



Stand Against Fear

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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Journalists know that "what leads - bleeds". People read newspapers and listen to news when there are exciting - not boring - things happening. Twenty-four-hour internet and television broadcasts can throw you into a world of crisis very easily so you need to be careful.

Recently, we have been hearing about the presence and pandemic possibilities of the corona virus. Now I am not ignoring the fact that we are facing a problem but, at the same time, I have lived through eras of measles outbreaks, tuberculosis and polio so I tend to believe in the expression my grandmother used to say. This too shall pass.

In the meantime, how can we latch onto wisdom when we are facing fear:

1. Be prepared - Canadian and United States panels who have been interviewed about tactics for the population have recommended several things. One is to have a store of food and medications on hand including those that have been prescribed as well as cough syrups and fever reducers. Frozen, canned and dried products are safe for long periods of time so you can invest in some inventory.
2. Learn new skills - Think about ways that you can stretch your time and dollars with simple recipes, meal plans and learning ways to do repairs.
3. Use common sense - Exposing yourself to possible dangers is just foolish. I often wonder what hikers who illegally enter communist countries were thinking. Try to avoid being around individuals who are infected. Disinfect areas that could be germ collectors.
4. Follow proven health practices - There is medical evidence that supports washing your hands for twenty seconds with soap and warm water as the best defense against germs. One of the clients told me that singing the "Happy Birthday to you" song takes approximately twenty seconds and can be used as a timing device when washing.
5. Consider your options - Do you want to increase risk by flying or being in environments where there are large groups of people? Should you go to work when you are sick knowing that you are increasing the possibility of becoming sicker or infecting others? Is it wise to sit in a hospital Emergency Room or crowded waiting room to see a physician? There aren't enough testing kits or any corona vaccine yet so you will likely be told to go home, drink fluids, rest and treat your fever with an over-the-counter medication.
6. Know when and how to seek help - Stay informed. Health Link, documents written by medical professionals and media interviews of professionals will help to define the symptoms of concern and the best strategies to deal with them.
7. Make good financial choices - You or a family member may need to miss work and lose income. Now is the time to curb unnecessary spending and ensure that your finances are in order.
8. Respect others - Avoid shaking hands, coughing on others and going into public if you are sick.

I am not a medical doctor, but I have worked with people who can be either impulsive or immobilized by fear. There isn't any guarantee that you will become sick or avoid illness. You can, however, use the points above to help you make good choices and gain some control.