

The Manual

Letting Go Of Expectations

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The Manual

A manual is an instruction guide we have for someone in our lives about how we would like them to behave so we can feel good and be happy. We generally don't tell the other person what's in our manual, and we usually don't even realise we have it or see the pain it causes us. We feel that the other person should just "know" what to do and how to treat us.

While it may seem justified to have expectations of other people, it can be very damaging when your emotional happiness is directly tied to their behaving a certain way.

For example, I had a client who hated her ex-boyfriend and blamed him for everything she's struggled with. She'd say things like "He's the reason I'm messed up, he's why I can't trust people" and a lot more. Despite being separated for years, she still gave so much power to him in her current emotional life. She thought by hating him it would punish him in some way but all it did was punish her. Through coaching she realised it was a choice. She didn't have to hold onto her story about him because he was no longer 'hurting her', **her thoughts** were causing her pain because **she chose to think them**.

Many of my clients have manuals for people they love too. They wish for people to change and follow their advice because they believe the other person would be happier if they followed their manual. But they're wrong.

Other People's Actions

Other people's behaviour has no impact on you emotionally until you think about it, interpret it, and choose to make it mean something. No matter what people do, how they act, or what they say, you don't have to give others the power to determine how you feel.

This concept will be mind altering for you. It might also be jarring. If you have lived your whole life giving your power away, it will probably be difficult to realise you have been doing this voluntarily and unnecessarily.

Some common manual instructions could be:

- She should call me back when I call her.
- He should remember my birthday.
- She should invite me when she has a party.
- He should write me a thank you note.
- She should be kind and understand when I am frustrated.
- He should support me.
- She should listen to me for as long as I listened to her.
- She should ask me to be a bridesmaid, godmother, etc.
- He should tell me he loves me.
- He should buy me something special on my birthday.
- He should know what I like.
- He should be emotionally available.
- He should spend less time at work.
- He shouldn't watch so much football.

Control

These examples are simple and brief, but the truth is that most manuals are pages upon pages thick. They are complicated, intricate, and detailed. Rather than sharing these expectations with the people they're about, people with manuals generally feel the other person should just inherently know. They are then eager to interpret this as a sign that they are really loved by this person but

Adults can behave however they want to.

This includes you.

When someone follows your manual out of obligation, they are not showing up as themselves and they feel controlled. Just like when someone has a manual for you that you don't want to comply with, the relationship fills with manipulation and an effort to control one another.

Controlling our own behaviour is challenging enough, but trying to control other people is inevitably frustrating for everyone involved and usually ineffective.

Letting go of manuals is one of the kindest thing you can do for yourself.

The best way to let go of your want to control is to understand what your manual is so I have created a workbook for you to complete.