



Adjustment Disorder and Adjustment Recovery

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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I live alone so that means that I can pretty well do whatever I want whenever I want.

On the long weekend I had company and, of course, that meant adjustment. I was so excited to have my grandson and his family come for five days but it is really different having a five-year-old in the house! On Sunday we hosted a barbecue inviting my son and his two children ages thirteen and two years. There were toys all over the floor. The guest room was full of suitcases and I was scrounging to ensure that we had enough plates and cutlery available.

I loved every minute of it! At one point, though my son looked at me and made a comment about the fact that all the visitors had temporarily changed my domestic world.

There are many things that happen in life that we cannot control. It is really not what happens that is the problem. It is how we deal with it.

Sometimes we have to adjust to changes and not all of us do this with grace. In fact, a stressor can lead to causes serious emotional and behavioral symptoms as well as health issues. Situations involving a relationship break-up, death, physical move or natural disaster can even result in an adjustment disorder.

Sometimes people experience recurring stressors such as exams for students, financial difficulties for individuals or contact with family members that trigger past traumas. Having a child, retiring or empty nest syndrome also require adjustments that might take a while to resolve.

Those who have an adjustment disorder may experience sleep problems, low self-esteem, excessive worry, irritability, change in attitude, desire to avoid people or changes in appetite. Some adjustment disorders also are accompanied by significant anxiety and/or depression.

The good news is that adjustment disorders can be treated and are therefore not permanent in nature. Therapy can help an individual increase their coping skills, reframe negative thoughts and prepare for future stressors. Medications prescribed on a temporary basis might help while individuals are learning new ways of dealing with life in their therapy sessions.

Over the years I have noticed that the same thing can happen to five different people and each of them responds differently. One of them will get drunk. A second will attempt suicide. A third might turn to their physician and receive medications. The fourth might talk to a neighbor while the fifth maybe didn't even notice what happened.

My weekend with family was lovely. We shared food, toured a greenhouse, enjoyed swimming and had lots of laughs. I accumulated many good memories to store and review in the future. At the same time, I admit that it was good to finally have the sheets washed, beds made, dishes done, and other items put back in place after they had gone. A long sleep and regaining a little control put me right back into my regular routine.

If you are experiencing problems adjusting to something in your life, do not suffer in silence. Why not schedule an appointment with a psychologist who will help you to get back on track again? I know you will be glad that you took a step towards good health.