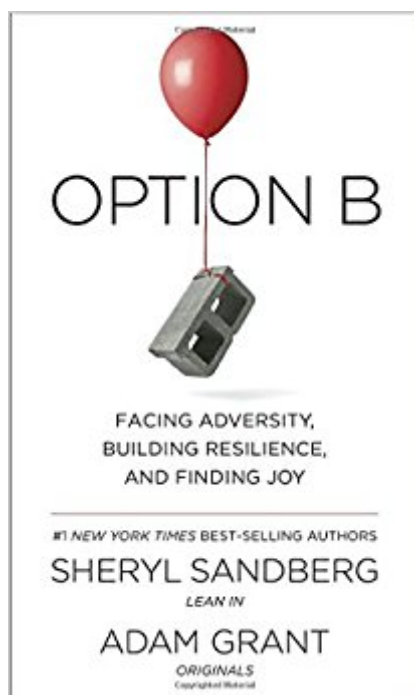


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Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, And Finding Joy



Synopsis

#1 New York Times *Best Seller* From Facebook's COO and Wharton's top-rated professor, the #1 New York Times best-selling authors of *Lean In* and *Originals*: A powerful, inspiring, and practical book about building resilience and moving forward after life's inevitable setbacks. After the sudden death of her husband, Sheryl Sandberg felt certain that she and her children would never feel pure joy again. "I was in the void," she writes, "a vast emptiness that fills your heart and lungs and restricts your ability to think or even breathe." Her friend Adam Grant, a psychologist at Wharton, told her there are concrete steps people can take to recover and rebound from life-shattering experiences. We are not born with a fixed amount of resilience. It is a muscle that everyone can build. Option B combines Sheryl's personal insights with Adam's eye-opening research on finding strength in the face of adversity. Beginning with the gut-wrenching moment when she finds her husband, Dave Goldberg, collapsed on a gym floor, Sheryl opens up her heart and her journal to describe the acute grief and isolation she felt in the wake of his death. But Option B goes beyond Sheryl's loss to explore how a broad range of people have overcome hardships including illness, job loss, sexual assault, natural disasters, and the violence of war. Their stories reveal the capacity of the human spirit to persevere . . . and to rediscover joy. Resilience comes from deep within us and from support outside us. Even after the most devastating events, it is possible to grow by finding deeper meaning and gaining greater appreciation in our lives. Option B illuminates how to help others in crisis, develop compassion for ourselves, raise strong children, and create resilient families, communities, and workplaces. Many of these lessons can be applied to everyday struggles, allowing us to brave whatever lies ahead. Two weeks after losing her husband, Sheryl was preparing for a father-child activity. "I want Dave," she cried. Her friend replied, "Option A is not available," and then promised to help her make the most of Option B. We all live some form of Option B. This book will help us all make the most of it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An Best Book of April 2017: After the unexpected passing of her beloved husband, Facebook COO and bestselling author of Lean In, Sheryl Sandberg, feared that she and her children would never find joy again. Fortunately this fear was unfounded. Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy--co-authored with psychologist and friend Adam Grant--shows you how Sandberg, and many others who have overcome a wide range of profound hardships, triumphed over tragedy. The book posits that it's helpful to think of resilience like a muscle, one that atrophies in the calm between the storms of our lives. But there are things we can do to develop it, so we're better prepared when adversity strikes. In America, culture can put a kink in this plan. Processing a painful event can be hindered when you're wired not to talk about it. We all know that when someone asks how we're doing, the expected response is "fine," no matter if we've just lost a limb, or had a cancer scare. We will grin, and we will bear it, and we will go back to work too soon and burst into tears in the copy room when confronted by a malevolent stapler (or maybe that's just me). Recently, Sandberg helped to enact a new employee benefit at Facebook: 20 days of paid bereavement leave, twice the amount that was offered previously. As she explains in Option B, it's the humane thing to do, and it also makes good business sense; compassionate companies engender more loyal employees. In this way, Option B is more than a little revolutionary. It challenges us to change systems that don't always take our humanness into account. And that's something we need to do on a personal level as well. None of us are immune to misfortune and heartbreak. We need to cut ourselves some slack when times get tough, and, as Sandberg discovered, flip the golden rule: When a loved one is in distress, instead of treating them how you would want to be treated, consider how they want to be treated, which may be quite different. Option B starts an (oftentimes) uncomfortable but important conversation. If we lean in to the numerous lessons it has on offer, there's a lot more joy to be found. --Erin Kodicek, The Book Review

“A remarkable achievement: generous, honest, poignant.” Option B reveals an aspect of Sandberg’s character—her impulse to be helpful. This is a book that will be quietly passed from hand to hand, and it will surely offer great comfort to its intended readers . . . The candor and simplicity with which she shared all of it is a kind of gift . . . Helpful, moving.”

—Caitlin Flanagan, *The New York Times*

“The overwhelming message of this book is: We’re a lot more resilient than we think we are. But there are things we can do for ourselves, and for other people who are hurting, that will really allow that resilience to bloom.”

—Katie Couric

“Sandberg is wise and honest and funny and practical in ways that are likely to stay with the reader. Her deeply personal book is more than memoir; interspersed with devastating scenes are equally powerful strategies for coping when your world has gone tilt.”

—Tracy Grant, *The Washington Post*

“I recommend this inspiring book to everyone around the world. None of us can escape sadness, loss, or life’s disappointments, so the best option is to find our Option B.”

—Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Peace Prize winner

“Option B is as hopeful as it is heartbreaking. Here are stories of sometimes unimaginable pain and loss, but also of how human beings nonetheless have the capacity to endure and even thrive. This book is not just an absorbing read. It also provides lessons that everyone needs to learn.”

—Atul Gawande, author of *Being Mortal*

“Sheryl writes about her own heartbreaking experience with a rare honesty. Then she and Adam translate her personal story into a powerful, practical guide for anyone trying to build resilience in their own lives, communities, and companies. It’s hard enough to resonate with readers. It’s even harder to help them take concrete steps toward a better future. Option B does both.”

—Bill and Melinda Gates, co-chairs of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

“Thoughtful, insightful, and compelling. Both individually and collectively, we all need to understand the power of rehabilitation, recovery, and redemption if we are to overcome adversity. This incredible book doesn’t avoid the loss and tragedy we all sometimes encounter, but it is animated by a resolve that is both inspiring and instructive.”

—Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy* and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative

“Illuminating, original, and deeply inspiring, Option B is one part riveting memoir, one part heal-your-heart boot camp, one part stories of others who learned to thrive in the face of profound loss: a practical, vital contribution to the literature on loss and resilience.”

—Cheryl Strayed, author of *Wild*

“Like her debut volume, Sandberg’s Option B is an optimistic book, even if one riven with sorrow. She argues that

after adversity and loss, there is an opportunity for post-traumatic growth. Thus the book is in part a moving memoir.

• Rebecca Mead, *The New Yorker* “Sandberg’s new book is tough, full of the raw, painful emotions . . . Option B [has] advice for people who are grieving. But it’s also a book for nearly everyone—people who may not know what to say or do in the wake of a tragedy. It’s also a deeply optimistic book, framed around the question, what’s next?”

• Rebecca J. Rosen, *The Atlantic* “Intimate, personal . . . Within Option B there are lessons for leaders who want to make organizations more resilient, help employees recover from a loss or crisis and create workplaces that are more prepared to deal with failure.”

• Jena McGregor, *The Los Angeles Times* “Admirably honest, optimistic . . . Sandberg shares a great deal of herself and what she has learned. At its core the book helps those who have been felled by despair: a guide both for those who have directly suffered loss and for those who are close to people who have.”

• *The Economist* “Though it was inspired by a deeply personal tragedy, Option B details Sandberg’s experience and the topic of resilience more broadly, and is filled with insight that is useful for anyone overcoming loss or failure.”

• Brad Stulberg, *New York Magazine* “Science of Us” “Being among the most powerful women in the world didn’t spare Sheryl Sandberg from the sudden death of her husband, not quite two years ago. Option B is at its best when pinpointing specific tips for coping with overwhelming grief. Sandberg writes how she created new rituals, such as taking a moment at dinner each evening to express gratitude for something positive that day, and declaring small wins. Day by day, the book says, these small victories can become building blocks to a return to emotional equanimity.”

• Diane Cole, *The Wall Street Journal* “Option B tackles a universal subject, and offers up a path to happiness based not on fantasies of immortality but on the reality of the sorrow of life itself . . . The book is also a practical guide for handling grief and adversity. With her coauthor Grant, Sandberg lays out anecdotes and research on perseverance and resilience . . . Finding growth and ultimately joy is the project of Option B. Sandberg makes a point of emphasizing this aspect.”

• Emily Peck, *The Huffington Post* “Part memoir and part operating manual for surviving the hardest moments in our lives, Option B has essential wisdom . . . This book has the power to help heal. What’s doubly impressive about Sandberg’s decision to write it: she must have known it required opening herself up to feedback that far exceeds the usual literary criticism.”

• Rebecca Ruiz, *Mashable* “Option B chronicles

Sandberg's devastating loss, her grief and how she emerged from it with a new perspective on life. The most affecting parts of the book recount not just Sandberg's grief, but that of her children . . . Tragedy does not have to be personal, pervasive or permanent, but resilience can be, she writes. We can build it and carry it with us throughout our lives. Associated Press "Sandberg is helping people find resilience and meaning in the face of adversity. She says there isn't one way to grieve, but she's learned that processing your feelings and not blaming yourself is an important part of recovery. . . Facing adversity, Sandberg says, is a part of daily life from childhood to adulthood. Queenie Wong, The Mercury News "Moving . . . A memoir of the loss of a husband and finding a path forward beyond the grieving process. Writing with Grant, a highly rated professor at Wharton, Sandberg explores how to weather the storm of grief, applying concrete skills in addition to more complex theories of psychology about how to find meaning in life-changing circumstances. A book that provides illuminating ways to make headway through the days when there doesn't seem to be a way forward. Kirkus "Helpful and hopeful Sandberg draws on her own pain around the sudden death of her husband, and shares what she has learned about resilience with a tone that is raw and candid. Those suffering as well as those seeking to provide comfort should find both solace and wisdom. Publishers Weekly

I'm not finished but I wanted to chime in right away. I'm a Licensed Professional Counselor, part-time teacher at Colorado Christian University, and published author. I live in the Columbine neighborhood and worked with police and firefighters at Ground Zero so healing from trauma is of huge interest to me. I've spent the last four years researching and writing about the powerful topic of Posttraumatic Growth. (I wish I could tell you the title of my book but it remains in the hands of agents and publishers. I hope it gets to be born someday.) In the meantime I want to shout hurray and yeehaw on almost every single page of this book. The smashing point of this book: All people can heal, and some people are even launched to a more meaningful place after experiencing trauma; clinical research shows how. Growth is actually more common than the much better known and far better studied posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The challenge is to see the opportunity presented by seismic events. After trauma, people need hope. In the aftermath of the tragedy, people need to know there is something better. Following a traumatic experience, most people experience a range of problems: Trouble sleeping, nightmares, agitation, flashbacks, emotional numbness, avoiding reminders of the traumatic event, anxiety, anger, guilt, hyper-vigilance,

depression, isolation, suicidal tendencies, etc. Until recently the entire discussion of the human response to trauma ended with a summation of the hardships incurred by trauma. But as it turns out, a traumatic event is not simply a hardship to be overcome. Instead, it is transformative. Trauma survivors and their family and friends need to know there is another side to trauma. Strange as it may sound, half of all sufferers emerge from the trauma stronger, more focused, and with a new perspective on their future. In numerous studies, about half of all trauma survivors report positive changes as a result of their experience. Sometimes the changes are small (life has more meaning, or the survivor feels closer to loved ones) and other times they are massive, sending people on new career paths. The worst things that happen to us might put us on a path to the best things that will ever happen to us. A brush with trauma often pushes trauma survivors to face their own mortality and to find a more meaningful and fulfilling understanding of who they are and how they want to live. To be clear, growth does not undo loss, and it does not eliminate adversity. Posttraumatic growth is not the same as an increase in well-being or a decrease in distress. And even for those who do experience growth, suffering is not mitigated in the aftermath of tragedy. Growth may make the pain meaningful and bearable, but it does not deny the hurt. For decades, nearly all the psychological research into trauma and recovery has focused on the debilitating problems that people face, but Option B speaks of the paths people can take to heal from their experiences and discover new meaning in their lives. Just this morning a blog reader wrote to me and said she feels stuck because of her father's suicide many years ago. The first thing I did was tell her about your book. I have been, and will be, recommending this book to friends and clients. Thank you Sheryl and Adam.

At the beginning of this book, I felt grateful to Sandberg and Grant for their clear articulation of how we as a culture fail those who are suffering by not talking to them about their adversity. Early chapters provide some ideas about how to bring up difficult situations and how to offer concrete, realistic help instead of fuzzy, generalized help. Later chapters on raising resilient kids and failing at work provide some good recommendations for building resilience, but it's unclear to me what that kind of resilience has to do with helping people bear the intense emotions of grief and trauma. The rest of the book was shockingly awful. Sandberg and Grant pushed way beyond basic recommendations for supporting grieving people into promoting their strategies for "overcoming" adversity as universally helpful. Their resilience strategies are so ill-advised for normal grieving and traumatized people that I can not only not recommend this book, I also need to strongly speak out against it. As a person who was suddenly

widowed 25 years ago, when my son was an infant; and as a psychotherapist who has helped people with grief and trauma for over 20 years, I am horrified and insulted by the way Grant misapplies to grief and trauma his business-based positive-psychology strategies—strategies that are intended to help people with performance anxiety, not mortal suffering. I know from experience that untimely loss is brutal, and I don't fault Sandberg for submitting to Grant's insistence that she follow his prescriptive exercises, especially because he frightens her by telling her that if she continues to feel her painful feelings, she will be "trapped" in negative emotion and her children "won't recover." Of course she wants her kids to be okay. So she uses his change-your-thinking exercises to momentarily stanch her wrenching pain. But in the long run, these strategies don't get rid of grief's intense feelings. Instead, Grant's strategies sidestep anguishing emotions and push them underground where they fester and cause problems years later and in future generations. I think it was irresponsible of the publisher to allow two unqualified people to make these damaging universal suggestions to grieving and traumatized people. Sandberg is a brand-new widow. (Whether she and the general public want to believe it or not, two years into widowhood is very early.) Though I would have supported her writing a memoir of her early widowhood; I think it's naive for her to advise anyone on how to deal with grief and trauma for the long haul. And Grant is a BUSINESS professor. He has zero training for working with people who are going through intensely emotional experiences, and no knowledge of up-to-date emotion science. The strategies he foists onto Sandberg emerged from research on learning and performance, not on dealing with overwhelming emotion. His cognitive-behavioral tools coerce Sandberg out of her pain and force her to prematurely and frantically chase after joy, gratitude, and meaning. These healing emotions don't need to be hastily imposed onto people. Joy, gratitude, and meaning naturally arise when grieving people are given time and help to bear their intense emotions. Though Sandberg was able to harness her strong achievement-drive to employ Grant's tools for dominating her grief and leaping toward joy, all of the tools spring from a hijacking of a narrow theory about the single personality trait of resilience for willfully overpowering anguish. Throughout the book, Sandberg and Grant use terms like overcome adversity, triumph over sadness, and regain control. These warlike terms reveal that they view grief as a monster that we should fear and flee from, or battle and fight against, and to ultimately prevail over. Though ultimately fear-based, this ego-driven, conflict-filled story preserves the beloved American illusion

that even in the face of horrific tragedy, we can acquire weapons of resilience in order to dominate the grief monster and bounce back to normal in just over a year. When distressing grief reactions occur in a society like ours that denigrates long-lasting and intense grief responses, griever can end up isolated, ashamed, and ill. They believe, "Something's wrong with me. I need to make this stop." "If I were resilient, I wouldn't be so overwhelmed." These beliefs are invalidating and they perpetuate a harmful fear of grief, and Option B throws gasoline on the flames of these beliefs. Emotion science clearly shows that when we are plunged into intense emotional states such as grief, we need to feel understood and we need to be helped to express our emotions in a way that doesn't overwhelm us. Grant never soothes Sandberg, never offers her kindness to help her bear and express her grief. Instead, he responds to her sadness, despair, or guilt with stern warnings that she's "delaying her recovery" and "delaying her kids' recovery." His strident approach leaves me feeling fiercely protective of all grieving people, including Sandberg. I've already seen clients having normal grief responses who feel ashamed and afraid of their own emotions when they compare themselves to Sandberg. I dislike the way resilience "as sold by Option B" is making griever feel bad. I'm angry that Option B is turning resilience into a new hurtful grief myth that griever have to fight against in order to heal, a myth that makes griever feel ashamed and frightened if they can't bounce back immediately, and if they don't feel like prematurely striving toward joy when they're honorably slogging through toward real healing.

I ordered this book because the blurb on line looked like something that would help me with my journey. I am a widow of 6 months, my husband passed of a fast heart attack. I too, found him in bed and administered CPR to no avail. While I identified with the steps of the author, I could not relate to her presentation. For many of us of limited resources, the journey is quite different. I do not know how I would have afforded to bring his body home from a vacation in Mexico, his graveside service was \$12,000, which will be paid off in 10 years. I certainly cannot take a lot of time from work, or fall asleep at a meeting. I appreciate that she has worked hard, but her journey is not even close to what many of us have, we will lose our home, and our families cannot just come out for a month, we have to take care of our own children. Therapy is expensive. I would venture she did not have to worry about her family's health insurance, many of us do. My husband worked for a major

retailer and his company cut off spouse/family insurance 24 hours after he died. I am hopeful that one day we will all have some peace, but most of us are a long way away...

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