



The Gift of Yourself

“Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only gift is a portion of thyself.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson



“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.”

— Plato



“In everyone’s life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.”

— Albert Schweitzer



“The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing in the right place, but, far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.”

— Dorothy Neville

Have you ever noticed how even a brief positive contact with someone at work or elsewhere can truly “make your day”?

Everywhere we are surrounded by sadness, anger, violence and hopelessness. **All around us are people who need encouragement, people who are hurting and need help.** Some people are so lonely that any token of attention would be encouraging. Even many people whose lives look perfect on the outside aren’t so perfect on the inside.

We often want to throw up our hands in frustration because we feel so inadequate in our ability to make a difference in the world. Through the human kindness in our hearts, we have the ability to make positive changes and alter the focus of our surroundings from negativity to kindness and caring.

We can offer so much to others that costs little or nothing if every time we interact with others we keep their feelings in mind and conduct ourselves with empathy and grace. **What we give of ourselves is priceless.**

Few of us realize the difference a word or action from us can make. When you pay attention to people, you are giving them your most precious asset — your time. Giving of yourself can change another person’s life.

In the book, **How Full Is Your Bucket?**, Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton, Ph.D., use the theory of a dipper and a bucket to illustrate how even the briefest interactions with others affect our relationships, productivity, health, and longevity:

1. Each of us has an invisible bucket that is constantly emptied or filled, depending on what others say to us or do to us. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it is empty, we feel terrible.
2. Each of us also has an invisible dipper that we use to empty or fill other people’s buckets. When we say or do things to increase their positive emotions, we also fill our own buckets. When we say or do things that decrease their positive emotions, we diminish ourselves.

We all know people who were born with a negative predisposition and people who are innately positive. Regardless of a person’s starting point, regular “bucket filling” can increase his/her positive emotions. Also, daily drops in your bucket from friends and family build a reserve that sustains you during tough times. (See “*How Full Is Your Bucket*” at <http://www.melbabenson.com/articles.php>)

Some people don’t even know how to handle compliments or positive affirmation because they have been programmed from childhood to feel totally unworthy. When we realize that many of the people we talk to each day have had some kind of abusive background, we can accept negative reactions without taking them personally, and can reach out with compassion instead of withdrawing. Also, when we wonder why a certain person can’t seem to give of themselves to others, we might consider the possibility that this person has never received from others.

When you give of yourself, you will be amazed at what you receive in return. Connection with others is the surest way to feed your spirit, boost your health, and be true to yourself. You will see changes not only in the lives of those around you, but also positive changes in your own life. Even when you are hurting, giving out an encouraging word to someone else can lift your spirits. (See “*The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others*” at <http://www.melbabenson.com/articles.php>)

When we reflect on the turning points in our lives, we often find they came at the encouragement of a person who believed in us, a person who took the time, and perhaps the risk, to give a portion of himself/herself to us.

The concept is simple, and the impact is overwhelming. Will you try it this holiday season and make it a part of your everyday life? (See “*Small Gestures of Kindness and Thoughtfulness*” at <http://melbabenson.com/articles.php> for ideas.)

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