



## **Integrity Vs Despair**

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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My uncle was a judge of the Queen's Bench of Canada. I remember how upset he was when he was told that he had to retire by his 75th birthday. He waited until the day before that birthday to leave office and was upset that he didn't have a choice in this matter.

My uncle's opinion was certainly in stark contrast to the "freedom 55" messages that were being thrown at us a few years ago!

Everyone seems to have an idea about retirement - when it should begin and how life should be lived thereafter.

Some individuals query whether Joe Biden and Hilliary Clinton will be young enough to consider a run for the US Presidency in 2016. Others are shocked that for the first time in over six hundred years, the 86-year-old Pope has resigned when it was expected that he would hold his position for life.

Speculation has occurred for many years regarding the future of the English monarchy. Queen Elizabeth II who is also 86 years of age continues to rule while. Her son, Prince Charles, has been waiting for 64 years to officially assume her role. It must be disconcerting for him to consider the fact that many of his subjects would actually prefer to have his son, Prince William and wife Catherine rule instead of him!

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands recently surprised the world by announcing her abdication after 33 years on the throne, a situation which would dispute the theory that the monarchy rules for life.

Sometimes we think that there are specific "rules" about things such as church leadership, the monarchy and retirement, there really aren't. Age is just a number! But retirement involves much more than just reaching a certain age.

Before you abdicate and leave your throne, there are probably a few things that you should consider:

**Money** - You don't have to be rich to retire but you do need to make sure that you have plans that will allow you to have a healthy and satisfying lifestyle. Investments, insurance and assets can be converted into pleasant days, but the main key is to ensure that you don't have any debts or dangerous spending habits that will haunt you!

**Health** - Be wise about both your mental and physical well-being starting today. It doesn't make sense to push yourself so hard that you lose them or plan your retirement long after they have left you.

**Activities**- I have been doing a little informal research and have been sad to realize that many people (particularly men) only enjoy their retirement for the first eight months or so. Their dreams of having all day without any demands can quickly turn to feelings of boredom and insignificance.

**Relationships**- who will you talk with when you no longer go to the office? Have you built positive bonds with friends and family members? Remember, you will have 24 hours a day

so will not only need to have contact with people from your past and present but also be able to develop new relationships. How will you do that?

A psychologist named Erik Erikson (1902-1994) described lifespan development as psychosocial stages. In his "Mature" stage (65 years to death) he identified the major conflict to be resolved as "ego integrity vs despair." When reflecting on life, success comes to those who feel fulfilled and wise whereas failure is represented by those who feel bitter and have regrets.

You have a great deal of control regarding your retirement. Whether you experience it with despair or with integrity will largely depend on the perceptions that you hold and the amount of planning that you do to prepare for it.

Don't just leave everything to chance!