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Option B Book Review

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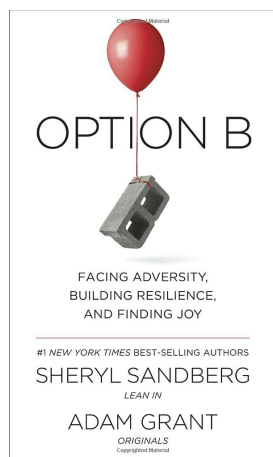
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MSR Bookshelf

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

By Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant

Reviewed Shelby Anderson



Sheryl Sandberg really can't win. The well-known COO of Facebook earned a backlash of criticism in 2013 after her well-meaning first book, *Lean In*. People criticized her how-to guide for female career advancement as ignoring the challenges facing less-privileged women.

Tragedy struck Sandberg in 2015, when her husband David Goldberg unexpectedly passed away. Sandberg's second book, *Option B*, written with Wharton professor, Adam Grant, details the aftermath of Goldberg's death, the process of grief, and the power of resilience. *Option B* opens with a gut-punch, as Sandberg describes the last hours of her husband's life.

The authors then expand their narrative and include others' stories of triumph over tragedy adding descriptions of Grant's research on overcoming hardship. Sandberg clearly learns from the mistakes of *Lean In* and openly acknowledges that the benefits of Facebook's lenient family-leave policy and her high-paying position are far from the norm.

Grant, the well-known author of *Originals* and *Give and Take*, is listed as a co-writer but appears in the third-person in *Option B*. A personal friend of Sandberg's, Grant came to her aid after Goldberg's

death. *Option B* is written from Sandberg's perspective and discusses Grant's research in an academic, authoritative voice. As Sandberg grieves, Grant introduces his ideas and research to her and the reader.

Option B attempts to hit two points. The authors combine teaching the reader about Grant's research techniques with personal notes from Sandberg's grieving process. In one vignette, Grant draws a series of circles for Sandberg, ranking the individuals most impacted by Goldberg's death. He encourages Sandberg to consider which loved ones need support, and who can offer her support. The description of Grant's technique is boring. Sandberg's realizations from the drawing detailing her responsibilities as a mother, are gripping. The reader is with Sandberg in that moment.

While her pivot to self-awareness is laudable, the criticism of *Lean In* also made Sandberg afraid to stand alone. The most gripping, interesting parts of *Option B* are not Grant's experiences or research, but Sandberg's personal recounting of a shocking loss and slow recovery. Sandberg's story of learning, experimenting, and using different grief techniques, teaches the reader about tragedy and resilience. Her journey is the heart of the book, reminding the audience that even inspiring leaders face human problems.