



# FLOOR IT OR BRAKE?

By Greg Wiens

*The Dip: A Little Book That Teaches You When to Quit (and When to Stick)*

By Seth Godin

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You've probably quit something at some point in your life, and the decision may have haunted you: Did I quit the wrong thing? Did I quit too soon or too late? Did I rob myself of a chance at greatness? Seth Godin discusses how to wade through the weightiness of deciding if and when to quit in his book *The Dip*.

*The Dip* is short yet pithy, and is a wonderful primer on when to quit and move on, and when to double your efforts and push through your obstacles. Godin convincingly argues that the most successful people and organizations throughout history have known when to push through the Dip and on to achievement. They worked hard, harder than the rest, so that they went on to capture what they were aiming for.

However, they also knew when the Dip wasn't worth the long term dividends and therefore quit. "The biggest obstacle to success in life, as far as I can tell, is our inability to quit...soon enough," says Godin. He then goes on to say, "The Dip is the reason you're here. It's not enough to survive your way through this Dip. You get what you deserve when you embrace the Dip and treat it like the opportunity that it really is."

It is between these two tensions that Godin vacillates throughout the book. He continually gives the reader handles on when to treat the Dip as an opportunity or as a signal to jump ship. Godin says that one way to determine this is to think through why you want to quit. He posits you should build automatic triggers within your decision-making process that tell you when the costs outweigh the benefits. Failure to do this in advance is a path toward regret should you quit in the midst of a struggle. If you quit due to pain, you are shortchanging yourself and others because of the potentially greater reward on the other side of the Dip. Those of us in ministry understand all too well the temptation of quitting in the face of painful circumstances.

Although stick-to-itiveness is an admirable trait, it can quickly turn to desperation if the product just doesn't work and just isn't catching on. If your target audience doesn't have the buy-in, then abort the mission and re-strategize. Godin puts it this way, "Don't fall in love with a tactic and defend it forever." According to Godin, it is only when you are ready to quit that you are free to discover the whatever-it-takes passion to correct the situation. Shedding your ineffectual approach empowers you to make the big leaps forward. "When the pain gets so bad that you're ready to quit, you've set yourself up as someone with nothing to lose," says Godin. "And someone with nothing to lose has quite a bit of power. You can go for broke. Challenge authority. Attempt unattempted alternatives. Lean into a problem; lean so far that you might just lean right through it."

In the end, enduring pain now will save you from enduring pain later. You should quit if you are in what Godin calls a cul-de-sac or a cliff. A cul-de-sac is when you are in a place that has no possibility of improvement, a dead end. A cliff is where you have run out of resources or face vocational suicide. You have hit an impenetrable wall.

You're at the edge. Don't allow pride to keep you from quitting. If you do, you risk wasting tremendous resources defending something that would heal: your pride.

It should be noted that a cul-de-sac or a cliff is not a Dip. When pain is not worth the reward of working through it, only then should the Dip prompt you to quit. Godin warns against this, saying, "Never quit something with great long-term potential just because you can't deal with the stress of the moment."

Although *The Dip* follows a similar theme as Henry Cloud's [Necessary Endings](#) by Henry Cloud, it approaches the issue from a completely different perspective. Cloud's approach is therapeutic approach with prescriptions that require extensive soul-searching and processing, while Godin is much more brief and matter-of-fact, answering a few questions that pertain to you, your immediate situation and its larger context. He also discusses what to do after you quit. Godin's treatment is much easier to read; Cloud's is more in-depth. Both are very helpful to navigate the tricky waters of quitting, and complement each other very well.

*The Dip* is classic Godin, in that he is able to treat a very in-depth subject in a palatable and simple, but not simplistic manner. Godin breaks down a complex, multi-faceted problem into basic influences and interactions. He does this in a way that allows the reader to understand how to work through pertinent factors to make healthy decisions.

I coach many leaders who face the issues addressed in this small but mighty tome. Too many young leaders have robbed themselves and the others of significant impact because they quit the wrong thing or at the wrong time. On the other hand, many other leaders refuse to quit and thereby squander their life or resources until there's nothing left. Taking the time to page through this book may pay dividends down the road, when you can look back with satisfaction that you did or did not quit.

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