



Cleaning Up Your Life

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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When I walk into my condo at night, I can tell exactly what condition my life is in at the time. You see I use my living environment as a gauge or thermometer that reveals my emotional situation. When there are shoes in the doorway, piles of unread newspapers on the couch and dishes in the sink I know that life, which has made many demands on my time and energy, has also drained my personal resources.

Taking a couple of hours to put things in order not only improves the appearance of my home but also allows me to experience some healthy control. I just feel better when things are organized.

In the morning, I love to sleep in until the latest possible moment. This desire motivated me a few years ago to hire a fashion expert to help me with my closet. I had found that I was wasting time and feeling frustrated as I tried to choose an appropriate outfit to wear for the day and wanted to improve this situation. When Terri arrived at my house, we started by taking a handful of large garbage bags into the bedroom. First, she challenged me to remove every article of clothing that I didn't like or hadn't worn in the past year. These went into the bags to be given to a charity. Often the articles had rarely been worn or even still had the sales tag attached. It wasn't easy to let go of those things which I thought I "should" use, but I was determined.

Next, we completely emptied the closet and put all of the clothing onto the pile. What a pile! It is amazing how much clothing can fit into one closet. Now it was time for me to try on each and every item. Terri was honest in telling me when I looked "dumpy" or if a colour was unsuitable. Those pieces of clothing went into the garbage bags. She would pin those things which needed alterations and a new pile began to emerge. These things were to go to the tailor. She pointed out which items could be interchanged to form outfits for variety sake.

Clothing that had spots or stains went into dry cleaning or laundry piles.

After several hours of this, I was physically exhausted. In fact, I found that I was becoming more and more ruthless and rather than trying on clothing that was "iffy", I automatically put some into the garbage bags without trying them on.

Finally, we went through purses, scarves, shoes and hats.

Now we had considerably fewer items to work with. I had taken a picture of each hat which then went into purchased round boxes with the picture secured on the outside so they could easily be found. Terri brought new hangers and we began hanging clothing in groups. Tops together by colour, pants in a section of their own and dresses were hung according to their length, or the season and purpose for which they would be worn. Shoes and accessories were stored in containers that allowed viewing and easy access.

I sorted my makeup, eliminated what I didn't need and put the rest in order in the bathroom.

Well, I have timed the morning routine and am delighted to know that from horizontal to leaving the condo now takes only seventeen minutes. I don't have to waste time deliberating about what to wear or trying on numerous outfits until I find something that fits, is suitable and clean. I am ready and I love it.

Sometimes you need to invest time and energy in order to claim it back in the future. Next time you enter your house take a look around. You will be able to judge what is going on in your life by the condition of the rooms. Better yet, use a critical eye in examining your closet. I'm sure that by following the formula in this column you will gain some healthy control in your life and be able to simplify things when it comes to getting ready for your day!

Okay - first you get a handful of large garbage bags...