



Entitlement in Society

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

Published

December 30th, 2015

Often, I hear people talk about how some individuals think they should be given everything without having to work for it.

Parents eager to be friends with their children are sometimes treated as ATMs who are expected to dispense twenty-dollar bills without question. Students often think they should get good marks without handing in assignments or showing up for classes.

Even some employees think that they can spend their time text messaging friends during work hours instead of doing the tasks assigned to them. It surprises me when new employees tell their managers that they should be promoted to a position of supervising others when they haven't even proven themselves!

In my private practice I often am asked to complete assessments for employees who have failed their substance abuse tests. Recently, some of the individuals who have been referred to me have stated that because Canada is going to legalize marijuana the people who test positive for having this substance in their system should not be required to fulfill educational or treatment recommendations. They forget that upon hire they signed zero tolerance contracts with the employer stating that they would not use substances because of safety-sensitive policies. Alcohol is a legal substance but that doesn't mean you can be drinking in a safety sensitive job. The same will be true for drugs. Just because you got caught doesn't mean you can make up the rules.

Even those who have broken the law want to be forgiven without penalty. Their promises to never do it again, however, often fall on deaf ears, especially when their patterns of behaviour and records suggest that they will likely get into trouble in the future.

Why do individuals think that they can do whatever they want to get whatever they desire "just because"? This is a complex question but there are likely a number of factors that have contributed to the problem:

1. Focus on the wrong things - Often I hear children being told that they are cute and smart instead of being told that they are making good effort. Children who think they are smart will sometimes not risk losing this status on projects that they cannot accomplish easily so they don't try or may give up too easily. On the other hand, those who are encouraged to keep trying will focus on their efforts and continue to look for solutions to even difficult problems that they can't solve quickly.
2. Practical experience is sometimes underrated - I have four university degrees and they were helpful in building my knowledge base, but nothing teaches like doing the work. Often students think that they are so smart that they don't have to start at the bottom and work their way up. They don't understand the value of mentoring or practicing. Unfortunately, because they have grown up with computers, they might appear to be smarter than older generations who are not as familiar with technology. Knowing how to text or play "Angry Birds", however, doesn't a leader make.
3. Poor communication - If a person hasn't been given clear expectations or direction, s/he think that they can just do things their way. As parents, teachers and employers, we need to not assume that those under our supervision know what we are thinking or needing.

4. Consistency - When there is a problem, everyone involved needs to know what it is, how to correct it and how to prevent it from happening again. Often people get away with things for a period of time and are then surprised when they are punished, failed or terminated because their past transgressions have been ignored.

One internet search defined entitlement as: "belief that one is inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment." That's way different from the way most of us were raised based on the expression "there's no free lunch".