

Families First
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All over the world — across ethnic, cultural and religious divides — many people say having a happy family is a top priority. And yet these same people often see the important relationships in their lives slipping through their fingers like lost dreams.

That's what the Covey Leadership Center discovered in analyzing 125,000 personal mission statements from around the world, created in conjunction with training programs based on *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. That book, published in 1989, has sold more than 11 million copies worldwide and made Stephen R. Covey a household name in the corporate world.

Why do people have less and less time for the things that are important to them?

The answer: "Probably because they're not urgent. They aren't pressing. They don't act on you. You have to act on them," Covey writes in his 1994 book, *First Things First*. He offers the example of filling a jar first with big rocks and then fitting in gravel, sand and water. The point is not that with hard work you can fill in the gaps in your time-managed day. The point is that unless you put the rocks in first — the things that truly are important — you probably won't fit them in at all. And, if you try to later, you'll just make a big mess.

John Covey, who along with his older brother is about to publish a new book for families (*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, due out in October) says the key is to create your family mission statement and then make time for one-on-one relationships, as well as family time.

Easier said than done? Perhaps.

"People get on a guilt trip about this," says John Covey. The fact is, he adds, that no business, sports team or other organization would start out with no plan. That you sometimes diverge from the plan doesn't mean the plan isn't important.

Covey continues: "We don't set up some ideal standard for people to follow.... We want people to keep the end in mind — to be proactive instead of victims or instead of scapegoating or feeling bad.... A lot of what's out there in society and the media is family fatal. We want to help the individual mother or parents or blended family to take leadership in the home and create a beautiful family culture where people learn, play and grow together."

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