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Be There  
**FACILITATOR'S GUIDE**



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A first grader once summed up Be There by saying, “It means no one ever has to be alone.”

Suzi Wells, RN, manager of nurse triage services at St. Louis Children’s Hospital, wanted to make sure her staff didn’t feel alone. “I work weekdays, so I don’t always get to interact with all the nurses who work nights and weekends,” she says. “I wanted to reach out to them, so I committed to calling them regularly.

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“I was surprised by the apprehension in their voices when I started calling. One nurse asked, ‘I’m not in trouble, am I?’ Once they realized that I was calling to check in *with* them, not check up on them, they looked forward to our conversations. We really got to know one another. While my initial motivation was to help the nurses feel more connected to our department, I found that I needed and wanted those relationships just as much as they did.”

As Suzi Wells proved, Be There goes beyond just being in the same room. You can sit a few feet from someone and fail to connect—like the restaurant manager who never turned around and kept typing when her employees came to her office to talk to her. “I thought I was multitasking,” she says. “But what I was really doing was alienating them.”

Everyone gets distracted when they are trying to Be There. Sometimes the distractions are external (people, cell phones, computers) but often the noise comes from inside our heads. Maybe we are thinking about something that happened in the past or worrying about what might happen in the future. Perhaps we are judging what the other person is saying or preparing a brilliant response.

It’s impossible to really listen if your mind is busy with concerns, fears or judgments. To truly Be There, you must be focused on the present. It means being open to what the other person is saying or feeling, what you might learn from them and how you might help them.

The key to Be There is that people may not need you all the time. But when they do need you, they need *all* of you.

*“Good leaders must first become good servants.”*

—ROBERT GREENLEAF

The resources in this guide were designed to lead a session from one to two hours, but you can easily adapt them to create a session of any length.

## 1. Video

*Be There* is 11 minutes in length. Key themes include:

- How being there builds trust.
- The impact of being present for those you lead.
- Finding common ground.
- Making an effort to get to know the people you lead.

## 2. Conversation Starters

Targeted questions, prompted by the video, help your group to begin exploring your beliefs about leadership. These questions help you to honestly assess whether the impact you are having is the impact you *want* to have.

## 3. Activities

Choose from several activities to help participants become engaged in their learning and take ownership of it. If you have purchased FISH! For Leaders Participant Workbooks for individual participants, we've provided page references so you can help them follow along during the session.

Example: *(If using Participant Workbook, see Workbook page 6.)*

## 4. Action Plan

John Keats said, "Nothing becomes real until it is experienced." Here your participants come up with their own plan to act on what they have learned. The actions may be simple: If you feel you haven't been connecting with your colleagues, you might decide "the first thing I'll do when I arrive in the morning is to greet every person in my area by name."

## 5. Tips

If participants are not sure what to try or need more ideas, we've provided some suggestions.

## 6. Follow-Up

After you put your ideas into action, it helps to reflect on what you learned. What worked? What didn't? What impact did it have on others? What impact did it have on you?

## Introducing The Video



Before your team watches *Be There*, it's helpful to give some context. Here's one way to introduce the film:

*Think for a few seconds about someone who is really there for you. Who is that? For me, it's \_\_\_\_\_ and they are there for me by \_\_\_\_\_. What does the person you are thinking of do to Be There for you?*

*As you think about that person, what's their impact on you? I'll bet there's a high level of trust. And that's critical for leaders—because you can't lead without earning trust. A lot of things go into maintaining trust, but it starts with being there.*

*As we watch the video, ask yourself, "What am I doing to Be There for the people I lead?"*

## Activity #1: What's my Impact?



In the video, Bob Deaton says he used to be so focused on his own work that when people came to him with a question, he “blew them off without even realizing it.” The concept of Be There helped Bob recognize the importance of taking time for others when they needed him.

Months later, when Bob saw another manager “walking past people without acknowledging them, being in a hurry with folks,” he used himself as an example. “You have Bob Deaton syndrome,” Bob told him. “You’re being just like I was.”

“That really hits home, because I know how I felt about you,” the manager responded. “I was afraid to come near you.”

It’s easy to come up with good reasons why we can’t Be There for others: too much work, unanswered emails, another meeting. But no matter how valid it appears, the choice not to Be There has an undeniable impact on the people we lead—and on our ability to lead them.

### Instructions

The following exercise reminds people of the impact of *not* being there. It’s also a good way to build connections between participants. Allow 15-20 minutes for the activity.

1. Pair participants with someone they don’t know, no trios if possible. Be sure they learn each other’s names.
2. In a fun way (tallest/shortest, similar birthdays) assign one member of the pair as Partner A and the other as Partner B.
3. Ask Partner A to share with Partner B a story or thoughts about someone (family, friend) who is very special to them and why they are special.
4. Tell Partner B to do everything they can think of (looking away, checking cell phone, acting impatient) to NOT Be There for Partner A. You may acknowledge this before Partner A begins by having Partner B look at A and say, “I’m sorry.” They’ll probably laugh and feel relieved. Or, if you’re brave, don’t tell Partner A what B is going to do.



### Tips

- To build trust, make these basic Be There actions a habit:
  - When people enter your office or cubicle, turn away from what you are working on and face them.
  - Before starting a conversation, let the other person know if you are expecting a call you must take.
  - Tell people how much time you have to talk and ask if it's sufficient. When you need to talk, ask, "Is this a good time?"
  - Wait for others to finish their thoughts before you speak.
- One way to Be There more consistently is to be curious. Being curious about what others are saying gets you out of your own world and into theirs. Curious questions don't just seek information. They help you find out more about what the person thinks, feels and values. Next week, when you ask, "How was your weekend?" and the other person says, "Great," don't just stop there. Ask, "What was great about it?" When someone tells you about a problem they are trying to solve or a project they are working on, ask what is important to them about it, their thoughts on it, how would solving it make the workplace better. Try not to make any statements for a few minutes—just ask questions. It's not an interrogation, but a way to let the other person know they are being heard and acknowledged.