

FLEX ENGLISH COMMUNICATION I

Lesson 2 “Rocks, Pebbles, Sand: A Story-bite about the Important Things in Life”

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<https://storlietelling.com/2013/08/07/rocks-pebbles-sand-a-story-bite-about-the-important-things-in-life/>

A teacher walks into a classroom and sets a glass jar on the table. He silently places 2-inch rocks in the jar until no more can fit. He asks the class if the jar is full and they agree it is. He says, “Really,” and pulls out a pile of small pebbles, adding them to the jar, shaking it slightly until they fill the spaces between the rocks. He asks again, “Is the jar full?” They agree. So next, he adds a scoop of sand to the jar, filling the space between the pebbles and asks the question again. This time, the class is divided, some feeling that the jar is obviously full, but others are wary of another trick. So he grabs a pitcher of water and fills the jar to the brim, saying, “If this jar is your life, what does this experiment show you?” A bold student replies, “No matter how busy you think you are, you can always take on more.” “That is one view,” he replies. Then he looks out at the class making eye contact with everyone, “The rocks represent the BIG things in your life – what you will value at the end of your life – your family, your partner, your health, fulfilling your hopes and dreams. The pebbles are the other things in your life that give it meaning, like your job, your house, your hobbies, your friendships. The sand and water represent the ‘small stuff’ that fills our time, like watching TV or running errands.” Looking out at the class again, he asks, “Can you see what would happen if I started with the sand or the pebbles?”

No matter how many times I hear this popular story, which is widely circulated and told in many ways, I am reminded about what is important in my life and work: if I solve the big issues first, the small ones will fall into place, but the reverse is not the case. I have found myself working with teams who focus on the pebbles. They stay very busy, counting tactical accomplishments as successes. But at the end of the day, their work begs the question: “Despite all this activity, what does it mean?” I’ve also fallen prey to petty distractions, like sand, that creep into the extra spaces of my life and paralyze me from moving forward. Some sand helps to cement our boulders, but if we let too much fill our jars, we have no room for the BIG things. So what does this have to do with health and innovation?

EVERYTHING!

As health counselors/coaches, we can share this story to help our clients focus on the most important diet, exercise, and life issues to tackle. Eliminating gluten may not help if their issue