

The Gift of Presence: *Celebrating Connection & Renewal*

By Nicole Pfeiffer, Benefits Practice Leader



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It's December! My oh my, where did the year go? As 2025 draws to a close and the holiday season approaches, I find myself reflecting on what truly matters - not just the gifts we exchange, but the time and attention we share. In a world that moves quickly and demands much from each of us, it's easy to get caught up in the hustle and overlook the simple power of being present.

This year, I've been reminded time and again that presence is the greatest gift we can offer - to our families, our colleagues, and our clients. Whether it's a quiet moment at home, a heartfelt conversation with a teammate, or a face-to-face meeting with a client, these moments of genuine connection are what sustain us and help us grow.

A Personal Reflection

Recently, I experienced one of those small but meaningful moments with my family. It wasn't a grand event or a planned celebration - just an afternoon spent together, watching the Hawks lose the second half to USC. There was laughter and frustration all around the TV. Later that evening many great games of SEQUENCE transpired. More laughter and frustration as we all want to win. If you haven't played the game, go buy this one for Christmas. The first time we played this game with some friends, after a while one of them said, "Oh..., this is a thinking game, not a drinking game." We laugh every time we think of that story. Well, we think it can be both. 😊 The best part of it all is that phones get set aside, and for a little while, the outside world fades away. Iowa football may have lost to USC that day, but I felt the warmth of true connection, the kind that lingers long after the moment has passed.

Presence at Work

The same holds true in our professional lives. Over the past year, I've seen how being present - really listening, showing up for each other, and investing time in our relationships - has strengthened our team and deepened our client partnerships. I can think of many people this year in which I have built stronger relationships because I invested time with them on a more personal level. It's not always easy; sometimes it means stepping away from the screen, picking up the phone, or making the effort to meet in person. But the return on that investment is immeasurable: trust, loyalty, and resilience.

Looking Ahead

As we prepare to welcome a new year, I encourage each of you to give yourself and those around you the gift of presence. Take time to recharge, reconnect, and reflect on the moments that have mattered most. Celebrate your successes, learn from your challenges, and set intentions for the year ahead. Let's continue to support one another, both personally and professionally. Together, we can continue to build a culture of connection and renewal - one moment, one conversation, one relationship at a time.

Thank you for all that you do. Wishing you a joyful holiday season and a bright, hopeful start to the new year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Pfeiffer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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