

# Cycle of Success & the Expectation Trap

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Q- How do we accept the no answers that life throws us? Often people have high expectations and seem to get stuck in the “Expectation Trap”.

A- In order to understand the expectation trap, we must first understand what expectations are. Expectations are basically ideals and ideals are not bad. In fact, ideals are really good. Learning self government and learning to help your children find happiness and freedom through self government are wonderful ideals.

Learning self-government is not a quick fix for problems; it is a continual process of progression in the skills needed to learn to accomplish that ideal.

It's interesting to note that ideals are what creates all the greatness in the world. Somebody has an idea that turns into a lofty goal and then they work at it and work at it and work at it. Everyday they fall short of the ideal and then they come back to the beginning place again and they work on it until they finally succeed.

Think of Gandhi - They called him “the fighter without a sword.” He freed so many people and stood up against the tyrannical government forms. Gandhi not only stopped the government from oppressing the people he stopped them from oppressing each other. He demanded that the people stop fighting each other. He said he would fast until the people stopped fighting. Gandhi expected that his ideal would win over the people's hearts and they would understand what he was doing and stop the war. Gandhi was a idealist.

Likewise, Mother Theresa, Christopher Columbus, Winston Churchill, Thomas Jefferson, and so many others followed ideals. In fact, all religious people follow an ideal.

For instance, look at the standard religious belief, “if I am good I go to heaven.” What does that entail? A lot of goodness. What happens if you are bad? How much repentance is it going to take to become good again? The ideal of going to heaven and living with God in some heavenly, glorified state forever is a massive ideal. It is one that the majority of the world subscribes to and they work on it every day. Most of us are idealists.

The scriptures say, “be ye therefore perfect.”(Matthew 5:48) That’s a huge ideal to be perfect. Who is going to do that in one day? It’s just not going to happen, right?

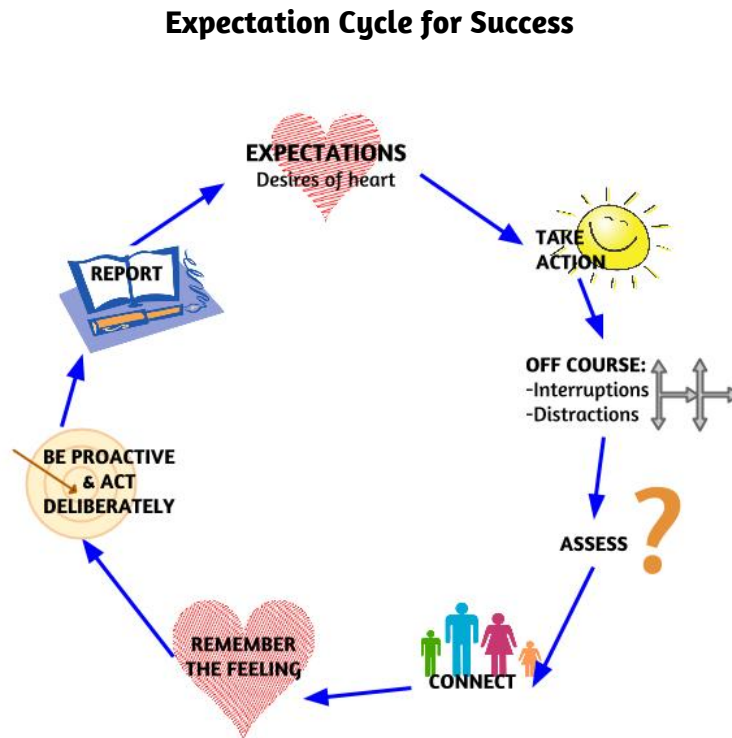
Ideals are what we keep working towards, day after day. We can set expectations, or goals, everyday and we can work toward accomplishing those expectations. But this does not mean we are going to achieve our ideals in one minute or even in one day.

Working toward our ideals gives us hope and gives us a vision of how to use our expectations in a really

productive way.

## Using Expectations --Expectation Cycle for Success

If a person is going to use expectations in a good way, they will go through the following Expectation Cycle for Success.



**Expectation** is at the top of the Success Cycle. Expectations are like a picture of a possibility of what you want, a perfect day. It's more of a feeling of something that you want, not necessarily a check off list.

The picture of the cycle above is what it looks like when you handle expectations correctly. In the next section, we are going to talk about what happens when you handle expectations incorrectly.

When we have an expectation we generally, immediately **take action** toward our goal. Taking deliberate action is one of the keys to accomplishing our goals. It is also vital for success because it involves some self-discipline.

Oftentimes after we make a picture of the possibility of what we want and start taking action, we are going to **go off course**. It's normal. It's going to happen every time because interruptions and distractions happen. The phone rings, a child needs something, somebody gets a fever, the neighbour needs some help, or the school calls. There is going to be something that throws us off course. We are going to struggle at

some point or another with interruptions and distractions.

After going of course with interruptions and distractions, we need to **assess** how to get back on course to the expectation.

The very best way to get back on the success course is to **connect** to other people around us -- to our children or to our spouse. Making a personal connection with somebody gives us energy. It inspires purpose. And brings us back to the importance of that expectation.

Following the connection it will be easy to **remember the feeling** of the original expectation. There is a feeling that is associated with the expectation. It is a type of romantic essence of the ideal moment we are working toward. We have got to stay focused on that feeling. It's that feeling of the ideal that carries us through to success --not the logical understanding of what you want accomplish. For the majority of people it is an emotional investment. It's that feeling of calmness and wanting to get back to that feeling of calmness; if that's your expectation. Remember what feeling it is we are going toward because we can keep creating the feeling even if we are not all the way there yet.

Now that we've recreated that feeling, turn upward on the cycle and **be proactive and act deliberately**. Acting deliberately means focusing on the steps we need to take,, not necessarily on the results we have already had. It is most important to focus on the steps we need to take so that we don't fall back into old, ineffective habits for problem solving or communication.

While taking these steps be very optimistic, act with purpose, with assurance and confidence, trusting that as the steps are taken we get closer to our ideal and reaching our expectation. These steps could take years, they could also take minutes or seconds depending on the issue. Taking these steps develops confidence. When we see ourselves conquer a few of the steps then we know we can conquer and achieve the expectation and our larger purpose. Skills increase confidence and offer a vision of possibility.

Finally, **report**. Report means that we track our progress. Report to a mentor or spouse or to a personal journal. Reporting is a spiritual experience. It's the moment that we recognize we did it, or that we are doing it! This is a time when we can see "I am able to conquer myself! My spirit truly is in charge of my body! I don't need to be angry anymore because my spirit can win out and I can be calm" (or whatever the issues happens to be).

The Cycle of Success is repeated over and over again with each new expectation. Once we get into this cycle we are unstoppable!

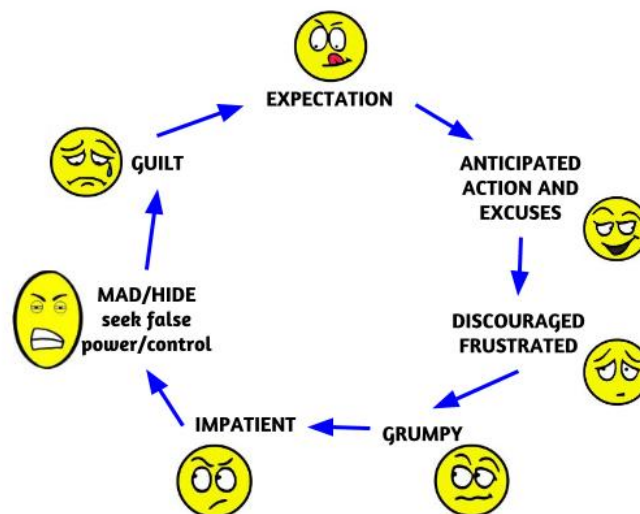
## Expectations Trap

With an understanding of the Expectations Cycle, we can now explore the expectation trap. This is a trap we can get stuck in when we use our expectations improperly and when we allow our emotions, frustrations and failures to trap us. This is probably one of the biggest things that people deal with because to some degree all good parents are idealists. They have to be raise a family better than what they see on TV.

In fact, all motivated people are idealists. They love to make expectations because they know they must continue to shoot for the ideal or they won't get there. That's why having a family vision is so important. (discussed in detail in the book *Parenting A House United*) Likewise, having a couple's vision and a personal vision are both very helpful. However, if we use visions improperly we experience a lot of emotions and frustration, and even feelings of failure. When we follow the expectation trap we don't feel like we actually fulfilled the expectation we set out to accomplish.

The Expectations Trap is different from the expectation cycle for success. In the cycle for success expectation was a picture of possibility it was a feeling of what we are moving towards. In the expectation trap the **expectation is the root of our security, and our emotions** are tied to accomplishing that expectation. This translates into beliefs that sound like this, "if I don't get this expectation I am going to feel like a failure, I am going to feel insecure, and I am not going to be okay. This has to happen or I won't be okay." It is a desperate approach, "I have expectations because I am desperate for things to go perfectly. And, if they don't go perfectly I am not prepared emotionally to handle it well."

### EXPECTATION TRAP



It is interesting to note that most people develop their life expectations from desperation, because it is common to be somewhat reactive in nature as we decide what we want. For example, "I have had bad days and am fed up with it! So I will now have a good day because there is no way I am going to put up with another bad day! This is it! This day will be good!" At that point I am throwing out all trust, all faith, and this is purely emotional. I am reacting based on the fact that I had other bad days so my expectation is coming from a place that's **reactive** instead of a place that is proactive.

Unlike the Cycle for Success, the Expectation Trap does not encourage deliberate action. Sometimes action is taken, but often times the person just anticipates action from someone else. The person expects someone else to solve the problem or achieve something for them. When the deliberate action isn't taken there are often excuses for why action wasn't possible. So, in this cycle the action step is written as

### **anticipated action and excuses.**

The Expectations Cycle for Success comes from a very proactive mindset. We say to ourselves, “What is possible? I just want to look ahead and see what I can possibly do. I know I am not going to achieve it immediately, but I want to try for what’s possible.”

Do we allow ourselves to have a possibility in mind with a true ideal? If expectations of achieving that ideal are aggressive, it’s probably headed for the trap...the ideal and expectations may be more emotion driven. Emotion driven expectations often move to **discouragement** and **frustration**.

When things don’t work immediately and we’re nowhere near the expectation being accomplished often people will get **grumpy**. (When mom or dad gets grumpy because their expectation isn’t met, they are really trying to force the ideal. They want that expectations so bad, but things have gone off track or there are some distractions and they are frustrated, so they start nagging and getting ornery, in an effort to force the expectation. Some people could be afraid of this grumpiness and just do what the parent expects...hopefully.

But that isn’t really achieving the ideal. is it?

After discouragement and frustration, the next step in this trap is **impatience**. When impatience appears, selfishness has set in. When I’m impatient this means that I have stopped believing other people. This is when mom or dad feels out of control. They feel like things have spiraled out of control and they don’t know what to do. No one is doing what they were told to do and the person with the expectation has given up hope that the expectation will be done without some force. At this point they are thinking about how they feel and about all the negative thoughts related to what they didn’t accomplish, how it didn’t go right, how nobody else cared, and so on. At this stage they only value themselves. They are not valuing anyone else at all. As we can see the discouragement and frustration was leading up to this wasn’t it.

The next step on the cycle is they get **mad**, really mad. This is where they yell or they **retreat**. Some may yell, “I am out of here!” and then they pout. “You know it never goes right! You kids never (fill in the blank).” When this happens the person is forcing with a false kind of control using emotion again to try to feel in control of themselves and to gain control of others. So instead of having real control, they are creating emotions in order to force the feeling of being in control. At this point, people retreat from them. We’ve all seen it. This is the final blow up. They get mad. They have been trying to hold it off all this time but this is it! They tried forcing by being a little grumpy and seeing if they can emotionally manipulate the situation just a little bit. Then they practically give up. They went through selfishness and impatience and now they (*roarrrrrrrr*) turn into a monster. They want the immediate, false power, false control, so they can feel like they are in control, even though in reality they have just gone more out of control.

The next step is **guilt**. Why guilt? Because after an emotional release the heart can finally be heard. Physically, all that stress endorphins have been released. The body experiences a chemical, calming change. The chemical release our bodies experience under extreme stress acts as a kind of protection mechanism for us. Following the explosion and endorphin release people feel shame. They feel the failure, they know they have handled the situation wrong and question their ability to lead or accomplish

what they set out to do. .

People aren't born to fail, so naturally most people, because they know what truth is and because they can feel goodness, they reinvent themselves and then they have an ideal and expectations again. If they are emotion driven, the trap happens over and over and people can get stuck in it. After multiple failures, some people stop believing ideals are healthy to have. At this point they stop their own progression in order to stop future disappointments.

This trap is very real. People can go through this cyclical expectations trap over and over again, day after day, issue after issue. This is what drains parents. They literally feel wasted after going through a process like this. And, if a parent goes through this multiple times a day, reinventing themselves and starting over each time (emotionally driven) they'll be physically and emotionally wiped out! That's a lot to go through chemically and emotionally! It's a lot for the family relationships to endure over and over again!

## Measuring Success

One of the tricky things about expectations is that people want to measure the success in reaching that expectation. They want to be able to say, "I was here, and I moved to here," and they want that measurement to happen pretty instantly. There is a technique to measuring success, and not expecting instant results, and it is really easy to see once we know what to look for.

I homeschool my children. I didn't always, but when I started I wanted to measure success. I wanted to measure all of the detail of all of the progress. At school they measure. Children take tests and quizzes. They do worksheets and have them signed by parents. They measure everything well. So, being new to homeschooling, I wanted to measure how my child was learning. Though, the more I tried to measure, the more stressful it became for my child and for me, and the more I felt like I was pushing instead of guiding. I was trying to force results. These results were to be the proof I was doing well as a teacher; they were the root of my security. Instead I should have focused on the feeling I wanted to have while learning with my children.

When I decided that I wanted to homeschool my children, I expected us to feel like we were together on a educational journey. That was my ideal. I wanted us to learn all sorts of things together and do projects together. I had ideals of how it would feel. This ideal feeling of the possibility of a family journey has carried us through our homeschool experience and inspired us to take action we wouldn't normally have taken.

Ideals and expectations are the desires of our hearts. They can also be the desires of the body. Though, the expectations that are true ideals and are in the Cycle for Success are the ones that come from the heart.

When we are trying to accomplish our heart's desires we trust that it is not going to happen immediately. We work toward expectations. When we do that, it is more of a feeling that carries us through the day. It is a purpose. We aren't necessarily measurements or results driven when we are on that path of success. And, as I said before, achieving that ideal, that expectation could take years. We just keep trusting and acting with purpose. We recognize that we don't need to see the perfect result in one day or ten. As long

as we continue assessing the next actions to take and keep taking deliberate action the results will come.

### *The Feeling Radiated from those Living the Cycle of Success*

The Cycle for Success is like living our mission in life. Life missions don't happen in one day. More often than not a life mission is less about what one does and more about who we are when we take deliberate action. The tone of who we are is always more powerful than what we are doing. Again that returns us to the heart -- to that spiritual drive inside of each of us that says, "This is what I know I need to do. This is who I know I need to be." and then we move forward with that.

I don't know if you've felt that feeling of becoming more. If you ever meet a person who is fulfilling their mission and they are doing it with that Cycle of Success, they feel different than the people who achieve greatness through stress (which is the expectation trap). The person who achieves greatness through the Cycle of Success is one people really want to be with. They want to learn from them and have more exposure to them.

There is a woman who was a friend of my grandmother's, her name is Barbara Smith, and she is a dear, dear woman, getting aged now, but she has such a wonderful, amazing feeling about her. She has dedicated her life to doing God's will; to living her purpose. She is on that Cycle for Success where she is assessing herself and learning the skills she needs. She is taking deliberate action and whenever I am with her I don't want to leave her presence, even if we are talking about something silly.

One time I saw Barbara and we had a few moments to talk. After catching up we turned our attention to a painting that was nearby us. Even as she talked about the painting we were both standing next to, I didn't want to leave her side. Not because of the painting, but because of who she is. I was so happy to be with Barbara Smith and that she was taking time to talk to me. She was sharing her thoughts with me, She is a person who is conquering herself on a regular basis.

There was no rhyme or reason to her power over me, I just wanted to stand there with her and feel her greatness. I don't even know if she thought that was odd or not but finally my husband pulled me away so we could get home. Her feeling was what it feels like when we are living our missions. When we are conquering ourselves we get endowed with that kind of a feeling, a kind of a spirit or power from remaining on the Cycle of Success instead of the expectation trap. It becomes self-fueled as we are using those ideals to push us forward to learn new skills, conquering ourselves.

Think about what your children's reaction to you will be as you follow the Cycle for Success throughout your life. They will trust, love and be inspired by you. They will want to be with you and to follow you. Sure they are going to have some selfish moments and you are going to have to correct some things, but you will do it in a way that is similar to the Cycle of Success --principled, not panic driven, and they will learn truth from you.

All of us have that potential. It just depends on what we do with our ideals and our expectations. In my book, *Parenting A House United*, I talk about having a vision of what kind of family we want for the

future. This vision is a long term expectation for the family. In this vision, there is a feeling associated with my character; who I am in the future. I will become a certain kind of grandmother who feels much like Barbara Smith feels to me. That is the expectation/ideal of who I will become. It is a life-long expectation that fuels the Cycle for Success to occur in each daily interaction with my family and friends.

Understanding the Cycle for Success can help us achieve our missions in life and help us become the families we know we need to become. These very big, often times life-long, Cycles for Success are macro, very big picture, cycles that foster smaller, micro, Cycles for Success that happen many times a day.

Expectations can either be bondage or they can be freedom. They can trap us or set us free. We are free when we choose to use our expectations in a productive way that allows us to lead others more confidently and powerfully.

## **Macro vs Micro Expectation Cycle for Success**

The Cycle for Success can be used in a macro and micro context. The Cycle for Success described above is the macro version of the cycle. A macro Cycle for Success is a life mission, a daily vision, or a vision for a big project or relationship. The daily, micro Cycles for Success are the little interactions that happen so many times a day such as the parent giving an instruction to do a chore.

### *Macro*

The macro cycles guide the big-picture of our lives. We have an ideal, a big vision, that we are patient to succeed in. The ideal/expectation drives us forward, inspires us and energizes us.

For example, as we are learning self-government we will go off course. Now and again we will lose our focus. What will we do? We are going to assess ourselves. We will connect with other people around us. Then we will remember what we are going towards. We'll focus back on that vision, our ideals, and we are going to take deliberate actions to move forward.

### *Micro*

In daily life The Micro Success Cycle can be used for smaller expectations.

Let's say a chore needs to be done and we give an instruction to do the chore to somebody. It's our expectation that the chore gets done.

So first, we pre-teach the chore. We declare what needs to be done. "This is how we follow instructions. . . . Here are your instructions." This is the take action step.

Then the child goes to follow the instruction but goes off course. They get distracted.

As a parent, what are we going to do? We assess and connect.

How do we assess and connect to that person? We do a correction. We use that time of correction to



assess what's going on and connect with them heart to heart connection.

Then we remember the expectation --we focus on the vision we had of getting the chore done. We focus on that feeling of giving the instruction and how it was calmly done. We focus on how the person who needs to be doing the instruction needs to feel -- how their hearts need to be.

The next step in the cycle for success is to act deliberately. Acting deliberately means they do their consequence and then they report back.

Then we praise creating more connection at that moment.

The cycle repeats again and again throughout the day. That is the micro expectation Cycle for Success.

## Summary of the Three Cycles

I have shared three expectations cycles.

- The Macro Expectation Cycle for Success is linked to the big ideals and our vision or mission
- The Micro Expectation Cycle for Success is how the cycle is used in smaller expectations --daily interactions that help achieve the bigger goal.
- Last, The Expectation Trap, which most people fall into because their expectation starts in the wrong place-- a place of wanting instant changes, instead of starting with the picture of possibility (what's possible, what is it that I want, what does that feel like, what are my kids are going to be like, etc.) Instead of starting with vision they start with the desire for security. (If I don't get the expectation I want, I will not feel secure -- so the expectation is coming from a more desperate place.)

## Conclusion

I will forever be grateful to a friend of mine named Beverly Loop. I used to swim with her at the community pool. She must have been in her 80's or so. One day I came into the pool so tired; I had taught a class then canned beans all night. I explained why I was so tired, and she looked at me and said, "Nicholeen, there is nothing that can't wait until tomorrow. You should not do that to yourself." She continued, "Trust me. I have been around for a long time. Nothing is worth doing that hurts your health. There is nothing that can't wait until tomorrow."

That piece of advice changed my life. I really listened.

I had pushed myself to do too much and then was so tired because I had an expectation to get the beans canned and then sacrificed my sleep to achieve that. Beverly's comments made me realize that I didn't have to be desperate in my expectation to have the beans done. Who is in charge of my schedule? I am. Who is in charge of my health? I am. Who is in charge of doing the beans? I am.

If beans get picked and they don't get canned in time and go bad, it's okay. It's not going to be the worst

thing that happens. It doesn't matter if it is beans or some other expectation. I don't need to be desperate with my expectations about my life.

While being desperate to get the beans done I was grumpy. I didn't yell, but I just kept going, forcing my body to stay up late. Then, at 5 A.M., when I had to wake up to go swim with only a couple of hours of sleep, I had to reinvent my expectations again and make myself get up. I had excuses and desperation all day. Why would I do that to myself? Why would I put myself in that desperate of a position? Nothing is worth that! Beverly is right and I will forever be grateful to her for telling me, "Nicholeen there isn't anything that can't wait until tomorrow." This means that the go off course step could mean going to sleep, but in the morning I assess, connect and remember and get right back on track towards my expectation again.

If I did not believe and live the principle of "There isn't anything that can't wait till tomorrow." I wouldn't be able to do Teaching Self Government and live the mission I live. This principle freed me. Now I can live the Macro Expectation Cycle of Success. This means that I am constantly assessing what's going on. I am taking deliberate actions -- it might be small steps, but that is okay because I keep remembering the vision I am going towards. I report on my progress and I keep taking small step after small step. If that means it takes me years to accomplished the things I envision, that's okay. I just keep putting all the first things first and trusting in the process to succeed at the expectations, ideals and visions that I have.

# Resources

- Line upon Line learning: <http://parentingselfgovernment.com/line-upon-line-207>
- Teaching Self Government to Anyone, not just children:  
[http://parentingselfgovernment.com/life-advice-with-self-government-principles-teaching-self-government-to-anyone-not-just-children\\_942](http://parentingselfgovernment.com/life-advice-with-self-government-principles-teaching-self-government-to-anyone-not-just-children_942)
- This letter was written by Duke President Terry Sanford during the 1983-84 basketball season. "Uncle Terry," as he was known, wasn't too happy about his school's reputation, so he asked students to consider changing their ways: Read the full text here:  
<http://mentalfloss.com/article/24379/life-advice-former-president-duke#ixzz2jtOsWoAB>
- Expecting Perfection in yourself? --Changing Perspective...You Can Do It.:  
[https://parentingselfgovernment.com/changing-perspectiveyou-can-do-it\\_894](https://parentingselfgovernment.com/changing-perspectiveyou-can-do-it_894)
- Parenting is a JOB:  
[http://parentingselfgovernment.com/%E2%80%9Cmom-is-on-the-phone%E2%80%9D\\_363](http://parentingselfgovernment.com/%E2%80%9Cmom-is-on-the-phone%E2%80%9D_363)
- Expectations vs. TRUST --Trust their Innate Goodness:  
<http://parentingselfgovernment.com/i-dont-know-any-bad-children-245>

# Discussion Questions

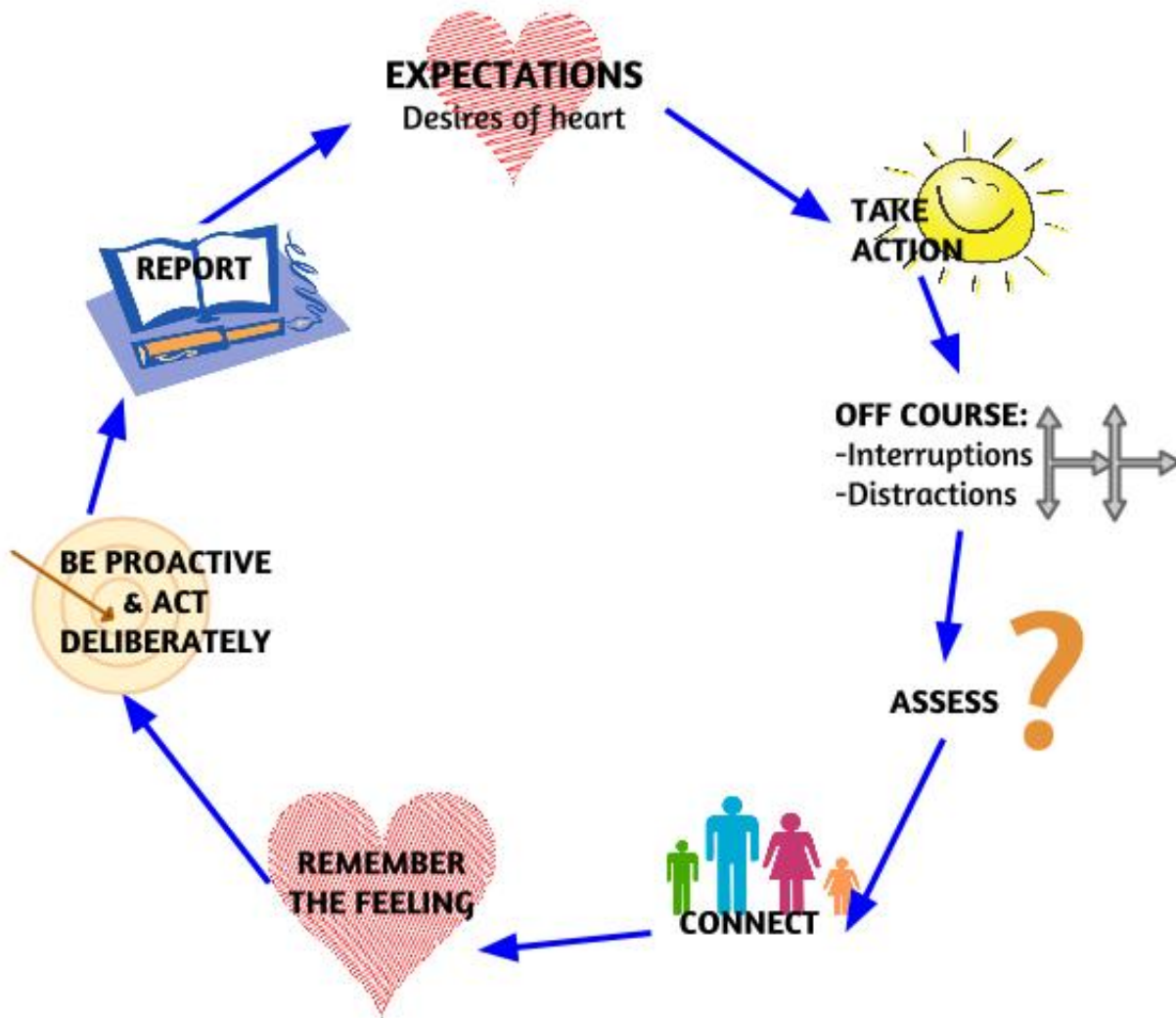
- What new insight did this article give you?
- What personal insights resulted from this reading?
- What examples do you see of the Expectation Cycle of Success in your life and lives around you? (macro and micro level)
- What examples do you see of the Expectations Trap?
- Can you see the Expectation Trap at work in your life? in lives around you?
- How easy or hard is it to be in one or the other (Success or Trap)? Why?
- How easy is it to recognize people who are living the Cycle for Success? Is it in material things? Other things? How do you recognize them?
- Are there people in your life that have the aura of successfully fulfilling their missions (living the Cycle for Success) --people you want to be with and learn from?
- What can people do to step into that Cycle for Success more consistently?
- Where does the Cycle for Success break down most often for people (where do people shift into the Expectation Trap)? Why do you think that is?
- What are some ways we can come from our heart when choosing expectations?
- What are some ways to avoid desperation when choosing expectations?
- What are some ways to stay focused on vision and mission?
- In what ways can vision and mission help us stay in the Macro Cycle for Success? Is it easy? Is it hard? What can we do to use mission and vision more effectively?

# Challenges

- Print the Expectations Cycle for Success and the Expectation Trap --analyze in writing where you are in each. Possibly examine different areas of your life and various relationships on a macro and micro scale. Share what you learn with your circle, a mentor or a friend.
- What can you do to more consistently be in the Expectation Cycle for Success? Analyze and take action. Some people make and use cue cards to carry with them and use whenever the need arises. Buddy up with a Circles member or find a mentor, or pay a life coach to speak with on a regular basis with the goal of maintaining a cycle for Success.
- Analyze: If you start out in the Success Cycle but don't feel the success, where does it break down? Identify where it breaks down and make a plan to form a new habit increasing your ability to stay in the cycle of success. Report this plan to a mentor, friend, or journal. Keep track of your progress and report back to the Circle. Invite your circle to "trouble-shoot" with you --brainstorm with you to find how to succeed more consistently.
- If you do not have a larger vision for your life, seek one. Identify one --one that will assist you in being patient with progress and patient with the cycle of Success. If this seems difficult, work with your Circle, a friend or a mentor to identify this. When you know it, share it.

# PROACTIVE

## Expectation Cycle For Success



# REACTIVE

## Expectation Trap

