

Time management is a huge issue in our busy, busy world. It seems that more and more households live hectic lives when you meet yourselves coming and going.

How do you find the balance between work, play, family, friends, exercise, church, volunteer activities, kids' activities, work-related activities and personal time? And we can't forget sleep and proper diet. Too many times sleep and eating healthy get shoved aside and the whole cart gets upset when illness, crankiness or the lack of focus subsides.

Priorities change throughout the years. You wouldn't miss a ball game when your kids are involved. But once they're out of the house, it might not be as crucial to make every single one. For some, it takes having a special person you want to go watch. For others, it's enjoyment of witnessing student talent, be it in sports, music, speech, etc. It just depends on priorities.

I started delivering the newspaper to subscribers at Imperial Parkview and Heights when we had a relative there. Now she has moved and I still fit that into my Wednesdays as I developed a passion for my new friends there.

I saw a demonstration recently which really hit home as I struggle to keep up. Picture these four items. A bowl, rocks, pebbles and sand.

The bowl represents the amount of time in a day. The rocks are the key aspects of your life that you need to keep at top priority. The pebbles (small rocks) also represent important parts of your life and tasks that need done but not with as much urgency as the bigger rocks. And the sand represents the extras you enjoy which are very important and make for nice perks, but need limits.

If you fit a given amount of rocks in your day first, the pebbles will slip down easily through the open spaces, then the sand can silt down through the finer openings. They ALL fit in the bowl. But if you start with the sand, all of the rocks and pebbles won't fit. Each represent different things for different people and your rocks can change from day to day.

More and more of our business is handled via e-mail these days be it invoices to pay, newsletters and communication, requests for information and the list goes on. I use the same e-mail address for organizations I'm involved with as well as personal connections.

It's not unusual to start my day with a list of important tasks I need to accomplish. And it's not unusual to just get started on those tasks after others in the office have already gone home. Yes, many of my interruptions are work-related and need to be handled. But do I work night and day and take work home on weekends because I have way too much work to do? Or do I not prioritize what needs my focus first?

God, family, friends and relationships are definitely my constant rocks. However I love my job and many of the benefits that come with it help support my rocks. Therefore tasks with my job become rocks for the day.

After all, if I don't fit them in the bowl and an absolute deadline arrives, I end up sacrificing weekend time from what I want to do with what I have to do. The same is true for the kid who gets his homework done and he's free to play when a friend asks him to go to the park unexpectedly. Life would be sad without some sand in our bowl.

Being realistic also needs to factor in. When I'm feeling overwhelmed and sit down to make a list of what I plan to fit into my week, it finally strikes me. There is no way I can do it all. NO WAY! It might come back to that all important lesson, "Just say no."

People might value exercise or prayer as "sand" for their bowl or not even make either a consideration. Then a health crisis finds them making physical therapy, treatments or prayer

their rocks to recover or cope. Gee, maybe making exercise, healthy choices and prayer time even a pebble in the bowl throughout life might not be a bad idea, before crisis strikes.

Sand items like social media, T.V., Sudoku puzzles and books for entertainment have a definite place in life. But they can rob hours that vanish away. These options are remarkable for the older person and might even be rocks to help pass the time in a day with mental stimulation. But limits are essential for the person who has other tasks to accomplish.

I love the feedback from writing this column but it hasn't been fitting into my bowl. Today, I considered it one of my rocks and I just met success. And that feels good. Now if there's just space for it on the page.

What are your rocks? Give them priority and you might be surprised how contentment and happiness automatically fall into place.

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