



Parenting - Boundaries and Limits

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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It was 10:30 p.m. and I was driving home from work tonight. At every corner of downtown there were young people chasing each other, visiting and riding their bikes. I couldn't believe it! After all, it was 10:30 p.m. and this is a school night. And then it hit me - it is 10:30 p.m. and I was just coming home from work!

Things have changed over the years.

I remember when I grew up in a small town that had a 9 p.m. curfew. Everyone knew that the alarm from the fire hall would ring and we had better be in the house. If we weren't, those who patrolled the area would not only take us home - which would be trouble for us - but open up the possibilities of having our parents "shamed" for not ensuring that we were home.

But then, those were the days when it was illegal to write a cheque or hold a sporting event on a Sunday. The "Irish Sweepstakes" were illegal as gambling was not acceptable. Stores were closed not only on Sunday but also all day Monday.

We had an hour and a half for lunch break so that everyone could go home and eat together as a family. There weren't any "after school" programs needed as school didn't end until 4:30 p.m. We might have a piano lesson or homework in the hour before our parents got off work. Everything in town closed at 5:30 p.m.

Things have changed.

Malls are open every day of the year except Christmas Day. You can get food at a drive-through window twenty-four hours a day. Gambling is so acceptable that the profits actually fund not only local charities but also the provincial Gambler's Hotline for individuals who are addicted. Some sports are scheduled at 5 a.m. in order for teams to get ice time.

I remember a very reputable school principal talk about how many problems resulted because teens are focused on having jobs instead of treating school as their job. She explained that there has been pressure on school divisions to end classes early so that students can get to their workplace. Many work a full shift and then close the till at day's end. They get home around midnight tired and hungry (because they don't want to eat the fast food they have been producing hour after hour so just do without eating). They haven't had time to be with family members, talk with friends, participate in activities or do their homework. The next morning they sleep through their first two classes.

There isn't any point in crying for "the good old days". There were lots of things that weren't as "good" then as now and I really don't want to go back in time. However, there is something to be said for having a beginning and an end to things. Now we have sports teams getting up in the middle of the night in order to obtain ice time. You can get drive-through food on a twenty-four basis. Media and technology allow one day to flow silently into the next.

It seems to me that because of the world we've developed, it would be more important than ever to identify and follow personal limits, protect family time and ensure that life includes a good balance of work and play.

And that makes me wonder - what was I doing coming home from work at 10:30 p.m.?
Hmmmmmmm.