What You Can (and Most Definitely Can’t)

EXPECT FROM LOVE

Searching for a fairytale relationship? Experts advise you on how to release expectations – and find the love that you ultimately deserve.

ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIP EXPECTATIONS TOO LOFTY?
"Both Cinderella and Snow White are said to live happily ever after when they’re rescued from their troubled lives by their respective princes. The major problem with fairytales is that no one has ever explained what happens after ‘happily ever after.’ This fairytale notion of relationships sometimes informs our expectations where love is concerned – but reality sings a completely different tune. For instance, trying to change your partner’s character or values is the most unrealistic expectation you can put on your relationship. I’d advise doing a lot of reality-testing by asking your friends, family or a therapist whether your expectations are normal or impractical.”

–AKASHNI MAHARAJ, PHD, relationship psychologist based at the Bellair Psychology Centre, Durban

LEGO AND CREATE THE RELATIONSHIP YOU DESERVE
"Understand that the responsibility for your emotional wellbeing should never rest in your partner’s hands. That is your responsibility alone: If you expect someone else to make you happy, you’ll never be happy. Every couple needs to understand from the outset that there is simply no such thing as the ‘perfect’ partner or relationship – they don’t exist. However, nurturing your relationship constantly will make it a fruitful, fulfilling one. As two imperfect human beings in a relationship, there are bound to be times when you’ll hurt or disappoint each other. The answer to a successful relationship lies not in if, but in when a disappointment occurs – that is, you need to be prepared to ask, ‘How are we, as a couple, going to deal with it?’”

–ANRI VAN DEN BERG, relationship counsellor at VitaNova Counselling Services, Pretoria

KNOW YOURSELF
“We all have different ideas of what love is, or how it should be expressed. Be curious enough about your partner to want to ask him what his idea and preferred expression is. Instead of playing the guessing game and not meeting each other’s expectations, rather ask your partner what it is that they want exactly. Remember, it’s not about coming across as needy but more about using healthy communication to get the kind of love that you deserve. Here’s the catch, though: it’s only by knowing yourself that you’re able to communicate your needs honestly and assertively to your partner. Be brave enough to discover who you are and share your true self.”

–YUMNA ZUBI, clinical psychologist, Johannesburg