



## **Be a Wise Communicator**

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](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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1. Deal with issues as they occur so that they don't pile up and form resentments.
2. Agree that you will use the sports time-out signal when you need a break just to cool down. That will tell the other person that you are safe and will return once you have dealt with negative emotions and are ready to talk again.
3. Choose a quiet time without distractions to have conversations about serious topics. Discussions during a final football game or when other people are in the room are not appropriate.
4. Talk and act in a respectful way. Use your manners. Is your behaviour and attitude the same as it would be if there was a small grandchild present? Model the behaviour that you expect from others.
5. Separate the person and the problem. It never helps to attack a person's character when dealing with a specific issue.
6. If you don't understand, then gently ask questions. Remember the old television program "Colombo"? The star would begin gathering information by saying something like "I'm confused". State this and then ask the other person to tell you about what they are going through, feeling or hoping for.
7. When you are angry ask yourself "What am I afraid of?" "What is being threatened that makes me feel like I need to protect myself?"
8. If you have an attitude of being in a competition where you feel that you need to win - you lose.
9. Even if you are right, remember that being stubborn or nagging won't really change things. In fact, it just makes you look like you are the problem.
10. Think about how you might talk or do things differently if you knew that you or the other person was going to die tonight.
11. Consider your tone. It's not the words you say but the music you play.
12. Answer questions in positive terms. Don't tell the other person what you want them to stop doing. Tell them what you would like them to do instead.
13. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Does s/he feel respected, cherished and cared about?
14. Be honest about your own weaknesses. If you are hearing the same thing or experiencing the same problem with more than one person, perhaps you are the problem.
15. Beware of listening to the advice of "shadow people". They are individuals who will tell you what to do but do not experience any of the consequences if you actually follow their advice.
16. Recognize that you cannot change other people. Others only change when life isn't working for them no matter what you think or do.
17. Admit your faults and ask forgiveness.
18. Work on improving yourself.
19. Be realistic. Arguing about the same thing over and over again does not solve anything. In fact, over time, it negatively affects the health and relationship for both of you.
20. Get professional help. Learning how to deal with your emotions or gaining assertiveness skills can lead to positive change and better results than what you have been experiencing.