



## How Are You?

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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So often people ask, "How are you?" and we automatically reply "Fine" when we really don't mean it. It has become such a habit that we aren't really being honest about our situation.

Well, often people ask us as a habit and don't really want to know anyway but there are times in our lives when it is important to have a clearer answer.

Following is an excellent communication system that will help you to understand yourself and tell others the truth about how you are feeling. It is especially helpful when you are talking with your physician, an insurance company or a close family members who really wants an accurate reading.

1. Adopt a scale that ranges from "0" to "10" with "0" being "horrible" and "10" being "wonderful".
2. On a piece of paper write the numbers from "10" down to "0" on the left-hand side leaving enough room to write a sentence or two for each number.
3. Beside each number write a clear description of what that number would represent. For example, if you are at a "2" you might write: "Very low mood and lacking in energy. Experiencing a lot of pain". For a "9" you might write: "Having a great day and feel like I can accomplish some tasks".
4. Edit and refine your descriptions until you think that they are a very accurate representation of your state of health at the time (mental and physical).
5. Write out a final copy that is neat and prepare copies that you can post on your fridge, carry with you and distribute to your physician or others who can use it as a reference.
6. Develop the habit of answering the question "How are you?" with a number rather than a word or two.
7. Consider what it might take to move from one number to another number that is higher on the scale. Perhaps it would be a positive telephone conversation, a nap or taking your medication.
8. Get really good at knowing how to move upwards and practicing the things that move you upwards.
9. Tell others about your accomplishments. You might say "I was at a 5 this morning but now I am at a 7" and then explain what happened to cause such positive results.
10. Teach people who you care about how to develop their own scale.

Developing this type of scale will not only allow you to provide accurate information to those who care for and care about you, but will also make you aware of the fact that you can make your life better when specific strategies are used. Recognize that you do have control.

And things can change very quickly. Imagine, for example, what would happen if you were feeling poorly and your favourite person entered the room. You would likely jump a couple of numbers immediately!

If you invest a little time and thought into this activity it won't be long until you will be noticing positive results in a number of areas. You will recognize the things that will help you to have a good day and begin implementing them.

Good luck and by the way "How are you?"