



**By Silver Rose**

My favorite definition of the word upset is: *an unfulfilled expectation*. You were expecting X to happen but Y happened instead and now you are upset. Expectations play a big role in ***Dancing with Change***. Whether you are a child, an adult or an adult behaving like a child, when you become upset it is important to ask, “What was I expecting to happen that didn’t?” You will be blown away by how quickly you can get to the bottom of what’s upsetting you.

“What were you expecting to happen that didn’t?” is also a great question to use when interacting with others. Imagine how helpful this question would be when you are:

- Managing a team
- Providing customer service
- Parenting
- Interacting with your spouse
- Trying to please your boss

Imagine being at the Customer Service counter in a store. A clerk is trying to calm an upset customer. The clerk says, “I really want to get to the bottom of this. Please tell me what you were expecting that didn’t happen.” What you are seeing is the clerk setting a context for the conversation that gives both parties power to resolve the problem.

The uses for such a brilliant question are endless. Whenever someone is upset, ask the question and then listen. Many negative situations can be diffused as a result. The act of merely asking the question implies that you care about why the other person is upset and that alone carries a lot of weight.

I am on vacation with my grandchildren. What a luxury—a week to just hang out by the beach and have fun. As I watch them interacting with their parents, I am struck by how often we ask (actually demand) that children dance with change.

Last night Abbie and Christopher wanted to go miniature golfing. We adults couldn’t get our acts together in time for that to happen. Naturally, they were upset. We used it as an opportunity to teach them about dealing with change. We wanted them to understand that life doesn’t always go as one might hope.

This morning, as I reflected on the event, I started to wonder how understanding we adults would have been if the roles were reversed. When children delay something that we want to do, are we equally understanding? I haven’t always been. Usually when children are the delay

## CHANGE YOUR FOCUS CHANGE YOUR LIFE

### ***Dancing with Upsets***

factor, I have gotten upset and what follows is a lecture on the “rules” or “respect for others’ time.”

As a child, the rule I always hated was, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Yuck. The ***Dancing with Change*** version of that same hypocrisy is that we want everyone else to fully embrace the **DWC** step ***Accept that which cannot be changed***. However, when it comes to our own response to change, acceptance is nowhere in sight. We want to manage and control events in the face of overwhelming evidence that it can’t be done.

So, when children get upset over changes they cannot control, we lecture them about being more accepting and “rolling with the punches” that life inevitably delivers. But heaven forbid we should follow our own sage advice.

As you go about your day and week, and you get upset, practice asking, “What were you expecting to happen that didn’t?” Then, start noticing where it would be effective in situations you observe. This question is a powerful tool that will help you more gracefully ***Dance with Change***.