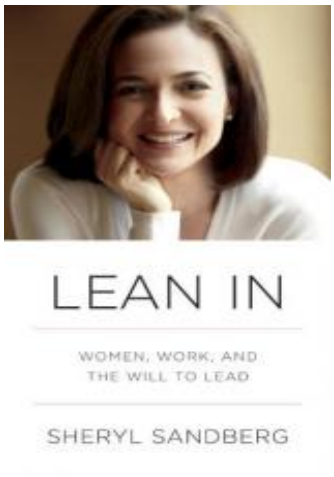
Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead

by Sheryl Sandberg



About the Book

Thirty years after women became 50 percent of the college graduates in the United States, men still hold the vast majority of leadership positions in government and industry. This means that women?s voices are still not heard equally in the decisions that most affect our lives. In LEAN IN, Sheryl Sandberg examines why women?s progress in achieving leadership roles has stalled, explains the root causes, and offers compelling, commonsense solutions that can empower women to achieve their full potential.

Sandberg is the chief operating officer of Facebook and is ranked on *Fortune*?s list of the 50 Most Powerful Women in Business and as one of *Time*?s 100 Most Influential People in the World. In 2010, she gave an electrifying TEDTalk in which she described how women unintentionally hold themselves back in their careers. Her talk, which became a phenomenon and has been viewed more than two million times, encouraged women to ?sit at the table,? seek challenges, take risks, and pursue their goals with gusto.

In LEAN IN, Sandberg digs deeper into these issues, combining personal anecdotes, hard data, and compelling research to cut through the layers of ambiguity and bias surrounding the lives and choices of working women. She recounts her own decisions, mistakes, and daily struggles to make the right choices for herself, her career, and her family. She provides practical advice on negotiation techniques, mentorship, and building a satisfying career, urging women to set boundaries and to abandon the myth of ?having it all.? She describes specific steps women can take to combine professional achievement with personal fulfillment and demonstrates how men can benefit by supporting women in the workplace and at home.

Written with both humor and wisdom, Sandberg?s book is an inspiring call to action and a blueprint for individual growth. LEAN IN is destined to change the conversation from what women can?t do to what they can.

Discussion Guide

1. What does ?lean in? mean? Why do you think women need to be urged to lean in?

2. The first three words in the book are ?I got pregnant.? What does this signal about the kind of business book**Lean In** will be?

3. When Sandberg says, ?The promise of equality is not the same as true equality? (p. 7), what does she mean? Have you found this statement to be accurate?

4. Why is ?ambitious? often considered a derogatory word when used to describe a woman but complimentary when used to describe a man?

5. In chapter 2, Sandberg discusses the impostor syndrome: feeling like a fraud, fearing discovery with each success. Why do women feel this way more often than men do? What causes the gender gap?

6. Sandberg believes that there are times when you can reach for opportunities even if you are not sure you are quite ready to take them on?and then learn by doing. Have you ever tried this? What have you tried? What was the result?

7. What did you learn from the anecdote on page 36, about keeping your hand up?

8. Why did Sandberg respond so negatively to being named the fifth most powerful woman in the world?

9. When negotiating, Sandberg tells women to use the word ?we? rather than ?I.? Why does the choice of pronoun make such a difference?

10. On page 48, Sandberg says, ?I understand the paradox of advising women to change the world by adhering to biased rules and expectations.? How do you feel about her advice?

11. What?s your take on Sandberg?s suggestion that we think of the path to a satisfying career as a jungle gym rather than a ladder?

12. Sandberg argues that taking risks can be important in building a career. How have you approached risk-taking in your life?

13. Sandberg argues that mentorship relationships rarely happen from asking strangers to mentor you, but rather from an opportunity to engage with someone in a more substantive way. How has mentorship worked in your own experience?

14. People who believe that they speak ?*the*truth? and not ?their truth? can be very silencing of others, Sandberg says on page 79. What does she mean by this?

15. When considering employment after motherhood, Sandberg suggests that women shift the calculations and measure the current cost of child care against their salary ten years from now. Why is this a more effective perspective than just considering current costs? If you?re a parent, would this change your attitude toward employment and money?

16. In chapter 9, Sandberg blasts the myth of ?having it all,? or even ?doing it all,? and points to a poster on the wall at Facebook as a good motto: ?Done is better than perfect.? (p. 125) What perfectionist attitudes have you dropped in order to find contentment?

17. Sandberg and her husband have different viewpoints about parenting: She worries about taking too much time away from their kids, while he?s proud of the time he *does*spend with them. Would it help women to adopt an attitude more like his?

18. In chapter 10, Sandberg discusses how the term ?feminist? has taken on negative connotations. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why?

19. Discuss this assertion: ?Staying quiet and fitting in may have been all the first generations of women who entered corporate America could do; in some cases, it might still be the safest path. But this strategy is not paying off for women as a group. Instead, we need to speak out, identify the barriers that are holding women back, and find solutions? (pp. 146?47).

20. In the book?s final chapter, Sandberg talks about the need to work together to create equality?to allow women to thrive in the workplace, and to allow men to participate proudly in the home and child rearing. What steps can you take right now to begin to make this happen?

Author Bio

Sheryl Sandberg is chief operating officer at Facebook, overseeing the firm?s business operations. Prior to Facebook, Sheryl was vice president of Global Online Sales and Operations at Google, chief of staff for the United States Treasury Department under President Clinton, a management consultant with McKinsey & Company, and an economist with the World Bank.

Sheryl received a BA *summa cum laude* from Harvard University and an MBA with highest distinction from Harvard Business School.

Sheryl is the co-author of OPTION B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy with Wharton professor and bestselling author Adam Grant. She is also the author of the bestsellers LEAN IN: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead and LEAN IN FOR GRADUATES. She is the founder of the Sheryl Sandberg & Dave Goldberg Family Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works to build a more equal and resilient world through two key initiatives, LeanIn.Org and OptionB.Org. Sheryl serves on the boards of Facebook, the Walt Disney Company, Women for Women International, ONE and SurveyMonkey.

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