



## **Distancing - Gift or Burden**

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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This past week I had the opportunity to listen to a presentation by Canadian financial expert Benjamin Tal. This, for me, was like finding the lost piece of a thousand-piece puzzle! He started by describing the world as being "frozen." What an appropriate description!

Schools are closed and so are most businesses. Layoffs and the need to work from home have left streets empty. Thoughts of buying or selling a house are just that - thoughts. The price of gas is extremely low, yet we are not going anywhere!

Mr. Tal stated that the world will not change until an effective vaccine is discovered and, even though every country is working day and night with this end in mind, it could be months until we are successful in this quest. Finally, I could begin adjusting my life to fit a timeline that was much longer than I had previously expected or hoped for.

I have noted that people's perspectives seem to fall into three distinct groups. The first is the group that thinks the media is catastrophizing the problem and that the pandemic isn't serious. They carry on with their activities, ignoring recommendations from government and health professionals while minimizing the situation. Part of this, I believe is because they haven't been directly affected by COVID-19 or even seen high numbers of affected people where they live. Their belief is that even if they get the virus, their symptoms will be mild.

The opposite end of the spectrum is the group that is preparing for the worst. They have hoarded food and expect that they will have to protect their families from those who might want to take it when supplies run out. Some even have made preparations to hide out and defend themselves until what could be "the end".

The third group sits somewhere in the middle. They are aware of how COVID-19 has affected others and are using caution based on health recommendations. They know that the virus doesn't move but that people move, and the virus goes with them so are willing to physically distance themselves from those who might be carriers.

Many global citizens are now using their time at home to do things that might not otherwise occur - like painting the basement, cleaning drawers, cooking and baking, telling stories over the internet to grandchildren, reading books that were bought long ago, learning a language, making music, and completing work projects from home that were previously neglected. Funny how many times we have thought "If I just had a few days at home". Well, now we have it.

The next three months might be the worst that we will face as we wait for governments and banks to process requests for financial relief and learn to settle in with the new lifestyle that we didn't ask for. Also, we are facing a somewhat uncomfortable learning curve as individuals, schools and companies are having to create different ways to deliver goods, services and information.

The good news can be summarized in the words of my wise Norwegian grandmother "This Too shall pass". But we need to be realistic. It is NOT going to pass for a long, long time.

So, how will you view and respond to the need for distancing over the next weeks and months? Will you resent it and live with anxiety while you impatiently wait for life to return to normal? (Sorry, it will never be exactly the same). Or will you embrace this time and use

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each day as a unique gift where you can give thanks for what you have instead of what you have lost?

You can't change the world, but you can change your attitude! Are you thinking gift or burden?

If you are struggling, you can call a psychologist for help. Many of us have secure video sites so we can see each other while we talk. Remember, we are all in this together!