

In many elementary school libraries, we are likely to find the book *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids* by Carol McCloud, or perhaps another book with a similar message.

The premise of the story is that being kind and compassionate to others not only fills their buckets, but fills ours too! While this is true, I suspect that there is little left in your buckets at this point in the school year, and with the kindness, compassion, and care that school leaders dedicate each day, your own supply may be seriously in need of replenishment!

REPLENISHING AND DEPLETING

Our days, weeks, and months are full of moments and behaviours that both replenish and deplete our physical, emotional, and mental energy. This flow of what fills – and drains – our bucket is in constant motion. If we are experiencing more moments of depletion than moments of replenishment, our bucket is in danger of emptying and going dry, and this is a significant threat to our health and well-being.

Let's explore how we can reduce the drain, and increase opportunities to refill.

IDENTIFYING WHAT DRAINS YOUR BUCKET

Each person is unique in what drains them, and the frequency of their exposure to depleting situations.

For all of us, depletion can result from evading the core essentials of health, which can include:

- Eating a poor diet
- Not getting proper sleep
- Not exercising, particularly when tired
- Being dehydrated

Other factors contributing to your feeling of depletion may be:

- **Dwelling on the past:** Aside from learning from it, there is nothing you can do about what has happened in the past. Focus on the present, and move forward. Seek help from a counsellor if you find this difficult.

- **Holding onto anger and resentment:** Anger and resentment are often linked to 'living in the past'. Not only are anger and resentment extremely depleting, but the person suffering most from your anger is you, rather than the person or situation that is the source of the anger. It is not worth the mental and physical cost of the drain from your bucket.

- **Constant worry and rumination:** Worrying does not address a situation; it only depletes your well-being. If you can do something about it, take action. If action is not an option, then stop worrying. This can be easier said than done, and if you are a constant ruminator, you may find our January 2021 series on Rumination in ReCharge to be helpful.



BCPVPA ReCharge

If you cannot stop ruminating or worrying, then seek help from your physician and/or a counselor.

- **Being surrounded by toxic, draining people:** These may be people around you that continually complain and exude negativity. They may be people who constantly demand your attention and leech your energy. Where you can, minimize your exposure to such people. Recognizing that may not always be possible in your job. Try reading this article on '10 Tactics for Working with Difficult People':



10 Tactics

FILL YOUR BUCKET



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"If we are experiencing more moments of depletion than moments of replenishment, our bucket is in danger of emptying and going dry, a significant threat to our health and well-being."

- **Complaints and negativity:** What if you are the toxic person that is regularly complaining and negative? This state of mind will forever keep draining your bucket, along with those of the people around you. Be part of the solution, not the problem.
- **Gossiping and drama:** Getting caught up in workplace drama and gossip will neither advance your career nor build positive relationships. Instead of wasting time and energy in the drama, put energy into your own self-care and self-improvement.
- **Worrying about what people think about you:** Worrying about how much people like you – or don't like you – is emotionally draining. You will never really know how others think and feel. Rather than worrying about what people think, simply focus forward. Lighten this load, and feel more energized.
- **Taking things personally:** For those of us who are energized by connecting with others, it is hard when we don't click with someone. This may not mean they dislike you, so do not take it personally if you are unable to find common ground. It can be exhausting if you are analyzing every interaction with someone to diagnose how they feel about you, and your analysis

may be incorrect. How a person is relating in a particular moment may have nothing to do with you.

- **Always checking email or social media:** The constant pressure of needing to respond quickly, alongside everything else you are dealing with, is perpetually draining.

REPLENISHMENT

The foundations of health are also critical to ensuring your bucket does not empty. Sleep and exercise are very important, as is a proper diet with enough iron, and favouring foods with a low glycemic index such as whole grains, high-fibre vegetables, nuts, and healthy oils.

Do your best to manage and support your mental health, as being stressed, anxious, and depressed can lead to you feeling sapped. Incorporate stress-relieving activities such as yoga or meditation into your routine. Set aside time to consider how you can reduce your overall commitments either at work, home, or both.

There are many ways to replenish our energy, and each individual needs to find their own fit. Options could include:

- Practicing positive psychology – read more here:



Positive Psychology

- Finding things to laugh at, including yourself!
- Focusing on what you can control.
- Practicing gratitude.
- Doing things that give you a lift: listening to music, dancing in your living room, being

around animals, walking in nature, playing street hockey with the kids.

- Determining your 'why', both at work and outside of work – what activities or plans give you a sense of purpose?
- Being forgiving and kind towards yourself when you make mistakes.
- Calling someone you love, and telling them how you feel, or that you miss them.
- Doing more of what you want by carving out little moments in your day – sitting in the sun, pausing for tea or hot chocolate, reading for pleasure, high-fiving students in the hall.
- Planning small indulgences that you can look forward to such as a short getaway, a weekend bike excursion with friends, or a planned spa or pool trip to enjoy the sauna.
- Learning that it is okay to say no. The greatest emotional drain can be when you deprive yourself of fun when you are feeling emotionally exhausted. It is not selfish to prioritize yourself more often. When you are emotionally drained, you are not giving others your best self.
- Spending time with people whose company you enjoy, and who bring out the best in you. These people are likely positive, compassionate, and interested in you and who you are. This is a sure way to fill up your emotional energy reservoir.
- Starting your day well – finding something unique that helps you prepare your body and mind for the day. Don't scramble for your phone first thing. Have a mindful cup of coffee, play with your pets, do a morning stretch or a 10-minute meditation before responding to emails or reading the news.
- Carving time out for yourself. Self-care is essential.

- Surrounding yourself with what comforts you, whether it is people, activities, or things that make you feel loved, happy, and content:

- *Place flowers or pictures in your workspace*
- *Don comfortable clothes when you get home from work*
- *Light a candle or build a fire in the fireplace*
- *Settle under a heated or weighted blanket*
- *Enjoy comfort food*
- *Set aside time to play video games*
- *Stand outside and listen to nature sounds: the rain, wind, birds*
- *Take a warm bath or shower*
- *Use a diffuser with essential oils, with scents that remind you of a place you love, like the beach or a pine forest*
- *Have friends over for Sunday football*
- *Try a new recipe*

START FILLING AND - IDEALLY - OVERFLOWING YOUR BUCKET!

Over the course of a week, keep a list of the activities and situations that energize you, and those that deplete you.

Once you have examples, ask yourself:

- What percentage of my time do I spend on energizing activities?
- What percentage would I *like* to spend?
- What are some ways I can decrease the amount of time I spend on depleting scenarios, and increase time with replenishing options?

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Think about the barriers in your life that inhibit your ability to enjoy the things that energize you. Some barriers may be minor, and can be resolved through intentional action. Others may require several steps. Start working through the list of barriers; in imagining ways to remove what is hindering you from filling your bucket, it may be helpful to engage the support of others with an outside perspective and creative ideas!

SOURCES:

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When you know that your day will involve depleting activities or individuals, think about whether there are better times or places to complete those activities to lessen their draining impact. For example, do you experience your best mood and energy level in the late morning? Consider scheduling depleting tasks or meetings when you are operating at a level that might make the tasks less daunting.

EVERYONE WILL BENEFIT WHEN YOUR BUCKET IS FULL!

It is difficult to fill the buckets of others, and to be active in their support, when you feel exhausted, burned out, and ragged around the edges. Your normal, upbeat, cheerleader self may feel flat and frayed as a result of never-ending responsibilities and dwindling energy.

The good news is that time and intent can help you fill your bucket at a rate that prevents you from running dry. You will always be the main source of your own tap, so we hope this article provides ideas and motivation that will replenish you!

