



Objectives

- ▲ Define emotional childhood and emotional adulthood
- ▲ Write a “manual” that you have for a person in your life, and explore the impact of that manual on your relationship
- ▲ Reflecting on your manual, decide what reasonable requests you can make, and also make a plan to stay in emotional adulthood

“What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When we really see people as they are without taking it personally, we can never be hurt by what they say or do.”

-Don Miguel Ruiz

A “Manual” is a tool we use to describe and explain what our expectations are of someone else and what we think they should do. Just like the manual that comes with your new toaster (“unplug when not in use, empty crumb tray after each use, don’t take in the bathtub!”), we have manuals for what other people should do or not do to keep us happy and our relationships running smoothly. Our manuals for other people dictate what they should say, not say, do, not do, and how they should be or not be for us to feel happy, appreciated, validated, etc. This, of course, comes with a few problems. Sometimes we haven’t shared the manual with the other people or been clear in our expectations - if we have, they might not have agreed to them.

But the biggest reason that having a Manual isn’t useful is because it tricks you into thinking that people or things outside of your control are responsible for what you think, feel, do, and the results you achieve. Now that you’ve been in BT for a bit, you know that this is not the case, and it’s super disempowering to think that way. This type of thinking, “emotional childhood” puts us into a victim role, because the only way we can feel better is if the other person (the villain) changes, or starts doing things differently.



The Manual

Understanding your needs and making requests

The thing is...

Other people are *other* people.

They have their *own* motivations, their *own* priorities, and they won't always align with ours. We get to decide how we want to communicate expectations (these are actually *requests*, unless we are their employer or their parent), and how we respond when they are met or not met. When we recognize that the reason we are upset is because of our Manual and NOT because of them, we can decide whether the rule or request still makes sense to hold onto, moving us from emotional childhood into **emotional adulthood.**

STEP 1: WRITE YOUR MANUAL

What they should/shouldn't do	If they did, I'd think	And I'd feel...



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When that person doesn't follow your manual, what do you make that mean?

How does that feel?

How do you respond when you're feeling that way?



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STEP 2: SCRATCH IT

Now go back to your manual and ask yourself, “Do I do this all the time? Is this an expectation that’s fair to keep?”

Which parts of your Manual are you willing to let go of? **Cross them off.**

STEP 3: FLIP IT!

Once you’re aware of your manual for someone, your next step is to apply it to yourself.

For example:

“My junior resident should never complain about the late-day admission”



I should not complain about my resident.

“My attending should respect my opinion”



I should respect my attending’s opinion

“My partner should care more about what I care about”



I should care more about what they care about.



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This is powerful because it shows us how we can also work to act in the same ways we ask of others.

This can bring into your awareness ways in which your expectations might be unrealistic, or even *impossible*. Once you see how your manuals flip for you, practice the habits you wish others would practice with you. It will go a long way to step out of judgement of the other person and make an effort to understand what matters to them.

If you can't commit to what you're asking of them, it's time to cross it off your manual.

Flip your remaining manual HERE

RULE	FLIP IT



STEP 4: MAKE A REQUEST *

Once your manual only has items that are reasonable expectations, and ones that you're willing to *reciprocate*, you can make a clear request to the other person. It can be helpful to frame this by sharing the story you tell yourself when the request isn't met.

For example:

*"The story I tell myself when you interrupt my plan on rounds is that you think my contributions aren't good enough. And when I think that, I feel inadequate and clam up. I am working on presentations and I'd like to make the request that you let me finish my presentation before interrupting.
Can we talk about that?"*

*caveat that for dependent children or employees, it is **our job** to make this expectation and the consequence for not meeting it clear. See on the following worksheet.

Considering the manual you've been working on here, what requests do you want to make? Write them out here:



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How do you want to feel when making those requests?

What do you need to think about the other person to feel that way?



STEP 5: STAY IN EMOTIONAL ADULTHOOD

Since the other person in your relationship is a human being, they have the option to meet or not meet the requests. They will have their own thoughts/feelings/actions about how you are showing up on their Circumstance line - **and that's OK**. Regardless of what they do or don't do, you are responsible for what *you* think, feel and do.

What do you want to think on purpose if your requests aren't (or aren't always) met?

A word on dependent children and employees -

For people you are *actually responsible for* (children, employees), you get to establish the expectations and consequences of not meeting them.

It is your responsibility to clearly communicate expectations and anticipated consequences for not meeting them well ahead of time. This is different from a traditional manual where two people on equal footing are in a relationship, where we DO NOT recommend threatening consequences for not meeting expectations (we will talk more about this in our work on boundaries in a few weeks).

If the manual you are working on is a child or an employee, write out the expectations you have of them in the first column, and the consequence of not meeting them in the second column on the following page.



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Expectations	Consequences of not meeting it (if any)

When your expectation is not met, **you don't need to get upset.**

It feels best to deliver the consequence from a place of *connection, compassion, and even love.*