

Do's and Don'ts ! Must and Must Nots ! Should and Should Nots !

Ideals are what you aspire to. They often come from family ‘lore’ and esteemed family and/or community members. They are the stuff that heroes and giants are made of! And as we grow up amongst these legends, we unknowingly measure our success against them.

Expectations are what you believe (either correctly or incorrectly) is expected of you. These come from direct and indirect messages throughout our lives. Often attention, love and praise - “the strings” - are attached to you meeting them.

We are particularly susceptible to these messages when we are young, or most vulnerable.

These messages are internalized as we grow and can become powerful influences in our lives and shape our behaviour. They are often reinforced by social and cultural norms.

Despite their significance on our lives, both ideals and expectations are seldom recognized or challenged. It is useful to reflect on them deliberately.

Reasonable? Are they appropriate ? Are they encouraging you and at the same time leading you to greater overall health and well being.

Realistic? Are they possible? Or are they crazy making! Are they harmful, and tend to cause more stress, decreased overall health and a sense of less well being.

The Challenge

When you believe ‘you don’t measure up’, or the messages you tell your self are unrealistic and unreasonable, they end up hurting instead of helping you! There are both positive, or **adaptive**, ways of relating to and measuring your success, and also negative, or **maladaptive**, ways.

Have a look at the following stems and fill in the rest. Take a second to think deeply & honestly!

Ideal or expectation	Reasonable?	Realistic?
I must...		
I must not..		
I should...		
I should not...		
I have to...		
I can't...		
Do....		
Do not...		

It is important to consider whether these messages adds strength, confidence and self esteem, or diminishes it, in the long term! Awareness allows you to change ones that are no longer serving you!