

Are Your Marriage Expectations Too High?

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Can you imagine that historically, marriages have been more about survival than love? Arranged marriage brought people together for the best chance of prosperity and continuing the family name. No one was thinking about love and satisfaction. Weird right? Thankfully we've moved past this view of marriage but where has it left us?

If marriage isn't about survival, heirs, and managing the homestead then what it is about?

Blaine J. Fowers Ph.D. and author of *Beyond the Myth of Marital Happiness* suggests that with most of the needs of the past being met by outside sources and an increase in the emphasis of self-fulfillment the bar for what makes a satisfying marriage has been raised. The question is, has it been raised too high? Have we begun to expect more than our marriages can provide us?

Here are three questions to ask yourself to test if you might be expecting too much out of your marriage:

1. I expect a 50-50 marriage my husband/wife should be contributing at an equal level.

2. I am who I am and if my partner loved me then they would accept me for that.
3. If my marriage lacks romance then it's not fulfilling its purpose. I deserve romance.

If you said yes to any of the three questions above, marriage expert and professor Jeffrey Larson says you might be aiming too high. Let's take a look:

The 50/50 Marriage

Life and marriage can be complicated. Many things demand the attention of both spouses in and outside the home. Marriage on a day-to-day level isn't going to always be 50/50. Larson suggests that happily married couples report 50/50 marriage over the *long term*. So instead of focusing on your spouse doing the dishes one night and you the next, look at the big picture. How can you both sacrifice at different times to make sure that everyone's needs are getting met? You might give 90% one day and 40% the next but in the end, a marriage that focuses on the big picture is likely to be happier.

The "Love Me as I am" Marriage

As nice as it sounds to be able to live the way you want and expect everyone else to accept and appreciate it, it is just not likely. If we can't expect others to accept the obnoxious and annoying parts of us why would we expect our spouse to? Larson says, "Your spouse will love you to the extent that you are loveable, and that's based largely on your behavior". It's worth asking yourself, "What would it be like to be married to me." Consider working on some of your less desirable qualities to strengthen your marriage instead of asking your spouse to look past them.

I Should Still Be Getting the Warm Fuzzies

Obviously, romantic love is important and can add to the satisfaction of a couple's marriage. But research suggests that most marriages find satisfaction in day-to-day considerate and compassionate interactions. John Gottman, well-known marriage expert suggests happy marriages are based on a deep friendship where there is "mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other's company". So, while romance has its place in marriage you might want to focus first on strengthening your relationship with small acts of kind and considerate interactions. Then, as Gottman suggests you may begin to like each other a little more, and the romance will follow.

Now that you know what your marriage can and can't do for you consider changing your idea of what your marriage should look like and find ways to appreciate where it is.

Look for ways to grow together and strengthen bonds. In other words, focus on what your marriage *could* be rather than what it *should* be.

If you want to learn more about how to strengthen your marriage grab tickets to USU's [Marriage Celebration 2023](#) on February 10 and 11th.