Be Here Now: A simple concept to increase personal effectiveness

by Dr. Larry Senn
Applying the simple concept of Be Here Now can provide many benefits at work and home

We spend just 10 to 15 minutes out of our two-day culture-shaping offsite session with teams doing a deep dive on a concept that turns out to be the most remembered and valued one we explore. We call it Be Here Now.

An understanding of the meaning of those three little words has enhanced the cultures of many organizations and the lives of countless people and their families.

What does this phrase mean to you? Be present. Stay in the moment. Focus. Pay attention! Stop multitasking. Stop what you are doing and listen. Quiet your busy mind. Yes, Be Here Now is all of these things on the surface.

But it’s much more than a catch phrase and is really the tip of the emotional intelligence iceberg.

What lies beneath is a bigger concept that, when well understood and put into use in daily thought habits, can create a positive ripple effect from home life to work life.

To understand Be Here Now, you first need to understand the impact of not being truly present. Ask yourself these questions:

- Have you ever been with someone who was not there?
- Have you ever been with someone and you were not there?
- Have you ever been at a meeting and no one was mentally there?
- Have you ever gone home and left your brain at work?

Most of us have fallen into the habit of not being truly present. We are often so caught up in thinking about the past or the future that we lose our ability to be present in the moment.

It happens every day, and you need only look around you to observe it in others, or in your own behaviors. Two people have a conversation but one of them is not really there. A meeting is held but participants are concerned about other issues or are pecking away at person devices and tuned out to all around them. A person goes home but leaves his or her mind at the office going over problems of the day.

Work is no longer nine to five, and it overlaps into many home lives. As jobs and lives move faster and faster, multitasking is expected, even necessary to get work done.

Consequences of not being fully present

When people are doing one thing but thinking about another, they are generally not effective at either. The consequences of this behavior are very far-reaching:

- We are not as creative as we can be. Our busy minds prevent us from tapping into our wisdom and common
sense, or the more intuitive side of our brain.

- We do not listen well to others so they do not feel heard or respected.
- Meetings are not effective and decisions not as creative or sound because we don’t truly listen to each other.

Our quality of life and relationships at home suffer because we cannot turn off the whirlpool of thoughts about work. This robs our ability to recharge our batteries so we can be more effective when we go back to work.

The value of Be Here Now

Being fully present and aware in the moment at hand with a quieter mind, without being distracted, is an important concept that we work to get people personally connected to when we are working at companies to shape their cultures.

There are many benefits to being fully present:

- Better balance of personal and professional life: The more we can be fully present both at home and at work, the more we will have rich, nourishing, fulfilling environments in both places.
- Easier, more fulfilling relationships: When people feel heard and appreciated, they feel better about you and about themselves, and are more likely to produce their best efforts.
- Less stress, more peace of mind: When we think about the past or worry about the future, our thoughts create stress and diminish our peace of mind. Living in the present moment can reduce the anxiety that these distractions can bring.
- Better creativity: Have you ever noticed that you tend to get your best ideas when you are in a more reflective state and your thinking has slowed down, such as in the shower, or just before you fall asleep at night? That is because a quieter mind, one not full of distracting thoughts, has room to come up with good ideas. The more you can Be Here Now, the more this will happen.
- Increased productivity and quality: When we are present and undistracted, we can focus to reach our highest levels of performance.
- Improved listening: The ability to listen fully and openly to another person is a very important benefit of Being Here Now.

Are you really listening?

Good listening is really about listening to understand more than the words being spoken. It requires listening to what is being said with an open mind, without judgment and distraction. It allows you to step into the other person’s shoes and see their point of view.

Because listening builds rapport in relationships and provides us with better information with which to make decisions and solve problems more creatively.

- Improved customer experience: Employees who feel valued and engaged because someone really listened to them will go the extra mile to listen to their customers and focus on their needs with fewer distractions.

Good listening requires listening to what is being said with an open mind rather than judging whether the person or content of their conversation is right or wrong. Listening with an open mind,
when you are undistracted, allows you to step into the other person’s shoes and see their point of view — how they see the world.

This is what we call listening to understand. It’s the ability to listen to more than just the words being spoken. When you’re present and listening, you’ll find that you notice messages sent through gestures, facial expressions, posture, voice tones, underlying emotions and the speaker’s energy.

More than half of the message is carried by these non-verbal gestures. We only notice them when we quiet our minds and listen at a deeper level.

**Keys to the Be Here Now principle**

President Harry Truman spoke of quieting his mind and being more creative in his “personal foxhole.” Creative people and leaders in many fields speak of getting into the “flow.”

Each is speaking of a way of life that invites us to quiet our busy minds, rely on our innate wisdom and creativity, and live each moment of life to the fullest. We usually know we’ve been there only after it happens, for when we are fully in the moment nothing else exists, including reflection on the moment.

Most of us would like to spend more time in that state. So how do we do that? The three keys to living a more fulfilling, productive life are understanding, awareness and acceptance.

**Tips to get into the habit of spending more time in the moment**

- Know what the experience of Be Here Now feels like and what it does for you and others.
- Have faith that the more time you spend experiencing the value of Be Here Now, the more you will want to “be there”; consequently, you will begin to “be there” more often.
- Understand and accept that everyone goes in and out of the state of Be Here Now. Relish those times when you are in the moment, and accept the fact that you are human.
- Stop and take a deep breath periodically throughout the day as that will quiet your mind. Do it before important meetings and before you go in the door when you go home.
- Take a regular pulse of your mood. Feelings of impatience, defensiveness, judgment, anxiety and anger are strong clues that you are not fully present. Be aware of how those feelings can get in the way of Be Here Now, and proceed with caution in your interactions and decisions.
- Do anything that works for you to interrupt the pattern of your thoughts.

**Conclusion**

Be Here Now is an important concept that we work to get people personally connected to when we are working at companies to shape their cultures. Helping people learn to Be Here Now, and consciously practice being fully present, provides their companies and them personally with the greatest opportunities for maximizing effectiveness and life fulfillment. It is also the key to the customer experience and employee engagement.

**about the author**

Dr. Larry Senn is chairman and founder of culture-shaping firm Senn Delaney, a Heidrick & Struggles company. He has led culture-shaping engagements for the leaders of numerous organizations, including dozens of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, state governors, members of two U.S. president’s cabinets, deans of business schools and the presidents of major universities. Larry has co-authored several books, including *Winning Teams, Winning Cultures and 21st Century Leadership*. In 2013, Larry published his latest book, *Up the Mood Elevator: Living Life at Your Best*.

For more information on the Be Here Now concept now, visit [www.upthemoodelevator.com](http://www.upthemoodelevator.com).
about Senn Delaney

Senn Delaney is the culture-shaping firm of Heidrick & Struggles International, Inc., the premier provider of Executive Search, Culture Shaping and Leadership Consulting services worldwide. Founded in 1978, Senn Delaney was the first firm in the world to focus exclusively on transforming cultures. A singular focus of creating healthy, high-performance cultures has made us the leading international authority and successful practitioner of culture shaping that enhances the spirit and performance of organizations.

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