

READING GROUP GUIDE: Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way

This book is meant to be both an abbreviated and entertaining story of a great woman's life, as well as a source of advice, ideas and inspiration. I believe the advice and strategies for leadership in the book will grow clearer, and no doubt be expanded upon, in group discussions. Here are some questions to help you on your way. I am also available to come to book groups in the Washington, D.C. area, or, if you're outside the area, I will pay for a telephone call if your group can organize around a speaker-phone.

Thanks for choosing to read my book.

Sincerely,
Robin Gerber

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Eleanor Roosevelt had a sad and difficult childhood. What did she learn from that background that informed her leadership?

What childhood events, family sayings or familial relationships most influenced your leadership efforts?

Why was Madame Souvestre such an important mentor for Eleanor Roosevelt?

How do mentors come in and out of our lives?

Who was the most important mentor in your life... so far?

Is mothering training for leadership, a metaphor, or both?

Does the widely accepted idea that ER was a "bad mother" fit with her actions and ideas about mothering?

What did ER learn about leadership from her husband's affair with Lucy Mercer?

After FDR's death, why did ER send Lucy the portrait of FDR painted by Lucy Shoumatoff?

What is the hardest event you've had to face, and what did you learn as a leader?

What key events built the foundation for ER's leadership passion?

How important is authenticity to leadership? In what ways was ER authentic?

How did ER handle the criticism that came her way?

What is the hardest part of facing criticism for you?

What is transforming change, and how did ER try to achieve it?

What is one transforming change you would like to take leadership to achieve?

What were the most difficult risks ER took as part of her leadership?

Is taking risks harder for women than men?

ER believed leaders are learners. What did you learn today?

PARTICULARLY FOR UNION WOMEN:

Women in unions are often leading without formal authority. How did ER accomplish this?

Are there special ways that union women relate to each other that enhance our ability to organize?

Who are women leadership role models in the labor movement, and what can we learn from their leadership?

Do you think it's important to network? What ways do you use to add to a network?

Have your mentors been men? Women? Older/younger? Friends? What kind of help or advice do you want from them?

Do you think that women have to learn to play politics in organizations, just as Eleanor learned in her work in the Democratic Party? How do you go about it?