



How To... **CARE** WHILE EATING AND SLEEPING

A **BIG TABLE GUIDE** to Dining Out and Staying In Hotels

Hidden behind the smiles of those working in restaurants and hotels are huge needs. The industry posts the highest rates of drug and alcohol abuse as well as stunningly high rates of divorce and broken relationships. Long hours and constantly changing schedules create incredible stress which is compounded by a limited (or absent) financial safety net for most front-line employees and even a number of managers and owners. Those working in restaurants and hotels make up the largest single employment group in the nation and the industry is the #1 catch basin for the most vulnerable... single parents, at risk teens, immigrants, minorities, and ex-felons.

And here is the stunning part – until Big Table launched in 2009, there wasn't a single non-profit in the entire country caring in any strategic or holistic way for those in crisis in the industry.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We certainly would love for you to engage and support **Big Table** (www.big-table.com) as we expand from the Northwest. We care relationally and strategically for those in the industry who are in crisis, in transition or simply falling through the cracks. But the truth is that great care is not rocket science... we simply build relationships around shared meals and care for people out of the relationships formed. And **you can do an amazing amount of this on your own** or with a group of friends. All it takes is choosing to pay attention and intentionally building a few relationships with people who work in the industry.

SIMPLY ENGAGE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL STAFF AS PEOPLE

Each time you go into a restaurant or hotel, take the extra few seconds it takes to look staff in the eye and honestly engage – you would be amazed at how invisible many of them feel and how patronized they are until something goes wrong. **SPECIFIC IDEAS:** (1) Introduce yourself if it feels appropriate and work to remember their names. Ask how their day is going and mean it. (2) At the end of the meal, tell them they are really good at their job and thank them. If they aren't good at their job, ask them if it has been a rough day. (3) When you go through a drive thru window, greet the person taking your money and thank them. (4) Treat the front desk people who check you into the hotel with extra grace. They take the brunt of most of what goes wrong in a hotel and certainly don't get paid well to do it. (5) Ask your server if you can pop your head into the kitchen to thank the cooks. A simple thanks means a lot.

BECOME A SERIOUS TIPPER

Treat your tips as a way to surprise and bless those you have engaged. 20% should be a bottom line and look for opportunities to give more. If you know their name, try thanking by name on the top of the receipt. When you stay at a hotel, leave a \$5.00 tip (or an Unexpected 20... see below) in the room with a note thanking the maid – they have one of the worst jobs in the hotel and receive little appreciation.

FOCUS YOUR DINING AND HOSPITALITY DOLLARS AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME

One of the best ways to care is simply to focus – pick a few places and become a regular. Work to get to know names. Pay attention to details and comments and make notes if you need to (smart phones are brilliant here) so that you can ask about a child's game or a special event they mentioned the next time you see them. Plan your visits when they are less busy (early or late) so they can talk without slowing down service to other customers. Look for creative ways to truly become friends with those on the staff.

STOCK YOUR WALLET OR PURSE WITH UNEXPECTED 20s

We think this is the most fun you can have with a twenty dollar bill.

HOW IT WORKS - Put a twenty dollar bill in one of the Unexpected 20 envelopes and carry it in your wallet or purse. Then watch for an opportunity to give it to someone in the restaurant and hospitality industry as a surprise. That might be a maid, a cook, a front desk employee, a bus boy, etc. The goal is to give it to someone not expecting it who you think could use some care. Look for someone having a hard day. Find creative ways to get one to those who work behind the scenes or in the kitchen – possibly enlisting your server to help by asking him or her to give it to the person having the worst day on the staff (be sure to also leave a **GENEROUS** tip for them in the process). If you have kids, they will love helping to decide who to give it to – they may even want to be the one to deliver it. You can share envelopes with your friends or business colleagues too. Big Table has pre-printed envelopes we can send you and our website (www.big-table.com) also has a “Do It Yourself” Unexpected 20 template on it for you to download and print out. All it takes to make one yourself is paper, scissors, and tape.



PULL IN SEVERAL FRIENDS AND CREATE A FLASH UNEXPECTED 20 GROUP

About the only thing more fun than giving out one Unexpected 20 envelope yourself is to get a group of your friends to join in with you and create a spontaneous **UNEXPECTED 20 GROUP**. Here you simply take the basic Unexpected 20 idea and add community. Gather several friends and go out together for a meal – asking each person to bring a twenty for one of the Unexpected 20 envelopes that you will bring. Through the course of the dinner be intentional about connecting personally with your server. At the end of the meal ask your server for help – tell him or her about the Unexpected 20 idea and share that you have several envelopes you want to share... one will be for your server and your server can help you get the remaining envelopes to those in the restaurant who would most need it or be encouraged by the surprise. Afterwards, we’d love to hear about your experience – leave a comment on the Big Table website or on our Facebook page.

LOOK FOR WAYS TO GIVE

There is incredible impact in a plate of cookies shared with a kitchen staff. If you love something that is easy to share, why not share that with those you are building relationships with in the restaurants and hotels you have chosen to focus on? Make notes after conversations of the interests of people and look for little ways to honor that interest – possibly buying them a book on a topic they love or picking up a tee-shirt from their favorite sports team.

THE BIG FLIP

You cook or host! You’d be amazed at how few people in the industry – especially those who cook for a living – get invited over for dinner. People are afraid to cook for those who most love food and appreciate table fellowship. After you’ve invested in the lives of folks in a restaurant or hotel, consider inviting them over for appetizers or a meal. It can be incredibly simple... it is the hospitality that truly counts.

SHARE WITH US YOUR IDEAS OF ADDITIONAL WAYS TO CARE

Once you start looking for creative ways to care for people in restaurants and hotels, we are certain you’ll come up with ways to do this that we’ve not yet thought of... and we want to hear them! Email us at information@big-table.com and tell us your idea.