

A Story of Priorities and a Jar

Tips for Squeezing More into Your Life

-- By Julie Isphording, former Olympian

The following story is one that's been circulating for awhile. I believe it holds a very important message regarding appropriately setting priorities in our lives.

A professor of philosophy stood before his class with some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a large empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks about two inches in diameter. He then asked the students if the jar was full.

They agreed that it was full.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly and watched as the pebbles rolled into the open areas between the rocks. The professor then asked the students again if the jar was full.

They chuckled and agreed that it was indeed full this time.

The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. The sand filled the remaining open areas of the jar. "Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognize that this jar signifies your life. The rocks are the truly important things, such as family, health and relationships. If all else was lost and only the rocks remained, your life would still be meaningful. The pebbles are the other things that matter in your life, such as work or school. The sand signifies the remaining "small stuff" and material possessions.

If you put sand into the jar first, there is no room for the rocks or the pebbles. The same can be applied to your lives. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are truly important.

Pay attention to the things in life that are critical to your happiness and well-being. Take time to get medical check-ups, play with your children, go for a run, write your grandmother a letter. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, or fix the disposal. Take care of the rocks first – things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just pebbles and sand.

Finding time in the day for fitness or participating in other athletic endeavors should be considered a "rock" for us all. Physiologically, working out releases endorphins in the body. These endorphins are natural pain-relievers produced by the body. This is what gives us the natural high experienced after a workout. This natural high has the potential to positively influence our daily interactions by making us feel better about ourselves. Make fitness a rock solid priority in your life and reap the benefits.