

Ep #52: Mismatched Expectations



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Ep #52: Mismatched Expectations

You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 52. Today, we're talking all about mismatched expectations. You ready? Let's go.

Welcome to *The Less Stressed Lawyer*, the only podcast that teaches you how to manage your mind so you can live a life with less stress and far more fulfillment. If you're a lawyer who's overwhelmed and tired of trying to hustle your way to happiness, you're in the right place. Now, here's your host, lawyer turned life coach Olivia Vizachero.

Well, hello there. How are you this week? Before we dive into today's topic, we have to celebrate. It is the official one-year anniversary of *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast. How exciting is that? I have been coming to you through your speakers for a whole year, teaching you how to live a life with less stress, and far more fulfillment.

Teaching you how to implement thought work into your daily life in order to have a better lived experience. In order to harness the awareness that you get from coaching and implementing the tools that I teach you on the podcast. In order to make meaningful, lasting changes in your life.

Changing how you think, changing how you feel, changing how you show up, and ultimately changing the results that you produce. So, I hope you will join me in celebrating this milestone. I'm super excited about it.

I am not always the best at celebrating my accomplishments and really taking pride in the things that I do; I tend to be pretty future-focused. So, I'm always looking, what's the next thing on the horizon? What's coming next? Which is one of the reasons that I spend so much time teaching you about how to define 'enough' in order to be able to celebrate the milestones when you achieve them.

But even though I'm not the best at celebrating some of those moments, I am really proud of this accomplishment. This has been quite an undertaking if I'm being honest. Creating a weekly podcast is a tight turnaround time and I have a very full schedule. So, it has truly been an exercise in discipline, and in commitment to produce this for you every

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week. But I love that I get to come through your speakers and talk to you and teach you all these things. It's so much fun.

I'm very proud that I've been doing it for a year, and I can't wait to be talking to you this time next year, celebrating two years of the podcast. I was thinking about this, and I knew that I was going to talk about this little tidbit in the beginning of the episode, and I just wanted you to take a second and join me. What is something that you are proud of yourself for accomplishing right now? Take a minute and join me; celebrate yourself, take pride, allow yourself to feel accomplished. It feels so good.

Alright, now that you've thought of that, we can shift gears and talk about today's topic: Mismatched expectations. I see so many people struggle with constantly feeling frustrated and disappointed. Those are probably two of the most common emotions that I see my clients experience, that I see other people in the world experience. And typically, they feel this way because they have expectations that go unmet.

Their expectations don't match the reality that they experience so there's a mismatched expectation. Now, most people also don't realize that this is what's going on. Most people blame the circumstances that they're encountering in their lives for how they're feeling. They think that what's going on in the world around them or other people's actions are causing how they feel. But that's actually not what's to blame.

Remember, our thinking is what creates every emotion that we experience. And ultimately, our expectations are just thoughts. We have opinions, we have beliefs, we think things should go a certain way or should be a certain way. And that's just our thinking. So, when we think a thought in the form of an expectation, and then we encounter a reality that doesn't match it, we end up experiencing frustration and disappointment because we think that it should be different than it is. Right?

You expected one thing and you got another. The point of today's episode, I'm going to walk you through a couple examples, but I want to give you a framework for what to do when you notice yourself experiencing frustration

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or disappointment. I want you to be able to take inventory of what's going on, to identify and articulate your own expectations, and then decide if you want to keep them or not.

You always get to choose to feel negative emotions if you want to. But I want you to become aware of exactly why you feel the way that you feel. Why you feel frustrated or disappointed in any given moment. Provide you with a way to create a lot of awareness for yourself.

And then, if you choose to want to feel differently, how to shift out of that negative emotion into, probably not the rosier of emotions, but if we can get you to understanding and accepting that would be great. So, I'm going to teach you how to do that today.

Here's the framework I want you to follow. When you notice yourself experiencing one of these emotions, frustration, or disappointment, I want you to ask yourself these questions. First, ask yourself: What did I expect? And get really clear on what your expectation was. Pretty quickly, you're going to see that your expectation was different from the reality that you're experiencing. So, you want to get clear on what that expectation is.

Then, the second question you're going to answer is: Why was that your expectation? Why did you expect that? Now, this question is important, because what you'll see, sometimes your expectations are based on something; either a past experience, or something that you've been taught over the years, what society gets us to start to expect. So, you'll see what it's based on, and then you can question: Does it make sense for me to keep this or not?

Other times, though, you'll notice that your expectation really isn't based on anything. It's like your brain just invented, what it expected, an experience to be like, and it won't be based on anything at all. So, it's kind of funny when you start to question this. It's like, "Well, why was I expecting that? I don't even know why I was expecting that. My brain just offered this to me." And I think that's something that we do to make sense and predict the future because we love certainty.

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So, rather than not having an expectation, as human creatures, we're used to coming up with an expectation in order to create a relatively false sense of security for ourselves. If that's what's happening, you just want to notice it. And then it's really easy to shift your expectation if you notice, "Oh, I just invented that idea. It wasn't supposed to be like that at all. I didn't know what to expect. But I was expecting it to be different than it was." And you can shift out of that.

Now, the next question, the third question that I want you to ask only works if it's a situation where you're dealing with someone else's actions. The question is: Did you communicate your expectation to the person that you're interacting with? I want you to assume that you didn't communicate it, at least not clearly enough.

So, I want you to get curious and learn from this incident, and figure out how you could have explained it differently, how you could have communicated your expectation differently, in order to create a situation that's different from the current one that you're in. What would you have done differently, in order to get reality to more closely align with your expectation?

Always assume responsibility for this. Take radical ownership; that you could have explained it in a way that would have gotten you closer to the reality that you wanted. Alright?

Question number four: Do you want to adjust your expectation? Once you've gotten clear on what you expected and why you expect that, do you want to adjust your expectation? There's no requirement for you to adjust your expectation. You absolutely get to keep it if you want to, you just have to take the frustration and disappointment that comes with having the expectation when it's unmet, okay? When there's a mismatch between reality and the expectation you had for reality.

If you do want to change your expectation, what do you want to change it to? What's your new expectation? Do you want your expectation to match your current experience? That's up to you if that's what you want.

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And the last question that I want you to answer, and this is going to help cultivate that sense of understanding, that feeling of acceptance, instead of being at war with reality. I want you to ask and answer: How does the reality you're currently experiencing make sense? Make it make sense to yourself, don't allow yourself to indulge in 'I don't know'.

Your brain might want to serve up to you that you don't know why it makes sense or that it doesn't make sense. I want you to get creative and force yourself to answer this question. How does the current reality make sense?

Alright, now let's talk about some specific examples. The first one that I wanted to talk about, where I see people commonly experience frustration or disappointment, is with delegating work. I'm getting ready to do a two-part episode on delegating specifically, because it's been coming up so frequently with my clients.

It's one of the things we work on a ton together; managing expectations with delegating, how to do it effectively. People make so many mistakes when it comes to delegating, so I'm going to do a two-part episode on that really soon.

But here, I want to talk about the mismatched expectations that we experience and encounter with delegating. So, you assign something to someone, and then you get work product back and you're disappointed by it. Or maybe, it's not work product that you get back, but they did something and the result of whatever they did isn't what you expected.

Now, people mistakenly believe that the work product itself is what causes their feelings of frustration and disappointment. But that's not true. Remember, your thoughts cause your feelings. So, it's how you think about the work product that you received, that causes you to experience those emotions. And like I said earlier, our expectations are just thoughts.

So, you expected something different than what you've got. And it's the mismatched expectation here that your expectation did not match reality

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that is actually the problem. When this happens, I want you to ask yourself: What did you expect? Get really clear on what the expectation was.

One of my favorite examples of this... I worked with a transactional attorney, and he was really frustrated that the associate, he was a partner, the associate that he was working with, she wasn't responsive enough. That was his opinion of her. I asked him, "Well, what does 'responsive enough' mean to you?"

They were working on a deal. I generally had a sense he was from big law. He had worked at an Am Law 20 firm for a really long time. He's still at an Am Law firm. I generally had a pretty good idea of what I thought his expectation was, but I asked him what the expectation was, and he really wasn't clear on it.

I finally offered him my best guess, and I said, "My guess is that you would like the associate to respond to your email within 30 minutes, if it's between the hours of 6am and 11pm." Now, you might hear that, and you might think that that expectation is unreasonable. That's not what this episode is about. You are entitled to expect whatever you want. Whether or not your expectation serves you, is a completely different story.

For this attorney, when he's working on a deal closing and it's close to the closing date, that was actually was his expectation. So, when I communicated it to him, he was like, "Yep, that actually is what I'm expecting."

And then I got to ask the next question, which is, "Why are you expecting that?" We got clear on his reasons. That, in part, that's how he was trained when he was coming up as a new associate. Also, based on the type of work that they were doing, it made sense for him and the associate to be in frequent communication.

Then I asked the next question, "Did you communicate this expectation to the associate?" And, of course, he said no. Because oftentimes people don't communicate that specific of instructions or expectations to the

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people that they're working with. Right? So, he wasn't getting that in response.

Now, this isn't to say, just because you communicate an expectation that people have to comply with it. You can communicate an expectation, and the associate here would have free will and agency to make a decision; am I going to comply and meet the expectation? Am I going to not meet the expectation? Do I want to set a boundary instead? It's totally up to her, she gets to make that decision.

Once we discovered that he hadn't communicated the expectation, you get to decide, do I want to adjust the expectation? Or do I want to keep it and probably communicate it, to at least empower someone to make a more informed decision?

One of the things that I explained to him was, the associate probably doesn't know she's not meeting your expectations because there is a lack of clarity around what the expectation is. She might think she's being perfectly responsive, and you aren't satisfied with her level of responsiveness. So, communicating the expectation empowers everyone in that situation.

Now, turns out, he didn't want to communicate it because he actually thought that the expectation sounded a little ridiculous. Again, this isn't a judgment on the expectation. But if you realize that you aren't comfortable communicating your expectation, I highly suggest that you change what your expectation is.

Because if you're not going to change the expectation, but you're unwilling to communicate it, chances are your expectation's going to continue to go unmet. You're just going to ensure future frustration and disappointment for yourself if you don't change the expectation. So, check in with yourself: Do you want to change the expectation?

Now, you could do it to where you get to an expectation that you actually feel comfortable communicating. Maybe you want the person to respond

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every hour, and within a different timeframe, if you're delegating work and you're not getting it as fast as you want it. Ask yourself: What did you expect? Actually, get clear on when you expect to receive the work product. And then: Why was that your expectation? Was it based on anything or is that just the amount of time that sounded really reasonable to you?

And then: Did you communicate that expectation to the person you delegated the work to? Do you want to keep that expectation? If you don't, what do you want to change it to instead, going forward?

I also had a client, he was also a transactional attorney, and he assigned someone to put together deal binders. There was a specific way he wanted them done. When the associate that he delegated the assignment to returned the binders, they weren't what he wanted. So again, he was frustrated and disappointed with the work product that he received.

You want to go through these steps. What did you expect? Why did you expect that? Did you communicate the expectation? And here, he said he did communicate the expectation. But like I said a moment ago, I want you to go through that question and assume that the answer is no, that you didn't clearly communicate the expectation. Because that pushes you into curiosity, to problem solve for why you didn't get back work product that you were satisfied with.

What could you have explained differently? Did you need to give an example, a template, for someone to go off of? How could you have been more clear? What didn't you explain? That's where you want to bring your focus and attention to. And then, do you want to keep your expectation here? You probably do want to keep your expectation that you get binders back the exact way that you want them done.

Now, that last question is also so important. Why does it make sense? Why does the current reality make sense? That's going to help shift you into understanding and accepting, feeling those feelings, instead of frustrated and disappointed.

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Similar to the delegating arena, another place where I see people experience a ton of frustration and disappointment, is when it comes to encountering other people's actions, most specifically, when you expect yourself from other people.

So, I would classify this as unreciprocated behavior; when you expect someone to act in a situation, how you would act in that situation. Or at least, how you think you would act. When the person does something differently, you feel frustrated and disappointed as a result. Because you had an expectation that someone behave differently than the way that they ended up behaving.

Maybe you are known for dropping everything and helping someone when someone asks for your help, whether it's a colleague, a client, or a friend or a family member, okay? Then when you ask for help, they say no instead. And you feel really frustrated and disappointed being on the receiving end of their 'no.'

It's not because they said no, that's not why you feel these feelings. You feel these feelings because you expected them to *not* say no; your expectation doesn't match the reality that you're experiencing. So, check in with yourself. What specifically did you expect from them? You expected their behavior to be different.

But how different did you expect it to be? What did you expect their behavior to be instead? I want you to get really clear on that. Don't just say you expected it to be different than what it was. How, exactly, did you expect it to be? What did you expect to happen?

You want to get clear on that because it's going to help you answer the second question: Why did you expect that? And again, your reason's probably going to be, "Because that's what I would have done." This is going to be a situation where you're probably going to want to adjust your expectation.

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When we expect ourselves from other people, we really set ourselves up to experience so much frustration and disappointment. Now, ask yourself, you've got to check in here again: Did you communicate your expectation? If the answer's no: Do you want to communicate it?

This is really good when it comes to gift-giving. I learned this from a marriage coach friend of mine; her name is Maggie Reyes. She always teaches the concept "would you rather be surprised or satisfied?" It's awesome if you could be both, but that doesn't always happen. Reality doesn't always provide us with the opportunity to be both surprised and satisfied.

So, if you have to choose between the two, which would you prefer? Some people might choose to be surprised and that's totally fine. Chances of you being unsatisfied if you allow yourself to be surprised? Much more likely. If you're like me and you'd rather be satisfied, you probably want to communicate the gift that you want, prior to the gift-giving event, right? Whether it's your birthday or another holiday.

Did you communicate it? Do you want to communicate it, in order to increase the likelihood, not guarantee, but at least increase the likelihood that your expectations are met?

Alright. When it comes to another person's behavior, you ask yourself: What did I expect specifically? Why did I expect that? And then: Did you communicate it or not? Do you want to communicate it? Or, do you want to adjust your expectation? And chances are, especially when you're expecting yourself from other people, you probably will want to adjust your expectation.

Because you are going to experience so much more frustration and disappointment in your life, when you have that expectation, and other people invariably don't meet it. So, get clear: What do you want to expect instead?

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One of the things that I've come to expect instead, is for people to just show up as themselves. I expect people to just be who they are. And I am going to accept them for who they are, in their most authentic version. And then, in order to get myself to that place of understanding and acceptance, I'm going to answer the question: How does the reality that I'm currently experiencing make sense?

One of the things that I have done for myself, is that I notice when people are acting in conformity with the way that they typically act. That always allows me to get to that understanding and place of acceptance. So, if someone's acting "on brand", it will make a lot of sense to me that they're acting in conformity with the way that they always act. So, of course, this is how they're acting. Of course, they're not behaving differently than the way that they typically behave.

I also will think about why someone is acting the way that they're acting. And normally, I can figure out what their motive is, and that it makes sense to me. I may not like it, but I can at least get myself to the place where it makes sense. And when I get myself to the place where it makes sense, I feel very accepting and understanding.

I also remind myself that people get to do whatever they want to do, and that people have free will. That really opens me up to those two emotions, as well. You can walk yourself through that same exercise in order to get to those emotions for yourself.

The third big area that I see people really struggle with feeling disappointed or dissatisfied or frustrated, is their satisfaction with the current results they have in their life. I'm going to use the example of a career, but it could really be anything. It could be your relationship status, it could be where you live, all of these things.

But specifically, when it comes to your career, do you feel frustrated and disappointed with what you have right now, with what your current experience is like right now? If you are experiencing those feelings, I want you to ask yourself: What did you expect? What did you expect your day-

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to-day experience to be like? How is it currently different from the reality that you're experiencing? How did you expect your career, on a whole, to be different than what you're currently experiencing?

The area where I see a ton of frustration, very commonly, is with compensation. What did you expect? A lot of people have mismatched expectations; their expectations, the compensation that they're currently receiving. What did you expect? That's where we want to start. Get really clear on what you expected your life to look like instead.

Then from there, ask yourself: Why did you expect that? Why did you expect your day-to-day to be different than it is? Why did you expect to maybe be further along than you are? Why did you expect your compensation to be different than it is?

This is really one of those areas where your brain just creates an expectation for you sort of based on nothing. It came up with an idea. The reality would be different than it currently is. It doesn't really come from anywhere, it's just what you thought it was going to be like. Your brain just serves you up some idea, and then we're constantly measuring reality against that idea that we formulated based on nothing, right?

A lot of people I work with expect to be making a lot more money than what they're making. And when I dig into this, what did you expect instead, a lot of times, they can't articulate what they expected. They just want to be making more. But I'm like, "Okay, how much more?"

And then when we finally put a number on it, I'm like, "Why do you expect to be making that? You accepted this job offer. You were making X amount, and the compensation structure is a specific way," right? That you're going to get raises in this increment. Or you can expect to receive salary increases in this amount based on what you've received in the past. Or you expected to receive a much bigger bonus.

When I ask about that, "What's the bonus structure like? What's it based on? How do they calculate that amount?" When we do this, what we start to

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see is that they expected something that's really detached from reality. It doesn't make sense how they would ever get to that number, based on the current compensation model that they're operating within.

So, this brings us to that next question: Do you want to change your expectation? If you're unwilling to change your job and you're unwilling to develop business or do the things that would allow you to increase your compensation in the way that you want, then you should adjust your expectation. Otherwise, you're just going to constantly be operating in a state of frustration, disappointment, and dissatisfaction.

If you can get to the number where you're at without changing jobs, amazing. Do the work that you need to do in order to get and qualify for that compensation that you'd like to have.

Your other option is to change the circumstance. So, you can keep your expectation that you make a certain amount, but you would change where you work in order to make it more likely that you're operating within a compensation framework that allows you to meet your expectations.

You would want to switch to someplace where you are compensated for the business you develop, and the origination credit you get aligns with your income expectations, or the salary is just higher, right? Those are your options there.

Same thing with your expectations about your day-to-day: What do you expect it to be like? How is the current expectation not meeting your current reality? What did you expect instead? What did you expect your day-to-day life to be like? Get really clear on that.

For me, I've had to do a ton of work on allowing myself to experience boredom. Because what I have learned, is that life on a day-to-day basis is a little bit more boring than I expected life to be. I used to think that that was such a problem, and I would solve for it by buffering and engaging in instant gratification activities that allowed me to feel more entertained, than dealing with the boredom that I was experiencing.

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If that's you and you're not great at experiencing boredom, what I want you to do is get really clear on what are you expecting instead. For me, what I realized was that I was expecting to feel really exhilarated on a day-to-day basis. And ultimately, I decided to change that expectation, because the pace of a very exhilarating life is actually pretty exhausting.

So, as I've shifted my expectation, I've come to expect life to be a little bit boring. One of the things that I teach my clients, is that life is 50/50. I talked about this on a recent podcast episode. And not only is it 50% good, 50% bad, we're going to think 50% of things are good and 50% of things are bad, on average, I also like to split it into the specific emotion.

So, 50% of life is not boring, and 50% of life is boring; I've just come to terms with that. And when I came to terms with that and I adjusted my expectations, now my expectations aren't mismatched, they are much more closely aligned with reality.

For you, if you feel dissatisfied, frustrated, or disappointed with your current life, with the results that you currently have, go through this process. What did you expect? Why did you expect that? Do you want to change or keep your expectation? Do you want to make an adjustment? If you do, what do you want your expectation to be instead? And then, this question is so powerful here: How does the reality you're currently encountering make sense?

It makes sense that you're making the amount of money that you're currently making, based on where you're working, what you agreed to, and what you're currently doing. It makes sense that your day-to-day experience is the way that it is, because of the choices that you're making. Same thing with where you live or your relationship status or your weight, any of those things, how you spend your time.

If you're dissatisfied with that, if you're really underwhelmed by different aspects of your life, get clear. What did you expect? Why did you expect it? How does your current reality make sense?

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You're going to see that you should be exactly where you are. Your current experience should be exactly what it is, based on what you're doing and what you're not doing, based on the choices that you're making. When you take radical ownership over those decisions that you make day in and day out, you're going to feel way more understanding and accepting of your current reality.

It's going to really dial down that frustration and that disappointment. It's also going to empower you to make changes. So, if you realize that you're the one creating your current results and you want different results, you're going to start making different decisions. You're going to start choosing different actions. You're going to show up differently than the way that you have been showing up, in order to create a different result for yourself.

Alright, that's what I have for you this week, my friends. I want you to go through and identify, really take inventory of your life. Where are you experiencing frustration? Where are you experiencing disappointment?

And walk through this framework. Get very clear on what your expectation is. What did you expect? Understand why that is your expectation, why did you expect that. Did you communicate it? If it makes sense for you to have communicated an expectation here. Because the expectation is involving someone else's behavior.

And then from there, do you want to adjust your expectation? Or do you want to keep it? Why or why not? If you want to adjust it, what do you want to adjust it to? You want to be very specific, and then create understanding and acceptance for yourself. How does the current reality make sense?

That's going to make a huge difference in how you feel on a daily basis. How you feel in conjunction with the results that you have in your life. It's really going to free up and eliminate so much of the heavy emotional weight that you encounter because of your mismatched expectations. Alright? Have fun taking inventory and going through that exercise. I think it will really help you feel better.

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Alright, my friends. That's what I have for you this week. I will talk to you in the next episode.

Thanks for listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast. If you want more info about Olivia Vizachero or the show's notes and resources from today's episode, visit www.TheLessStressedLawyer.com.