



How I Use the Boulder, Rock, and Pebble Analogy in My Recovery

by Matt T.

When I work through the 12 steps, there's an analogy I keep coming back to. It's helped me a lot, especially with Step 1 and Step 8. I think of all my secrets, wrongs, and painful memories as **boulders, rocks, and pebbles**.

Step 1: Writing My Story

In Step 1, when I write out the story of my compulsive sexual behavior—how it started, how it grew, and how it damaged my life—I need to make sure I include **all of my boulders**. These are the biggest, darkest secrets, the ones that still make my stomach turn. If I don't put these in, I'm not being fully honest, and that always comes back to bite me.

I also try to include **most of my rocks**—painful memories and regrets that might not be quite as heavy as the boulders but still weigh me down.

As for the **pebbles**, these are things I've probably already talked about before. If I feel like my story is getting too long or scattered, I'll let some of these go. What works best for me is this simple rule: **all the boulders, most of the rocks, and just a few pebbles**.

Step 8: Making My Amends List

When I get to Step 8 and start writing down everyone I've harmed, I use the same idea. I make sure to list all the **boulders**—the people most deeply impacted by my addiction, like my spouse and kids. These absolutely have to be on there.

Then I look at the **rocks**—family, friends, coworkers, or others who were meaningfully hurt by my actions. I do my best to include most of them.

For the **pebbles**, I use a bit of judgment. Sometimes there are minor situations or people I've wronged in small ways. If it feels important, I'll write them down. If not, I don't force it.

Why I Keep Coming Back to This

I've learned the hard way that if I skip my boulders because I'm ashamed or afraid, I'm not really free. If I leave out too many rocks, I stay stuck with unnecessary guilt. And if I try to list every single pebble, I get overwhelmed and lose sight of what matters most.

So for me, remembering **all boulders, most rocks, and a few pebbles** keeps things balanced. It helps me be thorough and honest, without drowning in the little stuff.