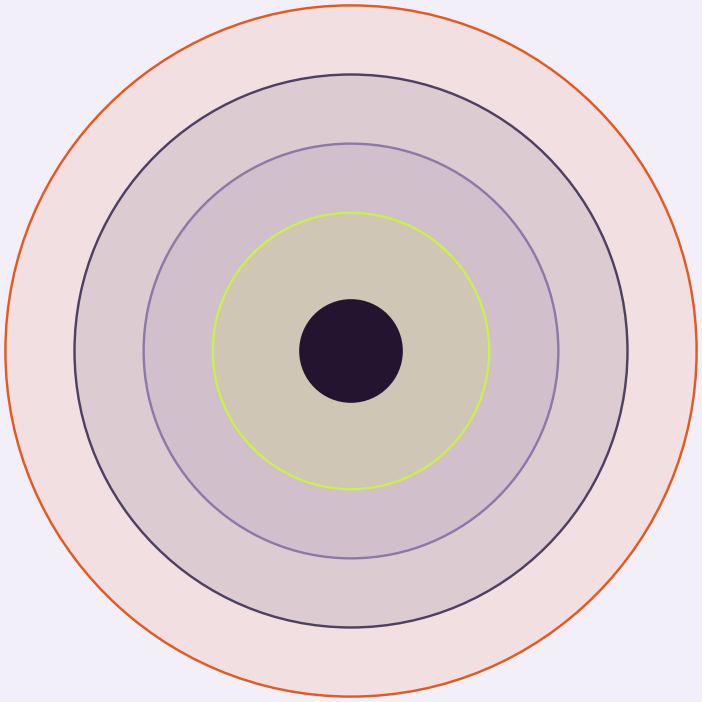


The Steps: A Memoir

A reading of the book by Sylvester Stallone (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of The Steps: A Memoir, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Sylvester Stallone is the actor, writer and director who created Rocky Balboa and John Rambo. The Steps is his memoir of the eight years from 1969, when he was drifting through Europe and then scraping by in New York, to the night in 1977 when Rocky, which he wrote and starred in, won Best Picture. The title points to the Philadelphia steps Rocky runs up, which Stallone treats as a picture of every time he fell short of the next level. Flashbacks go back to his childhood: a birth injury that left part of his face paralysed and his speech slurred, a hard relationship with his parents, and schools that did not know what to do with him. His argument is that a life is built by facing setbacks rather than dodging them, and he makes it through auditions, rejections, a marriage in the lean years and the fight to play Rocky himself.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The steps are not a victory lap. Each one stands for a time you failed to reach the next level.

The film made the Philadelphia steps a picture of triumph. Stallone reads them the other way round: as a stack of falls, missed chances and doors that stayed shut. The climb only looks easy from the top, because nobody films the years of slipping back.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

When the deal only works without you in it, the deal is the thing to turn down.

The studio wanted the Rocky script with a known star in the lead. Stallone, short of money and with a child on the way, kept refusing until they let him play the part himself. The lesson is not to refuse every offer. It is to know in advance which condition you will not trade.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The thing that keeps you out of the room can become the reason people remember you.

Forceps at his birth damaged a nerve, leaving part of his face paralysed and his speech slurred. The face and voice that cost him parts in the early years are the ones audiences came to know. The book does not pretend this was a gift at the time. It shows how long it took to stop fighting it.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Going down swinging is a result. Never stepping into the ring is not.

Stallone keeps coming back to the boxing idea that a loss on your feet beats a safe life spent on the edge of things. He treats striking out as part of the deal for anyone who tries. What he can't forgive in himself is the swing he never took.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Write the story you are living, while you are still inside it.

Rocky is a written-off fighter who gets one shot and decides to go the distance. Stallone wrote him when he was being written off himself. The script worked because the struggle in it was his, still raw rather than remembered from a safe distance.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Where you started explains a lot about you. It does not have to settle where you end.

The strained relationship with his parents runs through the book in flashbacks. One school for troubled boys punished him by making him haul cut logs up a hill. Stallone does not tidy these years into a lesson, but he shows them feeding the hunger that kept him going later.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

If the odds are a lottery, the only lever you hold is how often you show up.

Stallone calls acting a gamble, and his New York years bear it out: small parts, cold rooms, no money and plenty of rejection. He could not control who said yes. He could control whether he kept walking into the next audition.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Say less. The line that lands is usually the short one.

Stallone believes screen dialogue should be lean, and the book's own sentences are clipped and quick to match. The same rule works off screen. A pitch, an apology or an ask carries more weight when you cut it to what matters.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The person in your corner during the lean years is part of the story, not a footnote.

His first wife, Sasha, stayed with him through the broke years before Rocky. Long climbs are rarely solo, even when they are told that way. It is worth naming the people who held the ladder while you were still on the low steps.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Name your long shot
- [ ] Write down what you won't trade
- [ ] Draft it fast, then fix it
- [ ] Turn one hard memory into material
- [ ] Tell the person in your corner

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Count every knockdown as a step
- ◯ Make one ask a week
- ◯ Cut a third before you send

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Name your long shot

Write one sentence for the thing you would keep climbing toward even if it never paid.

Keep it where you will see it each morning.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Write down what you won't trade

Pick the one condition you will not give up for your long shot: the role, the credit, the quality bar.

Write the offer you would turn down to keep it, before anyone makes one.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Draft it fast, then fix it

Give yourself a short, fixed window, such as one weekend, to finish a rough full version of the project.

A complete bad draft is something you can improve. A perfect first page is not.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Turn one hard memory into material

Write a private page about a setback from your past and what it left you with: a skill, a hunger, a way of seeing.

Look for the part that belongs in your work.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Tell the person in your corner

Tell one person what you are going for and ask them to check in on it every two weeks.

Put the first check-in in both calendars now.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Count every knockdown as a step

Each time you pitch, apply, audition or get turned down, log it.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Make one ask a week

Once a week, send one pitch, application or request that could move your long shot forward.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Cut a third before you send

Before an important email, pitch or message goes out, delete about a third of it.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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December 2026

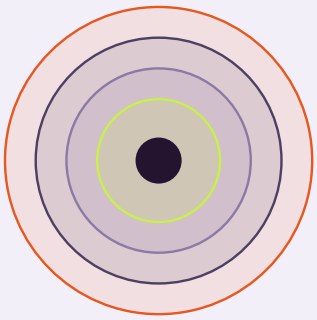
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Every step is a time you didn't make it yet. Climb it anyway.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER SYLVESTER STALLONE