

# Rock, Pebble, Sand Story

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## Stephen Covey's Demonstration

Covey had a table set up upon which there was an empty glass jar and three other jars: one containing large rocks, one containing small pebbles, and the last one containing sand. He then stated that the big rocks represented our most important activities. The pebbles represented our less meaningful activities and the sand represented the activities that waste the most time. He stated that most of us focus our attention on the small things in life and so he dumped the pebbles into the jar. He then asked a person to come up to the stand and fill the empty glass container with all three materials. The secretary that was up there put into the jar the pebbles first and then the sand and tried unsuccessfully to put the large rocks in the glass jar, but they would not fit.

After some general guidance from Covey and a fresh set of supplies, the secretary put the big rocks into the empty jar first and then the pebbles and finally the sand and all three materials fit inside the jar. In fact, in another similar demonstration, the facilitator took it another step and put a jar of water into the container after the sand was poured.

Source: [http://www.synergyinstituteonline.com/detail\\_article.php?artid=319](http://www.synergyinstituteonline.com/detail_article.php?artid=319)

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## The Popular, Frequently-Told Version of the Rock, Pebble, Sand Story

A philosophy professor stood before his class with some items on the table in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, about 2" in diameter.

He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks.

He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else.

He then asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "Yes."

"Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The rocks are the important things - your family, your partner, your health, your children -- things that if everything else were lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter - like your job, your house, your car.

The sand is everything else. The small stuff."

"If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued "there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life.

If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take your partner out dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party and fix the disposal.

Take care of the rocks first - the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

(Source Unknown)