



Honouring Our Veterans

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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Over the years I have had the privilege of working with many Veterans and they have taught me so much about the sacrifices they made for our freedom.

I used to be in awe of the courage that our military displayed in very traumatic situations that I frankly would not have attempted. More recently, however, I have come to realize that one of the most significant impacts on their lives was the need to adjust several times in order to fulfill their roles.

We have likely all heard or seen military recruitment materials that offer an opportunity for those who are interested to see the world while serving. That sounds very enticing but definitely doesn't outline the price that will be paid by those who accept the challenge.

Following are some of the specific adjustments that our Veterans have been faced with:

1. Culture – Joining the military not only subjects individuals to the hierarchical structure of command but also affects everyday activities. The organization determines when one will get up in the morning, what s/he will eat as well as the types of training and exercise that will be done. Many of my veterans have told me that they learned to work hard and then play very hard, as they never knew what the future would hold for them.
2. Location – Postings and tours of duty could be anywhere in the world, on land, in air or at sea. Besides having specific training sites, the military will often go where they are needed to help in the cases of emergency. Most recently, in Canada, for example, we have been proud of the work done by the military in Quebec nursing homes during the pandemic. Residency might be in a barracks, tent or other housing, often without family being present.
3. Health – The military helps its members to strengthen their physical and mental health but discharge often is accompanied by the opposite. Many Veterans suffer for years because of flat feet, torn ligaments or missing limbs. My work is focussed on service-related mental health diagnoses that include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, unresolved grief, substance abuse, sleep disorders, anxiety and depression.
4. Relationships – The work of a member of the military and the demands often take a toll on their relationships. A Veterans who has been trained to do difficult tasks while ignoring personal feelings often is not comfortable sharing the things that they have seen and done with those who they love. Their withdrawal or lashing out without explanation can be very difficult for others to understand.

Adjustment for a Veteran begins the day of enlistment and doesn't end even at discharge.

Despite these things, our Veterans serve the country, and return home as heroes. In order to do that they have had to adjust many times over the years. They sacrificed in order for us to experience freedom.

Remember to honour our Veterans not just on November 11th but every day of the year.

They did things that I could never even imagine undertaking!