

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUCKET FILLING

All of us have an invisible emotional bucket that we carry around inside us. This bucket can vary between being completely empty to totally full or anywhere in-between, at any point in time. This is dependent on our interactions with those around us. The level of a person's bucket can greatly influence how they are feeling about: themselves, those around them and life in general. This in turn, can have a direct impact on a person's actions when interacting with others.

Daily interactions with others have the potential to decrease or increase our bucket levels. For example, we usually know when we have done the wrong thing. There is this uneasy feeling that we often have inside. Therefore, if someone then publicly points out our failings, they dip into and take away from our bucket. Conversely, if we are given well-deserved praise or someone takes the time to show genuine interest in us, this person helps to add to our bucket.

The concept of bucket filling is particularly pertinent for myself as a teacher, since having positive relationships with my students is so crucial for effective teaching and learning to take place. Alfie Kohn says that, "Children are more likely to be respectful when important adults in their lives respect them. They are more likely to care about others if they know they are cared about." How better to build positive relationships that model care and respect, than by filling up the buckets of my students!

Maya Angelou once said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." This is also true for children! When a student walks into a classroom, they have already had a wide variety of experiences in their lives. I have known students over the years that have not only had empty buckets, but their buckets have been broken and contained holes. These students require substantially more work, effort and persistence, for teachers who are attempting to forge relationships with them and want to fill up their buckets. This often means that these students' buckets need to be mended, before the teacher can even start to fill them. Life has often dealt these students a rough deal and they may not trust adults, even when the adult is genuinely trying to fill up their bucket. I have also had the privilege of being able to persevere with such students, to start patching up holes in their buckets and to begin to fill them up. In doing so, I have received huge rewards as I have witnessed these students begin to believe in themselves and to start reaching towards attaining their full potential.

Therefore, building relationships and filling my students' buckets are of uttermost importance in the classroom. If I did inadvertently dip into and take away from a child's bucket, I know that I would have to work even harder and over a longer period of time to restore their bucket to its former level. If I were having a difficult time with a student, then I may need to think outside the box for some more creative ways to fill this particular child's bucket. Since we are all individuals, what may work with one student may not work with another. I need to be regularly reflecting on my interactions with students' to ensure that I am continuing to fill each child's bucket, rather than dipping into it and taking away. By building strong relationships with my students and regularly filling their buckets, I will be helping to unlock their hearts and minds so that they can be open and receptive towards learning.

© Debbie Hibbert

Kohn, Alfie. *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*. Alexandria: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1996.

goodreads 2015, *Maya Angelou > Quotes > Quotable Quote*, Available from: http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/3503.Maya_Angelou>. [14 March 2015].