

# **Being There: Sometimes Good Intentions Are Simply Not Enough**

Ph.D., Dr. Derek Smyth, LCSW, Robert Jones

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There's a whole world of people who find themselves caring for someone and often haven't been trained on the subject of caring. Even the clinical or technical skills needed to be an effective professional like Doctor, Nurse, Lawyer, Clergy, Human Resource professional don't always prepare us with what it takes to be present to another Human Being.

And its not just professionals; volunteers, neighbour's, family and friends, anyone in the business of listening, serving and caring for others may not possess the skills and knowledge of how to sit with someone in need and do what is necessary to make a difference in their lives.

The truth is, most people haven't been trained in human relations and even though they are well intended, the lack of these skills can often cause the well-intended to get in trouble. Often people, who believe they are doing the right thing, actually end up providing counsel and advice that is counter to what could be done. That is why good intentions are simply not enough.

Being There provides its readers with the basic understanding and skills of how to relate in a way that is effective as opposed to responses that are hurtful or unhelpful. These are communication skills that most people can easily learn and put into practice in their daily lives. How often have you said yourself, "Oh! I know he meant well", when someone was attempting to be There for you and really didn't provide the support you needed.

Every day we meet people who find themselves caring for someone close to them but don't have the wherewithal to do that properly. Yet, out of a sense of duty or family pressure they get involved. When this occurs we tend to observe the person providing care sliding into a situation where they feel out of their depth. They may burn out from stress, the experience itself can be draining, they get depressed, their quality of life diminishes, and their relationships often collapse around them.

Whether you have a calling to work and care for others professionally, or you are someone who unintentionally has to care for someone, the skills covered in this book will assist in being better prepared and effective at Caring. The caring person learns how to monitor themselves so that the quality of their life won't diminish and in contrast, their quality of life is enriched. They feel a sense of gratification when they see their caring bear fruit, rather than ending up feeling exhausted, tired and losing contact with their friends.

The authors built the program around the concept that people who find themselves in a Care Experience, though well motivated to help others, may not realize that the Care-Experience is a sensitive and fragile moment that requires knowledge and skills for helping someone through pain, loss, grief or crisis. This book, coupled with personal life experiences, allows them to become more effective support systems for those they care for. Being There elicits from the participants their thoughts and feelings about the principles and skills that form the foundation for the work of the Care Experience. This aspect also contributes to its interactive dimension.

Being There is "person-cantered." It is cantered first on the needs of the person seeking support or help, and secondly on increasing the self-awareness of the person providing care and support. At the same time, it strives to point out and clarify the knowledge and boundaries needed to be effective at caring.

This book is intended to address the increasing demand for properly trained women and men who find themselves caring for another by choice or even by happenstance. Good intentions may not be enough, but they are the all-important first step in your Care-Experience journey.



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