



Unit 1

Introduction to Self-Leadership

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Define self-leadership and what it means on an individual level
- ✓ Assume responsibility for your results by understanding who you are, what you want, and how to reach your goals

Unit 1

Introduction to Self-Leadership

What is Self-Leadership?

Defining Self-Leadership

Self-leadership is about choosing who we are, what we do, and who we become. It doesn't advocate for a selfish approach to get what we want at any costs. It also recognizes that things do not always come to us easily but that our environment is created through us making choices and creating opportunities and circumstances.

The world, with its reliance on technology and inter-dependent economies, has become a place that leverages knowledge, meaning the things we learn can become obsolete very quickly. What remains constant is that we have to manage ourselves effectively within these complexities and ongoing evolution in order to overcome obstacles, to renew and refresh ourselves, and to fully participate in our own lives.

Self-leadership is not about managing others, although self-leaders make great managers and leaders. This means that this course will not be focused on leading others, but rather about leading yourself.

In a typical look at external leadership, your manager gives you directions, sets expectations, and tells you when something is due. If they are a consultative manager, they may ask you how you would like to get the work done, while still defining what the end result will be. A self-leader scans their own environment, recognizes what they could be doing, and does it.

Let's say that a supervisor says to you that sales are down and you need to increase your results by 10% in the next quarter. A consultative supervisor would probably ask you how you could achieve those results. The self-leader sees that sales are down and devises a plan of action without the supervisor saying anything.

Four Pillars of Self-Leadership

Self-leaders share several key characteristics, which we have organized in a model of four pillars.



Test your knowledge
Define three attributes for each pillar.

Knowing Who You Are

Knowing What You Do

Knowing What You Need to Learn

Using What You Know

Knowing Who You Are

Creating a Personal Vision Statement

If you want to feel like you're getting more out of life, then we recommend that you set a personal vision statement. This will then help you set short and long term goals, which should influence your daily plan. All self-leaders need to know what they want from life and to have a plan to get there. You can think of it like a pyramid:



There are three important steps to creating your personal vision.

Step One: Identify Your Values

The list below reflects some common values. Choose the ten that are most important to you as a person (meaning that they apply both at work and at home). You can customize the wording, or add your own to the list.

Ability to make decisions and implement them	Ability to persuade and influence others	Achieving excellence
Achieving fame and recognition	Adventure and excitement	Behaving ethically
Being challenged by pressures and deadlines	Being organized and dependable	Being skilled and capable
Building a family	Building meaningful relationships with others	Competition with others
Contributing to society	Cooperation with others	Demonstrating expertise
Diversity in daily tasks	Doing something meaningful	Efficient and effective
Enjoying what you do	Environmental rights	Establishing a reputation
Expressing creativity	Feeling excited and stimulated by life	Feeling independent
Feeling of belonging and community	Feeling of inner harmony	Feeling of patriotism
Financial security	Financial wealth	Free speech/human rights
Freedom to set your own pace and goals	Having a feeling of security	Having power and control
Having privacy	Helping those in need	Religion and/or spirituality
Leading others to success	Moving at a fast pace	Moving at a slow pace
Being productive	Reliability	Self-development
Sense of accomplishment	Serving the public	Spontaneity
Truth and integrity	Working as part of a team	Working individually

We cannot focus on too many things at one time and remain effective, which is essential for self-leaders. Look at the ten values you selected and select the five that are most important to you. Cross the others off. Be firm with yourself if you need to be. Remember, you are focusing on what is really important to you.

Next, reduce the list to just three values. These are the things at your very core. Cross the other two off your list. Put circles around the three items that are your core values.

Step Two: Define Your Values

Now, outline what success for each of those values would look like.

Value One

Value Two

Value Three

Step Three: Put It All Together

Finally, bring the three statements together into one paragraph. You may feel that you need to go back and re-evaluate your values, or you may want to re-work some sentences to create what is meaningful to you. That's OK! Above all, this should be a reflection of your innermost thoughts and a roadmap for how you would like to conduct your life.

Use the space below to write out your vision statement.

Identifying Dreams and Setting Goals

Identifying Your Dreams

Once you have a good understanding of where you want to go, it's time to sketch out what that might actually look like.

What areas of life do you want to set goals in?

These areas should tie in with your vision statement. If not, evaluate it. Does it really reflect who you are?

In our example above, our vision statement was:

"In my life, I would like get the most out of each day by being as productive as possible. For me, being productive means feeling good about what I have accomplished at the end of the day. It is important to me to do this in a way that allows me to make enough money that I feel secure and able to get the things that I both need and want. As well, I need to feel challenged in my life. I like overcoming new problems and having new experiences."

My specific dreams might include:

- Set up an organized work space at the office.
- Start my own consulting business.
- Learn how to do yoga and practice it daily.
- Climb Mount Everest.

Now, clearly some of these are achievable in the short term while others will take longer. Some will obviously take more work than others.

SPIRIT

Each objective should be broken down into several small, achievable goals that will help you get where you want to go. Good goals should have SPIRIT!

Specific

Be specific about what you want or don't want to achieve. The result should be tangible and measurable. "Get organized" is pretty ambiguous; "Organize my desk and filing cabinet" is specific.

Prizes

Reward yourself at different points in the goal, particularly if it's long-term. If your goal is to establish a consulting business, you might purchase a piece of artwork for your new office after you have written your business plan and discussed it with your accountant.

Individual

The goal must be something that you want to do. If your parents want you to become a doctor and you have no interest in medicine, you're not going to want to work towards the goal.

Review

Review your progress periodically. Does the goal make sense? Are you stuck? Do you need to adjust certain parts of it? Could you work with a coach?

Inspiring

Frame the goal positively. Make it fun to accomplish. You could make a poster of the end result, frame it, and post it on the wall.

Time-Bound

Give yourself a deadline for achieving the goal. Even better, split the goal into small parts and give yourself a deadline for each item.

Writing Tips

Use action verbs in your goals, like:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add ● Arrange ● Assemble ● Build ● Carry ● Choose ● Collect ● Compute | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Count ● Demonstrate ● Describe ● Distribute ● Draft ● Explain ● Identify ● Initiate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Label ● List ● Plan ● Rewrite ● Select ● Supervise ● Train ● Transform |
|--|--|---|

Setting Ourselves Up For Success

One of the things that makes self-leaders stand out from the crowd is that they are very serious about **being effective**. They know their goals and they don't let them slip for very long if things get off track.

For some of us, we can be effective and keep on track with our goals quite efficiently. Other times, it helps to have an **accountability partner**. All of us can benefit from accountability support because we can get pulled into projects or invited to take on more commitments than we can really manage at one time. That partner can help you to say no and then stick with it, if needed.

If we look at the success of **programs** such as Weight Watchers, Herbal Magic, or other healthy eating and diet programs, a large part of the reinforcement comes from the way in which the programs are designed. Clients visit the program leader at least once a week and can visit daily if they need to. They receive encouragement, rewards, and support at each of those meetings. In addition, group sessions and support from other individuals help dieters to stay connected to the program. An accountability partner will help you take that support even further. Sometimes they are just waiting to be asked to help!

Have a look at your goals. Which ones could you use some help with? Select one goal that you know will be easier for you to achieve if you have someone to talk to about it from time to time. Then, write down who that person might be. Your accountability partner might be a workplace mentor, a career counselor, your partner, a good friend, or just about anyone that is supportive, encouraging, and will provide you with a bit of a push when you need one.

Record your ideas for building accountability into your goals.

Change Management

Control and Change

Change expert **Daryl Conner** lays out the human reaction to change like this:



Test your knowledge

Now that we are aware of each phase, how can we use this awareness to help us manage change? Use the space below to record ideas for each phase.

People have a need for control.

The need for control can be met by dictating or at least anticipating their future.

Expectations are established based on what can be dictated or anticipated.

If reality matches expectations, then you feel in control. If reality does not match expectations, then you lose that sense of control.

Knowing What You Do

Your Behavior

We can talk about ourselves in terms of self-leadership and set up a plan, but as the saying goes, “The proof is in the pudding.”

When you make a series of decisions about what you intend to do, and you start doing them, your behavior is in line with and supporting your intention. If you say you will do something and then allow yourself to be distracted, or you lose the commitment to a particular goal, then your behavior is not supporting your stated intention.

In order to keep your behavior on track, we encourage you to leverage the teaching of Christopher Neck and Charles Manz in their excellent book *Mastering Self-Leadership: Empowering Yourself for Personal Excellence, 6th Edition*. They write about the power of positive and negative cues in our environment.

Negative cues are things that distract or stop you from doing the things you want to be doing. If you want to cut down on the amount of time you spend watching television, but you have a 52 inch screen and 130 channels, you have a negative cue set up. The temptation to turn the television on and then start scanning programs or flipping channels is very evident. On the other hand, having a smaller screen, fewer channels, or a stack of tempting books next to your favorite chair can help distract you from the television.

Positive cues are things that influence you to do things that meet your goals. That stack of books handy when you sit down to relax, an ergonomic chair to work from, or a good long distance plan when you need to be making a lot of calls, are all positive cues. If your work involves a lot of driving, then keeping your car clean and in good shape is another positive cue. Positive cues can also include calendars with good scheduling programming, reminders, sticky notes, task lists, and being with people who are reminders of your desired behaviors.

Test your knowledge

Answer the following questions about your behavior, the way that it exists today.

What good habits do you have with using schedules and task reminders?

What specifically could you do to improve your attention to tasks?

List any negative cues at work and at home that are reinforcing behaviors you don't want.



What specifically can you do to eliminate or reduce negative cues at home and work?

List positive cues at work and at home that are encouraging the behaviors you want.

What specifically can you do to increase positive cues?

Do you need help for this? Who can you enlist for help?

Lifelong Learning

As you may have already figured out, **lifelong learning** means that we recognize and appreciate that learning does not stop when we leave school. With the rapid advances that technology makes, our international relationships, and global economies, the ability to learn and continue to seek knowledge are essential aspects of life today. Lifelong learning is part of self-leadership; it is a commitment by self-leaders to seek knowledge continuously.

Employers demonstrate their own appreciation for lifelong learning when they write up a job posting that includes equivalencies, with statements like, “A university degree or equivalent is required.” This demonstrates that while qualifications are valued, so is the learning that comes away from school.

If you commit to lifelong learning, you will keep your finger on the pulse of things that are changing and developing in your environment and around the world. This doesn’t mean that you are restricted in what you learn, either. No matter what your field of work or study is, your value and your understanding of the world increases as you learn about all kinds of subjects. Geography, geology, anthropology, music, art, sports, history, languages, business, technology, agriculture, and cooking will all enrich what you know, whether you work in a broad area such as science, or a narrower one such as micro-brewed beer.

In his book *The Outliers*, **Malcolm Gladwell** describes how people become successful at what they do through the value of practice. He proposes the theory that it takes about 10,000 hours of practice to master something, whether it is a sport, music, or academic field. Human nature is for people to look at successful people and say, “Wow, she sure lucked out,” or, “He did that so easily.” These statements are short-sighted as we know that success and mastery do not normally come easily: they require attention, learning, and plenty of practice.

Self-leadership does not mean that you can create absolutely anything for yourself. Although it might seem like a nice ideal, it just isn’t realistic. Most of us do not wield the power to change economies, influence politics, stop weather disasters. We do, however, have the ability to choose our behavior and to lead ourselves.

Test your knowledge

My goals for learning and development include the items outlined below.

I am committed to the following in order to meet my learning goals:

The barriers for me achieving these learning goals include:

I will take the following action(s) to reduce or eliminate those barriers:

Additional thoughts on my learning and development goals:

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Blanchard, Ken & Susan Fowler & Lawrence Hawkins. Self Leadership and the One Minute*
- ✓ *Manager: Increasing Effectiveness Through Situational Self Leadership. William Morrow, 2005.*
- ✓ *Bridges, William. Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change (3rd Edition). Da Capo Press, 2009.*