

Expectation or Pressure?

A reflection for recognising when challenge is asking too much.

High expectations are not the problem.

Children need opportunities to try, stretch, learn and discover what they can do.

But challenge changes when the expectation repeatedly asks for more than the child has available — without enough room for support, changing capacity or mistakes.



Challenge can help a child grow.

Pressure asks them to grow without room for capacity.

LOOK AT WHAT THE EXPECTATION IS ASKING

HEALTHY CHALLENGE MIGHT...



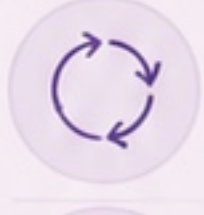
Stretch the child without continually exceeding their capacity.



Allow support as part of reaching the goal.



Recognise effort as well as completion.



Adapt when circumstances change.

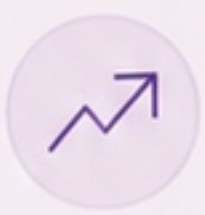


Leave room for mistakes.



Build confidence.

PRESSURE MIGHT...



Repeatedly exceed their capacity.



Treat help as failure.



Focus mainly on completion.



Expect the same regardless of capacity.



Make mistakes feel costly.



Create fear of disappointing others.



LOOK BEYOND “CAN THEY?”

The question isn't only whether a child can do something.
It is what doing it is asking of them.



The Expectation Check



Completion
doesn't always mean
the expectation
was manageable.

Before continuing with an expectation, pause long enough to consider what is being asked — and what the child needs in order to meet it.

01

PURPOSE

What is the actual purpose of this expectation?

Is it based on this child's capacity — or somebody else's?

02

SUPPORT

What support is available?

Does the child feel safe asking for help?

03

CAPACITY

Has their capacity changed today?

Are we noticing effort as well as the outcome?

04

COST

What is the child giving up in order to meet this expectation?

If they complete it, will we automatically assume it was manageable?



ONE MORE QUESTION

Would I still consider this successful
if I knew what it cost the child to achieve it?

Achievement tells us what happened.
It does not always tell us *what it required*.

What Is the Child Learning?



Children can learn from how we respond to their limits, too.

Every repeated expectation can communicate something beyond the task itself.

Sometimes the important question isn't only whether the expectation worked.

It is what the child may be learning about effort, help, capacity and their own worth while trying to meet it.



WHEN EXPECTATIONS LEAVE ROOM FOR THE CHILD...



"My effort matters."



"I can ask for help."



"There are different ways to reach a goal."



"My capacity can change."



"Adults will listen when something is too much."

*Challenge can communicate:
You are capable — and you do not
have to prove it at any cost.*



WHEN PRESSURE BECOMES THE PATTERN...



"I shouldn't need help."



"I have to keep up."



"Getting it done matters more than how I feel."



"Other people's abilities are the standard."



"My best is never quite enough."

*Pressure can teach a child to hide
the very information adults need
in order to support them.*



BEFORE ASKING FOR MORE

**Before changing the child,
consider whether the expectation
needs to change.**

Believing in a child's potential should always leave room for their capacity.

