

# Want to be a Better Leader? Master These Skills

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True leadership isn't about what you achieve. It's about who you become.

Two decades of coaching leaders and developing myself as a leader have taught me a key lesson: Leadership isn't a destination. Just when you think you've reached the top of the mountain, look up, you'll see another peak waiting.

The truth is, there's no secret sauce for leading yourself or others. Leadership is an ever-evolving process of learning and growing. The best leaders never stop evolving.

Here are four lessons every great leader eventually learns.

## 1. Humility is a strength

Humility is often mistaken for weakness. In one survey, more than half of fifth and sixth graders described humility as "embarrassed, sad, or shy." Adults often confuse it with humiliation.

But groundbreaking research tells a different story. Bradley Owens and David Hekman found that humble leaders don't assume success is guaranteed. They test their progress, revise plans, and seek feedback. They empower others to take initiative and celebrate team wins over personal credit.

Far from soft, humility gives leaders flexibility and strength. They avoid reacting from ego or abusing power, and instead lead from integrity, self-control, and emotional intelligence.

## 2. Great leaders learn from others

Strong leaders know they don't know it all. They constantly seek wisdom from others and expand their perspective beyond their own experience.

Remember the saying: If you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room.

The best leaders deliberately put themselves in spaces where they can learn, grow, and connect with people further down the path. They remain lifelong students.

## 3. Patience gives you an edge

Patience doesn't always get attention and it won't make any headlines, but it's one of leadership's most underrated strengths. (I cover patience extensively in my new book.)

Research shows that patient people make more progress toward tough goals, feel more satisfied when they achieve them, and experience less stress and depression.

Impatient leaders tend to jump to conclusions and act impulsively. Patient leaders, by contrast, are steady and rational. In conflict, they listen first, respond calmly, and diffuse tension. That kind of presence builds trust and resilience in teams.

#### **4. Self-awareness is nonnegotiable**

In a study reported by Harvard Business Review, teams with less self-aware team members made worse decisions, coordinated poorly, and struggled with conflict compared with teams led by self-aware individuals.

Self-awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence. Leaders who cultivate it see the bigger picture, regulate emotions, and empathize with others. As emotional intelligence expert Daniel Goleman put it:

If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.

In closing, remember: Leadership is about committing to the climb. And here's the real test: You don't prove your leadership on the easy days when everything goes smoothly. You prove it in the moments when your patience is tested, your humility is questioned, and your self-awareness is the difference between escalating a conflict or inspiring a breakthrough.

Keep climbing. Keep growing. The best leaders aren't defined by the peak they've reached, but by their willingness to take the next step.