Black Cockatoo
MEN'S COUNSELLING

HOW OUR EXPECTATIONS CAUSE TROUBLE

Understanding suffering, accepting life's difficulties and easing the pressure we put on ourselves

MEASURE YOUR EXPECTATIONS. MAKE MORE ROOM FOR LIVING.

Accepting that life is difficult doesn't mean giving up on making it better.

Life can be a wonderful journey, but it isn't always an easy one.
Without sadness, we may not fully appreciate happiness; without struggle, achievement and fulfilment can lose some of their meaning. Many religious and philosophical traditions recognise suffering as a natural part of human life. Sometimes, our expectation that life should be easy, fair or free from hardship adds another layer of distress.

NOTICE THE EXPECTATION

When things go wrong, ask yourself: "What was I expecting?" Perhaps you expected someone to understand, a plan to work out, or life to be fair. Naming the expectation helps you see what is adding to the hurt.

SEPARATE THE FACTS FROM THE STORY

Look at what has actually happened, then notice what you're telling yourself it means. "This is difficult" is different from "This should never happen to me" or "I'll never get through it."

CHECK WHETHER IT'S REALISTIC

Wanting comfort, success or approval is understandable. But expecting never to feel doubt, disappointment, rejection or hardship sets an impossible standard. Ask whether you're treating a preference as something that must happen.

REVIEW WHAT MAKES IT WORSE

Notice expectations that keep you stuck: needing everything to go to plan, believing you should always be strong, or expecting others to behave exactly as you wish. Ask whether holding on to that expectation is helping you.

ACCEPT YOUR HUMAN SIDE

Self-doubt, vulnerability and difficult emotions are part of being human. You don't have to like them or pretend they don't hurt. Try making room for them without turning them into a judgement about yourself.

BRING IN A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Talk it through with a trusted friend, family member or counsellor. Someone who knows you may help you see another way of looking at the situation and identify a realistic next step.

ACCEPTANCE IS NOT RESIGNATION

Accepting that hardship is part of life doesn't mean putting up with harm or giving up. It means seeing the situation clearly, recognising what you cannot control and deciding where you can take useful action.

MAKE IT REAL THIS WEEK

Think of one situation that has been troubling you. Write down what you hoped or expected would happen, what actually happened, and whether that expectation is making things harder. Then identify one more flexible way to respond.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

"We suffer more often in imagination than in reality."

Seneca, Letters to Lucilius, Letter 13

A LIGHTER THOUGHT

I had a plan for how today would go. Today, as it turns out, had other plans.

Sometimes a little flexibility saves a lot of frustration.