



How to Remember - November 11th

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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Memory is an interesting faculty of human life. Often I hear clients express concern about not being able to remember everything or recognizing that their memory isn't working as well as it had in the past.

My response is to remind them that we are in an age of information and it is not even possible to remember everything. The Internet allows us to access facts within seconds so learning how to search is a wonderful skill that replaces the need to remember.

I don't want to remember everything! For example, I have seen over 7,000 clients and I certainly don't want all of their stories running around in my head! That's why I make notes during appointments.

Sometimes cues help us to remember things. Putting items you need to take with you can be simplified by placing them in a bag that you can hang on the doorknob of your exit door. A sticky note with a list of chores you need to accomplish can be stuck on the dash of your car. Setting an alarm on your phone can help you keep track of time so that you will not miss a special program on television or be late for a planned event.

But you really can't remember unique things that you have never personally experienced or been told about. Most of us have never been involved in a war. Some have never even seen or met a soldier. There is no frame of reference and therefore nothing to remember.

As a child, I would look at the many black and white photos that showed my mother posing with different young men dressed in uniform. It was so sad to hear her tell about how these friends went off to war, never to return. Mom's stories helped me to understand that fighting for a country's freedom means loss at a personal level. These were her friends! They were also a significant part of the fabric of rural communities in my home province of Saskatchewan.

Veterans Affairs Canada states that as of 2014 we had 75,900 veterans of World War II; 9,100 from Viet Nam and 600,300 Canadian Forces vets (Regular and Primary Reserves). That's almost three-quarters of a million people who had personal losses as well as their families and the communities of those who didn't return. Some veterans came home with medical and emotional injuries. A large number had lost friends while fighting. Many of those who returned still face memories are very painful - of events that they don't want to remember.

But not all battles are in the past. Each day police and military continue to work so that people can feel safe both here and abroad. Their directives come from governments and legislatures who strive to preserve our values and freedom.

When I was growing up, Remembrance Day was a very important opportunity for all of our community to honour those who sacrificed. November 11th was a very personal occasion.

This year, let's ensure that we use our memories to consider the price paid for our blessings. But let's also share stories of the bravery evidenced in our history so that others will also be able to understand. November 11th is not just a day off from school or work. It is an important part of who we are as a country and as a society.

Lest we forget!