

High-Intermediate 3
Unit 3 Reading
Presented by Mohammad Rajabpur

The Expectation Syndrome
I Hope for It, but I Don't Expect It
by JESSICA TAYLOR

syndrome /'sɪndrəʊm/ = a group of symptoms which consistently occur together, or a condition characterized by a set of associated symptoms.

Example:

"a rare syndrome in which the production of white blood cells is damaged"

PICTURE THE SCENE: It's the seventeenth Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. Dan Jansen, a famous American speed skater, is about to compete in the 500-meter race. This is the fourth Olympics he has participated in. In the first three races, he failed to win any medals. This will be his last Olympic competition, so the pressure is on. About halfway through the 500, one of Dan's skates catches a rough spot on the ice, and this slows him down. He wins no medal at all. Three days later Dan competes in the 1000-meter race. Everyone knows this is his last chance for a medal. Some observers have already written him off. Dan starts off well. As he is coming around a turn, though, his skate again hits a rough spot on the ice, and he almost falls. Will the outcome be the same? He says to himself that he's just going to keep skating and let what happens happen. In effect, he "casts his fate to the winds" and ceases to worry about the outcome. The result? Dan sets a world record and wins the gold medal.

Picture the scene = Imagine what I am going to tell you

the seventeenth Winter Olympics

- Olympics: Head Noun
- Winter: Function
- seventeenth: Ordinal Number
- the: Determiner (Article)

a famous American speed skater

- skater: Head Noun
- speed: Function
- American: Origin & Nationality
- famous: General Quality Adjective
- a: Determiner (Article)

be about to do sth = be going to do sth soon

the 500-meter race => **Compound Modifiers**

Point: The noun following the number in compound modifiers must be singular.

the first three races

- races: Head Noun
- three: Cardinal Number
- first: Ordinal Number
- the: Determiner (Article)

Point: Ordinal numbers precede cardinal numbers in noun phrases.

outcome = result

in effect = in fact

cease = stop



Dan Jansen

PICTURE ANOTHER SITUATION: Your two best film-buff friends have seen the reissued Star Wars, but you haven't seen it yet. They rave about its superb color photography and awesome special effects. They applaud its basically serious and even profound treatment of the age-old conflict between good and evil. They say it's the best American movie of the last half of the century. When you go to see it, though, you're disappointed. You don't find it as excellent as everyone has been saying. In fact, you consider it just another action-adventure flick.

buff = a person who is highly interested in a particular subject

reissued = published again

rave about = talk about something emotionally and enthusiastically

special effects = artificial images and sounds, esp. in a film, that appear real but are created by artists and technical experts

applaud = praise

profound = deep

flick = movie, film

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

illustrate = show

psychiatrist = a medical doctor who treats psychological disorders by prescribing drugs

psychologist = an expert in psychology who treats psychological disorders by giving advice to patients

merely = only, just

frustrating = annoying

irony = saying something, meaning something else

irony = a situation in which the actual result is totally different from the expected result

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

phenomenon = event, happening

phenomenon => phenomena (plural)

short circuit = to have or cause a bad electrical connection that makes the current flow in the wrong direction, which often has the effect of stopping the power supply

circuit = a closed system of wires or pipes through which electricity or liquid can flow

manifest = show

counterpart = a person or a thing of the same rank or importance

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

STEVENS: Yes, I think I have. We're learning more about the human brain all the time. It seems that the mind has immense power for both positive and negative things. Let me give you an example from skiing. There are days when, as a cautious, high-intermediate 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 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"?

steep = rising or falling quickly, not gradually

plot = plan

excessively = too much

take over = gain control

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

STEVENS: 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.

Full Text:

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

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STEVENS: Yes, I think I have. We're learning more about the human brain all the time. It seems that the mind has immense power for both positive and negative things. Let me give you an example from skiing. There are days when, as a cautious, high-intermediate 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 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"?

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Sample Summary:

Jessica Taylor's article, *The Expectation Syndrome: I Hope for It, but I Don't Expect It*, explores the impact of expectations on outcomes, illustrated by two contrasting examples. Olympic speed skater Dan Jansen initially fails under pressure but wins gold when he lets go of his expectations and focuses on the process. Similarly, the heightened anticipation for a reissued *Star Wars* film leads to disappointment when reality doesn't align with inflated hopes. Psychiatrist Robert Stevens explains how excessive focus on expectations can "short-circuit" brain functions, causing outcomes like focal dystonia in athletes. He advocates for shifting focus from goals to the process, emphasizing that it's better to hope for outcomes than to let rigid expectations dictate experiences.

Sample Summary:

Jessica Taylor talks about how expectations can influence outcomes in life. She shares two examples: Olympic speed skater Dan Jansen succeeded when he stopped worrying about winning and just focused on skating, while a highly praised *Star Wars* movie felt disappointing because of high expectations. Psychiatrist Robert Stevens explains that focusing too much on goals can cause physical and mental issues, like athletes performing poorly under pressure. Instead, he suggests focusing on the process and hoping for good results, rather than expecting them.