At **Pike Place Fish** the fishmongers have learned that customers want your full attention when you are with them. A big part of their magic is being **fully present**.

How much do you actually get done when you are in one place thinking about a different place? Why not commit to being in one place at a time? When you are present - not dwelling on what happened in the past or worried about what may happen in the future - you are fully attuned to opportunities that develop and to the needs of the people you encounter. You gain a healthier perspective and the capacity for greater focus and creativity.

In no line of work is “being there” more important than in healthcare. When you try to provide the best possible support for patient care while simultaneously attempting to reduce costs and deal with constant change, a stressful workplace can be the consequence. That’s why this field offers important lessons for all industries and situations.

“Be There” means be present – fully present – especially when you are interacting with another person. If that person happens to be vulnerable, your ability to be present can have both positive and healing effects. The capacity of caregivers to “be there” for the people they serve is perhaps the single most powerful quality of care variable. IF you doubt that for a second, simply remember how you felt the last time someone gave you her or his undivided attention.

**“I Don’t Have Time!”**

Carr Hagerman, a speaker who works for ChartHouse Learning, was talking with a group of nurses when one of them loudly proclaimed she did not have time for all this stuff. She said she was too busy already. But another nurse immediately said, “I don’t think we are talking about doing anything extra. I think this is about who we are being while we are doing the things we need to do anyway. When we are with a patient (customer) we can be **physically** present or we can be **fully** present. The difference to the patient is considerable. How much of the stuff we are distracted by as we work with a patient actually gets done anyway? So why not be fully present while we are doing the things we have to do anyway?”

The nurses sat in silence pondering the wisdom of their colleague then launched into a high-energy discussion about being there for their patients – physically, emotionally, and spiritually – and how that is their tradition as nurses.

Exerts from FISH! TALES – Stephen C. Lundin, PH.D., John Christensen and Harry Paul
TWO HUNDRED COOKIES

A Friend named Harry stopped at a fast-food restaurant and placed an order that included a cookie. The server said, “And would you like a cookie with that today?” The next time Harry returned to the restaurant, he placed the same order, cookie included, with a different server. Again, the server politely asked, “Would you like a cookie with that?” The third time Harry dealt with yet another server. This time he was feeling a little mischievous. He placed his order, and then added, “I would like two hundred cookies.” To which the server said, without a trace of irony, “I’ll get that for you, sir. And would you like a cookie with that?”

Yes, the employees were told to say that. But were they really present when they did?

EXERCISE

Today is dedicated to being where you are. Think of all the people with whom you interact each week at work. Consider all the work settings you visit. This activity is designed to make all of those interactions more effective, less anxious, and more pleasant.

Below are some ideas that you may either try or use to stimulate your own. After each episode, ask the person for whom you are “being there” if they would mind reflecting on the experience. This reflective feedback will help you catch any little distractions and sharpen your ability to be where you are.

“BE THERE” IDEAS:

- When someone comes into your office to talk, either say, “This is not a good time,” or shut down your computer monitor and unplug or ignore your phone while conversing with the person in front of you. If you need to take a call, explain that ahead of time. Move around your desk into a good “be-there” position.

- Always disclose the amount of time you have for a conversation and ask if it is enough.

- When making quick exchanges in the hall, position your body so all you can see is the other person.

- During conversations, clear your mind of everything but the topic at hand, and then do it again and then again.

- Never take a cell phone to lunch unless you are at the Motorola Technology Convention. In that case, take it but keep it off.

- If you are in an open area, try not to look past the person with whom you are speaking.

- Use the person’s name as often as you can without getting weird.