Clarifying Expectations

There is value in stepping back and thinking about the expectations that we have in our relationships and clarifying these with our partners. See below for several exercises to help you gain clarity and engage in authentic communication with your partner.

Internal Preparation: Clarifying questions to ask yourself beforehand

1. What type of relationship is this?

2. In thinking about this particular type of relationship, what matters to you most regarding ways you’d like to relate to each other? (e.g., respect, non-judgment, open communication, compassion, etc.)

3. What other values (or pet peeves) do you personally hold that need to be disclosed up front in order for you to have an authentic relationship?

4. For this particular relationship, what roles do you each play? What tasks are associated with these roles?

5. What is your vision for a successful partnership with this person? What does that look like?
Ways to Engage in a Conversation about Expectations

General Guidelines:

- Set the stage – Share with your partner your hope to improve the relationship and to share unspoken expectations as a step in this direction.
- Let them know you’re in it together – Remember that both parties need to share their expectations and to own them not as universal ‘truths’ about what good relationships look like, but personal values that are important to each.
- Be open to differences of opinion AND be listening for agreement – places where your expectations are aligned.
- Create a list of expectations that you each agree to fulfill.
- Consider creating a vision that describes what your relationship looks like at its best. Think about the values you’ve shared and the expectations that you’ve agreed to. Find a way to incorporate these in the vision and post this somewhere where you’ll each see it.
- Make time to periodically check in with each other to see how you’re doing at living this vision.