

BEFORE YOU READ

- 1** *What is the difference between hoping for something to happen and expecting it to happen? Discuss this with your classmates.*
- 2** *In your experience, does what you expect to happen usually happen? Give an example.*
- 3** *How can expectations be a negative force? How can they be a positive force?*

THE EXPECTATION SYNDROME

Picture another situation: Your film-buff friends have seen all three parts of the Academy Award-winning *The Lord of the Rings*. They rave about its superb color photography, its fantastic computer-generated scenes of strange-looking creatures, and its awesome special effects. They praise its serious, profound, and heartwarming treatment of the age-old conflict between good and evil. They say it's the best English-language movie of the last decade. When you go to see one of the three parts, though, you're disappointed. You don't find it as excellent as everyone has been saying. In fact, you feel it's a tedious, boring movie and consider it basically just another special-effects fantasy film.

These situations illustrate what we might call "the expectation syndrome," a condition in which events do not turn out as we feel they will or ought to. Children often do not meet their parents' career expectations of them. Athletes do not always win the contests people expect them to win. Great literature doesn't always seem as good as it should. I asked psychiatrist Robert Stevens whether expectations can actually make things turn out negatively, or whether this is merely a philosophical question, an unpleasant, frustrating irony of the human condition.

RS: Well, what we're really talking about here, I think, is the immense power of the mind to control outcomes. For example, there's a medical condition called "focal dystonia," which is an abnormal muscle function caused by extreme concentration. Somehow, when athletes are concentrating too hard, it affects certain brain functions and they miss the basket, don't hit the ball, or lose the race. In effect, they're letting their expectations control them.

JT: Have you ever had any experience with this phenomenon in your personal everyday life?

RS: Yes, I certainly have. Let me give you an example from skiing that shows that the mind has immense power for both positive and negative things. There are days when, as a cautious skier, I stand at the top of a steep, icy slope, plotting my every move down the course, fearing that I'll fall. Sure enough, I do fall. Other days I feel different. My expectations are miles away. I forget about myself, ski well, and don't fall. When we focus excessively on goals, our expectations tend to take over, and our mind places us outside the process. On the other hand, when we concentrate on the process instead of the goal, we're often much more successful. Have you heard the phrase "trying too hard"? That's what people often do.

JT: Very interesting. What would be your recommendation about expectations, then?

RS: Well, all I've been able to come up with so far is that it's better to hope for things than to expect them.

AFTER YOU READ

Circle the letter of the choice that explains the meaning of the italicized phrase.

1. It's the best *English-language movie* of the last decade.
 - a. It's a movie about language that was made in England.
 - b. It's a movie in the English language.
2. Children often do not meet *their parents' career expectations* of them.
 - a. The career expectations parents have
 - b. The career expectations children have
3. Focal dystonia is an *abnormal muscle function* caused by extreme concentration.
 - a. The function of a particular muscle is abnormal.
 - b. A particular muscle is abnormal.

Read these sentences based on the opening article. Circle all head nouns that have noun or adjective modifiers before them. Underline adjective modifiers once, noun modifiers twice, and compound modifiers three times.

1. It's the fourteenth Winter Olympics.
2. The U.S. team is playing the Soviet team in the men's semifinal ice hockey match.
3. The supposedly unbeatable Soviet squad, winners of the last four gold medals in hockey, is so good that it has already beaten a team of National Hockey League all-stars.
4. Your film-buff friends have seen the Academy Award-winning *The Lord of the Rings*.
5. They love its strange-looking creatures and awesome special effects.
6. They admire its serious, profound, and heartwarming treatment of the age-old conflict between good and evil.
7. Children often do not meet their parents' career expectations of them.
8. I asked Robert Stevens whether there is an actual scientific basis for the negativity of expectations.
9. There's a medical condition called "focal dystonia," which is an abnormal muscle function caused by extreme concentration.
10. I stand at the top of a steep, icy slope, plotting my every move down the course.

Complete the sentences in this narrative with compound modifiers.

Pam and Allen Murray took their son Joshua to a reading specialist because Joshua could not read aloud in class. Dr. Tanaka, the specialist, asked Joshua a number of questions about his problems with reading. Joshua said that he got frustrated in his reading class, that even though it was only a 50-minute period, it seemed to him like a year. During this 1. (lasting 50 minutes) particular semester, the teacher was giving the students oral reading assignments every day. At first the teacher had called on Joshua to read aloud, and Joshua would panic every time, even if it was only a _____ assignment. Now she was no longer calling on him. 2. (one paragraph in length)

Dr. Tanaka asked Joshua if he had any problem with silent reading. Joshua said he didn't, adding that he loved to read to himself and could finish a _____ book in 3. (300 pages in length) a day or two. Pam, Joshua's mother, noted that his reading comprehension was excellent.

Dr. Tanaka asked Pam and Allen how long this problem had been going on. Allen said it had begun when Joshua was in the first grade. Since Joshua was now 12, the situation had been a _____ ordeal. Dr. Tanaka wondered how the problem had started. Pam 4. (lasting six years)

Dr. Tanaka agreed that teasing might have caused Joshua's problem but suggested another possibility—that Joshua's inability to read aloud could be an _____ 6. (related to eyesight) problem. He asked if it would be all right to test Joshua's vision. When the Murrays agreed, Dr. Tanaka asked Joshua to read two eye charts, which he was able to read perfectly. He then asked Joshua to read a short passage that he held at a distance. The passage went like this: "Night was falling in Dodge City. The gunfighter walked down the street wearing a _____ hat." 7. (holding 10 gallons)

Joshua read the passage with no difficulty at all, and Dr. Tanaka said he felt he now understood Joshua's problem well: He had _____ anxiety. He told the 8. (induced by performance) Murrays he had distracted Joshua by referring to his vision. He then said he had a _____ program that would have Joshua reading aloud proficiently if he 9. (lasting two months) was willing to try it. Joshua was more than willing, so the Murrays made arrangements to start the program soon.

Write a sentence for each of the following, changing the phrase so that the modifier appears before the head noun. Use correct punctuation.

1. a flight that takes 10 hours

Last month I was on a 10-hour flight from Rio to Bogotá.

2. a cat that has long hair
-

3. a jacket that is old and comfortable
-

4. an experience that amuses and interests you
-

5. a child who is 11 years old
-

6. a movie that wins an award
-

7. a table that has three legs
-

8. people who look unusual
-

9. a skirt that is made of cotton, is short, and is blue
-

10. a bowl originating in China and made of jade
-

11. a building that has 60 stories
-

12. a bag that weighs 40 kilos
-

Read this entry from medical student Jennifer Yu's computer journal. There are 11 mistakes in the use of modifiers. The first mistake is already corrected. Find and correct 10 more.

FRIDAY: It's midnight, the end of a long day. My first week of ^{medical school} ~~school~~-medical is over, and I'm exhausted but happy! I'm so glad I decided to go to the university. It was definitely a good decision. I'm not completely sure yet, but I think I want to go into child psychiatry because I love working with children—especially nine- and ten-years-old kids.

Yesterday our psychiatry class visited a new large hospital where many middle-class troubled children go for treatment. I expected to see a lot of boys and girls behaving badly, but most of them were pretty quiet and relaxed. They just looked like they needed some personal warm attention.

Today in our surgery class we had a bright hardworking teacher, a Brazilian young doctor who was substituting for our usual professor. We got a foreign helpful viewpoint on things.

The only thing I don't like about medical school is the cafeteria disgusting food. I'm going to have to start getting some hot tasty Chinese food from my local favorite place.

Well, it's time for me to get some sleep. I hope this computer new program works correctly.

A Work in pairs. Brainstorm adjectives for describing people's personalities.

B Look at the words in the box. Give examples of how people with these qualities might behave.

perceptive inspirational over-ambitious conscientious
obstinate neurotic open-minded prejudiced apathetic
insensitive solitary rebellious mature inquisitive

C Find a word in the box above to describe someone who:

- 1 notices things quickly and understands people's feelings.
- 2 has an unreasonable dislike of a thing or a group of people.
- 3 is not interested or willing to make the effort to do anything.
- 4 is determined not to change their ideas, behaviour or opinions.
- 5 deliberately disobeys people in authority or rules of behaviour.
- 6 spends a lot of time alone because they like being alone.
- 7 is unreasonably anxious or afraid.
- 8 is willing to consider or accept other people's ideas or opinions.

3 A Work in pairs and complete the phrases using words from the box.

perspective mind eye-opening
narrow-minded convincing preconceptions
stereotypes second

- 1 People tend to have various _____ about what a drug addict is.
- 2 The aim is to challenge the _____ that exist about immigrants.
- 3 I was feeling nervous and beginning to have _____ thoughts about the whole idea.
- 4 It's important to keep an open _____ before making a judgement.
- 5 His attitude is very _____ and intolerant of alternative opinions.
- 6 The experience of talking so directly was _____. I had never done anything like it before.
- 7 I saw the situation from a whole new _____ after our conversation.
- 8 I don't think he really knew his facts, so his argument wasn't very _____.