

## EXPECTATIONS

Expectations play a large role in our grief. Certainly, expecting to feel better and to not always hurt is helpful, but other expectations can be hurtful. Some of these hurtful expectations are the expectations we have of those around us -- our friends and relatives.

We "expect" them to listen to us talk about our child and our pain. We "expect" them to be sensitive and aware that we are hurting more on a particular day or date. We "expect" that they will understand that it is normal to grieve for so long. We "expect" them to understand our mood swings. We "expect" and we "expect", and when our relatives and friends do not understand, or provide what we need, we are angry and hurt.

To "expect" is to presume. When we expect others to behave a certain way or say a particular thing, we presume they know what we want or need. This is rarely possible. Even if the other person is a bereaved parent, he/she cannot read our minds. What they needed in their grief may not be what you need in yours. If our friend or relative is not a bereaved parent it is even less likely they will have any idea of what we need at that particular time.

The problem with expecting understanding and help from others, is that we set ourselves up to be hurt. On page 449 of one of my favorite books, "Alcoholics Anonymous", it says, "...my serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations". Of course, serenity doesn't exist for the bereaved parent, but the hurt we feel from others IS "inversely proportional to our expectations".

If we expect others to do or say the right thing and they do not, we are hurt, but on the other hand, if we do not expect their reaction and they react as we would like them to, we will be pleased. I think it would be better to be pleased now and then, rather than be hurt almost every time.

We need to remind ourselves over and over, that others do not know how to help us. They are not being cruel, uncaring or indifferent, they simply do not know. Therefore, the responsibility to let them know of our needs lies with us. Not only must we tell them of our needs, but after we have done that, we must take this a step farther. If the individual does not react the way we asked

them to in the future, we must try to accept this and consider that, for reasons only they can know, they are either unable or unwilling to do as we ask. We can not know their innermost motivation anymore than they can know our innermost needs.

To eliminate the hurt we feel from others we must let go of our expectations of them. We can only be hurt if we ALLOW ourselves to be hurt, or if we take into ourselves as hurtful, something that was done or said (or not done or said) in ignorance. (Remember, we ourselves did not know of the needs of bereaved parents before our child died.) There will be times we must simply say "He/she doesn't know" or we might ask ourselves "How important is it that that person is not supportive?"

It is up to us to protect ourselves from any more hurt than we already have. So if we stop expecting what others may not, or cannot give, we can stop some of the hurt.

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