

DR. LORETTA TOLLIVER

EXPECTATIONS

THE MONKEY ON YOUR BACK



The Hidden Root of Suffering and Low Energy...
and the Path to Freedom

About the Author



Hi, I'm Loretta. I'm an executive and quantum coach, and someone who explores what's possible when we bring heart, mind, and the universe to the table.

Through a 40 year career in the workplace, I discovered that real transformation doesn't come from quick fixes or surface-level changes. It comes from curiosity, presence, and a willingness to see things differently.

Through quantum learning and awareness, I've learned how impactful it can be to blend science, soul, and stillness. I understand life isn't one size fits all. I come with an understanding of universal principles, an open heart, a listening ear, and a willingness to be present.

~Dr. Loretta Tolliver



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Introduction

We all live with expectations. Some are small and simple, like expecting the sun to rise, the lights to work, or a friend to call back. Others are more personal, like expecting kindness from people we love, respect from people we work with, or wanting life to go the way we planned. Underneath, expectations hold a need for control. They become the monkey on your back, holding on, not letting go.

Expectations shape how we see the world, how we treat others, and how we react when things don't go our way. Sometimes they help life feel easier. Other times they become heavy chains, leading to frustration and draining our energy. This book will help you notice the role expectations play in your life.

What's inside:

- How to identify the expectations you carry
- Why unmet expectations cause stress and low energy
- Types of expectations and the grip they hold on us
- How to let go or reframe expectations to lift energy

“Expectations are not something to fear or deny. They can be acknowledged, held gently, and, when necessary, released. In doing so, you reclaim energy once tied up in resistance and open the door to more freedom, presence, and higher vibration.”

01 What are Expectations?

Expectations are quiet ideas we carry about how people, situations, or even ourselves should be. Some are small, like thinking someone will call us back. Others are big, like believing life should be fair or that people should always understand us.

Most of the time, we don't notice our expectations. We only notice them when they are not met. That's when we feel disappointed, hurt, or tired inside. If you pay attention, you will feel the energy depletion.

Expectations are not just thoughts. They are also plans in our minds about how things are supposed to turn out. We imagine outcomes before they happen. We picture how people should act, what they should say, and how situations should feel.

When life doesn't follow the picture we created, it can drain our energy and create stress. When we keep holding on to those expectations, the same problems show up again and again. Sometimes we even become tense or push back, trying to get others to meet what we expect.

Learning to notice expectations helps us feel lighter. It gives us more choice. We can decide which expectations help us and which ones are weighing us down and restrict our energy.

The Invisible Rooms We Build

Sometimes expectations work like invisible rooms we build around people and situations. Inside these rooms, we decide the rules such as how someone should behave, how they should treat us, how they should respond, or how they should make us feel. The problem is, other people don't know these rooms exist. And they have rooms of their own.

People walk in being themselves, not knowing the rules we made in our heads. When they don't act the way we expected - especially when our rules don't match theirs - we feel hurt, upset, or disappointed, even though they were never told what was expected.

We assume they should have known. We call it common courtesy, good sense, morals, or "just knowing better." The list can go on. What feels obvious to us often lives only in our room, not theirs. When rooms align, all is well. When they don't, there is a draining of energy.

Sometimes, even if expectations were spoken, the rooms still don't match. What feels right or fair to one person may not feel the same to another. When rooms collide, the situation may not work out at all.

These invisible rooms can make it seem like we are trying to control outcomes or emotions. While we are not trying to be difficult, we are trying to protect what matters to us and the effort costs us energy. When we notice these rooms, we have choices. We can open the doors by speaking clearly about what we need. Or we can let the room go completely, along with the expectation. Letting go of invisible rooms gives our energy back, energy lost building the room and trying to keep its structure strong. It softens our bodies, calms our minds, and helps us feel more peaceful, more open, and more free.

Invisible Room Examples

The Call Back

You left a message and expect someone to call you back quickly because that feels polite to you. Hours pass. They don't call.

You feel ignored or hurt. Maybe worried or even angry.

They thought calling the next day or when they could was fine.

No rule was spoken — two different rooms, two different expectations.

The Tone

You expect someone to speak without harshness when they are not happy with you. To you, that is common courtesy.

They speak sharply instead. You feel disrespected.

They thought being honest with their point mattered more than tone.

Different rooms. Different rules.

The Simple Thank You

You help someone and expect a thank you. It never comes.

You feel unappreciated or unacknowledged. They assumed you helped because you wanted to, a response can happen anytime or not at all.

Another invisible room. (This can include social media likes.)

The “They Should Know” Moment

It has been a tough day. You expect your partner to understand how tired, stressed, or sensitive you are without being told.

They don't notice. You feel unseen. They didn't see you needed support.

The expectation lived in your room. Their present state could have affected the reason. Perhaps, you also missed an expectation of theirs...

Spin these any way you like. Recall some of your own. Don't convince yourself they are OK. **Bottom line is they drain energy.** Unnecessarily.

How Expectations Show Up

They show up in relationships. We expect friends, partners, or colleagues to act a certain way, often without ever saying it aloud. When they don't, we feel let down.

Example - You expect someone close to you to understand what you are experiencing without you explaining it. When they don't, you feel hurt or angry.

The emotion shows up as distance, silence, or irritation. The relationship feels tense, even though the real feeling underneath is disappointment.

They show up in self-talk. We place rigid standards on ourselves like, "*I should always do better,*" that can create patterns of shame or anxiety. We attach to them as our brains expect the patterns to continue.

Example - You expect yourself to handle everything well and not struggle. When you feel overwhelmed or make a mistake, your inner voice becomes harsh. Thoughts like "*I should be better than this*" or "*What's wrong with me?*" show up.

The emotion turns inward and feels like guilt, shame, or self-criticism.

In the world, when we expect fairness, recognition, or consistency from life, forgetting that reality doesn't follow our rules. There's so much more to life than our agenda.

Example - You expect the world to be fair, people to be kind, and things to work out. When they don't, frustration rises. You may be thinking, "*People are selfish,*" "*Nothing ever works out,*" or "*Did they really give him that job over me?*" This becomes anger, bitterness, or feeling tired of everything.

This is the short list. **They show up everywhere we decide to place them.** When unmet, expectations can create disappointment, resentment, or even disconnection from our authentic selves. And they drain energy.

What Happens When Expectations Are Not Met

When an expectation is not met, the body reacts first. You might feel tight in your chest, heavy, or a little off. Some form of an internal sensation happens. You may feel annoyed, sad, or confused, even if the expectation felt small. This happens before you have time to think about it.

Expectations create a picture in your mind of how something should go. When life does not match that picture, the body notices right away. Something feels wrong, even if you cannot explain why. Then the mind steps in. It starts asking questions like:

“Why didn’t this happen? I did everything right.”

“Why did they act that way?” “What did I say or do?”

“Why does this always happen to me?”

If we are not paying attention, the mind fills the space with stories. Those stories can turn into blame, hurt feelings, or self-doubt. We may replay the moment again and again, trying to make sense of it. This is how expectations use up energy.

Instead of being present with what is happening, we begin to resist it. The body responds. The nervous system moves into protection mode. Even if nothing is said out loud, something inside closes.

When unmet expectations happen often, the body learns this pattern.

Feeling tense or disappointed starts to feel normal. Ease and openness fade into the background.

Expectations themselves are not bad. Holding them tightly can pull us out of the present moment. When we understand what is happening inside us, we gain a choice. Noticing is where awareness can step in.

The Neuroscience of Unmet Expectations

Your brain is wired to predict. When reality doesn't match the brain's prediction, it sends out an "error signal." This feels uncomfortable and can trigger stress responses like tight chest, racing thoughts, or emotional overwhelm. The mind then tries to fix the gap by clinging tighter to the expectation or by spiraling into blame. Self or others.

This is why unmet expectations hurt so deeply. They are mentally charged and they are embodied experiences encoded in your nervous system.

Expectations and Forgiveness

It starts with self. Many people think forgiveness is about the other person. In truth, it's about releasing yourself from the grip of expectations. Your belief that:

"They should have treated me differently."

"They owe me an apology."

"This shouldn't have happened."

The pain is real, but the suffering comes from holding on to the story that life should have been different. Forgiveness is not about excusing behavior, it's about reclaiming your freedom from the weight of unmet expectations.

Conscious Reframing

Instead of trying to erase expectations, the practice is to:

1 Notice them: What "should" or "supposed to" is living in your mind right now?

2 Name them: Say the expectation clearly. This alone often softens its power.

3 Release or reframe: Ask, "Is this expectation helping me grow, or is it holding me hostage?"

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Ego and the Hidden Expectation



Are expectations purely ego? Not really, they are referenced in two ways - ego driven expectations and functional expectations.

Ego-driven expectations come from the part of us that wants control. The ego believes, “Life will be okay if things go the way I want.” These expectations often sound like: “They should treat me better,” “They should know how I feel,” “If this doesn’t happen, it means I am a failure.”

When these expectations are not met, we experience suffering. We feel hurt, angry, or small inside because the ego ties our worth to what happens outside of us. Our vibration and energy gets stuck in blame, resentment, or shame. When vibration drops, we feel drained, tense, and closed off instead of calm, open, and steady.

Ego-expectations close energy. Functional expectations, held lightly, allow energy to move freely.

Functional Expectations are the reasonable “rules of engagement” that make life flow more smoothly. For example: expecting traffic lights to work, colleagues to show up to meetings, or water to come out when you turn the tap. They’re not personal and are agreements or patterns that reduce your mental load. You don’t have to think about them. Functional expectations support daily life by creating predictability.

The effect to energy is neutral to light. When held gently, they create stability and flow. When clung to, even these can become rigid and lower vibration. Pay attention if the ego gets activated.

Ego-expectations demand reality bend to your story.

Functional expectations are shared understandings that make collective living easier. One creates tension; the other creates flow.

Vibrational Impact of Expectations

We can easily lower our vibration just by holding on to an expectation that creates tension inside us. We do this to ourselves without realizing it. Think of every expectation as a frequency you send out into the field. When life or people meet that expectation, it can feel good for a moment. Our vibration lifts, and we feel satisfied or relieved.

But when we depend on others or outcomes to meet our expectations, our energy becomes fragile. The same expectation that lifted us can just as quickly drop our vibration when it is not met.

This is the problem. Expectations can bring a short rise in energy, but they also set us up for a fall. True steadiness comes not from getting what we expect, but from loosening our grip and allowing life to unfold.

Unmet ego expectations vibrate at lower levels such as frustration, disappointment, and resentment. They often show up as some physical sensation such as tightness in the body or a heavy feeling inside. These unmet expectations send waves of heaviness into conversations and relationships. The mind begins to protect itself. Thoughts turn toward blame, judgment, or self-doubt. Presence fades, and tension takes its place.

Communicated expectations (spoken clearly and not assumed) can bring harmony. They align inner and outer energy, creating coherence instead of conflict. Both people know what is being asked or needed. When not met, the response depends on how tightly the expectation is held. Clear communication does not guarantee ease, but it reduces confusion and hidden resentment. The energy remains cleaner because it is honest.

Released expectations raise vibration into openness, curiosity, peace. The energy feels lighter, more expansive, and others around you can sense it. Instead of needing life or others to match a certain picture, you meet the moment as it is. You remain present instead of braced for disappointment. Releasing expectations means you stop demanding that life unfold a certain way in order for you to feel okay. Awareness changes the experience.

Expectations and Conscious Living

Expectations are not guarantees. Consciousness invites you to:

Hold functional expectations lightly:

"I expect the bus to come, but if it doesn't, I can adapt."

Release ego-driven expectations:

"They should have noticed my needs without me saying anything."

Replace hidden expectations with communication:

"Here's what I'd like. Does that work for you?"

Let go of the invisible room: You can enter conversations with an open mind allowing others and yourself to be genuine.

The Hidden Expectation - Respect

“Respect” is one of the most commonly expected and misunderstood concepts. **Society often teaches** that, “Respect must be earned” or “Respect should be given.”

Really? Actually, respect is not owed to anyone. It’s a choice and **a reflection of your own values**. When people say, “You disrespected me,” what they usually mean is: “You didn’t meet my expectation for how I want to be treated.”

This creates two traps:

Respect as control: Demanding it keeps you entangled in ego battles. Lowers energy.

Respect as obligation: Offering it only out of fear or duty is inauthentic, affects your vibration and drains your energy.

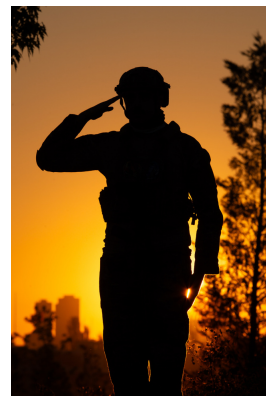
Conscious Respect

Instead of seeing respect as an expectation, see it as an expression of yourself and others.

Self-respect: Honoring your own boundaries and values **without needing validation**.

Respect for others: Recognizing their humanity, not because they earned it, but because **it reflects your integrity**.

Mutual respect: Not a guarantee, but a practice of meeting others as equals, without control or demand. With authenticity and kindness.



*Respect is not something owed. It is something you choose to **embody**, free from expectation.*

Practices to Loosen Expectations

Shift the language: Replace “should” with “could”. It opens possibility rather than demanding certainty.

Gratitude check: Instead of “They should have,” ask “What did happen that I can be thankful for?”

Self-inquiry: “What is the real reason I want this expectation met? What would it give me?”

Micro-practice: When you feel disappointed, pause and whisper: “This is just an expectation. I can choose freedom.”



Explanations

The need to explain ourselves comes from wanting others to agree with us, approve of us, or see things the way we do. If we explain enough, they will meet our expectations justifying us in holding them. Explaining over and over can drain energy. It keeps us tied to outcomes we cannot control. When we release the need to be understood or validated, something softens inside. Each expectation we let go of returns energy back to us.



Reflection

1. When was the last time an unmet expectation caused you pain?
2. How much of that pain came from the event itself, and how much from the expectation you held?
3. How do you use the word “respect”? Does it carry hidden expectations, or does it radiate authentic vibration?

You don't owe anyone an explanation. You owe yourself a new understanding. Every expectation released is a piece of energy returned to you.



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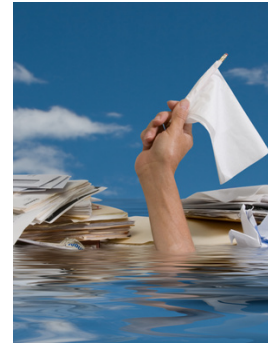
Expectations and Surrender

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Expectations are vibrations you radiate outward. Release the heavy ones, and your energy rises. Hold the functional ones lightly, and life flows. Live in conscious respect, not as an obligation, but as a chosen resonance and you lift both yourself and those around you.

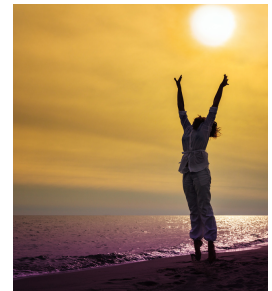
Why Surrender Matters

Ego expectations cling tightly. They tell us, “It has to be this way.” The grip contracts energy and lowers our vibration. The practice of surrender is not giving up, it is letting go of this unreal illusion of control. It opens space for life to move as it will, without draining your energy in resistance.

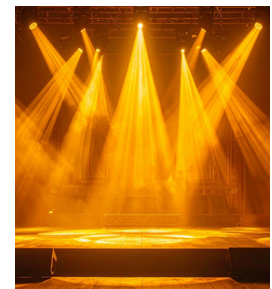


The Energy Shift

Holding on becomes tight, static, and has heavy vibrations. Letting go leads to open, fluid, and lighter vibrations, releasing energy back to you.



Surrender doesn't erase functional expectations (we still expect water to flow when we turn the tap), but it loosens the ego's demand for certainty. Rather than question if the water bill was paid and begin making irate calls, you can redirect. Keeping your energy. You hold expectations gently, knowing you can adapt if life doesn't match your picture. Drop the drama.



The Practice of Surrender with Expectations

Notice the grip: When disappointment or frustration rises, ask: “What expectation am I holding onto right now?”

Name it clearly: “I expected them to...” or “I expected life to...”

Release it into surrender: Whisper: “I let go of needing it to be this or that way. I am open to what is.”

Feel the difference: Notice how your body and energy field adjust. Surrender naturally raises vibration.

The Tie to Forgiveness

Forgiveness and surrender work together. Forgiveness releases you from the past expectation that something should have been different. Surrender releases you from the future expectation that things must go a certain way.

Together, forgiveness and surrender return your energy to the present moment, where vibration is naturally highest.

Your participation in forgiveness belongs to you. Carry it with the integrity of who you are and the lightness of forgiving self as well.

Presence and Vibration

Presence - access point

The present moment is the gateway to higher vibration because it's the only place your awareness, breath, and choice exist. The past is memory, the future is projection and both are mind-based, not energy-based.

State of mind - amplifier

What you bring into the present determines the vibration you experience. If you bring fear, resistance, or judgment into the now, your vibration contracts. If you bring openness, gratitude, or surrender, your vibration expands.

*Vibration is not always highest in the present moment. Yet, the present moment is the only place where vibration can be altered, because **awareness, thought, and choice only happen now**. Even when you reflect on the past or imagine the future, the shift itself is taking place in the present.*

An Expectation Quiz

Expectations are like invisible contracts we write in our minds. They shape how we interact with others and ourselves, often without us realizing it. When unmet, expectations can create pain, frustration, or disconnection. In order to help bring expectations into our awareness, here's a short quiz.

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Part 1: Where Do Expectations Come From?

"I expected them to..."

Take a moment to think about a recent disappointment. Where did the expectation come from?

Exercise:

1. Write down one expectation you had of another person.
2. Check where you believe it originated:
 - ☐ Ego (I needed control / certainty)
 - ☐ Conditioning (I was taught people "should" act this way)
 - ☐ Unspoken Agreement (I never said it, but assumed it)
 - ☐ Other: _____

What emotion arose when the expectation wasn't met?

Part 2: How Expectations Create Pain

Expectations can set up a gap between what is and what should be. The larger the gap, the greater the pain. Use the same one from above or think of another.

Visualize the Gap:

- The Expectation: _____
- The Reality: _____
- Emotion Felt: _____

Do I feel betrayed, hurt, or unseen because of the expectation, or because I assumed control I didn't actually have?

Quiz

Part 3: When Expectations Make Sense

Not all expectations are harmful. Some protect your energy and dignity. Tread lightly here. Because you believe it healthy doesn't mean the receiver feels the same.

Examples of Healthy Expectations:

- Mutual respect in a friendship.
- Clear deliverables in a work agreement.
- Safety in relationships.

Exercise:

List 3 expectations that are functional or healthy:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now ask: Have I clearly communicated these to the other person?

Part 4: Shifting to Intention

Expectation looks outward: *"They should..."*

Intention looks inward: *"Here's how I will show up..."*

Exercise:

Rewrite an expectation as an intention.

- Expectation: *"They should call me back right away."*
- Intention: *"I will reach out once, and release the outcome."*

Your Turn:

- Expectation:

- Intention:

Quiz

Part 5: Self-Expectations

Sometimes the harshest expectations are the ones we place on ourselves.

Exercise:

1. Write down a self-expectation that feels heavy.
2. Example: “I must always be strong.”
3. Reframe it as a compassionate intention.
4. Example: “I intend to show strength, but I allow myself moments of rest and vulnerability.”

Part 6: Working Through It

Quick Journaling Prompts:

- What expectation has caused me the most pain lately?
- Did I ever express it openly, or was it silent?
- How could I release it or shift it into an intention?
- How would my life feel with fewer expectations and more presence?

Closing Thought

You passed. Awareness is always a winner. Expectations are part of being human. But when unconscious, they can chain us to suffering. When conscious, they reveal where we are still learning to release control and live from presence. Shifting from expectation to intention frees us to live with clarity, compassion, and peace.

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Expectations are part of being human, fact is, we create them. We put the monkey there. Our approach to them can steady us or weigh us down. By learning to notice them, hold them lightly, and release the ones that drain energy, you create space for freedom. Every shift happens in the present moment which is the only place where you can redirect your thoughts, language, and awareness. When you surrender control and let go of heavy expectations, your vibration naturally rises, bringing more clarity, ease, and lightness into your life.

DR. LORETTA TOLLIVER

Thank You for Reading!

Walk with intention and integrity. Build high vibrations in your ability to be genuine and kind. To self, to others, to the earth.

If you have ever felt like there is something more, that's because there is.

Join me in the 30-day Roadmap for Consciousness Seekers. We will walk slowly into understanding how science, energy, spirit, and consciousness meet and thrive together. This is life changing!

www.lorettatolliver.com

Let's connect:

YouTube:

@drlorettatolliver

Instagram:

@drlorettatolliver

LinkedIn:

@drlorettatolliver