

## 5 Leadership Secrets of Hillary Clinton (abridged)

Article written by Rebecca Shambaugh

Leadership Expert, Author and Keynote Speaker; Founder of Women in Leadership and Learning (WILL)

In June, Hillary Clinton made history as the first female presidential nominee of a major political party. In doing so, she told supporters: “Tonight’s victory is not about one person. It belongs to generations of women and men who struggled and sacrificed and made this moment possible.”

As important as the historical value of this victory is, the press and other news commentary called out that gender is not Hillary’s primary playing card. What will be more important is how she articulates her strong vision for this country, and how she will differentiate her leadership from other presidents for addressing the complexities and challenges our nation and the world are facing today.

Reaching this moment was no accident, however. For decades, Hillary has relied on a number of key leadership traits—including resilience—that have helped her overcome significant obstacles to achieve her goals. While some may agree with her and others disagree, it’s hard to dispute the fact that this influential global leader is in the midst of one of the most important leadership roles of her lifetime, and has much to offer us on what’s behind successful leadership...

From my personal experience as an international speaker on 21st Century Leadership, I can tell you that people are increasingly interested not just in general leadership principles, but in best practices and solutions that can help them lead through tenuous times. Both men and women are eager for guidance from leaders who have navigated successfully not just during periods of business as usual, but who:

- Know how to navigate through difficulties
- Value continuous learning
- Aren’t afraid to make midcourse corrections to succeed in the face of circumstances that seem initially insurmountable

Hillary’s words and actions emanate her high degree of resiliency that has allowed her to overcome and even thrive on adversity. Here are five secrets we can learn from her that leaders in any industry can apply to their own initiatives:

### **Secret 1: Understand Yourself**

When you think about what’s at the heart of resiliency, it’s self-awareness. This means not only understanding your values and beliefs, but also having knowledge of your emotions, attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses. It also includes recognizing what might be holding you back in a particular circumstance. Many times, when we perceive an obstacle, it’s based on our own faulty thinking and self-limiting beliefs about what we can achieve.

It took great self-awareness for Hillary to face adversity and bounce back from her failure to win the presidency in 2008, and she used this self-knowledge to reposition her campaign and approach, winning the respect necessary to receive her party’s presidential nomination in 2016. You too have the power to reexamine your mindset and shift your attitude so that you can take the next step toward achieving your goals.

### **Secret 2: Control Your Immediate Response and Make a Plan**

What’s your immediate reaction to adversity? Do you avoid bad news or prepare for battle? Knowing your fall-back tendency—and deciding to be proactive rather than reactive—can empower you to stay positive until you have all the information you need to make a decision. Hillary is a master planner and relies on continuous learning as a strategy, rather than having a knee-jerk reaction without the full set of facts. This is a key part of her resilience ability.

When you hit bumps in the road, remember that putting a plan together can move you in the direction of action, creating the energy needed to promote your resiliency. It can also give you back some control over the situation and empower you to begin to shift the circumstances. That's because action creates energy, which in turn promotes resiliency. So regardless of how stressed you feel in the moment, identify the next baby step. Whether it's picking up the phone to schedule lunch with a key stakeholder who can advise you or deciding to spend more time researching possible options, designing a plan to help you reach your goals will begin moving you in the right direction.

### **Secret 3: Embrace Change**

Even though change is the only thing constant in life, change is still difficult for most people. Resiliency is about overcoming change that is truly disruptive and more difficult than normal change. I've seen from my own coaching of many leaders that what separates successful leaders from ineffective ones often comes down to their ability to adapt to change.

Like other successful leaders, Hillary sees periods of change as the time to get curious. It's about asking questions that will help you move forward rather than staying stuck and lamenting that things aren't the way they used to be. To embrace change, ask things like: What's the new vision? Who are the new key stakeholders and what do they care about? How can I help implement this change to get others on board and ensure it's sustainable?

### **Secret 4: Be Courageous**

Hillary understands what promotes resiliency and also what repels it. She knows that fear is the greatest obstacle to resiliency in leadership because it causes leaders to retreat from possibilities rather than moving forward toward creative action. Fear causes immobility and makes leaders ignore their options.

As leaders, the best weapon we have against fear is courage. Courage isn't necessarily something you can plan for since the need for courage can arise when you least expect it. But as general principles, you can:

- Be prepared to stand up for what you believe is important.
- Confront traditional ways of thinking rather than giving in to fear and pressure to throw in the towel.
- Take prudent risks as you leverage your courage at work.
- Courage is not about riding in a boat without a life vest if you don't know how to swim—it is about learning to drive the boat. You want to stretch yourself in situations where you aren't completely confident yet, while still using good judgment to ensure that you don't crash and burn.

### **Secret 5: Never Give Up!**

It's easy to get discouraged as a leader since things won't always go your way. No one knows this lesson more than Hillary, whose sheer determination to reach her goals has led to her current status as the Democratic presidential nominee, even after failing previously in her bid for the presidency. Throughout the 2016 campaign as well, Hillary has been confronted by numerous obstacles that threatened to derail her, from the Benghazi scandal to potential indictment over her emails—but each time, she has stayed the course and moved ahead toward her goals, eventually securing the presidential nomination. Hillary offers an excellent example for leaders about how to see beyond the horizon and avoid staying in the valley.

Some might say that Hillary's evolution into one of the most powerful and influential people in the world was due solely to hard work or even to luck. But based on my decades of coaching both male and female leaders and executives, I can share with certainty that when it comes to leadership success, it is generally not luck or hard work alone that gets you there. It is instead both art and science that strong leaders learn and apply over time to become great. The good news is that leaders at all levels of an organization can develop these skills by recognizing and modeling key attributes that have been proven successful. My hope is that you will use these five secrets as part of your personal leadership toolkit to take your own skills to the next level.