



## Expert Witness

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

November 26th, 2008

Psychologists who work with individuals about legal matters often are required to prepare reports or serve as witnesses in Court.

In June I flew to Vancouver to attend a workshop entitled "Becoming an Expert Expert Witness". Dr. Stanley L. Brodsky who is a professor at the University of Alabama also provides training and consultation for individuals who are required to give testimony in Court. He has written several books and developed considerable expertise in this niche.

Most people go through life without having to formally witness in the justice system but, each of us is regularly asked to give opinions about our values, politics, community issues or other specific topics.

For several hours we listened and learned from Dr. Brodsky so that we could develop skills for our careers. The lessons he taught, however, are valuable not only for Court purposes but also for daily living. In fact, many of them are ones that we teach children so that they will do well in society and can be used throughout a lifetime.

1. Listen carefully and attentively to the question being asked. If you do not understand, ask for it to be repeated.
2. Be prepared. Knowing your subject means not only ongoing study but also being able to present information in a manner that can be understood.
3. Represent yourself well. Regardless of who pays you or influences you, what you say should be your opinion.
4. Be honest. It is okay to say "I don't know". Do not try to guess or make up an answer if you really don't know.
5. Relax. When you are feeling great pressure or stress, pause in order to allow yourself an opportunity to think before answering. Take a deep breath, release it and then answer.
6. Make eye contact with the person who is asking you a question.
7. Address the other person by his/her name.
8. Provide only the information that will answer the specific question and stop talking when you have done that.
9. Know your limits. You may be an expert in one area, but no one is an expert at everything.
10. Admit any errors that you made have made and correct them immediately.

Whether you are speaking with a judge, your employer or your family, these guidelines will help you to develop a reputation of integrity.

Next question...