



Are You a Filler or a Dipper?

By M.J. Clark, MA, APR

I can't tell you how many people have recommended to me the book *How Full is Your Bucket?* by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton, Ph.D. A group of executives at Waste Management that I coached read the book together, and then a realtor friend of mine named Carol Huber mentioned it shortly thereafter. When I told Carol I have heard of the book many times and haven't had a chance to read it yet, she sent it to me in the mail.

The book arrived today, and I finished it in less than two hours. What a wonderful metaphor the book presents for The Golden Rule. How we treat one another directly affects our business productivity and our physical health, and the book gives many research examples that outline specifically how we are affected.

The Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket goes like this. Each of us has an invisible bucket and dipper. Each person's bucket is emptied or filled throughout the day by the interactions we have with others.

When we use our invisible dipper to fill the buckets of others, by saying or doing things that create positive emotions in others, we also fill our own bucket. Anyone who has volunteered their time for a good cause knows the wonderful feeling you get when you help put a smile on someone's face.

When we dip from the buckets of others through negative interactions, we also take from our own bucket. I think this negativity that spreads is often harder to identify. How many times do we gossip and complain and judge and fail to see the ill effects of our actions on ourselves and others?

I remember a family friend who used to dip from my bucket often. I always left our conversations feeling worse than when they began. I moved to another state to take a job, and the Dipper began writing me letters that also took from me emotionally. My boyfriend at that time read one of the Dipper's letters that he found on my kitchen table.

"This is the most depressing letter I've ever read," he said. "You should stop communicating with this person." I took his advice, and my emotional well-being significantly improved. I had no idea how much those interactions were affecting my outlook until they stopped.

The book contends that we face a choice every moment of the day – to fill the buckets of others or to dip from them. The book also cites a Nobel Prize-winning scientist named Daniel Kahneman who estimates that we experience approximately 20,000 individual moments in a day, each "moment" lasting a few seconds.

How do you spend your 20,000 moments? Filling or dipping?