

My Life Areas and Big Rocks

Identifying Your Life Areas and Big Rocks

Picture a jar, a handful of large rocks, some small pebbles, and a pile of sand. Pour in the sand first, followed by the pebbles, and there may not be enough room left for the rocks. But put the rocks in first, let the pebbles settle into the spaces between them, and then add the sand — and everything fits. If the Big Rocks go in first, everything else can find its place around them.

What Are Big Rocks?

The term “Big Rocks” was made famous by author Stephen Covey. Big Rocks are the most important practices in your life that need your time, attention, and care — practices like:

- Regular exercise
- Regular quality time with particular special people in your life
- Prayer
- Torah learning
- Teshuva

When important practices aren’t intentionally prioritised, smaller things — emails, WhatsApps, errands, other people’s requests, and the countless other little things that fill our days — can leave very little time or energy for what matters most. Life can begin to feel scattered and reactive, like something is missing. Left unaddressed for long enough, what started as a small issue can expand into something horrific.

Big Rocks Are Connected to Life Areas

You can categorise your life into different areas — physical health, mental health, relationships, mitzvah observance, and more — and each of these can be further subdivided. Relationships, for example, could include a spouse (or looking for one), children, friends, mentors, and extended family.

It's often helpful to break your life into its different major areas, and then check whether there are Big Rocks in each area that aren't currently being addressed.

Some Common Life Areas

There's no single correct list of Life Areas or Big Rocks that will feel right for everyone. Some commonly identified Life Areas — and some of the Big Rocks associated with them — include:

Physical Health — Exercise, quality sleep.

Mental and Emotional Wellbeing — Making time for what you love (painting, singing, dancing, chess); regularly meeting with whoever is good for your emotional health — a therapist, good friend, or mentor; learning and practicing emuna and bitachon.

Relationships — Regular quality time with the people who matter to you.

Career and Finances — Taking the time to oversee income and expenditure, and plan necessary adjustments.

Contribution to Others — Making regular time to use your abilities, time, and resources to make a difference to other people and the wider community.

Our Relationship with Hashem — Making a practice to talk to Hashem — formally from a prayer book, or informally while driving or standing in a queue; reducing time spent on things that are unholy.

Torah Learning — Meeting regularly with a study partner to learn the next area of Torah that's right for you.

Mitzvah Observance — For example, taking the next step in keeping Shabbos.

Teshuva Between People — Taking the time regularly — especially leading up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur — to acknowledge and put right things that have gone wrong between yourself and others.

Teshuva Between Ourselves and Hashem — Looking honestly at where you've fallen short, what needs to change, and how to repair and strengthen your relationship with Hashem.

1. Look back

Read back through the Life Areas above and the previous ElulTime exercises that you have done, and notice which ideas stand out to you — the dreams that keep coming up, the things that keep tugging at your heart.

2. Make your list

Write down the Life Areas you feel drawn to work on, along with the Big Rocks — the practices — associated with each one, in the chart below.

If a Big Rock comes to mind and you're not sure which Life Area it belongs to, that's fine — just leave the Life Area column blank, or write it in on its own.

A few common life areas, just to get you thinking (not exhaustive):

Physical Health	Mental & Emotional Wellbeing
Relationships	Career & Finances
Contribution to Others	Relationship with Hashem
Torah Learning	Mitzvah Observance
Teshuva Between People	Teshuva Between Ourselves & Hashem

3. Choose your Big Rocks

Once your chart is filled in, read back through it, and imagine you could only make real progress on three to five Big Rocks this year. Ask yourself:

- Which Big Rocks would make the biggest difference to my life?
- Which Big Rocks do I believe Hashem most wants me to focus on?
- Which Big Rocks feel most important right now?

Place an asterisk (*) next to the three to five Big Rocks that matter most right now — those are your priorities for the year.

Remember: this doesn't mean the other things don't matter — you're simply deciding what deserves your attention first.

MY LIFE AREAS AND BIG ROCKS

For example: Life Area: Torah Learning · Big Rock: Study with a partner · Notes: Learn 20 mins Torah each morning.

It's fine to have a Life Area with no Big Rocks in it right now, or a Big Rock with no Life Area yet — write down whatever comes to mind, and leave any blanks you're not sure about.

MY LIFE AREAS AND BIG ROCKS (continued)

