

Literature Review

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Lean In by Sheryl Sandberg

For this course, I wanted to read a book that would truly resonate with me and “speak to me”. I am a woman, a wife, and a mother to four children—my oldest son is autistic and my other three are all under three years of age. I often find myself wanting to move forward in my career, but then I would always find a reason not to. Someone, somewhere needs me for something; so I cannot pursue more than what I am doing. The internal challenge of volley balling about what I want for my career and what I want to do for my family never ends. Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead all focus on that internal struggle and how women need to shift their thinking.

From the beginning, Sheryl Sandberg’s writing style completely captivated me. She wrote as if she were having an encouraging conversation with someone. She gave real-world scenarios and walks you through how the scenarios play out. She even tells you how the conversations with men begin and compare them to how those same conversations with women begin; yet the focus is different. She spoke about how women need to take a seat at the table without being asked. Sandberg even mentioned how when there were seats available for women, yet instead of taking them, they chose to sit off to the side. Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead is all about women taking the initiative to lead and not second guess themselves.

“Don’t Leave Before You Leave”

If you do not read this book in its entirety, this is the one chapter that every woman should read. This chapter is the one that really got to me. Sandberg speaks about how women are brought up thinking that they have to choose whether they want to be successful in their career,

or if they want to be a good mother to their children; you simply cannot have both. Women are trained to think that they have to reel it in and take a step or two back once they want to have children. We stop desiring for more; we stop jumping at the next opportunity. That thinking does not have to be our reality.

In this chapter, Sandberg spoke about her relationship with an investment banker and how she was the only woman who did not quit her job. She fought through all the hard times and even though there were tough moments, she pushed through and ultimately ended up with a better job in the field. Once it was all said and done, she did not have any regrets. I feel this is important because us women and mothers deal with so much in our personal lives, adding stress from a professional aspect can make things unbearable.

As I stated before, I have young children. My husband also recently received a promotion, but that requires him to work out of state for three weeks at a time. My oldest son has been extremely sick and even though I am in the final weeks of graduate school, I was more than ready to throw in the towel despite how hard I have worked to get here. I felt as though I could not keep up with the demands of my job, graduate school, and especially being a mom. Everything was just too much for me. With that being said, Lean In greatly helped me. Having women who were successful in their careers and as mothers helped me. Of course I had the support of my husband, but he is also a man and our professional struggles have always been different because of our gender differences. What it really came down to was that I had other women supporting me and rooting for me.

Conclusion

I truly believe that every woman should read Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead. This book has the potential to truly ignite that internal fire for any woman who second guesses herself or even has the slightest of doubts. Sandberg did an amazing job of making this book relatable to all women. Not only is it relatable, but Sandberg also mentions the importance of women recognizing other women and supporting them no matter if they choose to be a stay at home mom or a working mom. Women have to support each other. We have enough “competition” with me, we should not be bringing each other down.

References

Sandberg, S., & Murai, A. (2013). *Lean in: Women, work, and the will to lead*. Nihon Keizai Shinbun Shuppansha.