

Leading out of Who You Are

By Simon P Walker

An Executive Book Summary by Andrew Hartman



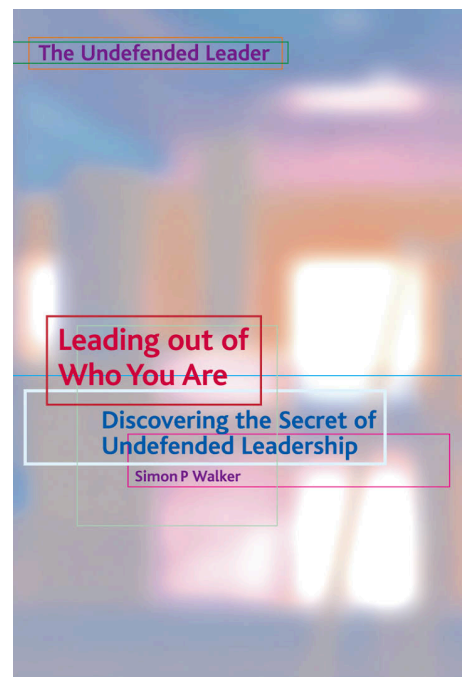
Meet the Author

Simon P Walker is an ordained clergyman. He teaches Undefended Leadership courses at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University and trains leaders within the church as well as the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. He has founded The Leadership Community, an international network of social leaders committed to undefended leadership.

Book Summary

The book doesn't only provide knowledge, but paves the way for you to participate in a journey of soul searching that ends with you understanding the mechanisms that happen internally so you can grow to be more of an undefended leader.

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Leaders and Leadership

Leadership is about trust and power

Leaders - Make change possible

Act as guides

Represent safety and security

There are three main components that exist when leadership is taking place: the Leader, the Follower, and the Goal.

In-between these components there are relationships happening.

Great leaders have three characteristics:

- Integrity, which was earned through personal hardship and sacrifice
- Courage, from having their commitment and dedication challenged and exposed for everyone to see
- Compassion, by becoming more human through the refinement that came from their experiences

Vision – The leaders ability to communicate his or her goal

Movement – The relationship between the leader's following and the goal

Trust – The glue that bonds the leader and follower together

If any one of these relationships breaks down, then the power in the leadership dynamic will also break.

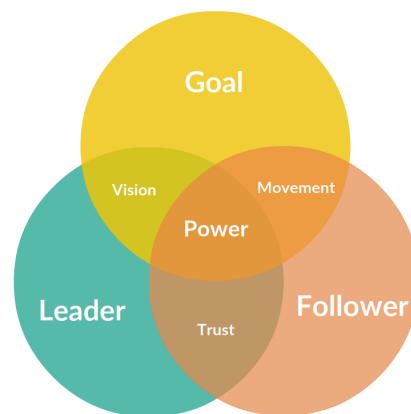


Diagram1.1 Leader, follower and goal

What Makes An Undefended Leader?

Before we can look at what an Undefended Leader is, we need to look at the mechanisms that make a leader defended in the first place. There are three things that leaders experience more often than others that create a hostile world for him or her to lead in:

1. Idealization
2. Idealism
3. Unmet emotional needs

Idealization

All human beings live with doubt. These doubts can be broken into three sub-categories confusion, self-doubt, and self-loathing. Our natural response is to bury them. When we do that we choose to live our lives through the shoes of someone else, which is often our leader.

This is where the idealization happens to leaders. The leader is not able to show emotions or weakness, and must protect its following.

Idealism

Walker finds that leaders live in a world that ought to be. This can cause strain and hardship on the leader through “cognitive dissonance”, a disconnect between what is and what should be.

While others shy away from the idea of what to be, the leader can is found to be motivated towards their ideas and the tension caused by their cognitive dissonance.

Unmet emotional needs

A leader is someone who takes responsibility of someone other than his or her self, which can be defined as an “appropriate leader”.

An *appropriate leader* can find his or her self-sacrificing their own needs to support others. This sacrificing draws attention on to the leader from its followers, through appreciation and approval. This attention in the end meets the leaders unmet emotional needs in an indirect way.

These three experiences make for an isolating and unhealthy leadership journey. When a leader succumbs to these three experiences over again he or she fall into the cycle of deprivation where the needs of the leader are not being met, but the affirmation from the following is encouraging the behavior. This cycle causes the leader to be motivated bt the emotional feedback, but also causes the leader to feel alone, since he or she is unable to share his or her feelings and get support from others.

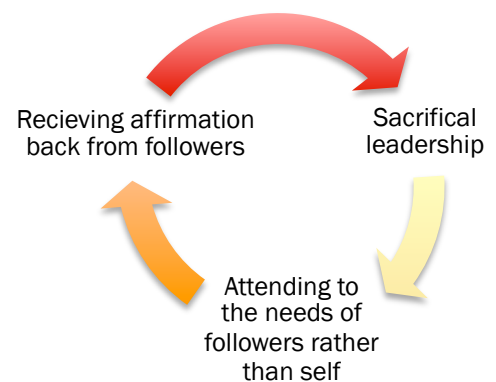


Diagram 2.1 The leadership-followership collusion cycle

Strategies of Defense I: The Stage

Being a leader can be defined as a type of performance. Psychologist's Erving Goffman developed a theory tying human behaviour around the idea of theatre back in the 1960s. He believed our personal behaviour is our performance where we attempt to attract the attention to affirm our self-identity.

As individuals we attempt to reduce the risks and threats presented from other people. We achieve this through utilizing what Goffman presented as our front stage and back stage.

Our front stage is where we perform for our audience; this represents everything that can be seen by our team. The back stage is where we house all things we feel that we are unable to show our audience. This is where we hide our hopes, thoughts, plans, feelings, and more negative thoughts like doubt, failure, frustration and fears.

Both our front stage and our back stage are always connected. An imbalance in one area can cause us to cope in negative ways to over compensate in the lack of attention. In addition, the more we pay to either side of the stage, the less we pay attention to its counter part. And finally, what goes on in one area of the stage, will affect the other through leakage.

As leaders we can only truly find freedom when we develop the ability to allow individuals to see both our front stage and our back stage.

Strategies of Defense II: Control

Control offers individuals a sense of security. Control shouldn't be seen as a bad thing, but should be used so sparingly in times of a crisis. We like to use control as a way to create order and predictability into our lives, however we can't reach this 100%, and it will only be an illusion. When we lead we use control to create a world around us that resembles ourselves and makes us feel safe. The personality of an organization reflects the personality of its leader.

As leaders who create worlds in they feel comfortable in, this can be reflected back to the metaphor of the stage. The people who follow the leader in their world are fellow actors on the leader's stage within an organization. Ironically, leaders who are in total control don't always feel safe, even though safety is the goal. Being able to forfeit this control and obtain freedom will help the leader transition into being an undefended leader. It is important for us not to be clouded by our personal goals, which prevent us from achieving the goals of the organization.

Strategies of Defense III: Power

In Charles Handy book, manipulate change. Here are five different types of power:

- Personality Power – the ability to effect the emotions of an audience through ones affection
- Resource Power – the ability to affect the outcome of a project on the basis of the resources you can provide or withhold
- Experience Power – the ability to have an impact on a situation based on have more knowledge from being around the situation for a long period of time
- Expert Power – the ability to impact a project or situation based the greater knowledge and insight one has that others do not
- Positional Power – the influence one has based on their position within an organization

Individuals can have a mixture of each of these powers. Often individuals within an organization can hold power without actually knowing it. There are various ways one can gain power it can be through time, development, education, or it can be bought. An undefended leader needs to work hard on their awareness of his or her power and its impact, as well as how power works through their own organization.

Our Experience of Trust

The way we are raised during infancy can develop into four different shapes of ego. Below is a table that breaks down these ego shapes into how they are formed, and how the individual views themselves and their caregiver based on the nurturing they received in their childhood.

Ego Shapes	View Of Themselves	View of Caregiver
Secure – received approval and affection from caregivers	Positive	Positive
Dismissing – received over intrusive care from caregivers	Positive	Negative
Preoccupied – attracted inefficient amount of care from caregivers	Negative	Positive
Fearful – received unpredictable and disoriented care from caregivers	Negative	Negative

Our Response to Trust: The Shaping Leadership Ego – Overconfidence and Paternalism

The Shaping Ego has a high level of trust in themselves and others. Their upbringing has developed them to not feel threatened by others, or has developed them to have enough esteem that the individual is able to handle failure. In the eyes of the Shaper, the world is generally a safe place.

How the Shaping Ego affects an individual’s leadership

- **Optimism** – Shapers tend to view what other ego styles would see as threats as opportunities
- **Paternalism** – Shapers are often trying to rescue their followers
- **Self-Defined Reality** – Shapers are self-motivated individuals who do things their own way They live in their own reality which allows the to experiences situations in a unique way

Frontstage Shapers – the Shaper’s focused on their frontstage provide an air of self-assurance. In the frost stage the Shaper is very protective of the following that is on his or her side.

Backstage Shaper – the Shaper’s focused on their backstage split people into two groups, those who can be trusted and those who can’t. As long as you are part of the Backstage Shapes “family”, you can be trusted and won’t be observed and perceived as a threat.

Our Response to Trust: The Defining Leadership Ego – Drivenness and Ambition

The Defining Ego brought up under rewards systems, believe in the notion that as long as I stay within the boundaries of my caregivers I am okay. This allows the Definer to develop a high sense of trust in his or her self, but a low sense of trust in others. In the eyes of a Definer the world is a safe place under conditions when the Definer is successful or in control.

How the Defining Ego affects an individual's leadership

- **Performance, not success** – Definers strive to improve performance, while avoiding failure. They strive for the perfect score
- **Control and lack of delegation** – Definers work hard to create systems to ensure order is in place and threats are defused
- **Avoiding risk** – Definers avoid risks to avoid failure. Helping ensure they reach their perfect score

Froststage Definers – Definers that focus on their frontstage are high achievers. They devote enormous amounts of energy into their cause. Because of this busy work ethic the definers devote the majority of their time to work, preventing them from performing any self reflection in their back stage or developing personal relationships.

Backstage Definers – Definers focused on their backstage hide their high standards in their backstage away from their following to see. This allows them to fail without having their failure to be

Our Response to Trust: The Adapting Leadership Ego – Anxiety and Over Responsibility

The Adapter grew up in an environment that gave a sense of fragility in relationships. This may have come from caregiver being absent or never fighting. This causes the Adapter to have low trust in his or her self, but high trust in others. Adapters do what ever they can to keep harmony in relationships.

How the Adapting Ego affects an individual's leadership

- **Following, not leading** – Adapters go with the path of least resistance. They require approval and attention when leading
- **Denial, not freedom** – Adapters wear a mask of confidence, while they push themselves hard and perform perfectly, without letting anyone see their back stage.
- **Giving, not receiving** – Adapters are great at giving but struggle with receiving support or love from others, this comes from their lack of trust in themselves

Frontstage Adapters – Adapters that are focused on their frontstage like to be at the center of attention. They often are the first to speak in a group and always need to contribute their piece of information to the problem.

Backstage Adapters – Adapters focused on their backstage will bottle everything up. They don't share any emotions. Adapters are "Yes" people as they try to keep that harmony in relationships by avoiding using the word "No".

Our Response to Trust: The Defending Leadership Ego – Suspicion and Over-Sensitivity

Defenders grew up in a world with what they perceived to be was an unreliable caregiver. This can look like the Defender perceiving they have unreliable, unpredictable, or inconsistent caregivers. This realm of uncertainty causes the Defender to have low trust in themselves or others. They often divide the world into two categories, safe and unsafe.

How the Defending Ego affects an individual's leadership

- **Respect and suspicion** – Defenders are often seen as unreliable to others, which is a reflection on how others have been unreliable to them
- **Unpredictability** – Defenders are often seen as unreliable to others, which is a reflection on how others have been unreliable to them
- **Corporate Policeman** – Defenders look for disloyalty within an organization. Disloyalty will not be tolerated to a defender

The Freedom to Fail: Locating the Source of Approval

Freedom comes from knowing you are approved of

Freedom to perform comes from the knowledge that there is someone rooting for you in the audience, whose opinion you value more than anyone else's and who is smiling and cheering just for you.

In this moment you become free from the need to succeed

You can perform with nothing to lose because you are secure that your identity future welling does not depend on the quality of your performance.

When we fear our security we look for ways to defend ourselves

The idea of undefended leadership is that we are secured not by our skills and resources but by our attachment to another, one who is big enough not to be overwhelmed by our failures and weaknesses.

Freedom to lead an undefended life comes from finding a relationship that we are safe and secured by unconditional attachment.

	Key transforming truth	Key action	Key attitude
Shapers	The world is neither as safe or unsafe as you think	Stop trying to rescue people	Allow feedback to touch you
Definers	You are not as successful as you think you are – but you cannot be as unsuccessful as you fear	Stop wanting to win all the cases	Enjoy the moment and stay in it
Adapters	Relationships are not as fragile as you believe	Say no	Trust yourself
Defenders	You are safer than you realize	Stay in the relationship	Trust others



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The Formation of Moral Authority

Nature builds in struggle as an essential part of the formation and development of healthy life.

Struggle can be:

- **Physical** – a day to action that people within the norm could perform without thinking about
- **Emotional** – experiencing the loss of some kind, having to cope and move past that situation or incident
- **Intellectual** – Overcoming barriers or struggles that come with having to do with thinking
- **Spiritual** – Challenging our purpose and our meaning in this world

When struggling, the strugglers choice is the biggest impact on whether the incident will be humanizing or dehumanizing. They can choose how to respond to the pain and what path they want to take towards his or her destiny.

Our three choices at the crossroad of pain:

- **Purpose and purposelessness** – Those who hold on to a belief in his or her purpose of their life and the value of their experience of pain will emerge refined, able to carry other through their own suffering
- **Love and anger** – When we are inspired by anger we are held hostage by our anger and are not free. Only when we act through love can we truly connect
- **Knowing who we are and what we do** – Do we attempt to understand ourselves by owning our past and finding meaning in it? Or do we let what we do define who we are.



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Setting undefended Goals

The primary task of leadership is to enable people to take responsibility. We can start to empower our following by enabling them to have the power and trust to take on responsibility.

- **Enabling people to embrace struggle**
 - Don't carry your team, allow them to take on tasks and be challenged
 - Don't offer premature solutions
- **Enabling people to both develop and 'lay down' their skills**
 - Inspire those you lead to desire to lay down their skills
 - A leader is an individual who creates the space for others to share their gifts
- **Enabling people to identify and embrace their vocations**
 - A leader creates a space where others can identify their passions own passions and pursue them
 - When someone who has the desire and ability to give away what they possess, it is given back into something that has transformed into something greater
- **Enabling people to 'know the moment'**
 - Focus less on efficiency
 - Build a generation of individual who are able to critically think, analyze and see the bigger picture and be creative.

Discussion Questions

- Which leadership ego style best describes you?
- What barrier does this present to your leadership practice?
- Do you spend more time on your frontstage or backstage?
- How does this affect your leadership practice?
- How does your leadership style affect the culture you project into your workplace?



Application

Leading out of Who You Are is a useful resource for leaders who are looking at shaping their leadership practice to being more authentic. The book acts as a reflective tool where leaders can assess how they are defended and the barriers they need to overcome to leading through authenticity. The book works to teach leaders how to be open, vulnerable, and trusting leaders.

References

Walker, S. P. (2007). *Leading out of Who You Are: Discovering the Secret of Undefended Leadership*. Carlisle, UK

Review

Leading out of Who You Are provides a unique perspective on how individual's childhood upbringing affects their leadership styles later in life. The most useful aspect of the book was Walker's use of Erving Goffman's metaphor around Organizational Behaviour and the stage. The book exposes the reader with a new language about the mask we wear for everyone to see and what is occurring inside of our minds.

The biggest flaw with Walker's book is that he pushed together two different theories together and added cute personal anecdotal life stories and historical events to win his argument. He pushed Erving Goffman's theory around Organizational Behaviour and Kim Bartholomew and Leonard M Horowitz theory around different shapes of ego together without actually furthering the dialogue in these areas. There is no real science or questionnaire to help the reader discover which leadership ego they have. The lines between each leadership ego are blurry, making the theory a little too easily adaptable to fit the goal of the author.

In the end I appreciate the lense in which Walker looks through in attempting to tackle what makes us defensive in our leadership practice and trying to break down those barriers.