

Stones, Pebbles or Sand - What do you have in Jar of Your Life?

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I came across this story (and several other versions of it) a couple of years back and it struck me hard. I am sure you would like this story because it brings across the same message as the movie "Click". I hope you will spend a little time to read this. Here it goes:

One day, an old professor of the School of Public Management in France, was invited to lecture on the topic of "Efficient Time Management" in front of a group of 15 executive managers representing the largest, most successful companies in America. The lecture was one in a series of 5 lectures conducted in one day, and the old professor was given 1 hour to lecture.

Standing in front of this group of elite managers, who were willing to write down every word that would come out of the famous professor's mouth, the professor slowly met eyes with each manager, one by one, and finally said, "We are going to conduct an experiment".



From under the table that stood between the professor and the listeners, the professor pulled out a big glass jar and gently placed it in front of him. Next, he pulled out from under the table a bag of stones, each the size of a tennis ball, and placed the stones one by one in the jar. He did so until there was no room to add another stone in the jar. Lifting his gaze to the managers, the professor asked, "Is the jar full?" The managers replied, "Yes".

The professor paused for a moment, and replied, "Really?"

Once again, he reached under the table and pulled out a bag full of pebbles. Carefully, the professor poured the pebbles in and slightly rattled the jar, allowing the pebbles to slip through the larger stones, until they settled at the bottom. Again, the professor lifted his gaze to his audience and asked, "Is the jar full?"

At this point, the managers began to understand his intentions. One replied, "Apparently not!"

“Correct”, replied the old professor, now pulling out a bag of sand from under the table. Cautiously, the professor poured the sand into the jar. The sand filled up the spaces between the stones and the pebbles.

Yet again, the professor asked, “Is the jar full?” Without hesitation, the entire group of students replied in unison, “NO!”

“Correct”, replied the professor. And as was expected by the students, the professor reached for the pitcher of water that was on the table, and poured water in the jar until it was absolutely full. The professor now lifted his gaze once again and asked, “What great truth can we surmise from this experiment?”

With his thoughts on the lecture topic, one manager quickly replied, “We learn that as full as our schedules may appear, if we only increase our effort, it is always possible to add more meetings and tasks.”

“No”, replied the professor. The great truth that we can conclude from this experiment is:

If we don't put all the larger stones in the jar first, we will never be able to fit all of them later.

The auditorium fell silent, as every manager processed the significance of the professor's words in their entirety.

The old professor continued, “What are the large stones in your life? Health? Family? Friends? Your goals? Doing what you love? Fighting for a Cause? Taking time for yourself?”

What we must remember is that it is most important to include the larger stones in our lives, because if we don't do so, we are likely to miss out on life altogether. If we give priority to the smaller things in life (pebbles & sand), our lives will be filled up with less important things, leaving little or no time for the things in our lives that are most important to us. Because of this, never forget to ask yourself,

What are the Large Stones in your Life? And once you identify them, be sure to put them first in your “Jar of Life”.

With a warm wave of his hand, the professor bid farewell to the managers, and slowly walked out of the room.

Take care of the large stones first - the things that REALLY matter. Set your priorities. The rest are just pebbles and sand. If you put the sand or the pebbles into the jar first, there will be no room left for the stones.

The same goes for your life. If you spend all your energy and time on the small stuff, you will never have room for things that are truly most important.

Pay attention to the things that are critical in your life. Take time to play with your children. Take your partner out for dinner. Take time to have a chat with your loved ones. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house and give a dinner party.

Sometimes the less important things in life can distract us, filling up our time and keeping us away from what really matters. I encourage you to take a moment and ask yourself, is your jar of life full of sand & pebbles or is it filled with large stones?