

Option B Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Option B shares the stories of people who've had to deal with a traumatizing event, most notably Facebook's COO Sheryl Sandberg, to help you face adversity, become more resilient and find joy again after life punches you in the face.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



When she was 45 years old, Facebook COO and mother of two, Sheryl Sandberg, found her husband collapsed on the floor of the gym. He never woke again. Sheryl was devastated.

What did she do? Why her? For what reason him? Why so young?

Two weeks later, as she prepared for what would have been a father-child activity, she cried in front of a friend: *"I want Dave!"* Her friend replied: *"I'm sorry Sheryl, but Option A is not available. But I promise you, I will help you make the most of Option B."*

Sooner or later, we all lose Option A in our lives. This book is about learning to thrive with *Option B*. Co-authored by Sandberg and Wharton's top professor Adam Grant, bestselling author of *Originals* and *Give and Take*, it'll help you deal with adversity in your own life and find happiness after a traumatic event like the death of a loved one.

Here are my 3 main takeaways:

1. Trauma leads to three P's you have to deal with.
2. Grounded hope speeds up the healing process, which you can find by spending time with others.
3. Be a panic button for grieving friends and offer specific help.

I don't know what Option B will look like in your life, but we'll all experience it one day. I hope this will help you deal with it when it comes. Here goes!

Lesson 1: You'll have to deal with three P's after a traumatic event.

When Sheryl's husband died, the first medical report stated an injury sustained from his fall to the ground as the cause. As a result, Sheryl blamed herself for not paying attention to her husband more.

Her brother, a neurosurgeon, was suspicious, because the fall's height could never have been fatal. The second autopsy showed cardiac arrhythmia due to an undiagnosed disease as the real cause. But instead of accepting that it was outside of her control, she then felt guilty for not pushing him to change his diet more.

Even after the Jewish seven-day period of mourning, shiva, Sheryl stayed close to a nervous breakdown at work all the time. The weight on her shoulders felt too heavy and like it would never be lifted again.

Pioneer happiness researcher Martin Seligman describes the three-P model Sheryl clearly went through:

1. **Personalization.** Contrary to all evidence, Sheryl kept blaming herself for a terrible event she could do nothing about.
2. **Pervasiveness.** Naturally, the sadness infected every aspect of her life, even work.
3. **Permanence.** After being stuck in this vicious cycle for a while, it became impossible for Sheryl to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

These are what make trauma tough to get past, and they're remarkably similar to a pessimist view of the world. But all hope is not lost.

Lesson 2: Spend time in groups to develop grounded hope, which helps you move on.

Usually, we assume grieving people want to be left alone, but most often, that couldn't be further from the truth. The isolation causes more despair than fresh air, so being among friends, while counterintuitive, is helpful. Sheryl talked a lot with friends 1-on-1, but spending time in groups is beneficial too, especially when it leads to something called *grounded hope*.

In 1972, the Uruguayan rugby team's plane crashed in the Andes. Of the 33 people on board, 16 survived, thanks to being a group, not alone. They were stuck in the freezing mountains for 72 days, facing starvation, freezing temperatures and avalanches.

These individuals had resilience *within* them for sure, but also *between* them. When their broken radio received a message that the search was called off, they shared their dreams of what they'd do when they get back to civilization, keeping hope alive. **On top of this psychological boost, they took practical next steps to improve their immediate future.**

These included locating the tail-end of the plane to sleep in, sending small groups to get food and even eating the frozen meat of their dead companions to stay alive. This is grounded hope in action and while it hopefully will never have to be as extreme as this, it can help you turn trauma into triumph.

Lesson 3: Offer specific ways of helping to grieving friends to act as a panic button they can rely on.

Luckily, most of the time it's not our turn to grieve. But it might be our turn to help. If isolation isn't good for struggling friends, then an obvious first step you can take to make them feel better is to offer to be there. However, *"let me know if you need anything"* isn't the best way to put it.

In a 1971 study about urban stress from noise and social stressors, researchers gave people tasks to complete in a noisy, distracting environment. They found if they gave people a panic button to turn off the noises, their stress levels and number of mistakes dropped – *even though they didn't use it.*

Offering help to a grieving friend is not about being a firefighter for emergencies, it's about giving them the feeling that help is within reach, should they ever need it.

Similarly, Adam Grant now always puts his phone number on the blackboard, letting students know he's available if the workload becomes too much, after one student he knew committed suicide.

The more specific the panic button you offer, the better. Say "I'll help you get groceries" or "we can go looking for job positions together" and you'll signal that your attempt to help is genuine and that you really care.

Option B Review

Putting your nose in a book when you grieve is one of the best things you can do. *Option B* is a good start, but I have one additional recommendation: lose yourself in a good fiction book too. Sometimes, fantasy offers more hope than reality ever could and that's okay.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Which daily habit helped Sheryl Sandberg deal with her emotions
- Why you should pat yourself on the back for making a solid cup of coffee
- Which question to ask to deal with survivor's remorse
- What the mum-effect is and how it keeps you from moving on

Who would I recommend the Option B summary to?

The 16 year old, who just lost a parent, the 53 year old, who suddenly got laid off, and anyone who feels like a past trauma is still holding them back.