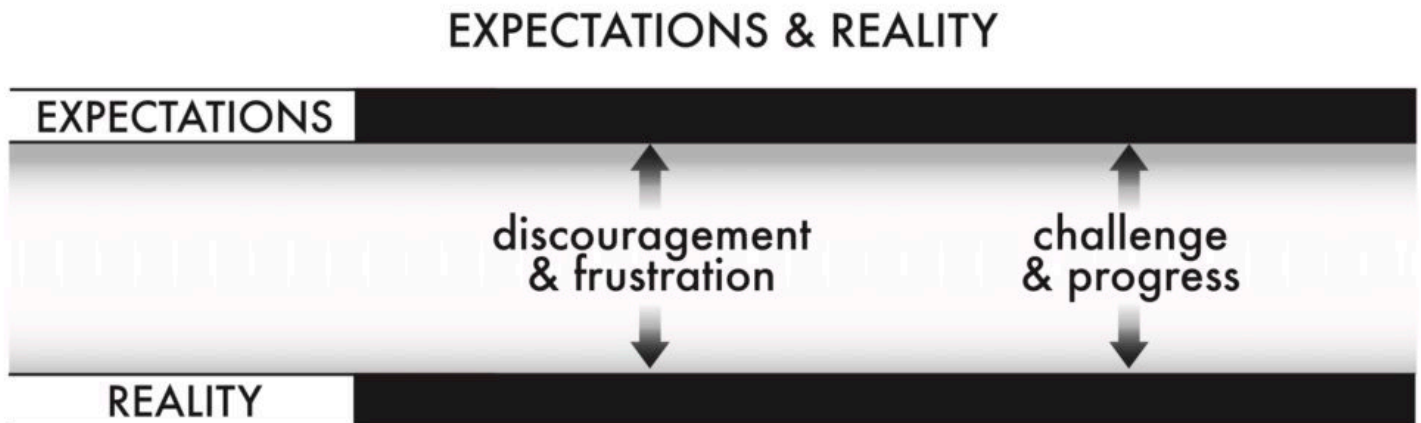


Between expectations and reality—challenge and progress and discouragement and frustration



For years, I had unrealistic expectations regarding a close friend. I was continually frustrated and he was constantly discouraged because of the unrealistic gap between expectations and reality. It was my faulty judgment that was causing the strain and friction in our relationship. When, in my mind, I “lowered the bar” closer to reality, my frustration subsided and the relationship improved.

I have another close relationship in which I have erred in the opposite way: my expectations have been too low and the person has stalled in her growth and development. I need to raise the bar and encourage her to start climbing.

This is a complex topic. Psychologists, leaders, parents, and others have wrestled with this issue and the questions it begets, such as:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having high expectations of people?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having low expectations of people?
3. How can expectations be set such that the disadvantages are minimized and the advantages maximized?
4. When is it acceptable to have expectations of people and when is it none of my business?
5. How does this expectations/reality syndrome apply to the organizations and businesses I relate to? (Are my expectations of my cell phone provider too high or too low? How about local restaurants? The schools my children attend?)

Think of a current relationship in which you are continually frustrated. Do you need to recalibrate your expectations? Identify one of your relationships in which increased expectations would be beneficial. What would be a good, first step?

Leaders, [here](#) are some additional thoughts about setting expectations in your organization.