



BUSINESS

JUNE 28, 2017 5:16 PM

## Sheryl Sandberg, 'Lean In' author and Facebook executive, shares lessons on grief

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When her husband died suddenly two years ago, Sheryl Sandberg was transformed by her grief.

“I am a different person. I am sadder,” said Sandberg, Facebook’s chief operating officer, on Wednesday evening at a Miami Book Fair event.

“But I am also more grateful, more alive, more joyful, more appreciative than I ever thought I would be.”

Sandberg spoke with longtime Miami Herald columnist Ana Veciana-Suarez in front of a sold-out crowd of more than 800 people about the perspective she gained through her loss. The event was held at Miami Dade College’s Wolfson Campus and was the final stop on her U.S. book tour for her new co-authored book, “Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy” (Knopf).

Sandberg’s husband, SurveyMonkey CEO Dave Goldberg, died on the treadmill of a heart arrhythmia at age 47 while the two were vacationing in Mexico in May 2015. Sandberg unexpectedly became a widow and single mother of their two children, then ages 7 and 10.



YAHOO!

“He was a person I always turned to who told me it would be OK,” said Sandberg, 47. “And then one day out of absolutely nowhere, he wasn’t there. And that’s where this journey starts.”

The book's title refers to a quote from a friend who comforted Sandberg when she was longing for her husband. "Option A is not available," he said, and encouraged her to make the most of Option B.

Sandberg offered anecdotes and advice from the past two years, moving the audience to laughter and tears.

After describing how she collapsed while sobbing on a dance floor after a moment of happiness, she reminded the audience to allow themselves to feel happy after moments of sadness. "Push away the guilt and look for the joy," she said.

Sandberg's book weaves together her personal experience with research from her close friend and co-author, Wharton organizational psychologist Adam Grant. The book's overall thrust: to build resilience before and after trauma.

Resiliency is a muscle that can be trained, Sandberg said, and she offered techniques she learned from her own grief. She suggested writing letters to yourself as if writing to a friend in order to remove self-blame.

"We say things to ourselves all day that we'd never say to our worst enemy," Sandberg said.

She also cautioned against permanence — believing the feeling would never end — and pervasiveness — failing to see how things could be worse.

Sandberg's first best-selling book, "Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead," included a chapter titled, "Make your partner a real partner."

During the talk, Sandberg discussed how her views on that chapter have evolved. At the time, single mothers criticized her for being out of touch with their lives. Sandberg said she did not fully understand the difficulties of raising a family without a partner. "We do not do enough to help single moms," she says now.

One of Sandberg's goals in writing "Option B" was to "take the elephants out of the room," and make grieving less isolating. She encouraged people to talk with those who were going through hardship rather than stay silent for fear of saying the wrong thing.

"Your silence is not protecting them, it's protecting you," she said.

Sandberg also shared stories of loss and growth from other women who had dealt with abuse, death of family members and other hardships, in part to demonstrate how adversity is something that everyone experiences to some degree.

The two women on the stage shared a tragic bond. Veciana-Suarez lost her first husband, Leo Suarez, suddenly when he died of a heart attack at age 37, leaving Veciana-Suarez with five young children.

"We are all living our Option B in some way," said Veciana-Suarez, "whether in our personal life, our work life, or our private lives with our children."

One of the prompts for "Option B" was an outpouring of support Sandberg received after her Facebook post 30 days after her husband's death went viral. She recounted how a friend who had been driving past her house daily finally came to her door in response to her post.

"I'm hoping that Option B helps us show up for each other," Sandberg said.

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