



12 Steps of Self-Leadership: The Difference Maker's Guide to Living and Leading on Purpose

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This compelling work by two leadership coaches offers a path toward significant self-improvement.

In *12 Steps of Self-Leadership*, leadership coaches Doug Lester and Cheryl Lester offer a detailed, self-directed, and engaging plan for individuals “who are ready to live and lead at new levels of engagement.”

The very notion of self-leadership stands to both intrigue and intimidate, as it requires strong doses of self-awareness, the ability to rise above weaknesses, and the desire for personal excellence. Thankfully, Doug and Cheryl Lester, life and business partners whose book is a product of their leadership coaching practice, lay out a process for self-leadership that is both logical and easy to follow.

The authors acknowledge that the concept of twelve steps is not original. Their approach is influenced both by the twelve-stage hero's journey (as identified by Joseph Campbell) and the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. They organize their leadership steps into four sections: Invitation (Steps 1-3), Exploration (Steps 4-5), Preparation (Steps 6-7), and Application (Steps 8-12). Steps are described in short chapters with parallel structure: chapters begin with relevant poems, overviews called “Fast Tracks,” explanatory texts about the steps themselves, action items and questions labeled “Stepping Stones,” and “Travel Tips”—advice for effective implementation. The highly organized content keeps the reader on track through all twelve steps.

This approach is presented as unique for its inclusion of “psychology, spirituality, science, and business practice in an integrated journey,” and the book effectively weaves together all of these elements, making for engaging reading. The tone of the text is consistently positive, encouraging, and uplifting—the authors shine as coaches. Steps are well-paced, the writing is cogent, and the design of the book, which features subheads, graphics, and callouts, facilitates easy reading. Helpful suggestions of titles for further reading and extensive notes are included.

The book employs quite a bit of jargon, such as “Difference Making Quotient,” “SoulDNA,” and “Self, Inc.” This can be distracting, though the authors acknowledge their special lingo early in the book—they call it “travel jargon” and provide a glossary of the main terms they use. The text also suffers some from overdependence on its structural elements. At times, steps seem a bit artificial and too finely drawn. In the invitation section, for example, the three steps, “The Birth of Awareness,” “Doorway to Possibility,” and “Crossing the Threshold,” seem only subtly different from one another, and are perhaps unnecessarily delineated. There also seems to be quite a lot of descriptive language that rationalizes each step before actual action items are presented.

Still, neither of these two minor weaknesses should distract from the noble intent and overall quality of the book. Individuals who are seeking significant self-improvement and are willing to do the work to achieve it should find *12 Steps of Self-Leadership* to be a thorough and actionable plan.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (February 16, 2016)

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