



TOPIC: TIME MANAGEMENT

TITLE: THE BIG ROCKS

September 7, 2000

I have received this story on several occasions and always appreciate its message. One challenge many of us face centers around time management. There just seems to be too much to do in too little time. The end result is that we often don't get the things done we'd like to, because we are managing all the other urgent tasks which need our attention. So, I'd like to pass along this story to help remind us of the importance of being sure we put the right things first.

One day an expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students, and to drive home a point, used an illustration those students will never forget.

As he stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers, he said, "Okay, it's time for a quiz." Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed Mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. He produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into a jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?"

He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped in some gravel and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the space between the big rocks. He asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was on to him and replied "Probably not." "Good" he answered.

He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping sand in the jar and it filled all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is the jar full?" "No", the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good".

Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to put it in until the jar was filled to the brim. He looked at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager student raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in!"

The speaker replied, "No, that's not the point. The truth is if you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all."

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This story begs the question: What are the "big rocks" in your life? It might be your family, career, spirituality, friend/relationships, a hobby or a dream. Remember to put these big rocks in first or you'll never get them in at all. Although these things aren't usually urgent - in other words, they aren't demanding your attention like some other things in your life, however, if you don't intentionally allocate time to them, you won't ever achieve them. If you fill your life with the little things - the sand, the gravel, and the water - you might make your life easier in the short-term, but you'll never have the time you need to spend on the truly important things.

My challenge for you this week is to identify your big rocks and make some commitments as to how you will intentionally allocate time for them.

What are the big rocks in your life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

In order to achieve them, what are the daily/weekly tasks I need to do?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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Lastly, in order to make time for these items, what will I remove, or stop doing?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.