

The *Intentionally Awesome* Date Night Workbook

Expectations

We all have expectations of ourselves, of each other, and of our circumstances. These expectations are logical and reasonable to us, born out of who we are, what we've experienced, and how we see the world. Expectations are *human*.

When life doesn't match our expectations, we're left with **frustration, disappointment, anger, and conflict**. Sometimes we don't even know why we're so upset because our expectations are clearly logical and reasonable (to us, anyway). But life--or the other person--doesn't always cooperate.

While **it's impossible to completely align our expectations with reality**, we work to get as close as possible in order to reduce the emotional fallout that comes with unmet expectations.

This exercise is designed to help you **get on the same page** with your spouse by thinking through expectations—for yourself and for each other—and discussing them openly.

Instructions:

- **Set a timer** for 15 minutes. **No talking.** :)
- Each of you **fill out one of the attached worksheets** by making a list of the things you naturally expect even though you may never say it.

Idea prompts:

Roles--I expect you to grocery shop/fix meals. I think you expect me to pay the bills.

Relationship--I expect you to be available to me when... When we disagree, I expect...

Unwritten rules—When I get home, I expect to see... I think you expect me to look...

Circumstances—When I've had a hard day... When the kids are fighting...

Responsibilities: I expect you to put your dirty clothes away. I think you expect me to oversee homework.

- After the timer is finished (or you both finish writing), **swap worksheets** and look them over.
- Now compare them side-by-side and **underline the things that surprise you.** Talk about them.
- **Circle the expectations** that might lead to conflict.
- **Take turns** explaining why you feel those particular expectations are reasonable or unreasonable. **Listen closely to your spouse when it's his/her turn!**

The goal is to work through potential conflict before the heat of the moment when emotions run high from unmet expectations. Have a conversation, not an argument. **Listen.** Is there anything you can let go of?

- It's **impossible** to meet *all* of one another's expectations. **Number your top 3-5 expectations** in order of importance. Help your spouse understand what to prioritize.
- Now **thank your spouse** for areas where you've seen efforts to meet your expectations (real or imagined)—and be specific!
- Finally, **affirm three character traits** you appreciate in your spouse and give specific examples of the situations when you've noticed them. Remind your beloved why he/she is special to you!
- End your night with a **15-second kiss.** :)

I think you expect me to:



I expect you to:



I expect you to:



I think you expect me to:

