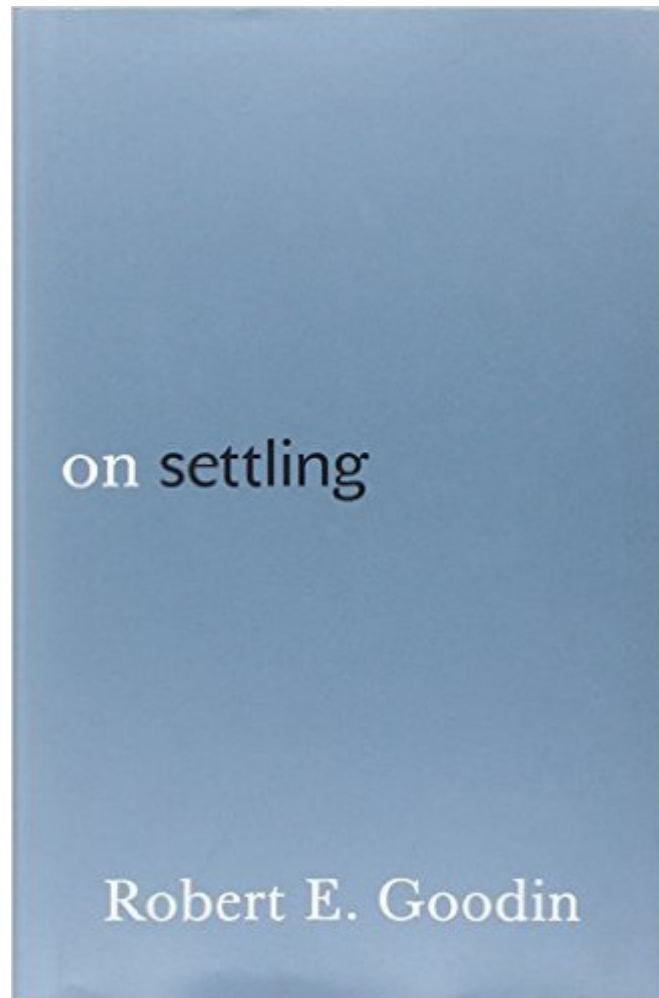


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# On Settling



## Synopsis

In a culture that worships ceaseless striving, "settling" seems like giving up. But is it? *On Settling* defends the positive value of settling, explaining why this disdained practice is not only more realistic but more useful than an excessive ideal of striving. In fact, the book makes the case that we'd all be lost without settling--and that even to strive, one must first settle. We may admire strivers and love the ideal of striving, but who of us could get through a day without settling? Real people, confronted with a complex problem, simply make do, settling for some resolution that, while almost certainly not the best that one could find by devoting limitless time and attention to the problem, is nonetheless good enough. Robert Goodin explores the dynamics of this process. These involve taking as fixed, for now, things that we reserve the right to reopen later (nothing is fixed for good, although events might always overtake us). We settle on some things in order to concentrate better on others. At the same time we realize we may need to come back later and reconsider those decisions. From settling on and settling for, to settling down and settling in, *On Settling* explains why settling is useful for planning, creating trust, and strengthening the social fabric--and why settling is different from compromise and resignation. So, the next time you're faced with a thorny problem, just settle. It's no failure.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 128 pages

Publisher: Princeton University Press (September 16, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0691148457

ISBN-13: 978-0691148458

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,598,779 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #703 in [Books > Law > Philosophy](#) #1097 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Social Philosophy](#)

## Customer Reviews

*On Settling* is a great little book. It gives us readers a standard philosophical analysis of a common term that we all use, settling. The book's main virtue is that Goodin is able to use conceptual analysis to show us (successfully, in my mind) that settling is much deeper than our common thoughts on it, and is something to aim for, not avoid. Settling may take a variety of forms (e.g.

settling on vs. settling up), but it actually provides us with the freedom to pursue those things that are meaningful to us, particularly as we face too many commitments and too little time. As he notes early on, settling is often considered a negative choice, something we're forced to do that isn't in our best interest. It's clearly not our top choice. But Goodin's definition is both functional and enlightening; to settle is to commit fully to a decision, but not permanently. Settling requires that we stay with a course of action, but leave open the option to reconsider and revise our choices after some extended period of time. Goodin contrasts settling with striving, which can commit us to endlessly aiming for the best option. The quest to maximize our choices leaves many decisions reconsidered, and therefore unsettled. But there is freedom which comes with not burdening ourselves with additional information, and the added difficulty of reopening a decision we've made. At some point, we must commit to a choice. This freedom redirects our focus to things that deserve our attention, and is particularly valuable for longer-term commitments in our lives. In this way, his approach is very pragmatic; most of us are pluralists when it comes to what we care about, and without settling on at least some decisions, we face gridlock if we can't commit our attention to what's important.

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