



# Renovations Can Drive You Crazy!

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 sister and her husband decided to put new siding on their house and garage. They chose the colour, purchased the materials and eagerly looked forward to the finished result - several months ago!

Every day they look expectantly out the window hoping that the contractor will arrive to complete the work and are repeatedly disappointed when he doesn't show up. It is so frustrating for them!

They are not alone.

Most people who are doing home improvement projects live to tell horror stories about their experiences. Following are a few things you should consider before you even start renovating:

- 1. Planning is key** - Know what you want. Research the possibilities and discuss your ideas with professionals who can help to develop a blueprint or plan.
- 2. Hire contractor who you can trust** - Ask for references and contact them with good questions about the workmanship, commitment and experience that they had with this contractor. What were the negatives? Were there things that the contractor did that could be considered outstanding?
- 3. A contract is vital** - Make sure you have a written agreement that specifies exactly what is expected. When will the work be done? How much will it cost and when will payment be made? It is a good idea to consult a lawyer before signing the contract or at least gather information from the Law Society to ensure that you have all the bases covered. Avoid trouble by being clear and detailed.
- 4. Your budget might not be adequate** - It is wise to add at least ten percent to your estimate. Make sure you have the finances or financing in place before you begin. You might run into unplanned situations which will cost extra. Most people who have done renovations state that it cost them more than they expected!
- 5. Completion might not be done by the completion date** - Weather, delivery problems, sub-contractor schedules, and structural difficulties can slow projects down. Make sure that you don't plan a very important event too close to the expected completion date. You might be very frustrated and disappointed if the work isn't done!
- 6. Life will be stressful during the process** - Prepare yourself for trouble. Your life will be disrupted for a period of time - perhaps longer than you ever dreamed would occur. Learn to laugh and get good at using your assertiveness skills to keep the workers on track.
- 7. Expect the unexpected** - You likely won't know what is behind the drywall until you remove it. Electrical and plumbing that was done decades ago might not be up to today's standards. The materials you ordered might not be satisfactory once they are received. You may have to reorder more expensive items than you planned. Things break.

**8. Flexibility is a necessary ingredient** - Be ready to discuss and choose options. The things that you were so sure would turn out don't always turn out. Be prepared to change the plans as you go.

**9. You might not get exactly what you planned** - The room might not feel as large as the one you imagined. The colour might not be the shade you dreamed about. A light switch might be in an inconvenient place. Figure out what things you cannot live with and tell the contractor immediately. Consider the costs of making changes as there might be some things that you can live with in order to save additional costs.

**10. Celebrate** - You have invested your time and money and now deserve to enjoy your new environment!

Sometimes the most difficult part of a home improvement project is handling your emotions. Take a breath. Relax. Like my old Norwegian grandmother used to say, "This too shall pass".