

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, time for a quiz."

He then pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouth mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one by one, into the 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. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar, causing pieces of gravel to work themselves in and shook the jar, causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the space between the big rocks.

Then he asked the group once more, "Is this jar full?" By this time the class was on to him. "Probably not," one of them answered.

"Good!" he replied. He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand into the jar and it went into all of the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked, "Is this jar full?"

"No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good!". Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim.

Then the expert in time-management looked at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

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

"No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth is this illustration teaches us this: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all. What are the big rocks in your life? Your children. Your loved ones. Your education. Your dreams. A worthy cause. Teaching or mentoring others. Doing things that you love. Time for yourself. Your health. Your significant other.

Remember to put these BIG ROCKS in first, or you'll never get them in at all. If you sweat the little stuff (the gravel and the sand) then you will fill your life with the little things you worry about that don't really matter, and you will never have the real quality time you need to spend on the important stuff (the big rocks).

Reflect on this short story, ask yourself this question: What are the "big rocks" in my life?

Make sure those are in your jar first.