

Lean in to the Suck

Sheryl Sandberg, author of LEAN IN and Facebook COO, recently gave the commencement address at UC Berkeley. I keep thinking of her rabbi's advice to "lean in to the suck" and to focus on moments of joy. Here are excerpts from her speech. I hope you find it as inspiring as I did.

One year and thirteen days ago, I lost my husband, Dave. His death was sudden and unexpected. We were at a friend's fiftieth birthday party in Mexico. I took a nap. Dave went to work out. What followed was the unthinkable—walking into a gym to find him lying on the floor. Flying home to tell my children that their father was gone. Watching his casket being lowered into the ground.

Dave's death changed me in very profound ways. I learned about the depths of sadness and the brutality of loss. But I also learned that when life sucks you under, you can kick against the bottom, break the surface, and breathe again. I learned that in the face of the void—or in the face of any challenge—you can choose joy and meaning.

We often project our current feelings out indefinitely—and experience what I think of as the second derivative of those feelings. We feel anxious—and then we feel anxious

that we're anxious. We feel sad—and then we feel sad that we're sad. Instead, we should accept our feelings—but recognize that they will not last forever. My rabbi told me that time would heal but for now I should "lean in to the suck." It was good advice, but not really what I meant by "lean in."

Finding gratitude and appreciation is key to resilience. People who take the time to list things they are grateful for are happier and healthier. It turns out that counting your blessings can actually increase your blessings. My New Year's resolution this year is to write down three moments of joy before I go to bed each night. This simple practice has changed my life. Because no matter what happens each day, I go to sleep thinking of something cheerful.

It is the greatest irony of my life that losing my husband helped me find deeper gratitude—gratitude for the kindness of my friends, the love of my family, the laughter of my children. My hope for you is that you can find that gratitude—not just on the good days, like today, but on the hard ones, when you will really need it.

And when the challenges come, I hope you remember that anchored deep within you is the ability to learn and grow. You are not born with a fixed amount of resilience. Like a muscle, you can build it up, draw on it when you need it. In that process you will figure out who you really are—and you just might become the very best version of yourself.

Sandberg, Sheryl. "Commencement Address." UC Berkeley Commencement. Berkeley, CA. 14 May 2016. Speech.