



# **Indoctrinate, Condition or Brainwash?**

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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I remember hearing a story about a woman who went to the butcher to buy meat. She asked him for a ten-pound roast but added that she wanted a couple of inches to be cut off one end. When the butcher questioned her about why she wanted this, she replied “I don’t know. That’s what my mother always asked for”. Curiosity drove her to ask her mother about why she ordered meat like this. The mother replied “I don’t know. That’s just what my mother did”. Finally, the two went to grandma to ask why she would order a ten-pound roast and then have the butcher cut the end of it. Grandma answered, “My roaster was too small”.

Many times, in life we do things without knowing why we are doing them a certain way. It might be because we are following the example of a parent. Perhaps we learned how to do something in school and have repeatedly followed the lessons learned. Maybe we have held onto things that have worked for us in the past without being open to new ideas.

I remember a few years ago, when my sons asked me why I only took cash or cheques in my office. I explained that there were four banks at the next corner, and it was easy for clients to get cash and for me to make deposits. They encouraged me to set up a system for debits and credits, but I was very resistant. I knew that my system worked and wasn’t sure whether a change would be positive. Finally, they convinced me to try the new system for 30 days and I never looked back. They were right and I had been foolish.

Are there things in your life that you do without thought as to why you are doing them? Are you resistant to trying new methods (even for 30 days)? Have you done any research to see if there are ideas or tools that you can get which will save time and be more efficient?

To indoctrinate, condition or brainwash a person involves programming them to think, do and feel a certain way repeatedly – without question. American B.F. Skinner is known for his work in the field of behavioral conditioning based on stimulus, reward and punishment. Just like animals are trained so are humans through our societal inputs – like family, television, internet.

We might not realize it, but there are likely a lot of things that we are accepting without question.

Maybe it’s time to be more open-minded about our perspectives.

Are you willing this week to think about why you do things a certain way? Or hold onto the beliefs that you hold dear?