



Needs or Wants?

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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Several weeks ago, I received a telephone call from one of my readers. She told me about a motto that her family had when she was growing up. It consisted of three parts: Use it up. Wear it out. Do without.

I was inspired by this and since the conversation have been questioning myself regarding whether this applies in my own life.

1. Use it up - They say that you can tell if a chef is good by the amount of garbage that leaves the kitchen. A cook who is creative and wise will hardly have anything left over that has to be thrown away. Do you buy too much food and then end up having waste? How about your freezer? Do you keep track of what is in it and rotate regularly or just wait until freezer burn does its damage? My daughter lives in Okotoks where there is a limit of three bags of garbage per household per week. Good idea. What are you throwing away that perhaps could or should have been used up?

2. Wear it out - Clothing can last a long time. The days of patching and altering do not seem to be as prevalent as in the past. We often have the idea that we "need" a new outfit when all we really need to do is check the closet. I am always surprised when I hear that people have gone to a second-hand store and actually purchased items that still have price tags as they have never been worn. One of the blogs that I subscribe to is written by a woman with twelve children. They live in a small house and she goes through all the family's clothing each season. Each of the children is allowed only three outfits per season. The mother states that this is all that is needed, and it definitely saves on laundry! Do you really need a new car or house? Are there things in the back of a cupboard that could be used? How many items are in boxes that you have forgotten about?

3. Do without - Sometimes, after a long day I get in my car and think about going through a drive-through. Then I remember that I have left-overs at home so steer my car in that direction. There is a big difference between the words "need" and "want". The advertising industry is designed to get your attention and encourage you to want things that you don't need. It may be easy to slip into a thought pattern of filling our wants instead of examining our needs.

I am sure that each of us has had a least one period in our lives when we were financially stressed. We managed! One man told me that he ate a lot of popcorn when he was at university because it was filling but inexpensive. Some walk for exercise rather than buying a gym membership. Clothing items can be spruced up with accessories and a haircut can always be put off for a couple of extra weeks.

I want to thank the reader who took her precious time to share this wise family motto with us. I know that it has helped me to be more thoughtful about how I use the resources that are available for me.

Are you also open-minded about change and how this lady's words can be put to good use?