

The third chapter of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* is about Habit Three — Put First Things First. To Put First Things First, one has to do the important things first. Similar to how the second habit had hinted to the habits building off one another, Covey directly states that Habit 1 and 2 are prerequisites for Habit 3. I remember reading one of Covey's other books, *The Seven Habits of High Effective Teens*, in middle school. One thing that stuck with me from discussing Habit 3 back then was a video that came from someone who had studied Covey's books and did a seminar at a convention for educators. The speaker started with putting multiple small rocks in a clear container, these rocks represented the non-important things in life. Then, the speaker put in bigger rocks until soon the container ran out of room and there were multiple big rocks left, these rocks represented the important things in life. The speaker then took everything out and started over, putting the big rocks in first this time and then the smaller rocks. Though the exercise seemed simple, it carried an important message that putting important things first would leave space for the smaller, more leisurely things in life, while doing the opposite would not leave room for all of the important things.

This is a big part of what the third chapter talks about. According to Covey, at all times we live in one of four quadrants of urgency and importance. Urgency means that things have to happen right in the moment, while importance means that the given subject works toward a specific life goal, motivation, or value. Quadrant I is when things are urgent and important such as a crisis, upcoming deadlines, or, something I personally struggle with, procrastination. Quadrant II is when things are important but not urgent such as prevention, building, and planning. This is a Quadrant that I struggle to be in because I do not plan or prevent well, as stated before I tend to procrastinate instead. Quadrant III is when things are urgent but not important such as phone calls, meetings, or anything that others need you to do that are not

necessary for you to achieve your life goals. Quadrant IV is when nothing is urgent or important such as leisure activities. I spend a lot of time in Quadrants I, III, and IV, due to procrastination and the inability to say “no.”

To work on getting into Quadrant II, I need to focus on management and learning to say “no.” Managing is choosing what roles you have are more important than others and organizing your life to fit those roles based on importance. For instance, right now, my main role is being a student, so my life should be organized based on that role. This is something I know I need to get better at as I tend to procrastinate instead. Learning from Covey’s book, I need to create a weekly plan and a long-term plan and try to stick to those as closely as possible. I already started typing a two-week to-do list every week in order to stay on track, and I need to try to stick to it better. Saying “no” is more difficult for me. I relate heavily to Covey’s story of his wife. Similar to how she had a hard time saying “no” to the leadership role she was asked to take on, I have a problem saying “yes” to things people ask me to do even if I do not want to. The biggest challenge I face with this is with my parents. They ask me to do things for them production-wise because of my concentration, and I have a hard time telling them I do not have the time to help.

All in all, I know that putting first things first can be difficult, and I also know that doing so is better than letting others or unimportant things control my life as well. As I move forward in life, this is something I want to work on and get better at. I want to be able to live in Quadrant II.