



Learning the signals

By Carol McCloud


As a proud native of Detroit, Michigan, I was pleased to learn that a Detroit police officer invented the first three-color electric traffic light. Here's the story:

In 1920, the number of automobiles on Detroit's downtown streets was increasing and officer William L. Potts was concerned about safety at intersections. Stringing together roughly thirty-seven dollars worth of wire attached to electrical controls with red, amber, and green railroad lights, Potts invented the world's first 4-way, three-color traffic light, which was installed on the corner of Woodward and Michigan Avenues. Within a year, Detroit drivers were adjusting to a total of fifteen of the new automatic lights.*


Today, even preschoolers know that red means stop, yellow means yield, and green means go. They also know that it is dangerous to go on red. By posting and discussing a simple traffic signal in your school and/or home, you can help everyone, including adults, understand their feelings and better manage their behavior. A three-colored traffic light parallels the three rules for happiness that we talk about in *Growing Up with a Bucket Full of Happiness*. STOP when you're angry so you don't dip into a bucket. Then, YIELD to take time to think, which is using your lid. Finally, GO when you can be a bucket filler with your words and actions.

If I ask either children or adults, "When do you think you would be most likely to dip into someone else's bucket with a nasty remark or uncaring comment?", the answer usually is, "When I'm upset or angry about something or if someone has dipped into my bucket." Those answers are probably true for most of us, including me. When we are angry or upset and don't stop to think carefully before we speak, we usually say something that's not very bucket filling. However, if we can remember to stop the conversation and even call out, "Red Light!" when tempers are flaring, we may be able to stop a verbal or physical assault before it's expressed. Learning to stop, calm down, and think whenever we are upset or angry is an important social-emotional skill to practice and develop. We are now offering a traffic light poster which illustrate three important steps to follow when emotions threaten to boil over.



 **STOP** when you're angry; take a deep breath.

 **YIELD** to think about what you can do.

 **GO** when you are ready to be a bucket filler.

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I wish someone had taught me these life-enhancing skills as a child. I wish I had learned that it's okay to feel angry and, when I did feel anger, there were steps I could take to diffuse a volatile situation.

The traffic light would have been a wonderful way to learn to 1) **stop** when I felt angry and keep me from dipping, 2) **yield** while I used my bucket's lid to calm down, and 3) **go** after I'd thought about how I could speak in a respectful, bucketfilling manner.

The familiar traffic signal is easily understood and a great teaching tool. Learning to **stop**, **yield**, and **go** are skills that can be taught, practiced and mastered in school and at home. Using these three steps throughout our lives can set us safely on the highway to a wonderful bucketfilling journey free of collisions or costly repairs.

Go to shop.bucketfillers101.com to order your posters at \$2.95 each.

Congratulations, Sam!

Sam Solomon, of Venice, Florida, is our bucket filler of the week. You have a book coming your way. Every bucket filler is a winner. Encourage your friends to get their buckets filled by subscribing to our free e-newsletter at www.bucketfillers101.com

Words of Wisdom

"My best friend is one who brings out the best in me." — Henry Ford