

Remove The Pebbles From Your Life Each Day.

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I heard a quote that stated “If you clear the pebbles from your life each day, then you don’t have to worry about moving mountains.” Have you ever gotten into the habit of putting something down and thinking, I’ll take care of it later? I’ve noticed this thing about my desk. About every month or two, it requires a major overhaul in order to be functional. How does it get this way?

It doesn’t happen in one day, or usually in one week, but little by little, day by day. I get my desk cleaned off with that major overhaul, then tell myself, “It is easy to keep this clean, I’ll just put away everything as soon as I get it. Inevitably, I will leave one paper out (for good reason), then it will lead to another, then to another, finally, I will have the huge pile again that will take me an hour or two to get cleaned up.

So, the question is, does it really save time to put it off until later? It may depend. I may be in a huge hurry to get somewhere and dealing with filing at that moment could make me late. If disciplined enough, I will come back and take care of it shortly afterwards. I don’t see this as a problem generally. On the other hand, if I make a habit out of putting things off until later, and then am never willing to prioritize those tasks, it generally ends up costing me a tremendous amount of time all at once, which I may not be willing to do. I’ve seen some piles in people’s homes or offices pile up to the point where it would take hours, days, or even weeks to clean it up.

I would like to list a couple reasons why I don’t think the “put it off until later approach” works on a general basis. First, as I just discussed, you seem to have to pay the “time” price anyway in the future. The clutter eventually catches up to you and you have to do something about it in order to have a functioning area again. Secondly, it seems that extra time ends up going into looking for things you can’t find because you have so much stuff to go through that is unorganized.

I know that I’ve had several times where I was looking for hours for a particular item that would have been exactly where I was looking for it, had I put it away when I first had the chance. I instead determined to “deal with it later.” This time tends to add up very quickly, depending on how many things you have taken the “I’ll deal with it later” approach to. Well, later usually comes, and it often comes at the most inconvenient times.

I find that when I do put forth the effort to “remove the pebbles” in the moment, I feel better, I seem to have more time, and I tend to have less stress. I also enjoy being in a space that is clean and organized and it seems to clear my mind.

This doesn’t just apply to physical things, but may be even more important in terms of daily problems we face. These day to day problems in marital relationships, communication patterns, parenting styles, or daily routine can largely impact our life’s satisfaction and success. I have heard that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of intervention. I’ve seen this in my life so many times. When I take a moment to apologize, rather than just wait, it often saves me hours

of trying to explain myself later after the hurt has gone on for some time. Sometimes, a little gesture or attempt to go out of my way has saved days of work and effort that may have been required in order to repair the damage that could have been done.

When I was training for the St. George Marathon in 2008, I was training more and harder than I had ever trained for a marathon in my life. About a month before the marathon, I was running with my son up in the mountains in Kaysville, Utah when I noticed a sharp pain in my arch. I thought it was a sticker at first, but then recognized that it was a pain inside my foot. I determined to keep running and deal with it later. I thought maybe I would just take a few days off and begin running again. I did so and it came back from time to time while I was still preparing for my marathon.

About 3 days before the marathon, I went out for a 4 mile run in the pair of shoes I had bought specifically for the marathon, because they were so light, and my arch hurt so bad I was limping the last 2 miles. This was not good. I spent the next 2 days searching on the internet for short term solutions for arch problems and talking with shoe specialists about what I could do to still run. I was just hopeful I could run given I was limping 3 days earlier.

So, I did end up running and was able to run effectively, with only mild pain, during the race, meeting my goal of 3:15:05, just under the time needed to qualify for the Boston Marathon. I was happy, but now had to deal with my injury as I knew I still had arch problems that needed attention, probably made worse by another 26 miles being put on them. It took several months of stretching, exercising, using different shoes, trying different things before my arches were able to heal and for me to run again. I hated the experience of getting back out of shape while they healed as I just wanted to keep running.

The main point I try to make with this story is that had I put a little time into going to a shoe or foot specialist when I first noticed the pain, got some good foot supports, maybe taken a little more time to recover up front, I may have saved myself a tremendous amount of time and energy later on. I even had the thought when I first had the pain that maybe I should go talk to someone or check out getting different shoes, but I was too busy and thought, I'll deal with it later. My price was a few months recovering, but many prices can be much greater, and may seem like moving mountains, if we put it off for later. I'll take the pebbles any day.