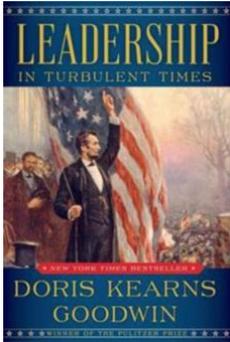


# CBODN: In The Know Recap

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November, 2020 In The Know Summary

## Leadership in Turbulent Times<sup>1</sup>

Doris Kearns Goodwin

The notes below were prepared for the Chesapeake Bay Organizational Development Network (CBODN) Book Club. The notes are not intended to be a full book summary or review—rather they are highlights that guided the group discussion.

Book Notes Courtesy of [Chris Westbrook](#)

While there is neither a master key to leadership nor a common lock of historical circumstance, we can detect a **certain family resemblance of leadership traits** as we trace the alignment of leadership capacity within its historical context. (xvii)

*Temperament is the great separator*

Richard Neustadt,  
[Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents.](#)

**These four men form a family tree**, a lineage of leadership that spans [almost] the entirety of our country’s history. (xviii)

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<sup>1</sup> All content—with the exception of the *Applications* section—is quoted directly or paraphrased from Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Leadership in Turbulent Times*. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2018.

**Leadership Traits**

<b><u>Lincoln</u></b>	<b><u>T. Roosevelt</u></b>	<b><u>F. Roosevelt</u></b>	<b><u>Johnson</u></b>
<p><b>Storyteller</b></p> <p>To explain “things hard for us to understand,” per a friend (6)</p>	<p><b>Storyteller</b></p>	<p><b>Storyteller.</b> Supple, often jaunty verbal capacity (47)</p>	<p><b>Storyteller.</b> Extravagant oral tradition of the Old West infused Johnson’s language (73)</p>
<p><b>Empathy (7)</b></p>	<p><b>Empathy.</b> Developed from seminal visit to a tenement with labor leader Samuel Gompers while a NY Assemblyman (38)</p>	<p><b>Empathy.</b> Listening skills (42)</p>	<p><b>Empathy.</b> Developed while principal of Mexican-American school in Texas (75)</p>
<p><b>Learn from mistakes.</b> Acknowledge errors (12)</p>	<p><b>Learn from mistakes.</b> Ability to learn from the excesses of his egocentric behavior, to alter course, to profit from error (37)</p>	<p><b>Learn from mistakes.</b> Adaptability (45)</p>	<p><b>Learn from mistakes.</b> Reflective, conducted lessons learned with himself after events (89)</p>
<p><b>Political acumen.</b> Ability to intuit the feelings and intentions of his fellow Assemblymen (15)</p> <p>Based in a thorough knowledge of human nature (15)</p>	<p><b>Political acumen.</b> A characteristic penchant for brash maneuvering (35)</p>	<p><b>Political acumen.</b> Ability to work together with different factions and strike bargains. (59)</p> <p>Interpersonal intelligence (47)</p>	<p><b>Political acumen.</b> Consummate political animal</p> <p>Instinctive ability to locate gears and levers of power</p> <p>Secured influential mentors</p>

<b><u>Lincoln</u></b>	<b><u>T. Roosevelt</u></b>	<b><u>F. Roosevelt</u></b>	<b><u>Johnson</u></b>
Self-reliance (39)			
Ambition	Ambition	Ambition	Ambition leading to inability to understand when to ease up (75)
Resoluteness	Willpower (40)	Persistence, willfulness (51)	Unflagging energy, hard work. Single-minded determination (82)
Sociability (39)	Gratification connecting with people from different backgrounds and stations. Irrepressible liveliness	Good-natured, gregarious (42)	Contagious enthusiasm (82)
Ability to break down the most complex case or issue into its simplest elements	Intellectual vitality (40)	Uncommon intuitive capacity, problem solving, transverse intelligence cutting across categories (46, 48)  Quick study (61)	Ability to see around corners (86)
	Prodigious memory (25)	Excellent memory (49)	Phenomenal memory for names, faces, and people behind the faces (89)
		Ingrained expectation that things would somehow turn out positively (49)	Every problem had a solution (81)
Sense of humor		Infectious sense of humor (52)	

## **Turbulent Times for the Leader: From Adversity Can Come Growth**

By the time they were in their late twenties, all four young men knew that they were leaders. Already these young men resembled sketches of the leaders we would recognize in the years that followed. For these sketches to become fuller portraits, however, would require the ability to transcend both public and private adversity.

Each leader experienced seminal **periods of adversity** that became their proving grounds for **developing resilience**, which is at the heart of leadership growth.

### **Lincoln: The Winter of 1840**

Illinois was in its **third year of recession** in 1840, prompting the state legislature to halt work on half-finished railroads, canals, bridges, and roads—all of which Lincoln had prodded the body to fund. The state was pushed into debt and years of bad credit.

**Lincoln announced his retirement from the legislature.**

- Lincoln entered a depression so extreme, troubled friends removed all knives, razors, and scissors from his room. (98)
- Lincoln then **broke off a public engagement with Mary Todd** which, in his eyes, now ruined his reputation and honor on the personal level.

Although “within an inch of being a perfect lunatic for life,” according to his doctors in Springfield, Lincoln slowly pulled out of his depression and **dedicated over a decade to restoration of his health and reputation and growth of his skills and experience.**

- Lincoln partnered with Stephen Logan, the leading lawyer in the county. Logan mentored and improved on Lincoln’s limited legal background and helped restore Lincoln’s self-confidence.
- Lincoln resumed his courtship and **married Mary Todd in 1842.**
- Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846 for a single term, based on an agreement with Whig politicians in the state. Campaigned in the 1848 presidential race on behalf of Whig candidate Gen. Zachary Taylor, impressing all with his unique charisma, storytelling gifts, and intellectual abilities.
- **Taylor won, Lincoln’s Congressional term ended**, and he began **an intense period of assiduous law practice and personal, intellectual, moral, and professional growth.** (105)
  - Traveled the state on a legal circuit for eight weeks annually with judges, lawyers, witnesses, and bailiffs, studying in all his off hours: philosophy, astronomy, science, political economy, literature, drama, mathematical theorems and proofs.

Lincoln was **thrust back into public life in the anti-slavery struggle**, including his famous debates with the pro-slavery Stephen Douglas in 1854. (Lincoln actually was not an abolitionist at the time but was committed to allowing no future states to enter the union with slavery.)

- Lincoln's mastery of the history of slavery, as well as his logic, reasoning, and oratory skills made for a speech of the ages.
- Lincoln ran for Senate twice in the new Republican Party, losing both times, before he **won the nomination for President in 1860**, besting William Henry Seward and two others.

### **Teddy Roosevelt: The Loss of Wife and Mother**

**In 1884 and within hours of each other, Roosevelt's mother Mittie died at 49 of typhus and wife Alice died** from acute kidney disease. This was within a day of the birth of his healthy baby daughter, Alice Lee.

- Roosevelt spent two years of buying and **establishing a cattle ranch in North Dakota**, during which time he healed, grew, and transformed himself.
- He forced himself through will power to accomplish things and later said he owed the Presidency to his experience in Dakota. (130)
- Roosevelt changed his philosophy to a fatalistic one of **taking whatever opportunity came his way and making the utmost of it**, in case it was his last. (132)
  - Roosevelt served on the New York Civil Service Commission and then headed the New York Police Department. On his first day heading the NYPD, Roosevelt literally hit the ground running, racing up the steps of the Mulberry Street police headquarters to dramatize for reporters the pace he wanted to set. (136)
- Roosevelt used these experiences and his time as Assistant Secretary of the Navy to hone management and bureaucratic skills: bestowing rewards and recognition to motivate staff, making technological improvements, and—in the case of NYPD-- building a diverse police force that reflected the city,. He was known for his hands-on inspections across New York City and then the Navy

Theodore Roosevelt was the **only one of the four to command men in military operations: the Spanish-American War in Cuba, 1898.**

- He demonstrated self-awareness in delegating complex logistical procedures.
- He earned balance between affection and respect to expect of his troops. (151)

- He deepened his confidence in his own leadership abilities, prompting him to claim those among his biggest strengths. (154)

### **Franklin Delano Roosevelt: *Above all, try something***

Franklin Roosevelt was **stricken with polio at Campobello in 1921.**

- His irrepressible optimism led him initially to work on a goal of full recovery.
- He demonstrated perseverance, resolution newfound patience, humility, empathy for other polio victims and others who have suffered, and willingness to adopt a trial-and-error method in his journey to reclaim his 'rebellious' body. (163)
- Roosevelt learned to not sweat the small things. *If you can't use your legs and they bring you milk when you wanted orange juice, you learn to say, 'That's all right,' and drink it.* (175)
- He asked his closest staff to go out where he could not and then bring back learnings. This included Eleanor, who became very adept at facility inspections. He was endlessly "educable," per Frances Perkins, who would become his Labor Secretary. (176) This led to his "visceral" understanding of the impact of the Great Depression. (179)

FDR's resilience, adaptability, and constant learning led to his **victory over Hoover in 1932.** (Hoover proclaimed prematurely that the economic downturn was over and then adopted a bunker mentality and refused to admit the depression was worsening.) (181)

### **LBJ: *The Most Miserable Period of my Life***

Johnson's **run for the Senate in 1941 ended in defeat**, destroying his self-confidence and leading to protracted depression and even physical breakdown.

- Though this defeat pales in comparison to the tragedies that befell the other three presidents, due to LBJ's excitable temperament and total investment in politics, this defeat was equally devastating. (183)
- His loss of bearings opened further when **FDR—a great mentor—died** on April 2, 1945. (191)

**Senate victory in 1948** restored him, and the smaller, boys' club culture of Senate was more amenable to LBJ's strengths than the House had been. (193)

- **1955** became **Senate's youngest majority leader.** (197)

In **1955 LBJ** also suffered a **massive heart attack**, throwing him again into depression but then helping him see that power needed purpose and vision. (200)

- From that followed his Program with a Heart and civil rights legislation.

## **Turbulent Times for the Nation: Strategies for Leading Out of Crisis**

**A leader who has suffered great personal crisis can then better lead a nation in crisis.**  
(274)

### **Lincoln: Transformational Leadership**

How did Lincoln determine that the time was right for **issuing the Emancipation Proclamation**, which would fundamentally transform how the war was waged and what the Union was fighting for? How did he **persuade his fractious cabinet, the Army, and his divided countrymen in the North to go along with him?** (213)

*Great necessities call out  
great virtues.*

Abigail Adams to her son  
John Quincy Adams in the  
midst of the American

- Acknowledge when failed policies demand a change in direction.
- Gather firsthand information, ask questions.
- Find time and space in which to think.
- Exhaust all possibility of compromise before imposing unilateral executive power.
- Anticipate contending viewpoints.
- Assume full responsibility for a pivotal decision.
- Understand the emotional needs of each member of the team.
- Refuse to let past resentments fester; transcend personal vendettas.
- Set a standard of mutual respect and dignity; control anger.
- Shield colleagues from blame.
- Maintain perspective in the face of both accolades and abuse.
- Find ways to cope with pressure, maintain balance, replenish energy.
- Keep your word.
- Know when to hold back, when to move forward.
- Combine transactional and transformational leadership.
- Be accessible, easy to approach.
- Put ambition for the collective interest above self-interest.

## Teddy: Crisis Management

The **Great Coal Strike of 1902** gave **Theodore Roosevelt** the **domestic purpose for his young administration**—to restrain the rampant consolidation of corporate wealth that had developed in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Under the banner of the Square Deal, he inaugurated a mood of progressive reform and **created a new vision of the relationship between labor and capital, between government and the people.** (245)

- Calculate risks of getting involved.
- Secure a reliable understanding of the facts, causes, and conditions of the situation.
- Remain uncommitted in the early stages.
- Use history to provide perspective.
- Be ready to grapple with reversals, abrupt intrusions that can unravel all plans.
- Reevaluate options; be ready to adapt as a situation escalates.
- Be visible. Cultivate public support among those most directly affected by the crisis.
- Clear the deck to focus with single-mindedness on the crisis.
- Assemble a crisis management team.
- Frame the narrative.
- Keep temper in check.
- Document proceedings each step of the way.
- Control the message in the press
- Find ways to relieve stress.
- Be ready with multiple strategies; prepare contingent moves.
- Don't hit unless you have to, but when you hit, hit hard.
- Find ways to save face.
- Share credit for the successful resolution.
- Leave a record behind for the future.

## FDR: Turnaround Leadership

During his first hundred days in office, Franklin Roosevelt **stemmed the immediate banking crisis** and set in motion **a turnaround that would forever alter the relationship between the government and the people.** (276)

- Draw an immediate sharp line of demarcation between what has gone before and what is about to begin.
- Restore confidence to the spirit and morale of the people. Strike the right balance of realism and optimism.
- Infuse a sense of shared purpose and direction.
- Tell people what they can expect and what is expected of them.

- Lead by example.
- Forge a team aligned with action and change.
- Create a gathering pause, a window of time.
- Bring all stakeholders aboard.
- Set a deadline and drive full-bore to meet it.
- Set forth and maintain clear-cut ground rules with the press.
- Tell the story simply, directly to the people.
- Address systemic problems. Launch lasting reforms.
- Be open to experiment. Design flexible agencies to deal with new problems.
- Stimulate competition and debate. Encourage creativity.
- Open channels of unfiltered information to supplement and challenge official sources.
- Adapt. Be ready to change course quickly when necessary.

### **LBJ: Visionary Leadership**

Lyndon Johnson not only **established calm and continuity after the assassination of President Kennedy**, but **successfully started what would become the Great Society**, in which the role of government was to look after those who needed help. (309)

- Make a dramatic start.
- Lead with your strengths.
- Simplify the agenda.
- Establish the most effective order of battle.
- Honor commitments.
- Drive, drive, drive.
- Master the power of narrative.
- Know for what and when to risk it all.
- Rally support around a strategic target.
- Draw a clear line of battle.
- Impose discipline in the ranks.
- Identify the key to success. Put ego aside.
- Take the measure of the man.
- Set forth a compelling picture of the future.
- The readiness is all.
- Give stakeholders a chance to shape measures from the start.
- Know when to hold back, when to move forward.
- Let celebrations honor the past and provide momentum for the future.

## **Discussion: Applications for the Practitioner**

1. Going **from surviving COVID-19 to thriving**, as a leader, as an organization
2. Coaching a leader through
  - **Personal tragedy.** Read and discuss with family.
  - **Professional failure.** Read and discuss with mentor, close peers.
  - **Organizational crisis.** Establish leadership-team reading groups, cascading downwards in the organization.
  - **Major organizational change.** Discuss change strategies with leadership team, your change management team.
  - **First 100 days.**
  - Other?
3. **Addressing competency gaps.** Can provide both motivation and concrete examples of how each leader developed and demonstrated that competency.
  - Focus on the leader most like client/most unlike client.
4. **Overcoming burnout.**
5. **Other?**

**About the CBODN In the Know Book Club** In this monthly book club, a presenter shares highlights from a book related to leadership, business, neuroscience, or coaching. Membership is not required, and there's no obligation to pre-read the book. [Register here](#) for upcoming events. For the full set of discussion summaries, [click here](#).