



## **Your Child Has a Problem**

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)

### **Published**

October 15th, 2015

As a psychologist it is my job to help figure out the differences between can or can't and will or won't.

Some parents might be worried about their children now that they have been in class for the past few weeks. Others will probably be shocked when they receive the first report card of the year. Maybe you haven't been paying enough attention or maybe your child has been conning you into believing that things are good.

It may be a parenting problem: Why is your child late, missing or not prepared to learn? Perhaps they have not been doing their homework, staying up too late or worrying about stressful situations at home. When a parent is not available or interested in helping the child do well, it is easy for that child to fall into bad habits. All of us want to do what we like and avoid the things that we don't like but avoidance of the basics by you or by the child will not have a good outcome. And don't kid yourself. Just because your child knows how to do something that you can't do just as downloading an app or using a computer doesn't mean that s/he is smart or knows how to use their brain effectively. I know many intelligent people who do poorly in life. I also know people with average intelligence who do well because they apply themselves.

It may be an academic problem: Sometimes there are simple reasons why a child does poorly at school. Perhaps s/he can't read and has been able to hide this from adults. There might have an undiagnosed hearing problem. The child may be so frightened by a bully that it is hard to concentrate. Learning disabilities and negative environmental factors can not only hamper a child's opportunity to do well but also steal their confidence. If the child does well in areas outside of school but doesn't do well academically, then it makes good sense for parents to meet with the teacher and/or principal to discuss barriers to progress and create solutions to help the child. Think teamwork.

It may be a both: Sometimes a child just doesn't want to follow rules or thinks that his/her goals and ideas are superior to traditional paths. Because peers are very important, the friends a child chooses will influence values, choices and attitudes. It's not that the child can't do things but rather that they won't. On the other hand, a child may have a low self-image and, as a result, can't progress because they give up too soon. Some problems may actually be due to a disorder or mental illness such as depression, anxiety, ADHD. There may even be physical factors such as undiagnosed illness or low iron in the blood that interfere with a child being able to reach potential.

If your child has academic or behavioural problems, it will not help to ignore the situation or to yell. The first thing to do is to gather information so that you can determine the exact problem area. Research might include a physical checkup, psychological assessment or review of parenting techniques. Once you determine where the problem lies, a plan needs to be created that outlines appropriate goals and resources to be accessed. Thirdly, the child will need to have firm and consistent support from the parents in order to accomplish the goals that are laid out in the treatment plan.

It is annoying to hear parents state that it is the child's problem if they don't do well. It is the parents' job to help figure out what is going wrong and how to partner with the child in a positive way. Blame should not be laid on anyone because that just wastes energy that

could instead be focused on making changes that, over time, translate into progress and success for the child.