



# Beliefs Drive Our Actions

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)

## Published

September 2nd, 2019

Sometimes people tell me how much they dislike Medicine Hat. They criticize the way the streets are laid out and find them confusing. They describe the river as "muddy" and the people as unfriendly. Others sing praises about our city. They like the unique layout, the fact that we have a river running through the middle of the community and describe the people as being kind and welcoming. Perceptions form beliefs and beliefs drive our actions.

Recently I have been making another attempt at fluency in the French language. I took classes in high school and again a few years ago with a group of "mature" students but never got to the level that I desired. I have also used a couple of apps, hired a private tutor and made some feeble attempts to greet the two francophones that I have met but still struggle. My vocabulary is fairly good, and I can read French quite well but frankly, my pronunciation sucks!

Last week, however, I was able to connect with a wonderful European French teacher who uses his study of psychological concepts to tutor individuals who have been "stuck" with the same disappointing progress that I have had.

It only took one class with this man to realize that the strategy he employs has exactly the same foundation as the ones I use in my private practice!

People who cannot speak French fluently (or any other second language) tend to believe that they will be embarrassed if they take the risk of trying to have a conversation. Their belief is that they will offend, not be understood or look foolish and this prevents them from trying. They focus on the things that do not improve their speaking skills - like reading, doing quizzes and studying at a theoretical level. They progress on paper but, at the same time, they believe that they will not be able to speak fluently in the timeframe that they desire.

Academic programs tend to teach vocabulary and grammatical structures that can feel overwhelming, especially when you might only need a few words and phrases to communicate about the things that interest you.

Clients often face the same challenges. They are "stuck" in a situation where they feel embarrassed, inadequate or frustrated. They come for help but often have already decided that they will not succeed. Failed attempts to change have not only affected their confidence but also strengthened their belief that things will not get better.

There is an old adage that states "Practice makes perfect". But practice takes time, involves making mistakes and presents risks that not everyone is willing to take.

What are the beliefs that are holding you back from doing something that you really want to do? Are you afraid that you cannot find a good friend or partner? Are you worried that you might not do well in a new job or academic program? Are you holding back from improving your health or financial situation because you don't believe you will succeed?

This week write a list of beliefs that are limiting your progress. Then write a list of things that you have accomplished in the past. Build up your belief and then start taking action towards your goal. One step at a time. One day at a time.

And remember to help those around you to think positively and build their belief levels and confidence through your encouragement and example.

Bonne chance!