



Recognizing We're All in This Together!

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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A couple of years ago I travelled to Jamaica. I'm not a typical tourist who sits on the beach with a Margarita. I loaded my luggage with supplies for this third-world country and arranged to visit three schools and an orphanage. Then I decided that it would be fun to visit Family Court!

Jamaica has a murder every thirty minutes and despite warnings about not leaving the resort, I hired a taxi and headed for the Court House. Well, what an old primitive building. Crooked cement stairs up the side allowed me to view the first floor which housed used appliances and the second floor which was designated for storage. The third floor was everything else - Probation, Counselling, Child Welfare, Family Court.

As the "whitest" thing on the floor I quickly attracted attention. I showed my business card and birth certificate to the receptionist asking for Mr. Green. I thought this was a "code word" but was ushered into the office of the CEO - a black man with a strong British accent. His very small "office" was extremely full to the point that one Social Worker needed to stand in order to close the door.

Mr. Green apologized for the crowd and explained "There are only two psychologists in all of Montego Bay and we don't have access to either". He immediately asked if I would teach him and provide a workshop for his people. We arranged for that to occur the following day.

In the meantime arrangements were made for me to be a visitor in Family Court. I was shocked at the poor surroundings and lack of resources. There were no electronics and professionals wrote all the proceedings by hand in large ledgers.

After Court the Judge approached me and said "What were you writing in my Courtroom?" I had been using a small journal to record my observations but quickly said "All the things you were doing well". She invited me to her office and questioned me at length about various topics. Then she said "If I come early tomorrow will you come and teach me?" I agreed.

The following morning, Mr. Green came to the resort to get me in the diplomatic car (I think it was Datsun). I met with the Judge again and then Mr. Green apologized. He said "Ms. Hancock, you will hate me. We have so many crises in our region that I cannot pull people in for a workshop. Shall I take you back to the resort?" My immediate reply was "Of course not. I came for the day so please put me to work".

What fun I had. I worked with a fire starter, taught a Social Worker how to do a genogram and visited with the senior counsellor. Then there was a knock at the door and Mr. Green announced "The Minister of Justice has asked to meet you". Wow!

She and I talked and laughed and shared issues that were common to us. She then asked "Will you do a workshop for my people?"(they love workshops) and I agreed. The waiting room was cleared and the clients were locked out as there was no other facility available. There were the paralegals, counsellors, administrative staff, probation officers and I had had no preparation time. I turned to Mr. Green and the Minister of Justice and asked "What is the topic?" Without any thought or hesitation I heard "Stress Management".

This experience reminded me that no matter what country we are in or what resources we have, expectations are high. Like the Olympic motto of "higher, faster and stronger" we try to do more with less and this results in stress. Learning to manage that stress is a task that is not bound by geography, ethnicity or economics.

The world is not all that big and some issues are universal. Isolation is not an option as we're all this together. The good news is that when we reach out to others no matter where they are, we end up being the ones who benefit most.