

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

In one of Bill Cosby's earliest comedy routines he imagines a conversation between Noah and God. Noah is not convinced that God is leading him down the right path by commanding him to build an ark. So God says to Noah, "HOW LONG CAN YOU TREAD WATER? God wants Noah to decide if he believes in him or not.

What is it about making a decision that is so paralyzing to so many people? It is the actual decision or is it the afterthought of the responsibility that makes so many quake at the prospect?

What happens to you? Are you a victim of Paralysis by Analysis or are you a Top Gun, able to make decisions by the seat of your pants knowing that you must be ready to respond to all scenarios at a moment's notice?

My Dad was a salesman, pure and simple. The best I ever saw. He had three things you need if you want to succeed in sales or in life for that matter. He had DESIRE - a strong and steady belief in what he was doing and that what he was doing was right for him. He had VISION – a fully complete plan for how he would succeed and how he would follow this plan. And, lastly, he had G.U.T.S. - a **G**enuine **U**nderstanding of a **T**ough **S**ituation. G.U.T.S. is good for those in sales, management or entrepreneurial endeavors.

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G.U.T.S. is fundamental to decision making. Without it, you could underestimate reactions to your decision and not be ready for the next step.

My Dad began his sales career selling residential fire alarms, progressed to selling appliances and found his calling as a leading insurance agent and executive. Every salesman knows the object is to get the prospect to buy. Many times the sales pitch is made but the close is lost because the salesman does not promote the buyer's decision. My Dad had a saying for this, "To not decide, is to decide." So he lived his life that way, for better or for worse. In my eyes he was a Top Gun, positive, swift and agile; able to make a decision and take the consequences. No doubt about it, he had G.U.T.S.

In the last days of his life, my Dad had to make some very difficult choices, choices that really tested his G.U.T.S. His body racked by the ravages of Lymphoma, chemotherapy and radiation treatments that scarred his esophagus, he had to decide whether to walk away and let the inevitable overtake him or keep slugging against all odds like the fighter he had been all his life. He chose life.

I can remember sitting with him in the hospital as bag after bag of the most toxic medicines known to man were slowly dripped into

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the shunt they had installed in his chest. There he sat, my hero, my Top Gun. Still fighting. Still making tough decisions. He could have faltered, held back, even retreated and no one would have blamed him. But he knew he had to do it on his terms. He had more G.U.T.S. in regard to this decision perhaps than any other in his life.

When it was over, and his pain had finally ended, I didn't cry. At first I thought this was strange. Why couldn't I cry at the finality that the man who had been my hero was gone? I would never have the chance to say what I really felt and he would never know how much I loved and admired him, every day of my life. But how could I cry? I wasn't sad or angry. What I was, was awed. Awed that such a strong man could be tested so hard. Awed that although he was brought to the bottom of his reserve that he could muster the resolve to keep on fighting. So, instead of tears, I gave him the smile that he learned to admire as the mark of my Capacity for Tenacity.

My last recollection of my Dad is an audiotape he sent to me spoken in a whispered voice. A shadow betraying the true strength of the man it represented. I still hear that faint voice. Every time I must make a decision, every time I must find my G.U.T.S., it whispers in my ear, "To not decide is to decide."

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Indecision is not only dangerous, it's debilitating. "How long can you tread water?" What can you gain from not deciding? When is enough information, enough information? When will you finally to find your G.U.T.S.?

Decision + G.U.T.S. = Action

Action is the key. To decide is to be in the game. Life like any sport cannot be won from the sidelines. The game is decided on the field of play. Making decisions and preparing for the aftermath of the decision puts you in the game. Your decisions put you in control. The alternative is to have others decide for you. Whether you are a manager, an entrepreneur, or in any of a thousand decision-making positions, how effective can you be if you can't make a decision?

Decision Makers have G.U.T.S.

My challenge to you is the next time you have to make a decision, find your G.U.T.S. and go for it. You won't believe how alive it will make you feel. Pick a shore and swim to it. After all, "How long can you tread water?"

And, that's The Don E. Smith Experience.