

Expectations as Assumptions: Expect with Confidence

Often our expectations are based on the assumptions we have about people or groups of people. The same is true of ourselves. Have you ever noticed how your expectations become reality in your personal life? Expectation is literally a self-fulfilling prophecy. We do this consciously and subconsciously. Remember the kid in grade school who was always really rowdy and disruptive? Sometimes if people already assume they are perceived a certain way, then that is indeed exactly how they will act, even if they don't mean to. The rowdy kid in grade school knew everyone perceived him as disruptive, and so he was. The teacher expected bad behavior, and the expectations were fulfilled. Consider the profound impact this can have in your own life. Are the assumptions and expectations you have about yourself liberating or victimizing? There are countless examples of "self-fulfilling prophecies," or the Law of Expectations at work in everyday life. Ever notice how someone who thinks they're going to be getting fired suddenly experiences a drop in the quality and enthusiasm for their work? Then what happens? They get fired! Their belief caused them to act a certain way, and those expectations then worked to bring about the very thing that at first was only a figment of their imagination.

In another study, second graders listened to statements from their teachers before taking a math test. There were three types of statements: "expectation," "persuasion," or "reinforcement." The expectation statements went something like, "You know your math really well!" or "You work really hard at your math." Persuasion statements involved sentences like, "You should be good at math." or "You should be getting better math grades." Finally, for the reinforcement statements, teachers said things like, "I'm really happy about your progress." or "This is excellent work!" Now, what do you think the results were? The scores were the highest in the "Expectation" category! Why were the expectation statements the most effective? They created personal assumptions within each student. Those assumptions conditioned the actual external results.