READ WITH ME

Playing Big

by Tara Mohr

Some books give you tools. Others feel like they hand you back parts of yourself you didn't realise you'd lost. Playing Big by Tara Mohr does both, with such clarity, warmth and depth that it's quickly become one of the books I keep coming back to.

Who it's for

Anyone - and especially women - who's felt the nudge to step up, speak out or lead more boldly... and hesitated. Skill and passion are seldom the problem. The problem is the internal noise that says, "Who do you think you are?" or "You're not quite ready yet."

The two kinds of fear

The passage I love most is Tara Mohr's explanation of two Hebrew words for fear.

> ***Pachad*** *is "projected or imagined fear," the "fear whose objects are imagined." That, in contemporary terms, is what we might think of as overreactive, irrational, lizard brain fear: the fear of horrible rejection that will destroy us or the fear that we will simply combust if we step out of our comfort zones.*
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> *There is a second Hebrew word for fear,* ***yirah****. Rabbi Lew describes yirah as "the fear that overcomes us when we suddenly find ourselves in possession of considerably more energy than we are used to, inhabiting a larger space than we are used to inhabiting. It is also the feeling we feel when we are on sacred ground."*

Think about how you can savour yirah and stand at the edge of something meaningful. Lean into the fear that comes with awe, presence and possibility - the kind that shows up when you're actually moving in the right direction.

It's such a helpful reframe. So often we read fear as a sign to stop. Sometimes it's the exact opposite. It's the signal that we're growing, that something important is about to shift.

What I took from it

Mohr opens with a confronting chapter on the inner critic. Her line - *"you simply need to learn how to live with the inner voice of self-doubt but not be held back by it, to hear the voice and not take direction from it"* - reframes the whole thing. Instead of pushing the voice down, you notice it, name it, understand it and manage it. That sits right alongside the kind of leadership I believe in - rooted, values-led, future-focused.

And it's incredibly practical. Mohr gives you tools you can use straight away. Visualising your "inner mentor", a future version of you who leads with calm, clarity and wisdom. Rethinking your relationship with praise and criticism, so you're not chasing approval or shrinking to avoid disapproval. Language and strategy for showing up more fully, without burning out or bending yourself out of shape to fit other people's expectations.

This book never asks you to fake confidence or hustle harder. It asks you to trust yourself more. To listen inward before you look outward. To stop waiting until you feel "ready" and start moving before you feel 100% qualified, because most of the time that moment never comes.

Should you read it?

In the work I do with leaders, I see this tension all the time - the pull to lead more boldly, matched with the pressure to stay small or safe. Playing Big speaks directly to that space. It gives you permission, and a pathway, to lead with integrity and purpose without needing to become someone you're not.

If you've been holding back, even a little, this book is a gentle nudge (or a strong, loving push) to step forward. You don't have to play big in the flashy sense. Playing true to yourself? That's where the real power is.

What would you do this month if you stopped waiting to feel ready?

Lisa's reading notes, first shared on radicalhr.nz