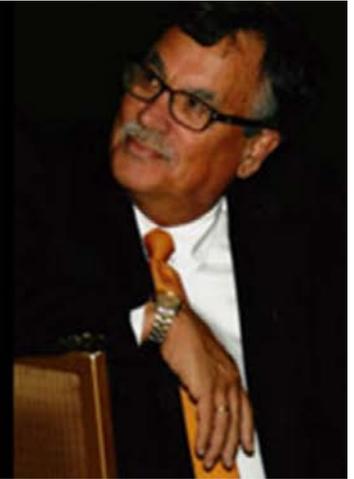


# MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



## PRACTICING BEING THERE

Recently I pulled into a Starbucks intending to do what I often do.... work on my laptop, and prepare for the workday. As I reached for my briefcase my heart sank...no briefcase. I had forgotten it at home. In my briefcase was a newspaper, my phone, and my computer...everything I needed to keep my occupied and productive before my workday began.

*“What should I do,”* I asked myself. I wondered if I should I even bother to enter Starbucks without my “tools of the trade.” What would I DO there for the next couple of hours? Having nothing else to do, I decided to take the leap. I entered Starbucks “naked.” Just me. Empty handed. Nothing to keep me busy. Nothing to distract me. I fully expected a long and boring two hours, just me and my coffee.

Much to my surprise those two hours flew by. I gradually realized that I was sitting in an interesting place surrounded by interesting people doing interesting things. I never realized before that Starbucks was so full of life and such a colorful place. It was like I entered a Starbucks for the first time.

In all previous visits I remained in “Wayne’s World”...a world having nothing to do with Starbucks and everything to do with MY work and MY interests. This time (out of necessity) was different. I became totally immersed in my immediate surroundings. Starbucks had my full attention.

I saw things I never saw before at the Starbucks which I had visited 100+ times before. I noticed...

- an employee holding a big pole and dusting off the ceiling lights.
- a homeless man outside on the patio sharing his cheerios with another homeless man.
- the fun the Starbucks employees were having with each other as they worked.
- the high school “sweethearts” ordering coffee and holding hands.
- those who had ordered online picking up their coffee and rushing out the door without saying a word.

And I noticed much more. As Yogi Berra said in one of his famous quirky remarks: *“You can observe a lot just by watching.”*

This trip to Starbucks was a lesson for me. I realized how unobservant I usually am as I go through life. I realized how rarely I'm fully present in the situation that I'm in. I have decided to make a change. Now on occasion, I intentionally leave my briefcase behind and enter Starbucks "empty handed," where I practice just "being there." I try to practice being less in my own world and more in the world around me.

I share this with you, TIP volunteers and leaders, because I think it has relevance to serving our clients. We know that what our clients need most from us is our "caring presence"...our fully "being there" with them. I've often wondered how we can practice this "being there." Is there a way individual TIP volunteers can practice "being there" in their lives so that they can be fully present to their clients?

I think so. I suggest that occasionally we all put away our phones, laptops, books and other distractions and enter situations resolving to "just be there" for an hour or two. These practice locations might be at a Starbucks, at a social gathering, during a conversation, at a church...wherever.

We can only give our clients what they really need if we have the ability to be there for them. And we can only do that if we make the time and the effort in our lives to practice being fully present in our activities and relationships.