

THE POWER OF PEERS

Sheryl Sandberg, 47, is a champion for women's leadership and the author of *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. After years of government service, she leaned in to the tech boom, first with Google and now as chief operating officer for Facebook.



What was a defining moment in your life, related to gender?

One was being pregnant and realizing we should offer parking for expectant mothers. The “aha” wasn’t, oh my God, Google needed pregnancy parking. The “aha” was that I had to be pregnant myself to think of it. I opened my book with this, but I’m not sure I drove home the point: It matters to have diverse voices at the table. When I first entered the workforce, in 1991, there were just as many women as men going into entry-level jobs. I looked to the side of me, and it was equal. But I looked above me, and it was almost entirely men. As my career progressed, I had fewer and fewer women in every group I was part of. If you look back at the 1950s, ’60s, or ’70s, of course we’ve made progress. But we have not made progress in getting a greater share of the top jobs, in any industry, in the past decade.

What do you consider the most pressing gender issue today?

It’s definitely equal rights and equal opportunity for women. As part of that, access to information is critical. There are four billion people still not connected to data and the Internet, and more of those are women than men. Connectivity is a very important driver of opportunity.

What advice would you give to girls and boys today?

Raise your hand if you’re a girl in class; run for class president. If you’re interested in it, be a leader. Don’t let the world tell you girls can’t lead. From the moment they’re born, boys and girls are treated according to stereotypes. We tell little boys, “Don’t cry like a girl.” Not helpful. I’d add that we all need people who will encourage us. Here’s an example: We help women form Lean In Circles and just hit 29,000 circles in over 150 countries. That shows the power of peers. We cannot just help ourselves take on leadership roles; we can help each other. There are men in these circles too—men who are really working hard toward equality.