

Don Clifton (of the Gallup Organization) used the Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket to explain how positivity can be increased and spread.

"Each of us has an invisible bucket. It is constantly emptied or filled, depending on what others say and do to us. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it's empty, we feel awful.

Each of us also has an invisible dipper. When we use that dipper to fill other people's buckets – by saying or doing things to increase their positive emotions – we also fill our own bucket. But when we use that dipper to dip from others' buckets – by saying or doing things that decrease their positive emotions – we diminish ourselves.

Like the cup that runneth over, a full bucket gives us a positive outlook and renewed energy. Every drop in that bucket makes us stronger and more optimistic.

But an empty bucket poisons our outlook, saps our energy, and undermines our will. That's why every time someone dips from our bucket, it hurts us.

So we face a choice in every moment of every day: We can fill one another's buckets, or we can dip from them. It's an important choice—one that profoundly influences our relationships, productivity, health and happiness."*

We can spread happiness, as well as increase our own, by focusing on the positive and giving sincere, meaningful positive feedback to others. John Gottman, Ph.D. discovered that a ratio of 5 to 1 positive to negative interactions was a good predictor of marital happiness. Divorce could be predicted with 94% accuracy in couples who had ratios below that shortly after receiving their marriage licenses. Work groups that have positive ratios greater than 3 to 1 are significantly more productive than teams with lower ratios. (However, they must be based in reality, and there is an upper limit around 13 to 1.)

Focusing on giving praise or recognition in a form that is meaningful to the recipient creates a contagion of happiness. It also increases the closeness of your relationships, and is a way you know you make a difference in other people's lives. So try filling other people's buckets! See how it improves your life.

You can visit the [How Full is Your Bucket - Drop Zone](http://strengths.gallup.com/116275/Drops.aspx) (<http://strengths.gallup.com/116275/Drops.aspx>) and send someone a personal message.

*Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton, Ph.D., *How Full Is Your Bucket: Positive Strategies for Work and Life*. Gallup Press, 2004. Page 15