



Telling the Truth

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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One day my uncle and I were having a discussion about the effectiveness of the justice system. He stated "It may be slow but it works" and went on to explain his position to me. He had been a judge for many years and noted that when a person tells a lie they have to tell another lie to cover it up. Then they tell another to cover that one and so forth until they finally get to the point that they can't remember what the first lie was. At that point, they are "caught" and the justice system can recognize not only that facts don't line up but also that the person who has been telling the lies may not be trustworthy.

Years ago, when I worked as a Child Welfare Investigator I also learned about patterns and how they reveal the truth about individuals. Sometimes we would receive a report about children who were being "abused" or "neglected" and I would be sent to the home to gather information. Even though the reporter had been adamant that action MUST be taken immediately and the children removed from the care of the parents, my supervisor would state that we needed to provide support and education for the family first.

Over time the truth would come out. Sometimes we discovered that the reporter had called because they were upset with the parents for other reasons and wanted revenge. Sometimes the report was initiated by a divorcing parent who wanted custody of the children and believed the way to obtain this was to prove the custodial parent was incompetent. Sometimes the parents who were reported just needed a little help to learn basic parenting skills.

You see, patterns of truth and deception are recognized over time as people do the same things repeatedly - over and over again.

I have heard clients swear that they will never take another drink of alcohol, or shoplift, or hit their partner - only to discover that the police were called to intervene within days of the statement. Patterns are difficult to break, especially when the person who makes a commitment actually believes s/he can follow through but hasn't the skills, resources or will to do so. The person making the claim actually believes that s/he will change but actions speak louder than words sometimes.

Life has a great deal of mystery in it and it isn't always easy to determine what truth is in certain situations. In fact, I have a good friend who claims that when two people are arguing "the truth is somewhere in the middle".

It isn't always easy to tell the truth. At times there is embarrassment, fear or shame attached to admitting that we are responsible for something that happened. And no one wants to face the consequences of losing a friendship, respect or reputation.

When I grew up, my parents taught me that it was far better to tell the truth and face the consequences than not. It helped to give me a firm foundation that has kept me out of a lot of trouble over the years! If I say something that comes out in a manner that doesn't seem to express what I was trying to say, I immediately correct it. That way, I can sleep at night and not have to try to remember everything that I said to keep any lies going.

Take a moment to examine your own life. Can you state that you value truth and ensure that it is evidenced in your own life every day? When you are asked about a difficult situation do you reply with honesty? Are there things from your past that you need to "come clean" about?

It may seem scary to think about correcting a wrong from years ago or admitting to a lie told yesterday but doing so will give you an opportunity to establish a fresh start with others and develop self-respect that leads to healthy pride and confidence.

Dishonesty forms a tangled web that traps individuals. Telling the truth, on the other hand, is a habit that may be difficult to learn at first but will give freedom and simplicity to your life.

Why not make a commitment today that regardless of the consequences, you will always honour and tell the truth to yourself and to others? You'll be glad you did. And that's the truth!