

The long and whining road

Starts are always fun. Everything is new and exciting. The novelty of it all is just thrilling.

Then the prospect of fame and glory is also titillating. Think about signing autographs and taking pictures with strangers in the street. Now that sounds cool!

Between the excitement of the start and the fulfilment of the end there is this huge no man's land of frustration, doubt and uncertainty.

I think it's easy to logically accept the deal with no overnight successes but perhaps it's harder to prepare oneself for just how much hard work, patience and optimism it requires.

10,000 hours is a long time.

It offers plenty of chances to quit.

But enough about the problem let's talk solutions!

To get you through this foggy terrain I think it's worth discussing Seth Godin's 'The Dip'.

'The Dip' is the term Seth coined that describes the lowest point or aspect of a project that has the strongest chance of making you quit.

For example if the project is a New Year's resolution to join the gym then the dip usually comes in February or March when the initial novelty has worn off and your discipline and commitment is being tested.

The thing about the Dip is if you can push through it you can gain enormous benefits. For example Carla is currently struggling to keep up with the work load of her masters.

She just can't do another all nighter.

The benefits to Carla getting through this dip and completing her masters are increased employability, easier job hunts and easier salary negotiations.

So Seth would recommend to Carla to lean into the dip.

Now this doesn't necessarily mean stocking up on coffee to enable all nighters. It can mean wholesale changes.

If Carla pinpoints the biggest contributor to her stress to be the all nighters then...

What if instead of trying to do 300 pages in one night, she did 300 pages in 30 days?

What if she created a habit of writing every day for an hour regardless of the fact that there is no deadline nearby?

Just a small bit of problem solving can alleviate all the stress for Carla and she can breeze her way to graduation and all the benefits a masters brings.

The pitch is unplayable

The majority of sport governing bodies have regulations regarding pitch conditions.

Therefore, on matchday, if the grass is too waterlogged, or if the ground is too frozen, or if there is a hurricane on the way the game is called off.

These regulations are put in place to protect the players.

The thing is, you don't have to be a governing body to apply this concept.

In fact, you might be able to protect yourself by specifying your 'quitting conditions'.

The runner who quits the marathon after breaking her leg is wise.

The runner who continues to run on a fractured femur because he can't bear the shame of being a 'quitter' is going to cause himself excruciating pain and long term damage.

The benefit of writing down your 'criteria for ceasing' is that you save yourself an enormous amount of mental anguish.

If every time your book proposal gets rejected you spend a month wallowing in self pity, agonising over whether you REALLY want to be a published author or not, then you need 'specifications for stopping'.

Quitting conditions make the decision simple.

'I'm thinking of quitting'

'Have the conditions been met?'

'No'

'Well then you continue'

The other thing about crafting 'dimensions for desisting' is that most people don't want to give up.

They want to make it!

So as soon as they write down their quitting conditions they flake into the work! They get off social media and start brainstorming ways to prevent the quitting conditions coming true.

Could you benefit from 'quitting conditions'?

Here are a few examples if you're interested:

If by 2025 I don't have 1,000 followers then I quit.

If I haven't sold a single painting by my 100th painting then that's it I'm done.

If I'm still living with my parents by the age of 40 I will demote my acting career to a hobby and get a full time job as an accountant.

**“I don’t want the acrid taste of not knowing
only the sweetness of certainty” Ethan Hersh**

“Our new Constitution is now established, everything seems to promise it will be durable; but, in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes”

Did you notice when Benjamin Franklin was listing the certainties of life ‘making it’ wasn’t included?

That’s because even with all the time and effort in the world, there’s no guarantee that your dreams will become a reality.

It sounds cruel, but life’s not fair.

It really takes the shine off being an artist doesn’t it?

First you have to put in years and years of hard work and then maybe, just maybe, you’ll stand a chance of achieving a modicum of success.

The overwhelming uncertainty of it all is enough to make you quit here and now!

But I think the solution to this dilemma is as follows:

Let’s say hypothetically that we can see into the future and after years of blood, sweat and tears, you don’t reach the heights you sought.

Will you regret the time spent?

Will you look back on your efforts with bitter disappointment and shame or was it a worthwhile journey?

Whilst you contemplate the above question I thought I would tell you about my YouTube channel.

I've always loved movies and I had long suspected that I was destined to become a filmmaker but was never brave enough to act on this notion.

Until 2018, when I decided to take the plunge and create my first short film.

Since then I have come to the conclusion that filmmaking is not for me. But in my brief amateur career I made 8 short films and 4 short videos.

In total my channel got 642 views.

642.

Spread across 12 videos.

That's an average of 54 views per video!

The typical amateur YouTube channel gets a minimum of 1,000 views per video. I couldn't reach 1,000 views with 12 videos!

Despite this embarrassingly low volume of engagement I'm quite proud of my work and my small filmmaking career.

Because in order to do it I had to leave my comfort zone.

I discovered things about myself I never would have known if I continued to sit on the couch wondering.

I found out I was more resourceful than I thought.

I got raw first-hand experience in decision making, directing others, project management, adapting to constraints and working to a deadline to name a few.

There was no running to a higher up for approval, I was the one doing the approving!

To complete each film I had to wrestle with my fear of judgement, fear of failure and limiting self-beliefs.

I draw great self-confidence from the whole experience.

I agree with Joseph Campbell when he said:

"People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive"

When I was filmmaking I felt nervous and excited but most importantly - I felt alive!

No amount of content consumption can compare with the thrill of creating!

So, to wrap this up, my point is, you don't have to live in Hollywood for you to enjoy your creative endeavours.

Something to consider when mulling over the aforementioned question.