

“Lean In” Applications to Optometry

Allergan recognizes the important role women eye care practitioners play within the optometric and ophthalmic communities. Visionary Insights for Eye Care Women—VIEW—is an initiative established by Allergan that is dedicated to supporting and promoting women optometrists and ophthalmologists.

This article marks the third in a series that will appear in *Advanced Ocular Care*, its sister publication, *Cataract & Refractive Surgery Today*, and the digital publication, *MillennialEYE* (www.millenniaeye.com).

KARLA ZADNIK, OD, FAAO, PhD



In October 2013, I was given the opportunity to address a group of women through Allergan’s VIEW program held during the American Academy of Optometry’s Annual Meeting in Seattle. As I reflected on my topic, “Mapping Out Your Personal and Professional

Paths: Advice Your Mother Never Gave You,” I turned to Sheryl Sandberg’s book, *Lean In*, and found myself thinking about decisions I made over the past 30 years in optometry and in life (and for me, optometry is life) that brought me to where I am today.

Since that time, I have become the dean of the College of Optometry at The Ohio State University. I am one of only three women deans on campus, and the other two are in traditionally women-dominated disciplines. I now focus on mentoring and being mentored, especially in women-to-women mentoring relationships. I sought out a life coach: a wise woman about 20 years older than I am who spent her academic career in nursing research and administration. I have dinner with her once a month, and she gives me unvarnished opinions about the decisions I make. Also, Ohio State Human Resources assigned me a transition coach as I became dean. She is currently conducting a 360° review of my first few months on the job, something I would never have done without her. Both these women sometimes say things I do not want to hear. They challenge my view that I am doing everything right (I am not). They tamp down the ego that can come with being in charge. They keep me grounded.

My best advice to women in optometry after 6 months in this job with intense, high-level mentoring? Find women mentors—older women, peers, ones you work with, ones you play with, ones with similar life stories to yours, and ones with different trajectories. If you have young children, definitely find yourself a mentor whose children are much older. Let them talk to you about your life and path. Do not always seek their praise. Invite them to criticize and advise you. Ask them hard questions about things you yourself think you

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might be doing wrong. Listen to them.

To quote Michael Burns, the Vice Chairman of Lionsgate, “As the studio that launched *The Hunger Games* franchise and its iconic heroine Katniss Everdeen, Lionsgate believes in the limitless capacity of women to shape the future of our business and our society.” That can only be true if women believe in their own abilities to shape the future. Helped by other women as mentors, they can.

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ANDREA P. THAU, OD, FAAO, FCOVD, DPNAP



When we graduated from optometry school and became licensed, we assumed the responsibility of caring for our patients and becoming the best optometrist we can be. Commencement from optometry school is just that—the commencement or beginning of our professional career.

Optometry is not a job; it is a profession. As part of becoming the best optometrist that we can be, we have a duty to become active members of the American Optometric Association (AOA). Being an active member strengthens our profession and enables us to provide a high level of optometric care

to our patients. We need a strong AOA to have a strong profession.

AOA membership makes practicing more enjoyable and helps us be more successful! An added bonus is that optometrists who are members are more successful financially and develop strong friendships with colleagues across the country. These colleagues help hone our leadership skills, improve our practice management abilities, and help make practicing optometry more fulfilling and rewarding. Membership will help you prepare for the future and be ready for its challenges and opportunities.

As an active AOA member, do not hesitate to volunteer and participate in your AOA affiliated state association. Come to meetings, get involved, and help shape the future of our profession. Our profession was built by generations of volunteer optometrists before us who had the vision and made the commitments and sacrifices necessary to advance our beloved profession to what it is today. We inherited the fruits of their labor. We should not expect someone else to advance our profession; we assumed that responsibility when we joined the profession.

I hope that you will make the decision to become involved as I did. I felt that it was my duty to thank those prior generations of volunteer physicians by paying it forward. We were all put on this earth to make the world a better place. As ODs, we have the unique opportunity to do this by helping care for America's vision. We can only do that if we have a strong AOA. It has been a labor of love and an honor to serve as a leader of AOA. I hope that you will take advantage of the opportunity to become involved and become an active member and leader of AOA. You won't regret it!

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MELISSA BARNETT, OD, FAAO



As I was running the beautiful hills of San Francisco in a half marathon last October, my thoughts led to Sheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead*. Sandberg states, "What would you do if you weren't

afraid?" This applies to both our professional and personal lives. On a personal level, I thought, why not run a marathon?

Consider the opportunities on a professional level: Why not volunteer for a leadership position or join a committee? Why not give a lecture to our colleagues? Why not learn how to fit scleral lenses? We are fortunate that there are so many opportunities to pursue within optometry. On a personal level, it is also important to take chances. Why not take off one day of work to attend your child's field trip? Why not learn guitar or take a CrossFit class? If we each did one thing each day that scared us just a little bit, we could improve ourselves and enhance our profession.

Sandberg discusses the balance between work and family life. She states, "A truly equal world would be one where women ran half our countries and companies and men ran half our homes." It is important for women to ask (and allow) their partners to do more parenting and housework (without controlling the way their partners do those jobs). This shared responsibility allows one to also incorporate other important things such as leadership, professional advancement, and time for oneself. Fortunately, our profession allows for this diversity.

Lean In is also about how to become a successful leader. Sandberg acknowledges that many women don't want both a career and family and other women don't care about ascending to a power position. However, she asserts that a greater number of women in leadership roles will help the status and opportunities of all women. Sandberg discusses the importance of having the conversation about women getting ahead and what it means to seek leadership roles. In our profession, we now have more female deans of optometry schools than ever and an increasing number of women in leadership positions. However, we need to help future leaders in our profession. I like to think that the more we help each other, the more we help ourselves.

So, be bold, be a little afraid, and go improve our profession!

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