



## Love Buckets

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The most important aspects of family centered education are things not easily measured by standardized testing, and are absent from most ready-made curricula. There were many concepts I wanted my children to grasp at an early age, including the cycle of giving and receiving. So, I gave them an object lesson.

Setting two clear plastic cups on the table, I told each of them in their turn, "one is your love bucket and one is mine," then I put colorful glass "jewels" into the cups, about half in each. Taking jewels from "my bucket" and putting them one by one into "your bucket", I talked about each dollop of colored glass as I placed it into the new container. "When I cook dinner for you, I am giving you a gift, a jewel, a treasure." I included other examples, like, "when I set up a play date with your friend...take you to the beach...help you find your book...drive you to the library so you can pick up your book on hold...take care of you when you are sick..." and so on.

After a dozen or so examples, my cup of jewels was wiped out. "Now look!" I said. "My love bucket is empty. I have nothing left to give you. So when you need to go somewhere, want me to fix your toy that broke, need a bandage on your knee...I don't have a jewel to give you."

After letting that sink in a little, I gave them the rest of the picture. Taking some jewels from "your bucket", I started placing them into "my bucket", one by one, with the explanation, "But you can give me jewels, too! When you come up and give me a big hug, that is a gift, a jewel, a treasure. When you do your chores conscientiously, without my having to check up on you, then you are putting a jewel in my bucket. I gave further

examples until the cups were again about even in the number of jewels.

"Now, since you gave jewels back to me, I have some to give to you," I told them. "When you need something, or when I just feel like giving you one. It is a cycle of love, me giving to you, you giving to me."

This lesson made a big impression on my daughters, one that they remember even today. My 20-year-old still hugs me "just because." My almost-as-tall-as-her-sister younger daughter, at 17, thinks to pick a vase full of flowers for "no particular reason," and they often have dinner ready when I come home, because they know it is a jewel that fills my love bucket in the cycle of love.

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