

EACH OF US HAS THE CAPACITY TO LEARN TO LEAD. Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith maintain that leaders are not only born, they are made and can develop the skills to transform their lives and their organizations. In *Learning to Lead*, these leadership experts have created a program that enables students, staff, managers, executives, public servants, and professionals to discover their own leadership voice.

In these pages Bennis and Goldsmith offer the wisdom of world leaders, tools for self-assessment, and exercises for building leadership skills. These lessons enable readers to recognize false leadership myths, translate failures into springboards for creativity, and communicate personal visions that inspire others to produce extraordinary results.

Now in its fourth edition, this best-selling guide includes new material that reflects on current world events and addresses the leadership challenges they pose. An immensely useful workbook and a powerful reformulation of the nature of leadership, *Learning to Lead* is an invaluable guide to driving your own success and inspiring it in others.

"*Learning to Lead* is full of smart, practical thinking on how to unlock the potential for greatness that lies within all of us."

—CATHERINE HOUSER,

Executive Vice President of Human Resources, MTV Networks

"This modern classic by Bennis and Goldsmith gives leaders of every stripe direct access to great mastery from one who knows you perfectly in your highest aspirations — YOURSELF."

—RAZ INGRASCI, President & CEO, Hoffman Institute

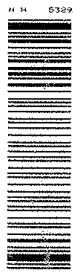
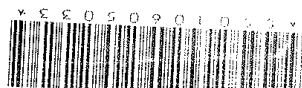
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at the University of California, Berkeley, he was a leader throughout his life. *Still Surprised: A Memoir of a Life in Leadership*, California.

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Becoming a LEADER

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FOURTH EDITION

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# LEARNING TO LEAD

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*A Workbook on Becoming a Leader*

WARREN BENNIS

JOAN GOLDSMITH



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## PREFACE

*Of course, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution—a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law; a Constitution that promised its people liberty, and justice, and a union that could be and should be perfected over time.*

*And yet words on a parchment would not be enough to deliver slaves from bondage, or provide men and women of every color and creed their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States. What would be needed were Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part—through protests and struggle, on the streets and in the courts, through a civil war and civil disobedience and always at great risk—to narrow that gap between the promise of our ideals and the reality of their time. . . . I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together—unless we perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes; that we may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction—towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren.*

—Senator Barack Obama

“A More Perfect Union,” speech on patriotism, delivered March 18, 2008

It has been eighteen years since we first published *Learning to Lead* and although we have witnessed many changes during that time, we have never

turbulent times as well as personal upheavals in our daily lives. The leaders of today who meet challenges both on the international stage and in their own communities have certain clear and identifiable qualities.

They are both reflective and action-oriented. They understand that collaboration produces the most creative and effective outcomes. They take pleasure in encouraging others to succeed and flourish. They make decisions even when all the data are not available. They are not afraid to refrain from action when restraint seems warranted. They generate and sustain trust, and are purveyors of hope, while not fanning unrealistic expectations. They encourage transparency and eschew the use of fear. They are wholly and actively people of principle. They find joy and fulfillment in solving problems. They consistently discourage “personality cults” and shy away from monuments to their achievements. They seek to learn, for the sheer pleasure of it. They are committed to shaping the learning of others, especially those who are in most need of a chance to learn. They prepare the ground of acceptance for what has not yet been imagined, a trait especially important in an age as fluid and uncertain as ours. They are imaginative as well as practical. They relish diversity and they are instinctively compassionate toward those with whom they differ.

You, our reader, may feel we are asking too much of you when we suggest that you strive to match these leadership attributes. But if you elect to do so, we promise you that you will ennoble your life and increase your joy in living it. We are each longtime students of leadership and have found the learning process both challenging and satisfying.

Warren was dramatically confronted with the demand to be a leader as one of the youngest lieutenants in the U.S. army in the European Theater during World War II. He not only led his men into combat but sought to guide foot soldiers toward an understanding and appreciation of the values they were defending with their lives. His leadership lessons emerged during his stint as university president and, more recently, in his capacity as Distinguished Professor at the University of Southern California and Chair of the Board of Advisors

seeking and engaging the highest offices in corporations, city governments, Congress, and presidential administrations provided opportunities for Warren to share the lessons he learned and the wisdom he gathered.

Joan was shaped as a leader by the civil rights struggles in Chicago in the 1960s and, later, during the desegregation of Boston's public schools. As a faculty member at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education she confronted leadership challenges in attempts to reduce racial and gender discrimination among students and staff. Her leadership lessons were hard-won; as a founder of Cambridge College, she learned strategies for encouraging women and professionals of color as successful leaders in positions they had previously been denied.

As we both to reflect on leadership in this fourth edition of *Learning to Lead*, we invite you to join us in gaining new insights in a critical effort to make a difference in troubled times.

## A Time of Crisis

In the beginning of this new century, the deck has been shuffled and wildcards have been added over and over again. Changing rules have turned our world topsy-turvy, bringing dramatic new players to the stage.

Consider, for example, the change that occurred in Philadelphia, Mississippi, the small community where in 1964 the Ku Klux Klan killed three civil rights workers in one of the era's most infamous crimes. Forty-five years later, in 2009, the mostly white populace of this city elected a black mayor, James A. Young, to lead them. Recently the Xerox corporation announced that their first female CEO, Anne Mulcahy, an anomaly in corporate leadership herself, had retired and replaced herself with Ursula Burns, the first African-American woman to lead a corporation of this size.

On the international scene, China has embraced entrepreneurship and other forms of capitalism and has emerged as a player, fiercely contending with India to be the premier "emerging market." The European Union is now a global economic force, replacing the franc and deutsche mark with the Esperanto of European currencies, the euro. And Latin American leaders, having emerged from very poor communities and previously unempowered ethnic minorities, are increasingly independent in their political and economic leanings, often shunning the United States and its history of economic and political leadership.

Inside the United States, the rules of the game are in flux. At Google and other giants in Silicon Valley, over 50 percent of engineers are immigrants (primarily from India, China, and Russia) and they are transforming this segment of U.S. industry into the world's leading producer of wealth and new jobs. The American free press is in danger of extinction, as well-respected newspapers including the *Boston Globe* and the *Los Angeles Times* drastically cut editorial and other staff, consider Web-based outlets, and take extreme measures to avoid bankruptcy. In addition, diversity of opinion and reporting assignments have narrowed as media conglomerates buy and sell news organizations to finance capital investments.

The "new economy" that emerged and soared in the 1990s has now crashed. The auto industry and vendors, suppliers, and adjacent industries in the United States are bankrupt or close to it. Once-respected corporate leaders have been accused of unbridled greed and irresponsible manipulation of financial deregulation. The worldwide economic crisis, the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s, has revealed failures in the interlocking system of markets, stock exchanges, investment networks, and banks. Headlines from the *New York Times* scream disaster in graphic terms:

- Bush White House Leaves \$482 Billion Deficit
- Lehman Hit Hard as Talks End
- One Week's Wild Ride: A Vast Economic Bailout as U.S. Acts to Restore Confidence

- Super-Rich Getty Trust to Slash Its Budget 25%
- Asian Investors Fear Aftershocks of U.S. Meltdown
- A Bitter Struggle Over Outsize Pay for Executives
- Central Banks' Lifeline: Huge Loans Attempt to Spur Revival of Lending
- A Fragile, Lonely Existence for Remaining Wall St. Titans: Morgan Stanley Seeks Merger; Goldman Feels Pressure
- Shaken British Leader Gordon Brown Fights to Stay at Helm
- 60,000 Jobs Lost in a Single Day: The Cuts by Firms such as Caterpillar, GM and Home Depot Aren't Likely to Reverse Under a Stimulus Plan
- In the Lap of Luxury, Paris Squirms and Faces Most Serious Setback Since War Broke in 1939
- Forecasters See Fast Recovery; Others Doubt Their Eyesight
- Data Shows Manufacturing Is Suffering in All Corners
- Stocks Rally to Start Year; Will January Be an Omen?

President Obama has labeled abhorrent business practices "shameful and the height of irresponsibility." Joseph Stiglitz, the 2001 Nobel Laureate in economics, estimated that the rate of worldwide unemployment for 2009 could reach 50 million. Mary Schapiro, upon becoming president of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), uncovered spiraling fraud in the billions perpetrated by the corporations her agency was responsible for monitoring. The exposure of the shocking "Ponzi" scheme of once-respected financier Bernard Madoff revealed that he had stolen \$65 billion from a network of trusting individuals, universities, hedge funds, and charitable organizations in phantom investments perpetrated over thirteen years.

These hard-to-believe scandals have continued to unfold in failing world finances. Shortly after the banking and investment giant Citigroup received an initial bailout with U.S. taxpayer funds, its executives allocated \$50 million to purchase a corporate jet. Richard Fuld Jr., the chief executive of Lehman Brothers, who hid and disguised the financial ruin of his company and oversaw the bankruptcy of this once-venerable institution, received \$466 million from 1993

to 2008 in personal compensation and \$62 million in exit pay. Charles Prince, chief executive of Citigroup, who oversaw his bank's near failure, earned \$53 million from 2003 to 2007 and \$40 million in exit pay. James Cayne, chief executive of Bear Stearns, who headed this investment bank as it crumbled and was taken over by the U.S. government in an attempt to save it, earned \$232 million from 1993 to 2007 and \$61 million in exit pay. Equally astonishing was the report from more than two dozen high-ranking Freddie Mac executives that CEO Richard Syron ignored their internal warnings on the danger of sub-prime mortgages and derivatives they gave him as early as 2004. Syron earned \$19.8 million in 2007 as his company was sliding into ruin.

Outrageous amounts of compensation for heads of failing banks are disheartening enough in times of financial despair, but when we realize that these banks misspent the retirement accounts of working people, cost the thin mortgages of poor families, and misspent the scrimped savings of countless millions, we question not only those who greedily took the money but also the board members, consultants, advisors, and government regulators who were complicit in such shameful practices.

Economic failure has impacted once-protected civil service employees who face layoffs and furloughs without pay in state, county, and city governments, and has threatened the stability of big-city public school systems attempting to avoid bankruptcy. Unemployment is at its highest in decades, hiring freezes are mounting, and urban core populations face home foreclosures and an epidemic of youth who are living on the street.

The Los Angeles County food bank that supplies meals for the needy reported delivering 750,000 meals a week in the spring of 2009 for a population swelling with the elderly and a growing number of middle-class families. This figure has ballooned since that date as food supplies diminish. A national deficit threatens social and medical protection for children, the poor, and the elderly. Political conflicts surrounding the adoption of a new U.S. healthcare system have blocked widespread and thorough coverage for needy populations. The income gap between the wealthy and those without hope for minimum subsistence grows daily.

The American Dream is crumbling as those in communities across the country lose their homes, their jobs, and their pensions, and are relegated to living in the street, in the largest numbers since the Great Depression.

Heads of households wonder: Can we remain employed and stabilize our personal finances? Can we feed and clothe our families and ourselves? Can we maintain healthcare coverage and meet mortgage payments? The ruptured economy is particularly painful for rural Americans. They wonder: can we meet fuel prices we cannot afford and can we heat our homes, power our trucks and farm equipment, feed our livestock, transport our children to schools, and take our family members to doctors and drive for errands to grocery and hardware stores. Many are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the everyday requirements of a simple life.

Despite the highest medical expenditures in the world, the United States is currently ranked twenty-ninth in the world in infant mortality rate, tied with Poland and Slovakia and far behind many Scandinavian and East Asian countries. Yet large U.S. pharmaceuticals, insurance companies, and medical conglomerates have strenuously opposed healthcare reform for newborn children.

Technology, that magnificent tool, allows people worldwide to communicate electronically, bringing down walls that once separated nations and facilitating the exchange of ideas among individuals. However, it has not made life safer or more peaceful. Religious fundamentalists have turned the most up-to-date machines to medieval uses. We now live in a world where the suffering of a woman being stoned to death for adultery can be broadcast on satellite TV, where cell phones can be used to detonate bombs and data from confidential financial and health records can be gathered to invade or destroy privacy, and to facilitate widespread identity theft.

Hopelessness is exacerbated when elected political leaders betray the trust of those who put them in office. Rod Blagojevich, governor of Illinois, did so before he was indicted on nineteen counts of corruption, including offering to sell the Senate seat in his state that was vacated by President Obama and engaging in racketeering and fraud for financial gain. Likewise, the governor of

stay attuned to the inner voice that directs them as they fulfill their promise to themselves and others.

## Leaders Embrace Candor

Among the important qualities of leadership there is at least one absolute: Leaders create solutions to problems *only* when they embrace candor and signal that they are willing to listen to unpleasant truths that may be sources of data that will lead to informed decisions.

When President Barak Obama had lunch in the Oval Office with all living past-presidents (George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush, and Jimmy Carter), the *New York Times* (November 10, 2008) reported that he asked his predecessors two key questions: “How do you make sure that you get good information? How do you make sure that people aren’t just telling you what you want to hear?” The soon-to-be-president was prescient regarding his need to know. Leaders rely on others to keep them informed about complex problems, and therefore they must create a climate of candor to get the information necessary to make the best decisions.

Effective leaders weigh the pertinent facts, study options, and are careful to hold their “gut reactions” in check while they are doing so. They ask powerful, challenging questions and test and judge information that may be confusing and frightening. Even when they “kick the tires” and discover information they did not want to hear, they do not shy away from evaluating what they think they know, considering all new data, and continuing their search for that nugget of knowledge that will lead to a viable solution.

Great leaders let it be known that they value candor, refusing to cater to yes-men and -women in their inner circle. They seek those who speak the truth, however hard it may be to hear. And candor goes both ways. Principled naysayers allow leaders to reevaluate their positions and learn from their mistakes. Relevant

information is not merely an executive perk; leaders share it with everyone involved, whether employees in a workforce or citizens of a nation.

Good leaders make people feel that they are at the very heart of things and are counted on to contribute to the success of the enterprise. Obviously there is some information that must be kept to an inner circle, but leaders hold it to a minimum and, to the extent possible, share data that will enable their colleagues to make informed decisions and act responsibly. Those who discover they have been lied to will never trust again. Thus are enemies born.

## New Definitions

The challenges that arise during times of great transition are especially daunting and call for diverse groups of talented people, committed to working together at every level of society and across every organizational hierarchy to tackle complex problems and implement coordinated, strategic solutions for the common good. The most successful leaders invite diverse minds to join them in their efforts. Consider the following shining examples: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Sitting Bull, Mohandas Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, Susan B. Anthony, and Nelson Mandela. One characteristic is common to these towering leaders. It is that they each had willing followers who shared their values and commitments and believed their successes were the natural outcomes of their united efforts.

Even in today’s winning corporations, shared power is an everyday practice. The collaboration among the three leaders at Google, for example, accounts for much of this Internet giant’s success. And when Apple’s Steven Jobs temporarily stepped aside to tend to health problems, he confidently turned the role of CEO over to Tim Cook, a man he’d partnered with for eight years to lead Apple’s iPod/iPhone revolution.

In government, President Obama brought this form of leadership to his administration. He demonstrated his commitment to collaborative problem

solving when he appointed Republicans as cabinet members and invited his former adversary, Hillary Clinton, to be his secretary of state.

Leaders who attract willing followers to join their efforts have the talent to engage colleagues in continuous, spontaneous, creative collaboration, and results can be proudly owned, as promised by the wise Confucian scholar Lao-tzu in his *Tao Te Ching*:

*The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to his subjects.  
Next comes the ruler they love and praise;  
Next comes one they fear;  
Next comes one with whom they take liberties. . . .  
Hesitant, the best does not utter words lightly.  
When his task is accomplished and his work done  
The people all say, "it happened to us naturally."*

As we redefine leadership to meet the upheavals in our society, we must learn to lead with characteristics of powerful and effective leaders. These leaders have:

### 1. A Focus on Purpose, Direction, and Values

The leader's purpose is to galvanize and energize others to achieve meaningful goals. This purpose gives resonance to the work and lives of all involved. Leaders not only have a clear sense of direction, but they communicate their dream to inspire ownership by everyone in the organization. Every leader has an agenda, a set of closely held values, and a vision of "the common good." These values, the very fabric of leadership, attract us to the person whose dream we will realize.

### 2. A Commitment to Building Trust with Followers

Leaders generate and sustain trust, the lasting social glue that binds commitment and inspires high-quality results. To trust a leader we must have confidence that this person is competent and worth following. Our trust is inspired when leaders openly communicate and encourage dissent. Leaders generate trust by including key stakeholders to make decisions about the future.

### 3. A Skill in Conveying Optimism

Leaders are purveyors of hope. Their optimism communicates a belief in the worth of followers and the talents of those around them. This optimism is pervasive and powerful when leaders do not get stuck in brooding about mistakes, problems, wrong turns, or mishaps. They view errors as opportunities to learn new information, to enhance or change their dreams, to power their visions, and to redirect their strategies for achieving success. Their optimism stems from their clear vision of the future and their commitment to bringing their team along for the ride.

### 4. A Talent for Inspiring Action to Produce Results

Leaders have the capacity, the special knack, the talent to convert purpose and vision into actions that will produce results. Most leaders are *pragmatic* dreamers and *practical* idealists who create solutions to seemingly overwhelming problems. Moreover, they make sure they get where they want to go by living the principles they espouse. When they strive to translate ideals and intentions into reality they act ethically to make an apparent difference.

## Competencies of Successful Leaders

Obviously each leader has unique skills, talents, abilities, styles, behaviors, and winning formulas. Leaders come in every race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, role, and circumstance imaginable. What they share, however, are six clear and powerful competencies:

- *Mastering the Context.* Leaders focus on understanding the big picture, the impact of external events on their decisions, and the forces that may be beyond their immediate control. They stand by an "internal" context of their own values, frames of reference, agendas, and ethical commitments.
- *Knowing Yourself.* Leaders deeply appreciate self-knowledge and are committed to continually learning about themselves throughout their lifetimes.



They engage in introspection and humbly solicit feedback to stimulate a lifetime of learning.

- *Creating a Vision.* Leaders create an evolving, vibrant, and compelling vision to guide their plans and mobilize others to join them in making changes. Their vision is so real that they live and breathe it.
- *Communicating with Meaning.* Leaders shape their communication by considering the concerns and intentions of their listeners. They walk in the shoes of those they wish to reach, delivering their messages to allow others to easily grasp their meaning and join in their endeavors.
- *Building Trust Through Integrity.* Leaders consistently live ethically and demonstrate their values through action. They build trust through consistency and in times of trouble can be counted on to meet challenges head-on.
- *Realizing Intentions Through Actions.* Leaders are dreamers who are skilled in producing concrete results that are expressions of their visions and values, and they consistently invite others to act with them in realizing their intentions.

Our goal in writing this book is to encourage you to develop all six of these leadership competencies. When you do so, you will be prepared for any eventuality and will be able to meet the challenges of your times with brave and brilliant leadership, as did these figures from our shared history:

Winston Churchill truly mastered the context of his shifting times, during both World Wars as well as in times of peace when he preserved the British Empire. Mother Theresa was steeped in self-knowledge as she humbly insisted that her work with the “untouchables” of India was a greater source of deep and fulfilling satisfaction for herself than for those she served. Few people can match the power of John F. Kennedy’s clear vision that the United States would place a man on the moon ten years after he declared his dream. Although he did not live to see Neil Armstrong take this “giant leap for mankind,” his vision resounded in that moment. A leader with legendary talent as a great communicator was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who moved millions to guarantee human rights for all

people. What better example of a leader who lived her commitment to realizing the clear and concrete result of peace and international understanding than Eleanor Roosevelt, who united former enemies to create the United Nations? Many of us are familiar with the trust created by the integrity of the Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, known as the “Rabble-Rouser for Peace.” With that trust he led the unprecedented “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in South Africa to heal his country with forgiveness and hope.

While history may not demand that we express these levels of leadership, we are certain that each of us has the capacity to become a leader in our own life. In light of this truth, we offer you an opportunity for learning and knowledge with which you can discover your innate leadership talents, hone your blunted or undiscovered skills, and express yourself as the successful leader you can be. We humbly offer the wisdom we have gleaned from others and the hope that you will value the process as much as we have enjoyed creating it. We wish you well on your journey.

Warren Bennis

University of Southern California

Joan Goldsmith

Santa Monica, California

# 1 A Lifetime of Learning to Lead

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*You better have you. The real you, the authentic examined self, not some patch-work collection of affectations and expectations, mores and mannerisms, some treadmill set to the prevailing speed of universal acceptability, the tyranny of homogeneity, whether the homogeneity of the straight world of the suits or the spiky world of the avant-garde. . . . You are only real if you can see yourself, see yourself clear and true in the mirror of your soul and smile upon the reflection. Samuel Butler once said "Life is like playing a violin solo in public, and learning the instrument as one goes on." That sounds terrifying, doesn't it, and difficult too. But that way lies music. Look in the mirror. Who is that woman? She is the work of your life; she is its greatest glory, too. Pick up your violin. Lift your bow. And play. Play your heart out.*

—Anna Quindlen

Speech to graduates, Wellesley College, delivered on May 24, 2002

LEADERSHIP CAN BE LEARNED BY ANY OF US, NO MATTER OUR AGE, circumstances, or the challenges we face. Anna Quindlen, the successful columnist, novelist, and essayist, has it right: We *can* create ourselves, we *do* create ourselves, and the choice is ours at *each* moment and at *every* moment to learn the lessons of leadership. Unfortunately, we tend to associate learning new skills with youth, but in fact, the possibility of leading is available throughout our

lifetimes; with every choice we make, we take charge of our lives. It is never too late to discover our unique voice as a leader.

✓ Leaders are made, not born, and are created as much by themselves as by the demands of their times. They have a talent for continually learning about themselves. They seek to know who they are, what they want, why they want it, and how to gain support to achieve it. They live on the frontiers, where tomorrow is shaped. They avoid cookie-cutter patterns, come from diverse backgrounds, are of different ages and types of intelligence, have a variety of occupations and accomplishments. They are committed to continually growing throughout their lives. Some blossom only in their later years, like George Bernard Shaw, Margaret Mead, Charles Darwin, Eleanor Roosevelt, Elie Wiesel, Nelson Mandela, Mohandas Gandhi, Golda Meier, Jean Piaget, and Martha Graham. The glittering accomplishments of these great leaders demonstrate to us that it is never too late to begin.

Leaders love to learn. They continually seek exciting “aha” moments of discovery. They are questioners, probers, searchers for new ways of defining problems, and they seek innovative ways of solving them. Leaders invite partners to enhance their learning process. They engage with collaborators who see problems differently. They bravely and consistently ask for feedback from others when they err in their efforts to learn on their own. They evaluate their leadership skills and refine them, hone them, and polish them with practice. They humbly accept failure as an opportunity to rethink assumptions that led to a glitch in their efforts.

As you become a leader, you can regard the paradoxes, puzzles, and missteps that will inevitably appear as learning moments. You must take that first step. As the great hockey player Wayne Gretzky reminds us, “You miss 100 percent of the shots you *don’t* take.” We agree. If you fail to take the risk to act, you fail completely.

The truth is that becoming a leader is a natural expression of the life force and a highly personal journey much like that of becoming an integrated human being.

## A New Approach

Programs of study, institutes, workshops, and courses that offer the study of leadership have undergone profound changes in recent years. In the bad old days, students read the biographies of charismatic “great men,” who were held in awe and never questioned. In the early days of MBA programs, students were taught to revere godlike “natural” leaders who were born into their role in history. A new approach, formulated by graduate schools in the United States and adopted by European and Asian graduate schools, increasingly considers this approach irrelevant. Faculty members in the highest-ranking MBA programs openly and publicly reject the dominance of outdated teaching that leaves students ill-suited to meet the leadership demands of multinational, entrepreneurial, fast-paced organizations that are engaged in rapid and consuming demands of a chaotic world economy.

The oft-cited military model of the leader, the lone general commanding his troops, is anachronistic in a world where the ability to command and control is valued less than the ability to orchestrate, counsel, collaborate, and inspire. The recent popularity of courses that promise “instant leadership” is a symptom of our demand for a “quick fix”; such courses foster confusion about what constitutes leadership and ignore the lifetime effort it takes to learn new skills. Some people claim that leadership derives from power. Others say it stems from having a thorough and mechanistic comprehension of the nature of organizations. According to the “one-minute manager” approach, leaders emerge instantly and all that is needed is to pop Mr. or Ms. Average into a quick-action program and out pops a McLeader in sixty seconds.

In our view the only valid path to genuine leadership is one that leads to self-examination, introspection, and honest soul-searching and includes collaborative partnerships with willing colleagues. Becoming a true leader takes time and a strong commitment both to learn from failures and to make amends when necessary. Becoming a leader involves discovering your native energies

and desires through self-invention and *authenticity*—being your own *author*. (The two words derive from the same Greek root.)

John Gardner, the only Republican in Lyndon Johnson's cabinet and founder of Common Cause, an advocacy organization for philanthropy, was a reticent, even shy man who nonetheless helped create innovative and durable organizations to support lasting value for the public good. He argued that the notion, endorsed by some pundits, that the attributes of a leader are innate is demonstrably false and that leadership can and must be learned. In an interview with Warren, Gardner validated our belief that if we commit to lifelong learning we will successfully become and maintain ourselves as leaders:

No doubt certain characteristics are genetically determined—level of energy, for example. But the individual's hereditary gifts, however notable, leave the issue of future leadership performance undecided, to be settled by the later events and influences. Young people with substantial native gifts for leadership often fail to achieve what is in them to achieve. So part of our task is to develop what is naturally there but in need of cultivation. Talent is one thing; its triumphant expression is quite another. Some talents express themselves freely and with little need for encouragement. Leopold Mozart did not have to struggle to uncover buried gifts in little Wolfgang. But, generally speaking, the maturing of any complex talent requires a happy combination of motivation, character, and opportunity. Most human talent remains undeveloped.

✓ We agree: The stakes are high and the demand for fresh, creative, risky solutions is enormous. Leaders among all citizens—of every color, ethnicity, age, and social class—are needed if we are to survive and prevail as a species. We are convinced that to lead in our own lives and make a contribution to our communities we must confront the challenging questions that currently face our society:

- Will waves of “baby boomers” struggle through the final years of their lives without adequate healthcare?

- Will our courts protect the rights of dissenters, minority populations, and the powerless to speak for themselves?
- Will private-sector leaders finally cleanse their organizations of greed and malfeasance?
- Will elected officials develop governmental regulations that create and sustain economic viability?
- Will hundreds of thousands of impoverished laid-off employees and minimum-wage workers find satisfying and useful employment?
- Will restitution be made by the banks, insurance companies, and other entities that mishandled funds and dispossessed hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, depriving them of their dreams?
- Will our children be safe from battles in distant lands, as well as from neighborhood gangs at home?
- Will our grandchildren have a world where tigers still stalk prey and glaciers are more than a memory?

It is our hope that this book will enable you to become a lifelong learner who can successfully lead efforts to find solutions to these troubling problems.

### Learning How to Learn—An Exercise

As adults, we rarely have the opportunity to be true learners. Too often, we encounter low-risk, protected environments, where we choose to passively skate through someone else's requirements or go through the motions to please someone, without confronting the challenges of an authentic learning process.

When leaders lose the skill to learn, they inevitably falter and become stultified. Those who are truly committed to becoming a leader understand what it takes to learn about themselves, they honestly recognize their strengths and limitations, they solicit and integrate feedback, they stay open to new experiences, they seek diverse information, and they hear and value their own

voices. Those who do so are the ones among us who will master the art of leader-as-lifelong-learner.

We advocate that you actively take risks, be self-conscious, and commit to true learning. We not only suggest that you acquire a body of knowledge about leadership but ask you to see the world as it *is* and at the same time as it *might be*, with an understanding of the distinction between the two.

Ideally, in a true learning process you will learn about *how you learn*. You will do so by paying attention to your own learning process, not just during the moments when you successfully master a new skill but also at those times when you want to give up in the face of failure. Whether you want to learn to play the piano for the first time as an adult or try bungee-jumping as a novice, you can expand your self-knowledge if you focus on understanding *how* you learn, if you listen to your inner voice as you take risks, if you observe your reactions when you are frustrated with failure, and if you discover your fears and your longings for a sense of accomplishment.

Throughout this book, we introduce activities to support your development as a leader and offer occasions for self-reflection that may reveal to you your leadership capacities. Included in these exercises are suggestions for collaboration with colleagues to enable you to tackle leadership challenges with the support of a team at work, members of your family, or friends in your community. We begin by asking you to explore the following questions.

### Questions to Consider

A. Describe a challenge, new experience, or risk you took when you tried to learn something that was new and unfamiliar.

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B. What were your fears before you began? How did those fears change during and after the experience? What did you learn about your fears?

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C. What were your hopes and dreams as you tried to learn something new? What did you expect to discover and to achieve?

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D. What did others tell you that supported or diminished your confidence when you took the risk to learn something new?

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E. What people, circumstances, actions, and events supported or blocked your learning?

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F. Which of your own thoughts and behaviors contributed most to your learning? Which blocked your learning?

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G. At what point did you know you would be successful? What evidence do you have of your success?

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H. What were the high points and payoffs of the risks you took, and what were the downsides?

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I. How did your image of yourself and your thoughts about your identity change as a result of your experience?

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Leaders have a hunger to learn and they know that learning leads to self-expression. They are intimately connected with *how* they learn as well as with *what* they learn. If you agree that it is worth taking the risk to learn, your next step will be to become aware of your leadership role models and to understand the impact they have had on your willingness to engage in *risky learning*.

### Leadership Models—An Exercise

Our decisions about being a leader are often based on lessons we have learned from models in our families, communities, and schools as well as from distant heroes who have walked through our lives. Unconscious patterns from our past inform choices in the present and influence the view we have of ourselves. To the extent that we are unaware of these models, we fail to see the limits they impose on our leadership choices and the opportunities they offer.

Who are your friendly ghosts, the women and men who shaped your expectations and guided your aspirations to be a leader? Who were your mentors? Who walked through your dreams? Who loomed larger than life and inspired you? Who were the people who made a difference in your life?

Please consider the activities below to assist you in uncovering the models that have shaped you as a leader.

#### Activities to Consider

A. Name three people who walked through your dreams as leaders in your past. Write their full names, and remember who they were and how they influenced you.

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LEARNING TO LEAD

B. Name three leaders whom you respect and value in your life today. Write their full names, and think about how they touch your life.

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C. Consider each person you have noted and indicate the successes and failures they have had in their own lives. Make an assessment of their achievements.

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D. Indicate the obstacles each leader faced and overcame and the rewards they achieved by doing so.

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E. Assess the risks each leader took and the results that followed. Then sum up each of their lives in a few words.

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F. Describe how you might use the lessons you have learned from each of these leaders so that you can learn to be a more successful leader in your own life.

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**Leadership Qualities, Attitudes, Behaviors,  
and Lessons—A Chart**

To truly appreciate and learn from the models of leadership in your life, you must carefully analyze their life choices. Take a closer look at these models with

the help of the chart below. In the first three columns, identify the *qualities*, *attitudes*, and *behaviors* of each leader. In the last column, summarize the leadership *lessons* you have learned from each leader.

For example, in the first column you might write the leader's quality of "integrity," and in the second you might list the leader's attitude as "being constructive in the face of problems." A behavior you might note in the third column is the leader's frequent "outspokenness." And in the last column you could indicate that the lesson you have drawn is to "speak your mind."

QUALITIES	ATTITUDES	BEHAVIORS	LESSONS
1. ....			
2. ....			
3. ....			
4. ....			
5. ....			
6. ....			

In the questions that follow, review your responses in the previous charts and search beneath the surface to discover not only how leaders have influenced your life but also your own leadership talents.

*Questions to Consider*

A. What are the positive lessons about life and leadership that you can draw from the experiences of the leaders you have identified?

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B. What are the negative aspects of the choices made by these women and men, and how might you avoid making the same mistakes?

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C. Given the qualities, attitudes, and behaviors of these leaders, what aspects of their lives have had the greatest impact on you and what did you learn from them?

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D. How might you thank these leaders for the influences they have had on your life? What would you like to say to them?

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