

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” and he pulled out a one-gallon, Mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. He also produced about a dozen fist-sized 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 this jar full?” Everyone in the class yelled, “Yes.” The time management expert replied, “Really?” He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped some gravel in and shook the jar, causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces among the big rocks. He then asked the group once more, “Is the 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 in the jar and it went into all of the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more, he asked the question, “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 he looked at the class and asked, “What is the point of this illustration?” An 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 it!” “No,” the speaker replied, “that’s not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is 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 – time with your loved ones, your faith, your education, your dreams, a worthy cause, teaching or mentoring others? Remember to put these BIG ROCKS in first or you’ll never get them in at all.” So, tonight, or in the morning, when you are reflecting on this short story, ask yourself this question: What are the ‘big rocks’ in my life? Then put those in your jar first.