



## **Return to Work**

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)

### **Published**

May 29th, 2016

Research indicates that the longer someone is off work, the harder it is to go back to it. There are very good reasons why people might have to take a leave of absence but when it comes right down to it, work is one of the very best medicines for all of us. Work gives us a reason to get up in the morning. It gives us a place to go, people to talk with and a purpose. We are rewarded with a good tiredness and some coins to jingle.

If you have been off work because of illness, grief, accident or another reason there are barriers that might prevent you from returning to your job:

1. Personal factors - Perhaps your abilities no longer match the job requirements. You might have had an injury, for example, that prevents you from walking, standing, reaching, or doing tasks that you previously could do without any problems. Maybe you are on medications that interfere with your ability to focus or are so fatigued that you cannot perform safety sensitive duties or regular shifts. Being out of the workforce for a period of time can cause you to be afraid that others will not accept you back or that you will not do well when you return to your job. All of these issues can be resolved with the help of a health professional and/or psychologist. You might need to retrain, develop new skills, have job modifications or specialized equipment but you will be able to return to work.

2. Employer factors - We are living in a world of change. Computers and software are replaced before they are worn out. Science introduces new concepts every day. Workplaces evolve. Sometimes employees go on leave and then find out that their job has significantly changed or disappears while they are away. The employer has to adjust according to the market and operational requirements. Frequently, returning to work means that you and the employer will need to have a plan so that you can learn about how you can comfortably reintegrate.

3. External factors - We can't change the economy. Or the weather. Or consumer needs. As much as you might have liked your job in the oil patch, global supply and demand may have destroyed your possibilities to return to it. An area that is devastated by a natural disaster might have destroyed your workplace. And the product you were used to making just might not be needed in the marketplace anymore.

Things change and when you have been away from the workplace for a period of time it will not be guaranteed that you can return to exactly the same job or tasks as when you left.

The good news is that if you are realistic and get help you will probably find that the changes can be facilitated and might even give you more satisfaction than you previously had.