

Lean In Summary

By Sheryl Sandberg

In 1980, Dolly Parton wrote the anthem 9 to 5, highlighting some of the inequalities faced in the workplace. As more women entered the workplace, it became woefully apparent that they weren't seen as equal. As the song goes, 'Workin' 9 to 5, what a what to make a livin', barely gettin' by it's all takin' and no given'. They just use your mind, and they never give you credit. It's enough to drive you crazy if you let it.'

Lean In is an encouraging and pragmatic approach to striving towards workplace and domestic equality. Sandberg encourages all women to recognize their place within the workforce, to "lean in," to speak up, and to demand more.

While this may seem like Sandberg is taking an unsympathetic, hardline approach to gender equality, and lumbering women with more to add to their plates, there's a lot more to her call for "leaning in." Leaning in means being assertive, claiming back the right to achieve goals, and finding equality in terms of domestic responsibilities.

You may be familiar with Sheryl Sandberg as the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook. Sandberg was the first woman to serve on the Facebook board of directors, and is the founder of Leanin.Org. As a billionaire and philanthropist, she's a woman who appears to "have it all," however, there's a reason she's been named one of the world's most influential people. Sandberg weighs in on the gender gap, and invites both men and women to become part of the solution.

This Briefer summary looks at business leadership and development, and scrutinizes the lack of women representation in top-tier positions. *Lean In* addresses some of the barriers that prevent women from succeeding, which include discrimination and harassment, but also the barriers women create for themselves. So if you're a woman who wants to achieve career success, or a man who wants to help create a more equitable society, then this is an excellent place to start.

Keeping The Home Fires Burning

How many women leaders do you encounter in your everyday life?

Did you know that out of 197 heads of state, only 22 are women? In the US, when this book was published, women held 18% of congressional offices. And, of the top 500 companies according to revenue, a mere 21 are led by women.

If you look at your own life, how often do you notice women dropping out of employment for a few years, resorting to part-time employment, or opting out of employment altogether? Many women work hard to achieve success at university, but then end up leaving the workforce to focus on family life.

Sandberg argues that it doesn't have to be this way. Workplaces need to evolve to take parenting into consideration. The inability of workplaces to be flexible and understanding about parenting responsibilities, means that many qualified people don't make it into the workforce, or opt-out because there's too much to balance. What's more, many male partners are unwilling to share the domestic load, so women feel duty-bound to take on the household responsibilities.

It's not only the attitude of some male partners that leads to women staying at home. There's also the "Leadership Ambition Gap," which is based on numerous discourses about women. For example, the belief that women need to stay at home to raise children. Having a family and a job is often viewed as too complicated. So, when faced with the choice between career or family, many women opt out of their careers. This means that having a high-ranking position often comes "at the expense of family."

Women have been indoctrinated into thinking that career and family aren't compatible, and so many don't aspire to careers and senior-level positions. Furthermore, girls grow up with so many gender stereotypes about what constitutes "good" behavior. Whereas young boys are praised for being assertive and stopping at nothing to achieve their goals, when girls do this, they're often deemed to be bossy or unladylike. Women also have a different attitude towards management positions. Whereas men actively seek them out, women are more complacent about them. A lot of this has to do with early learning and development.

Sandberg says that we need to be more aware of how gender stereotypes influence how we perceive the world and our behavior. For example, we're told that women need to marry before "the good ones" are taken. Women need to hurry up and get married, or "they'll stay on

the shelf." And that specific colleges afford women a better caliber of husband. Instead of accepting these beliefs, women need to lean in and go against these gender biases and stereotypes.

While there's nothing wrong with wanting a family and sacrificing one's career to do this, the point is to analyze how we're raising women. And it's not about forcing an opinion, but showing that there are more choices than women think. Women need to feel confident to actively pursue goals and ambitions.

Focusing On What We're Not

How do you feel about your brain and your skillset?

So many of us are shrouded in self-doubt and insecurity, and women experience this a lot more acutely than men. Most women in the workplace admit to feeling like a fraud and not being qualified enough. In a study involving surgery students, women rated themselves lower than their male counterparts, despite the faculty ranking them higher. In another study involving political candidates, where individuals had to rate their qualification levels, men rated themselves as "very qualified" 60% more than women.

Whereas the majority of men react to challenges with confidence, most women find it difficult to express the same levels of confidence. Sandberg argues that a lot of this has to do with how women have been stereotyped.

Women lack a lot of self-confidence in the workplace and, as a result, experience a distortion of reality where they can't recognize their own

worth. It's essential for women to remind themselves of their past successes and achievements, and to lean into feelings that remind them of their value and self-worth. The thing with achievements is that they aren't abundant when you don't have the confidence to grab them.

And speaking of confidence, women need to keep their hands up and ask questions. Other people need to encourage women to make themselves heard, and to notice when women are being silenced, ignored, or passed over.

Miss Congeniality

A 2003 study revealed that there's a massive discrepancy between the perception of men versus women in the workplace. Identical case studies on an entrepreneur's profile were given to two different groups. The only difference was in one case study, the entrepreneur was called Howard, and in the other, she was called Heidi.

Findings showed that although the two groups showed respect for both Howard and Heidi, Howard received a much higher score when it came to likeability. Two identical people were scrutinized, and yet one was more likable simply because of how we perceive gendered behavior.

Men who show decisive action, a natural drive, and a sense of authority, are likable. On the other hand, women who demonstrate these qualities aren't viewed in the same light. Many argue that this is because women have an expectation thrust upon them where they're supposed to be naturally caring and nurturing. The common belief is that women aren't supposed to be individualistic; they're supposed to embrace the community spirit and act with more of a group mentality.

And it's not just about being well-liked among colleagues and outsiders. Sandberg says that these gender discourses and stereotypes have an adverse effect on women's finances. The "gender discount problem" refers to the fact that women often take on the load of their colleagues' work. If there's additional marking to be done, reports to be written, muffins to be ordered, retirement gifts to sort out, this often falls on women because they're more communal and "good" at this type of "work." However, the problem with this "work" is that there is no financial remuneration. So often these additional jobs and projects come with added responsibilities, but with no reward.

Women often do a lot of invisible labor, and they often believe that this will get them noticed. Rather than ask for money, they choose instead to wait for someone to notice their good work. This is called "Tiara Syndrome," and it's the idea that if a woman works hard enough, eventually, someone will pay attention to them and reward them with a symbolic tiara. Sadly this is seldom the case; if you don't ask for what you want, it's unlikely you'll get it.

Another factor to consider is how salary negotiations play out. Against the backdrop of wage inequality, women have a right to ask for higher salaries. In 2010, women earned 77 cents for every dollar men earn.

Women aren't "supposed to be" assertive and advocate for themselves, and when they do, it's generally not well-received. Hence, most women opt for softer approaches when discussing pay rises. For example, they may resort to the strategy of expressing concern for others, and highlighting their niceness as opposed to being persistent and confident. Sandberg says that women need to negotiate like men. She uses the example of joining Facebook. When Mark Zuckerberg made his initial offer, Sandberg wanted to accept it immediately. However, she was advised to make a counter-offer, and this negotiation ended up giving her a much better deal.

Being The Change

If you speak to the most successful people, most of them will name a mentor who has helped them get to where they are. Mentorship is a crucial way of navigating a career and making the "right" decisions at the "right" time.

Women often battle to find mentors, and so they become overly persistent about forging relationships and often try too hard to engage a mentor. Men, on the other hand, often fall naturally into mentor-mentee relationships because they're easier to establish. Sandberg's advice is not to try so hard. She says we've been led to believe that we'll excel if we get a mentor. However, she argues that reframing this to "getting a mentor once you excel" will reduce the pressure and establish more meaningful connections.

It's also up to everyone to provide mentorship to women because there aren't enough women in high-powered and senior positions. Therefore it's essential for men to take up mentoring roles and become allies. And speaking of allies, men need to stand up and take responsibility for more of the care and domestic work. For women to be successful, men need to support them by participating in home life a lot more actively.

One argument is that men often step back from these duties because of criticism from women. As "maternal gatekeepers" women often prevent men from performing housework and childcare. For men to be more involved, they need to have the agency to be able to parent and perform domestic work. Women can help this process by relaxing in terms of judgment and criticism.

Equality in the home is essential, and it comes down to communication. Building a solid relationship with a partner, and discussing career growth and future goals is the only way to manage expectations and to reach healthy compromises.

Having open channels of communication, where women are listened to as much as men, and aren't criticized for being "too emotional," is one of the

primary ways to implement change.

How To Map Your Career Path

Sandberg provides tips on how to strategize our career paths. We're used to hearing about the "ladder to success," but this metaphor is no longer useful. Most of us don't end up in a job for life, and we tend to move jobs to gain a more varied experience.

The "career jungle gym" is a more accurate way of referring to how we move in our career paths. Sometimes we go upwards, and other times we pivot and go side-to-side. Sandberg advises that we should set short-term goals and continuously look towards upskilling. We need to decide whether it's a good idea to take time off from work to attend a course or workshop, or if taking a year off to learn an important new skill is worth the financial hit.

Rather than hunting down a prestigious title, we should be looking for jobs that promote growth and learning. Take risks and don't just settle for job security. Learning new skills and experiencing rich challenges is often more important than settling into a predictable job. A lot of prospective employers will ask about the challenges that we've faced, because true learning comes from dealing with obstacles.

And remember, always advocate for yourself, don't rely on others to do this for you.

In Conclusion

We're raised to believe that pink is for girls and blue is for boys. Girls are made of "sugar and spice and all things nice," which means it's difficult when women want to be assertive and seek out accolades or advancements. And women should be seeking out these things because, as Sandberg explains, 'We stand on the shoulders of the women who came before us, women who had to fight for the rights that we now take for granted.'

It's the duty of all women to critically analyze their place in the world, and not to be encumbered by fear. Women are plagued by fear and not feeling "good enough." They have performance anxiety where they think their best is never enough. They fear being bad mothers, bad wives, and failing dismally. This acute feeling of fear is holding women back, and Sandberg advises women to reframe fear and lean into it. Women need to boldly go where no man or woman has gone before.

And to do this, women need to set limits and accept that getting things done is better than striving for perfection. As we've learned from *Radical Acceptance*, perfection is a myth. "Having it all" is a myth. Everything we do requires sacrifice and compromise. So we need to begin with priorities and goals, move on to discussing these goals, and then work out how to move forward in a sustainable and fulfilling way.

Leaning in isn't about having it all. Leaning in is about potential. There are so many women who don't reach their potential because they compromise too much or settle for less. The message is that women should lean in, and get what they deserve. And this doesn't necessarily mean becoming CEO, if that's not what they want.

However, it's vital to see the value in having more women at the helm, because having more female voices in positions of power will make the world more equitable. As Sandberg so succinctly posits, 'A truly equal

world would be one where women ran half our countries and companies,
and men ran half our homes.'