

You Expected Something Else? | Marriage Tips Series

■ by Duane Kapp, MA, Marriage & Family Therapist, Chief Operating Officer

Twenty-five percent of the people who come to Chicago Christian Counseling Center come for marital or couple counseling. In future newsletters, we will be including a “Marriage Tips” Series. This article is the second in the series. Even if you are not married, these tips matter to any close relationship.

“You expected something else, my love?”

We rarely consider that the “other person” might have a very different expectation than we do when we say “Let’s do lunch”, “Let’s get married”, or “Let’s look for a house”.

Along the way we develop our hopes and dreams. You know---find a great career, get married and live happily ever after! Our plan seems so simple and obvious. But when we break down our hopes and dreams into specific expectations, it can get complicated. For example, two individuals agree that they want a house with flowers around it. One person means a house in a town with sidewalks and a little backyard flower garden. The other means a cabin in the back woods with lots of wild flowers; flowers not even visible until the 10 feet of snow melts in the spring!

➡ MARRIAGE TIP | Know the EXPECTATIONS of the other person

Relationships often struggle because each person in the relationship is trying to make their expectations happen. We do not realize or understand how our spouse could possibly have a different expectation. But, you say, most couples talk about big expectation differences, right? NOT when couples think they agree! You will not discover exactly what kind of “house with flowers around it” your spouse is expecting until you’re on the road toward town and she unexpectedly turns NORTH toward the forest!

“I thought you wanted to live in a house with flowers around it?”

“I do, she said.”

We must learn to check out our expectation by asking the other person to please expand on what they mean by, for example, “a house with flowers around it.” I know this example is not very sophisticated but it makes the point. We can, even in this, see how our expectations (and assumptions) can lead us astray; **she** wants the house in the forest. Do make a habit of checking out expectations by asking many genuine clarifying questions; our therapists do it all the time. ■



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