



Some Things Can't Be Buried Forever

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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Recently, thirty-three South American miners who were trapped underground for more than two months were rescued in a miraculous global collaboration. The world sat watching images and hearing stories told by over 1700 reporters about every detail of the situation that they could uncover.

For the first seventeen days no one knew if anyone had survived the mine disaster. The strong faith of the Chilean people however, never weakened and it spread throughout the world to others who also prayed and hoped for a successful outcome.

Meanwhile, underground, the men who had little in common with each other than their employment, sat in darkness sharing the limited resources that were available. They were allotted only a couple of spoons of food each day and, when clean water ran out, forced themselves to drink contaminated fluids. Most lost twenty-five pounds or more during that time.

When the men were finally located, there was an expectation that it would take several weeks until they could possibly be lifted from their underground prison. Water, food and supplies could be lowered to them from the eighteenth day onward. Messages to and from family were exchanged and requested items were provided to them.

Above ground there was much concern about whether the miners would be able to maintain physical and mental health due to the extreme conditions. To everyone's amazement, the supervisor helped the men develop a routine and encouraged activities that allowed them to not only maintain their sanity but also hold onto fairly good physical health. He organized them into three groups and assigned work tasks and sleep schedules for them. He assessed their skills and based on this, gave them various responsibilities. One man was appointed as the medic, another as the spiritual leader, another as the communicator and so on.

The men asked for lighting, sports jerseys, and even Elvis music. They followed an exercise regime, had singsongs and prayed together. They made pacts that they wouldn't tell their families how much they were suffering.

Before they were lifted to safety in their specially designed capsule, they made another agreement. Because they didn't want to jeopardize expected legal proceedings about why the collapse happened in the first place, they took a vow not talk about it.

One of the things that the miners and those watching likely didn't consider was how many secrets about their personal lives would eventually be revealed because of all the media attention. One miner's wife, for example, refused to greet her husband after discovering that he had a mistress of ten years who was also praying and waiting for him to be rescued. If it hadn't been for the disaster and the number of reporters on the scene this secret might have gone on for several more years without the wife knowing.

And even though the miners have taken a vow about what they will reveal of their shared experience, over time information is bound to surface. Things that they likely thought would

never been known by others - personal choices made before and during their entrapment - will most likely become fodder for media stories.

Many people have secrets that they never want anyone to know about. They hide the secrets with care and live in fear that they might be discovered. Fear forms the bars of their own cages and as time passes, the fear can become bigger than the secret.

If you have a secret that is controlling your life, try talking about it with a psychologist. Maybe there is a way that you can deal with the issue in a healthy way now rather than live worrying that it might surface when you least expect it.

You see there are some things that just can't be buried forever.