



# Teach People How To Treat You

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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Over the years I have had so many people tell me that they don't like the way that they are disrespected, ignored or abused often by their own family members. Despite their hurt and desire for change, the patterns continue. Now I'm not saying that you have to take the blame for everything that occurs, but there are certain things you can do to improve a situation or relationship:

1. Consider that it might not be your fault. Other people have bad days too and you just might have been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Just because they are upset, doesn't mean that they are upset with you or that you caused it. Forgive once but don't forget and if it happens again, clearly state that the other person's behaviour is unacceptable
2. Never give or take abuse. Think about the treatment that you wouldn't expect or accept from a neighbour or casual acquaintance. Why would you accept that same behaviour from a family member or friend? And be careful when it comes to "Do as I say and not as I do". Your actions and words help to set the tone for the future.
3. Set good Boundaries. They are like fences that protect the things you value and keep out the dangers. You don't need to do a lot of explaining when you put up a fence and a sign that says "Private" or "Beware of the Dog". Personal boundaries are the same. Use a clear, firm statement to let others know what is appropriate.
4. Think of a logical and reasonable consequence for inappropriate behaviours. This is not punishment but a statement that lets the other person know what will happen if the unacceptable continues. For example "Please stop yelling and swearing or I will hang up".
5. Never say what you aren't prepared to do. If you keep threatening or saying things without acting on them, others will quit believing you. Remember the little boy who cried wolf?
6. Recognize the stages in the cycle. Stress triggers can result in tension building and an explosive event. Often remorse follows and although the offender seems sincere, s/he is probably crying more because of being caught than because there is genuine desire to change. That would require repentance. The honeymoon stage that follows lulls everyone back into a place of temporary peace. But then the cycle begins again.
7. Protect yourself. Pay attention and when you see the signs that things are headed in the wrong direction - get out! And don't think that giving them what they want will help. Bailing them out financially doesn't help them to become more responsible or mature. It just makes you poorer (and resentful).
8. Give up on the "people pleasing". You will never be able to keep another person happy enough for them to want to change. In fact, often they will take from you and then treat you with disrespect again. Why would you agree to babysit for your adult children so that they can go away when they treat you poorly?
9. Get your needs met in a healthy way. If you don't like the lifestyle or choices that your loved ones make then come up with another plan. And don't allow yourself to feel left out when you aren't invited to be involved in their shenanigans!

10. Consider your limits. I learned a long time ago that the two best things I can do for my children and grandchildren are to pray for them and set an example.