

expect for the best

Stop expecting you can't have expectations.

Having expectations in a relationship has always been a foreign idea to me. But then in the past I've found myself becoming a backseat passenger, believing my boyfriend should be the one who leads. I would end up agreeing to do things I didn't want to, like sitting with him at lunch, even though I wanted to hang with my friends. It took me a long time to realise I shouldn't compromise my standards in order to make someone happy or make them like me.

My father must have been eager for me to understand that establishing expectations is extremely important. He dropped the bomb one afternoon when I was visiting with my boyfriend. I can't remember exactly how he broached the subject of our relationship but it happened quite suddenly and I got nervous. My boyfriend Korey and I had been dating for a while, so my parents had gotten to know him well, but I panicked and worried that Dad would tell us to break up, or something like that. But he didn't.

He told us that talking through your expectations in a relationship is really important, in order to fully understand what your partner wants from you, and what you want too.

Dad is my go-to for boy advice and he would usually find a time when we were

alone to start a conversation like this, so when he started giving advice in front of Korey, I was shocked... and a little embarrassed, because he's my dad and he was extremely serious about the chat we were having.

All I could think about was that paraphrased Shakespeare quote: *"Expectation is the root of all heartache,"* and how much those little words had shaped every past relationship I'd ever had. My dad went on to say that Korey and I should try to create five expectations for our relationship and then share them with each other. He said to be specific, and we shouldn't write things like 'I expect you to love me' and in fact, he said, love doesn't come into it at all. These expectations were a baseline to build upon and if we were serious about things, it would help solidify our relationship.

I remember sneaking glances at Korey to see how he was taking it, and he didn't look awkward or anything, which was a great sign! When I asked him about the conversation afterwards he said it was a great idea and he had already thought of one expectation. Although I was feeling nervous about it, I was also happy Dad had brought it up. I sometimes wonder what Korey thinks about our relationship, but get too caught up in my head to ask, so this was the perfect opportunity for me to find out how he was feeling.

So... we did it. It took us a while though. I had trouble trying to think of things I wanted from him. Sure, I wanted his loyalty and honesty... but I didn't want to pin him down or be demanding! It felt hard and scary to be honest about what I wanted. Did I really have to be that specific? I ended up writing my thoughts down just in case, with one of my top expectations being, *'I expect you to think about this relationship in a long-term sense.'* I was worried about this expectation because, Korey isn't the type of person to easily share his feelings, and I didn't yet know if he thought of me seriously or not. I even ended up asking some of my friends if my expectations were too much to ask, but they told me there was nothing to worry about.

When it came around to sharing our lists, I was nervous. I didn't know what he would say or think, and after we swapped papers, I kept telling my heart to calm down. Turns out... I had nothing to worry about! His expectations weren't things that threw me, one of them being *'Always continue to improve yourself and try new things,'* which is something I hope I will do anyway. We ended up having a great, in-depth conversation about what we want out of our relationship. It made us stronger and I realised that creating expectations is important and keeping your standards high isn't a bad thing after all!