

Every 4th Wednesday of the Month

by Tom Peters

“Never expect anything.” The professor proclaimed in a course I took as an undergrad student. The statement stuck with me all these years. I’ve repeated it to others never knowing if it was the same concept the professor had in mind. Challenge the brain’s way of deciphering the three words. “You’ll never be disappointed”, I would mutter to defend the phrase. I may have thought this was either true or clever, but I aged into and out of this stance.

I’m sure the professor was warning us that aspirational expectations may lead to unnecessary disappointment and even depression & anxiety.

At twenty, I expected to die in combat in Vietnam like so many others. Once returning to civilian life with my first wife, I expected us be together for life. When our three children were in elementary school, I expected them to get a college degree. Upon purchasing our third home I expected to have a 30-year mortgage and eventually own a house.

I didn’t die (yet), divorced my first wife (and second), my older three children never received a college degree, and I’m a renter.

Life is complicated, most everyone knows that.

How do I feel today about expectations?

First take everyone else out of the equation. What others do is out of our control. If you don’t like what they do, eased them out of your life as best you can. One of the traits my present wife, JoAn has that amazes me is that after knowing her for over 20 years, I’ve never

had to say out loud or to myself 'Where in the hell did that come from' in response to anything she has said or done. So, although I place no expectations on what JoAn may say or do, she's consistently genuine, kind and excited about life.

Second, what happens on any given day has variables way beyond our control. I love my phones event planner's ability to easily edit the time, date or delete planned events. I make plans and adapt as the day unfolds. An ever-evolving examination of our own expectations helps us grow. And embracing growth mindset is key to squelching limitations our inner committee preaches to keep us safe from saber tooth tigers.

Last Friday evening, while working on this piece, my daughter Ellie came into the room, "Biden is our new president, they just announced it!" What a relief. Hope prevailed where expectations in the 2016 election failed me.

Did I live by this professor's words? I heard 'never expect anything' around 1979 and by living the life I led from 1979 to 1999. No, I did not live by those words. I would say I expected most things in my life to just 'happen'.

I grew into a modified 'never expect anything' way of living. Life at the start of the new century for me centered on maintaining aspirational thoughts, ideas and drive; with no unrealistic expectations. I do however 'expect' my Social Security check every fourth Wednesday of the month.

