



## Special Occasions

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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Every day of one's life is important but there are four that I believe have particular significance.

1. Birth - On the day you are born, your whole family tree was altered. The fact that you had arrived was a very momentous occasion, not only for you but for everyone around you. Much thought was likely put into choosing a name that will be with you throughout your entire life. Schedules were altered and expenses incurred on your behalf. That occasion was so important that your actual "birth day" continues to be celebrated each year in honour of you!

2. Independence - Different places have ways of recognizing the transition from childhood into adulthood. I remember my dad telling me that he had to quit school after grade eight to go stooking (part of farm harvest) in order to help the family financially. His maturity was not marked by an age or date but by necessity. Some places do not acknowledge adolescence. When children are able to work, they work. But most societies have a ceremony or specific age when a person is legally or ethically on their own.

In Canada, there are different ways of measuring independence. The legal age of consent is sixteen years whereas the age of majority varies by province. In some provinces it is eighteen and in others it is nineteen years of age. Reaching the legal age has gifts and burdens. You might have privileges that were otherwise not available but also face additional legal responsibilities for your choices.

3. Elder status - When I was a child I thought that my grandparents were "really old". My grandfathers had reached the age of sixty-five years and were retired. Their days were spent visiting with others, reading and gardening. They didn't own vehicles so stayed close to home most of the time.

Things changed in my adulthood and people started talking about "freedom 55" meaning that they would invest their money so that they could leave their careers early. Their planning included travel, sports and leisure. Some places began describing seniors as those individuals who had reached the age of sixty.

Something else began to change also. Instead of holding one job for thirty or more years, Canadians changed careers more readily and often would experience six or more jobs before retirement. Pension plans also evolved and offered employees various ways to invest for their future. Now most government plans mature at age sixty-five but the experience of retirement is more often associated with health and finances than with the age of the individual.

4. Death - For some who have experienced pain or heartache, this is a relief. For others it holds fear of the unknown. For most, it is just part of the life cycle. Death for survivors is not an end in itself, though, as they hold our memories in their hearts and minds. The work we do here on earth also can be a testament or legacy for others to continue enjoying.

So why am I writing about special occasions this week? Well, it's because I have just passed the third one on my list and feeling reflective.

On August 7th I celebrated my sixty-fifth birthday! And what have I noticed? Well, I certainly am not as old as I thought my grandparents were at the same age. I am not ready to retire as I love my work and am healthy enough to continue. I am living in a world where life expectancy has increased significantly and opportunities for adventure are rampant!

And when it comes to the fourth special occasion of which I have written, I accept that it too will come. No fear or worry. Just the next step in a life for which I give thanks.