

# How Observant Are You Meeting Kit

How many times have you tripped over something you did not see or turn around and get startled because someone was in your area that you were not aware of? It happens to many of us often. Depending on what is preoccupying our mind, our emotions, the distractions around us, the noise levels in our area, etc. will determine how much of **our ability to be observant is affected.**

## IMPROVE ON BEING OBSERVANT AT WORK

**Use All of Your Senses:** No matter where you are, you should always use your five senses to your advantage. Seeing is important, but so are all of the others. Sometimes it's easier to smell smoke than it is to see it. Using your sense of smell, before falling back on your sight, alerts you to investigate the problem before it becomes even worse.

**Be Aware of Your Instincts:** We all get those explainable feelings sometimes. You feel on edge for some reason, or you feel as though someone is watching you. Most of the time, these instincts are telling you something important. Instead of brushing them off, use them as a guide.

**Ask Questions:** In order to keep your mind active and paying attention, it's good to ask questions. You don't even have to ask these questions out loud or to another person, although that helps if there's information you're lacking.

**Take Some Time:** Take the time before starting a task to stop and look around your work area. Really focus on the different tools or equipment in that area. Are there hazards you are missing? Do you have everything you need?

**Monitor:** While completing a task monitor your thoughts. Is your mind truly on the task? For example, think of a time when you were driving and can barely remember the trip. How observant do you

think you were while operating your vehicle?

## **SIMPLE IS BETTER**

**There are a few simple safety things people can focus on to become better observers on site, these are:**

1. Get out on site, walk the site and talk with people, not at people.
2. Get to know people and their interests, what makes them tick, share social interests.
3. Identify your assumptions and biases eg. Cultural bias such as dealing with intergenerational differences.
4. Don't go out with an agenda and don't go out if you are in a negative mood and busy.
5. Learn to 'tune out' of your own pressures and troubles and focus on 'the other'.
6. Participate if you can in some of the work so you understand process and flow and can differentiate changes.
7. Learn how to ask open questions and strings of open questions. Socratic question skills ought to be foundational to all safety training.
8. Focus on 'listening' rather than 'telling' by suspending your own agenda and focusing on 'the other'.
9. Make sure your questions don't 'interrogate' the other.
10. Learn to be tactically silent, you don't have to tell people about safety or what they are doing wrong.
11. Learn the names of people and engage people for who they are, not for how they can be used or by their importance in status or role.
12. Take a particular interest in those most neglected by the system: cleaners, assistants down the chain and part time staff.
13. Ask others to talk about the nature of their work, flow, process and what they would improve if they could.
14. Focus on dialogue, their story and their view of their work.
15. Take note of little things without judgment: dress, habits, colours, use of space, symbols, artefacts about, social indicators, eating areas, parking bay etc.

16. Develop trust in a confidential friend who you can reflect with about perceptions of people and misperceptions.
17. Understand what is normal in patterns of work and where people have become desensitized to risk
18. Look for correlations or anomalies in work process and any turbulence that could misdirect others.

## **TAKEAWAY**

### **The Key To Being Observant is to Slow Down**

- With so many things to do every day, it's easy to rush around. But one of the best things to do in order to be more observant is to slow down.
- By slowing yourself down, you open yourself up to the details of your surroundings. Rushing past everything means you'll never notice when a situation is no longer safe.
- Always remember to take an extra moment and look around. Those few extra seconds could make all the difference in a bad situation.

## **FINAL WORD**

Being observant is essential for safety by just becoming more skilled in what to look for and listen for in safety. It is so easy to block out so many things to our senses that we can simply walk about and not see hazards and risks.