



Toolbox Talk: Being Present in the Moment

Many things are going on around us in our physical environment, as well as distractions occupying our minds at any given time. With all of the challenges and noise we face in today's world, it is difficult to be truly present in the moment we are in. This can be especially true at work. It is important to increase safety awareness and realize when our focus, attention, or mind is not fully present in the moment while completing a work task.

What does it mean to be truly present? For the purpose of this talk, we are discussing where our focus and attention are at a given moment. All too often, we are physically present somewhere, but our focus and attention are not. We have all been there. Whether it is during a safety meeting or when driving home, we zone out and quickly realize we have no clue what was said in the safety meeting, or with the snap of a finger, we are home but have no recollection of the drive. This kind of disconnect from the present moment can be extremely dangerous when at work.

Dangers of Not Being Present While at Work

The dangers of not being fully present and engaged while at work are obvious. Two quick scenarios:

- Scenario #1 – A supervisor is going through the safety procedures for a new piece of equipment. Your mind begins to wander, and you do not hear much of the discussion. Later that day, while you are using the equipment, a coworker's hand gets caught in moving parts, and you do not know where the emergency shutoff switch is.
- Scenario #2 – You are working in a plant during a shutdown, and many different companies are performing work in a small area. You are not paying attention to where you are walking and totally miss multiple signs warning of overhead work being performed. A piece of pipe falls from a higher level and strikes you on the shoulder.



How to be Present

There are many reasons why we may not be present at any given moment. As individuals, we vary greatly, but a few quick tips may help you be more in the moment the next time you find your mind wandering.

- Take note of how well you are focusing and where your mind is. From there, make the conscious choice to improve your focus and attention if needed.
- When you are part of a discussion or receiving directions, make sure that you are actively listening to the person speaking. One way to become a better listener is to treat the information as something you are going to have to teach a coworker. Receiving information with the expectation that you will be responsible for passing it on can help ensure that you actively listen to the person speaking.
- Eliminate distractions from the physical work area. Things such as noise, clutter, chemicals, people, equipment, etc. can have a large impact on your ability to fully pay attention to what you are doing at any given moment at work. Eliminating distractions can make all the difference in whether or not you are able to focus fully on the task at hand.
- Eliminate any personal issues that are causing your mind to wander whenever possible. Oftentimes, personal issues cause our minds to not be fully present in our work. Try to calm your concerns or worries by making a phone call home if that will help solve the issue. If a discussion will not help the situation, then maybe you need to take the rest of the day off.

Discussion points:

- Why is important to be in the moment?
- What are some of the distractions we may encounter each day?
- What are some ways to get back into the moment?

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