

Divorce Recovery: Beware Expectations

In a nutshell, expectations are premeditated resentments and disappointments. They are self-sabotaging beliefs we hold that literally set us up to feel bad and keep us stuck in the pain of our divorce. They are in direct conflict with how the world actually works and are based on the phrase, 'should be'. In order to let go of the pain of our divorce, we must let go of impossible expectations.

What exactly is an impossible expectation? How about: I expect my ex to treat me with respect. I expect that my ex will be totally fair as regards our financial settlement. I expect my ex to feel regret for his bad behavior. I expect my ex to have trouble moving on after our divorce. I expect my ex to support me emotionally. I expect my ex to be a great Father to our kids.

Life rarely goes according to plan. Life has its ups and downs, its joys and sorrows. Life is never all one particular way: always good or always bad. The nature of existence is that life is chaotic, that it is in a continual state of change, that we cannot predict what will come next and there are no guarantees. That's just a start. Life isn't necessarily fair. We cannot control the outer world. The list of what life is goes on and on. The problem that arises is when we create expectations about life that are virtually impossible or unenforceable.

Let's take a close look at a particular situation in order to experience the truth of this fact. Sara is separated and getting divorced. Her husband left saying that he was not happy. After the fact she discovered that he was also having an affair, something he initially denied. Sara is having trouble because her ex continues to lie. Sara's impossible expectation is that her ex stops lying. She also expects for him to come clean about everything he has done. She expects for him to be on time for visiting the children, something by the way he couldn't manage even when they were married. As a result of her ex not living up to her expectations, she is continually angry, frustrated, resentful and disappointed.

The problem of course is that her expectations are impossible or unenforceable. Her husband lies and she has no control over that fact. That is just what he does and to expect him to become Mr. Truth overnight is totally unrealistic...virtually an impossible expectation. She also wants him to come clean and fess up, something that is not part of his character. Again, an unenforceable or impossible expectation. Suddenly, she expects her ex to be on time for the kids, something he has proven over and over again that he does not do. Is it a wonder that Sara is miserable? She is in a constant state of disappointment and resentment.

Sara cannot control her ex. She has a set of impossible or unenforceable expectations she is living under and they are the crux of her misery. She cannot change her ex or transform his character. Sara can control her expectations. She can identify where she is setting herself up by exposing all the impossible expectations she has

surrounding her ex and seeing how they cause her great pain. Once she has identified these expectations, she can move forward by acknowledging that they are indeed impossible and not under her control. She also needs to remind herself of the real laws of the universe.

Namely: Life isn't necessarily fair. Life has its ups and down, its joys and sorrow. Life involves suffering. Life is unpredictable. Life doesn't always go according to plan. Sometimes people do bad things (and sometimes they do good things!) There is much in life over which we have no control. It is not so much what happens to us in life but rather how we choose to handle what life throws our way!

If you are using the phrase 'should be', then you know you are living with unrealistic, impossible or unenforceable expectations. Should be's always point to a fantasy world. We reject what is and expect what we feel should be. My ex shouldn't lie. Except of course he does. My ex should be emotionally supportive. Except of course he isn't. You get the picture. We can continue to resist what is or accept the truth. It ultimately comes down to a choice. As a human being, choice is our most powerful asset.

Choosing to let go of impossible expectations is choosing to let go of blame, resentment, disappointment, anger, frustration, disillusionment and regret. Choosing to accept what is versus what should be is living in the truth and the truth will give you the freedom to re-create your life.

I suggest that you make a list of all of the impossible or unenforceable expectations that you have. Notice when you become upset: see what expectation might be operating. Notice when you are working under should be's. By setting down these expectations in writing, we can begin to identify where we need to change our points of view.

Next make a list of the real laws of the universe so that you can begin to drop unrealistic expectations. What do you know to be true of life? Are there any guarantees? Is everything always a bowl of cherries? In other word, get real!

I guarantee that your self-imposed impossible expectations are a major source of your inability to let go of the pain of your divorce and move forward. This concept does not just apply to divorce recovery. It applies to all of life. Visualize a little child stamping their foot and exclaiming, "But that isn't fair!" Don't be that child.

Shelley Stile is a Divorce Recovery Life Coach who guides her clients to let go the pain of their divorce and create new and vibrant lives after divorce. Shelley works with clients on the telephone so you can be anywhere and be coached. She also holds Tele-Seminars and publishes powerful e-books on life after divorce.

She is a member of the International Coaches Federation, the governing body for Life Coaching. Shelley trained with the Coaches Training Institute and the Ford Institute for Integrative Coaching's Spiritual Divorce Recovery.

Receive her free, powerful e-book, *The 10 Secrets to Coping with Divorce*, and receive her monthly *'Take Back Your Life After Divorce' Newsletter* by going to: <http://www.freedivorcesupport.com> or contact Shelley at shelleystile@changecoachshelley.com to schedule a free consultation and sample session of divorce coaching..