



Use It or Lose It! Surviving in a Difficult Economy

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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It doesn't matter whether you are listening to local, provincial, national or international news - the message is the same. Falling oil prices have threatened the economies of several countries in the world and we are going to be affected by this on a personal level.

But there are so many things that we can do to enhance our lives and save money whether it is good times or bad. Following are three areas to consider:

Food - We live in a land of plenty but don't always make good choices when it comes to eating. It is far easier to go out to a restaurant or order in fast food than to take the time to plan and cook for ourselves and our families. Frequently I have had clients who were financially in trouble. I have asked them about how long they could eat out of their cupboards and freezer without going to the grocery store if they really had to do so. Their answers have ranged from a few days to several weeks. Recently I decided to try this myself and have been shocked at how many dozens of meals I can make by just using what I already have in a creative manner. I sometimes discover something in the freezer that I forgot I had and just like a game show on the Food Channel I use it with other ingredients that are on hand to make an interesting snack, meal or dessert. When stumped, there is always that wonderful resource called YouTube to help with recipe ideas!

Clothing - Doing an inventory of our closets reminds most of us that we really wouldn't have to purchase any more clothing for a long time. It's not just the fact that we have lots of clothes but also that we don't wear them all or interchange items to make new outfits. Invest some time into trying on shoes and getting rid of ones that don't fit or really don't have possibilities of being worn in the future. Do the same with jackets, shirts, dresses and pants. It's time to sort the underclothes and get rid of those that might cause embarrassment at some point! Finally, consider accessories. Sort the jewelry and ensure that it is easily viewed and accessed so you will remember to wear it. Consider giving items to others who you care about so that you can enjoy seeing them being worn and treasured.

Recreation - I am always surprised when people tell me that they are bored. Get out the "To do" list and start checking things off. Instead of going to an expensive movie, watch one that you purchased or recorded a while ago. Do you still have some CDs in their original cellophane wrap? Open them up and listen as you begin those "I always wanted to... " projects. Sort your photos. Write a letter or call the person who is on your "should" list. Visit a greenhouse. Go for a walk. Read a good book.

The above three categories usually eat up what is called "discretionary" money. The good news is that you can choose how much or how little you spend in each category. The suggestions that I have given challenge you to invest your time instead of your money.

How about making a plan today to use what you already have, recycle them or get rid of them in the most appropriate way you can imagine. You will save money, enjoy discovering what you already have and have an opportunity to share both items and ideas with others. It's use it or lose it week!