



# **January Stressors - How Can You Handle Feelings of Being Overwhelmed?**

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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It's my "busy season"!

In January, the credit card statements arrive revealing any impulsive Christmas buying that occurred. Couples who didn't want to ruin things for the children during the holidays now announce their decision to separate or divorce. Unplanned pregnancies are talked about for the first time. Some individuals slip on the ice and break bones or feel trapped and isolated by the winter weather. Many suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder while still others complain of having the January "blahs".

Yes, post-Christmas celebrations can offer a number of difficulties that lead us into feelings of being overwhelmed.

Most parts of Canada are covered in snow and experiencing not only the coldest yearly temperatures but also the unpredictability that accompanies snowstorms. This can compound an already stressful month.

My return trip from visiting my sons over the holidays was challenged by flight delays, a frozen baggage cabin door as well as mechanical problems for those of us who shared the airport lounge. You could see the concern on the faces and in the actions of the passengers who just didn't know when they could expect to arrive at their destinations. Many cell phone conversations which could be overheard involved requests for help to feed animals, care for children or cancel previously booked appointments. People were problem-solving.

I remember how my wise grandmother used to say "This too shall pass" - and she was always right. That didn't mean that we could bury our heads in the sand and just wish the difficulties away though. We needed to do something about them.

Often my clients begin their first counselling session by stating "I don't know where to begin. There is just so much going on and I have so many problems". Once they have talked about their situation, however, they are usually surprised to realize that "so many problems" are actually only seven things (or fewer) that can be resolved.

Problem-solving involves gathering as much information as possible about the problem and about the options available. Resolution then requires appropriate action.

The good news is that a mood or situation can often be changed through the hope that accompanies a plan to deal with the issues.

Adding a few extra dollars to your credit card might not pay the balance off but it will preserve your credit rating and, over time, take care of the Christmas spending. Developing a Parenting Plan with a Professional Mediator can help divorcing parents to feel that the needs of their children will be met in the future. Taking a taxi to a friend's house to share an afternoon together can reduce the feelings of isolation that the winter weather can produce.

Yes, it's January, but that doesn't mean that you have to be overwhelmed or lonely or alone with your problems. Your first step in improving your dilemma is to schedule an appointment with a psychologist who will help you to problem-solve.

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Like they say "Two heads are better than one" - especially when one is a trained professional and the other one is an expert in knowing the details of your situation - that's you!

January can be a good month despite the stressors if you decide to face the problems head on and resolve them in a healthy manner.