

## Understanding Mutual Expectations

Names of relationship partners: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Every human relationship involves mutual expectations. Serious relationship problems often develop when these expectations are not clearly defined, understood, or fulfilled within the relationship. An “expectation” differs from a “demand” which usually causes a partner to feel threatened and defensive. This worksheet will hopefully help you to understand more fully the expectations you and your relationship partner share (past, present, and future).

### I. Identifying past original expectations:

Try to recall your relationship just before your marriage. You had certain hopes and dreams about what marriage would be like. You expected your marital partner to fulfill certain needs which you had. You planned on certain things happening. In the space below try to identify as clearly and specifically as possible the most important expectations you had originally of your marriage relationship.

“When we first got married, I had the following expectations of you and of our marriage relationship:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(USE ADDITIONAL PAPER AS NEEDED)

## **II. Rating and considering my original expectations:**

- A. Now, consider the original expectations listed in “I” above. Try to rank them in order of importance, assigning a “1” to the most important, a “2” to the second most important, and so on.
- B. Then, consider the extent to which each of your original expectations was fulfilled within your marriage relationship. Rate each expectation for “extent fulfilled,” using the following scale:
- 0: Not fulfilled at all
  - 1-3: Fulfilled at a low level
  - 4-6: Fulfilled at a moderate level
  - 7-10: Fulfilled at a high level
- C. Thirdly, consider your reactions to what happened to these important expectations as they were fulfilled or not fulfilled. What emotions did you experience (joy, sadness, anger, resentment, etc.)? What did you do to convey to your spouse your reactions and feelings? What resulted from your disclosure? To what extent did you deny your own frustrations and pretend “everything was okay”?

## **III. Identifying expectations for our future relationship:**

- A. First, think about the original expectations you had for your marriage (“I” above). Which of those do you still count important for yourself in terms of your present and future marriage relationship? Be sure to include those in your list of “expectations for the future.”
- B. Now, think about your future relationship with your partner. What do you want it to be like? What personal needs do you have which you want your partner to try to fulfill? What specific behaviors do you expect to be present within your relationship?

“I would like for the following expectations to be fulfilled in our future relationship:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

(USE ADDITIONAL PAPER AS NEEDED.)