

Big Rocks Ceremony

A University Professor was teaching a class in business when he decided to teach his students a lesson in time management. To drive home the point, he conducted the following activity.

He pulled out a one gallon wide mouth jar and sat it on a table in front of the class. He produced about a dozen fist size rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is the 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 of the gravel in and shook the jar causing the pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks.

Then he smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was on to him. "Probably not." one of the students answered. "Good!" the professor replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went in 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 replied, "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up 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 really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!"

"No," the professor replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: 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? To graduate from high school? Earn a degree? Get married? Have a family? Teaching or mentoring others? If you fill your life with so many small, sometimes insignificant things then you may find that you can't deal with the "big rocks" that really should be a priority in your life.

As teenagers, now is the time to get your gallon jar, determine what your "big rocks" will be and put them in place. Decide on what direction you want your life to go. Then as you begin to work on these "big rocks", when the other pieces of gravel, sand, and water begin to fall in on top of you, you will still have a foundation on which to focus and you will be able to better manage all of the other smaller things that come up.

So, tonight as you reflect back on this story, ask yourself this question: What are the "big rocks" in my life? Then, put those in your jar first. . .

(You can actually do a jar with the ingredients in it as described in the ceremony to make a visual impression.)