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Leadership Inspiration: A Guide to Daily Happiness

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Editor's Note: In the Leadership & Development Section's Leadership Inspiration Contest, entrants were asked to tell us what inspired them to be better actuarial leaders. Here is an entry from the "Book/Song" category.

Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids, written by Carol McCloud and illustrated by David Messing, is a powerfully inspiring book that holds true for all ages. It can be read over and over and helps instill positivity in children and adults.

This essay contains several concepts from the book. The book's premise is that we all have an invisible bucket whose sole purpose is to hold your good thoughts and good feelings about yourself. When your bucket is full, you feel good; when it's empty, you are sad. It's great to have a full bucket, and the way it works is that you need other people to fill your bucket and other people need you to fill theirs.

You fill a bucket when you show love to someone, when you say or do something kind, or even when you give someone a smile. A bucket filler is a loving, caring person who says or does nice things that make others feel special. When you make someone feel special, you are filling a bucket.

You can also dip into a bucket when you make fun of someone, say or do mean things, or even when you ignore someone. Many bucket dippers have an empty bucket. They think they can fill their own buckets by dipping into someone else's, but that will never work. You never fill your own bucket when you dip into someone else's. But the opposite is true. When you fill someone's bucket, you also feel good.

The book encourages the reader to try to fill a bucket and see what happens: Tell someone you love them, smile at others, and give compliments. With practice and conscious focus on filling buckets, we become better at bucket filling. Bucket filling makes everyone feel good. The book recommends that at the start of each day, make it a goal to fill someone's bucket that day, and at the end of the day, ask if you have filled a bucket.

I've observed many leaders put a higher consideration for the work than for the person. Gallup showed that a bucket-filling work environment leads to higher productivity and employee engagement. This book is a reminder that to be an inspiring leader, we need to be bucket fillers. ■



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