



**PART I:**

# **LEADING YOURSELF**

Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power. - Lucius Annaeus Seneca

People buy into the leader before they buy into the vision. - John C. Maxwell

## ARE LEADERS BORN?

“He’s a natural leader.” Ever heard that? Some people seem to think that great leaders have to be born with the right genes. But I don’t think that’s the case.

Here’s a metaphor that you might find useful: compare leadership to athletics, like running. Very few people are great runners – Olympic quality, world class. Can everybody reach that level? No, obviously not.

A while ago, someone asked a champion athlete what the most important thing to do to become great. His response? “Choose your parents wisely.”

To an extent, I think that may also be true of leadership. The greatest leaders seem to have a certain gift to lead, to read people and situations, to inspire with vision, to engage on a personal level and win wholehearted commitment. They are people that others seem to just naturally want to follow. They are world class.

But that doesn’t mean other people can’t lead. There isn’t only one great runner out there; there are many.

And whether you are concerned about running or leading, genetics is something you can’t change anyway, so there is no use in worrying about it. We all have the abilities and talents we are born with. What we can change is what we do with the gifts we have. That’s the thing to focus on.

You can wish all you want to be three inches taller, but that’s a waste of effort; not much you can do about it. Better to look at something that you can change. One example might how you spend time.

You can choose to watch TV or play video games all day, and if you are happy where you are, that might be fine. But if you are looking for change, for improvement, to have an impact on your world, it’s going to take a little effort. And I think you are probably capable of it.

## YOU ARE CAPABLE OF GREAT CHANGE

It doesn’t happen overnight, either. Most worthwhile things take effort; you have to work at it. But if you consistently apply yourself over time, you will amaze yourself at the results. The thing is to set a goal, then take a reasonable, achievable step towards that goal every day. Over time, you will be amazed at what you can accomplish.

Here’s a personal example. I’m not a great athlete, but I like to get in my exercise – it’s good for being outside in the fresh air, helps my self-confidence, maintains my health, and keeps me balanced in life.

Over the last several years I had worked up to doing some long distance triathlons. I loved training and racing and was happy with the results, but in the process of training and racing, I had strained my Achilles tendon on my right leg – that long

### TIP

Focus on what you can change, not on what you can’t change.

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Nearly a year went by. In September of 2013 I was itching to race again and believed that I was mostly healed. So I started running again. One mile a day. Six days a week. At pretty much a shuffle pace. It seemed almost ridiculous – too easy, too short. Only six miles a week.

But I knew I had to ease into it, to grow gradually, to steadily increase a little bit at a time.

After a few weeks at one mile a day, I bumped it up to 1.5, then later 2. Winter came, the snow fell, but still I ran. Not always enthusiastically, but I made sure to get out the door every day. By spring I was up to four miles a day, 24 miles a week.

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I started making every other day a longer run, building gradually to eight miles and doing a longer run on Saturdays up to 16, 18, 20 by the end of spring. I topped out at 42 miles a week (that’s on top of a bunch of swimming and cycling).