



[Keys To Prosperity]

KTP-0010

Great Expectations: To Be, or Not To Be



“Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t – you’re right.” – Henry Ford

Hello Achiever!

What are your expectations?

Are expectations a key to successful achievement, or are expectations a setup for disappointment and disaster?

We Are the Champions

How long has it been since you graduated from High School? From university or college, or perhaps trade school?

Do you remember the feeling?

You were on top of the world. The hard part was over. The wind was at your back and the world was your oyster ... and you were hell-bent and ready to take it on.

Then before you knew it, life happened.

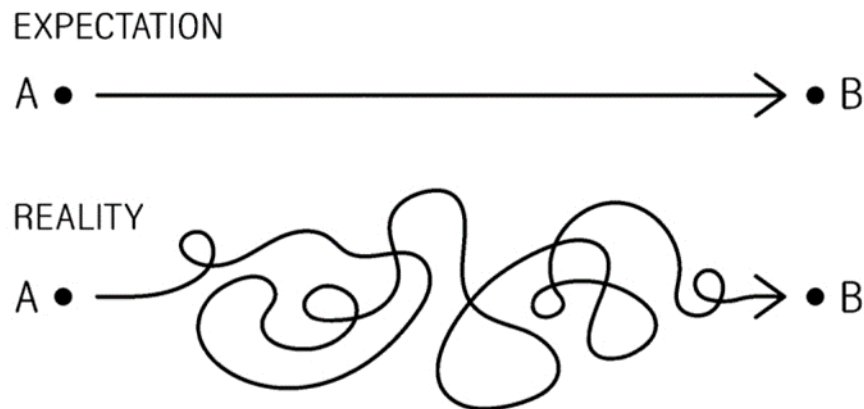
You now see pictures of yourself then, and you wonder where that light of excitement, anticipation, and optimism in your eyes, went.



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Did you end up anywhere near where you expected to be by now? What happened?



Many well-meaning people - even those considering themselves to be “mental health professionals” - will quickly and repeatedly caution against having expectations, or at least expectations of the sort they characterize (on your behalf) as “unrealistic.”

“*Expectation is the root of all heartache*” is a witticism attributed to Elizabethan-era playwright William Shakespeare, which may have its actual origin in one of the core teachings of Buddhist philosophy - that the causes of human suffering are craving, desire, and ignorance.

How often have you heard these:

“Don’t expect too much.”

“You must learn to manage your expectations.”

“Don’t let your reach exceed your grasp.”

“You must free yourself from expectations.”

“Expectations can blind you to the possibilities.”

“If you align your expectations with reality, you will never be disappointed.”

“Expectation is a horrible joy-killer in life.”



“You can solve your unhappiness by learning to not have expectations.”

“It is imperative to avoid having unrealistic expectations; if you’re not sure you can attain a goal there is no point shooting for it as you’ll only end up disappointed.”

Often, how other people counsel us on handling our expectations is simply a reflection of their own fears and aversion to being disappointed.

“Our environment, the world in which we live and work, is a mirror of our attitudes and expectations.” – Earl Nightingale

Great Expectations

In Charles Dickens’ thirteenth novel – first released in in 1860-61 as installments in his weekly periodical *“All the Year Round”* – the protagonist Pip has dreams of a better life, and sets out to achieve them.

A coming-of-age tale, along the way Pip encounters obstacles and setbacks, frustration, disappointment and heartbreak, and observes the many strengths, frailties, and failings of human nature.

“To be, or not to be, that is the question,” wrote Shakespeare in the voice of Prince Hamlet in 1603, as the Prince contemplates the pain and unfairness of life against the alternative:

“Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take Arms against a Sea of troubles, and by opposing end them; to die, to sleep no more; and by a sleep, to say we end the heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to?”

Expectations vs. Reality

Expectation implies certainty and is future-based. Expectations are what we BELIEVE will happen. Reality is what then actually occurs.

A significant source of stress for many people are the idealized expectations of outcomes they have developed in their minds, against which reality does not compare favorably.



It is true that our best-laid plans and expectations often do not play out in reality quite as well or as satisfyingly as we envisioned them in our heads.

This is simply a fact of life, and not a reason to avoid having goals, plans, and dreams in the first place.

Expectation fulfillment is subject to your realm of control. You cannot control other people or how they will react – you can only control yourself and your own reaction to circumstances which may or may not be unfolding as you had envisioned them.

The Tyranny of Expectations

Some people consider expectations to be a self-limitation, in which we lock ourselves in to a specific and narrow vision of how things should unfold.

Instead, they suggest you should *“free yourself from expectations,”* keeping your mind open, living in the moment to experience a *“freedom of the possible.”*

“Life delivers far less disappointment when your expectations are low.” – Brad Meltzer, American novelist and non-fiction writer.

Unhealthy Expectations

According to author and behavioral sciences expert Dr. Steve Maraboli, an unhealthy expectation is *“when we have an unhealthy attachment to and obsession with people, details, and outcomes we wish we could control, but don’t.”*

As Napoleon Hill wrote, you only have the right to absolute control over one thing – your own mind and thoughts. While you can have a tremendous influence on other people through your words and example, you cannot control them, their thoughts, or how they might react to events or circumstances.

It is therefore important to understand, and accept, that you do not have the right to force other people to live up to or conform to your vision or



expectations. If you harbor such expectations, you can expect to be continually disappointed - which will result in resentment and bitterness.

Tyranny of Low Expectations

“A little irrational optimism is a good thing.” – David Griffith

Usually presented in socio-economic terms, this is often also referred to as the *“soft bigotry of low expectations,”* or the idea that individuals arbitrarily identified as being part of a “disadvantaged” social or ethnic sub-grouping are somehow inherently less capable, thus justifying a lowered level of performance expectation – which then implicitly or explicitly discourages those individuals from even attempting to achieve their fullest potential, and providing automatic excuses for when they don’t.

President of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute Michael J. Petrilli writes that recent studies support the formerly common-sense idea that higher academic performance expectations in schools produce higher achievement test scores among students - of all backgrounds.

Students do better when their teachers believe that they can, encourage them to excel, and refuse to accept failure, even when other environmental factors (poverty, crime, violence, single parenthood) are acknowledged.

Still, people are messy. People are not machines. Outputs do not necessarily equal inputs, and sometimes it can take years for a positive influence to bear fruit. It is our human nature to want immediate and demonstrable results.

“Setting wildly unrealistic goals can lead to all sorts of problems ... but for teachers, suspending disbelief is almost certainly better than succumbing to the soft bigotry of low expectations. Simply put, we want educators to look at the kids in front of them and believe that they can know and do more tomorrow than they did yesterday, and that it will matter for their future for years to come.” – Michael J. Petrilli

While these studies were conducted in the scope of elementary and secondary education, the human principles involved are relevant to everyone.



Principles of Personal Achievement

Is having expectations inherently damaging and harmful, and thus something to minimize or avoid?

Motivational speaker and author of the perennial best-seller *“Think and Grow Rich”* did not think so. In fact, several of the foundational principles of his *“Law of Success”* directly contradict what some have identified as Signs You Are Expecting Too Much:

- Hoping / planning for a specific outcome,
- Having a mental picture of how things are going to turn out, and
- Having a preconceived notion of what you want or require from a circumstance.

According to Hill, *“...all achievement, all earned riches, have their beginning in an idea.”*

“Thoughts are things,” Hill continued, *“and powerful things at that, when they are mixed with definiteness of purpose, persistence, and a burning desire.”*

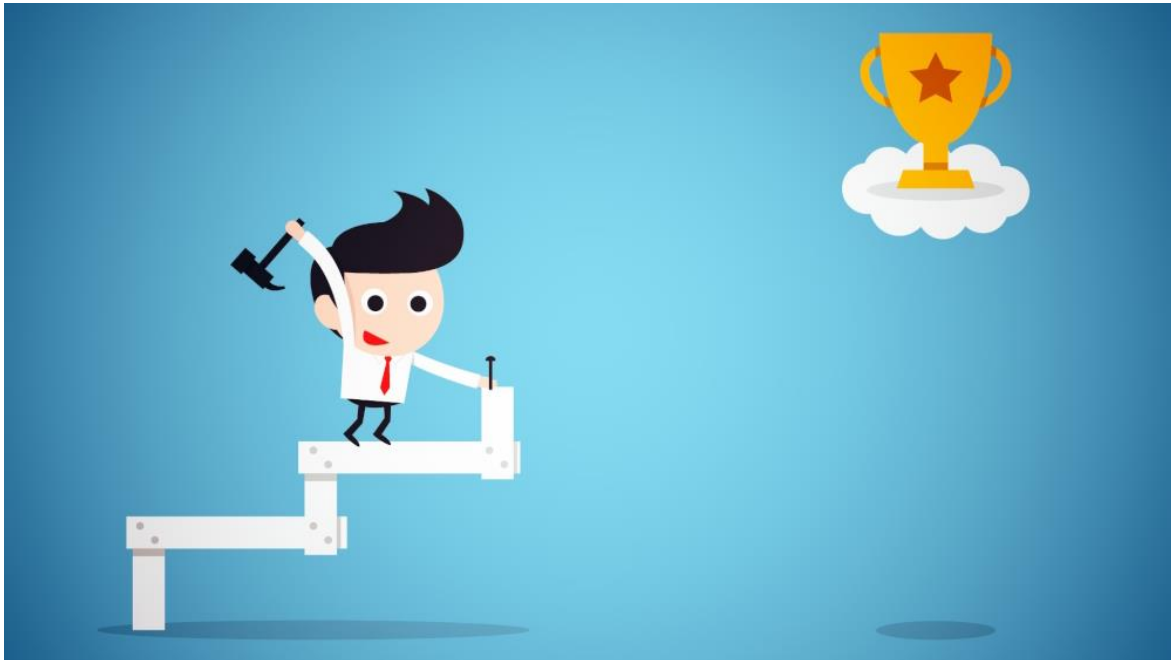
“The First principle of achievement is Desire: knowing what one wants.”

“Now, every human being who reaches the age of understanding of the purpose of money wishes for it. Wishing will not bring riches. But desiring riches with a state of mind that becomes an obsession, then planning definite ways and means to acquire riches, and then backing those plans with persistence which does not recognize failure, will bring riches.”

“These are not only the steps essential for the accumulation of money, but for the attainment of any definite goal.”

What Napoleon Hill describes is nothing less than an attitude of expectation, a belief so strong that you will attain your goal, that you feel in yourself the confidence that you have already attained it!





Irish author (*The Vorbing*) and actor Stewart Stafford writes, “Psychiatrists say unrealistic expectations lead to depression, but why else are we alive if not to dream? Every expectation is unrealistic (not-real) until it is made a spectacular reality through inspiration, hard work, and persistence.”

Wisdom to Know the Difference

Among the Stoic philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as among modern-day Stoic practitioners, one of the main objectives of observation and study is the cultivation of wisdom, developing a sense of what is truly important, and integration of that knowledge and understanding into the satisfaction of a well-lived life.

The Stoic creed thus involves cultivating a knowledge and understanding of what one can control in life, and what one can’t control – focusing on the former, and disregarding the latter.

It is from this philosophy that the Serenity Prayer – popularized through the work of psychologist Albert Ellis (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), theologian Reinhold Nieburh and Alcoholics Anonymous – is derived:



*“God, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
and Wisdom to know the difference.”*

When we apply this to the question of Expectations, we immediately see that our greatest stress from expectations comes from our attempts to control things which are not within our control – the actions and reactions of other people, and the outcome of events.

Expectations however are integral to the philosophy of personal achievement. You need your expectations.

Or, perhaps you don't think of them as “expectations,” but like Napoleon Hill you think of them in terms of your Desires and Goals, an Active Faith, Imagination, Persistence, and the Subconscious Mind.

Throughout life, what most people ultimately want is to “be happy.” True happiness ultimately is usually the satisfaction you feel in a life well-lived, however you define it.

Often, what we think or thought we wanted turns out to be different than what we really want. So, if your plans don't seem to have worked out as perfectly or in just the way you intended, or did not live entirely up to your expectations, check to see if they didn't in some way turn out for the better.

“Every adversity, every failure, every heartbreak carries with it the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit.” – Napoleon Hill

That's it for now. Talk to you again soon ...

To your success,

Chris

“The success and prosperity guy”

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