

PLAYING BIG
Book Group
Facilitator's Guide

Welcome to Playing Big Book Groups

I'm thrilled that you will be hosting a Playing Big Book Group. The women who are part of it will build stronger relationships with one another as peers, mentors, and friends.

You'll be giving the opportunity to further their learning by discussing the concepts in the book and hearing others' insights and experiences.

At the outset of my career, I spent much of my time doing one-on-one coaching but very early on, I saw that the most powerful change for women happens in the context of supportive groups. We inspire each other, serve as sounding boards for one another, and teach others through our example. Even on the days when we are not in conversation, a group's mere existence can buoy us.

That's why I've long focused my work on group courses and programs for women. Now, with Playing Big Book Groups, there is a very accessible way for women to be in supportive community with others as they pursue their unique expressions of playing big.

The guidelines that we've created here come out of our experience working with thousands of women around these concepts.

My team and I wish you all the best as you move forward with your group. Here's to rich discussions filled with connection, laughter, and insight!

*Warmly,
Tara Sophia Mohr*



Getting Started

Here are points you'll want to consider as you get started with your *Playing Big* book group:

- ✓ Decide how many times your group will meet, when, and for how long. We recommend four sessions, 60 to 90 minutes each, but you can choose the format that works best for you.
- ✓ Decide whom you will invite. How will you reach them? We've sent you a sample invitation to get you started.
- ✓ If your organization has more than one office, determine how to include people in different locations. You can form additional groups in remote locations, or you can invite people to join a group virtually.
- ✓ Choose the facilitators. We recommend that each group have a facilitator – someone who will set the tone for open discussion and confidentiality, ask questions as suggested in this guide, and keep track of time. The facilitator role can rotate to a different person for each session or remain the same throughout the sessions.
- ✓ Will your organization buy *Playing Big* books for participants? Some companies buy 30 or 50 books and give them away to the first people who sign up. It's a great way to build excitement about your group reading. Contact us to learn about bulk discounts for 25 or more books.
- ✓ Determine your meeting dates and reserve a meeting space for each session.
- ✓ Send out the announcement and first invitation (see our templates to get started.)
- ✓ Before each session, send out a reminder and book group guidelines (also in our templates.)
- ✓ Let us know when your group will be starting and finishing. We'll send you a recorded welcome video from Tara as well as an invitation to her next live Q&A session, specifically for *Playing Big* book groups! Email Gretchen at gretchen@playingbig.org.

Book Group Sessions

To get the most out of your discussions, we suggest that you divide the book and the discussions into at least four sessions. Feel free to add more sessions if you'd like more time to dive into each topic. We've also included many discussion questions below. You likely won't be able to get to all the questions in your session. That's okay! We've offered a wealth of options so that 1) you, as the facilitator, can choose which you'd most like to bring to the group and 2) you can move on to a new question if one you've asked doesn't seem to capture the interest of your group. Of course, it's also a great idea to ask attendees what they are most excited to talk about within the chapters you'll be covering in the session.



Book Group Session 1: A Foundation for Playing Bigger - Introduction and Chapters 1 & 2

- Introduction
- The Inner Critic
- The Voice of Inner Wisdom (includes listening to a recording before your meeting)

Book Group Session 2: Slaying the Dragons that Keep Us Stuck - Chapters 3 & 4

- A Very Old New Way of Looking at Fear
- Unhooking from Praise and Criticism

Book Group Session 3: Skills for Playing Big - Chapters 5, 6 & 7

- Leaving Good-Student Habits Behind
- Hiding
- Leaping

Book Group Session 4: More Skills & Moving Forward - Chapters 8, 9, 10 & Conclusion

- Communicating with Power
- Callings
- Let It Be Easy
- Conclusion

Playing Big Book Group Guidelines

- **Confidentiality.** Because *Playing Big* is a book about personal development, the discussions will be more engaging if people feel safe to share their stories and their personal experiences. Let participants know they should feel free to share about their own learning and experience with other people in their lives, but to not share about the experiences of fellow book group members.
- **Attentive listening.** Listening is powerful. Give your full attention to your book group members when you listen to them. Put phones and other devices away for the session. A good guideline to keep in mind is this: listen so closely and attentively to the words they are saying that you could repeat them back if you needed to. Listen not just for the words, but for what you hear in the tone of their voices as well.
- **Don't give advice or attempt to fix.** It's often part of women's habitual ways of loving to give lots of advice in an attempt to be of service. However, the core emphasis in *Playing Big* is on each woman learning to turn to *her own* inner wisdom. Instead of giving advice, you can respond with support, with empathy, or with an honest, "Here's what has worked for me," rather than, "Have you thought of y?" or "How about z?" or "I would recommend x." If you notice that another group member is asking for advice, don't give it! Instead, turn them back to applying the ideas in the book to their question. For example, you might ask them, "What would your inner mentor do in that situation?" or "What if you used one of the tools for unhooking from criticism here?"
- **Ask powerful questions.** Ask your fellow group members short, open-ended questions to help them find their own answers. Ask "What" questions of less than seven words. "What else do you notice about that?" "What do you feel most excited about here?" "What's an alternative way to look at that?"
- **Question your inner critic.** Your inner critic might show up as you participate in or facilitate the group, saying things like: "You don't have anything to share," or "These other women are so much more x (smarter, further along, etc.) than you," or "That sounds obvious. Don't say that." Recognize this voice as your inner critic – not a voice of wise or rational thinking! As best you can, dismiss, dismiss, dismiss that voice and jump into the sandbox, sharing your thoughts, questions, reactions.

Discussion Questions



Session I: A Foundation for Playing Bigger

- ✓ Start by introducing yourself and sharing why you chose to facilitate this book group.
- ✓ Ask each person to introduce themselves and tell the group why they chose to join.
- ✓ Watch Tara's welcome video together. (You can also send this to participants ahead of time.)
- ✓ Review our suggested *Group Guidelines* with the group. Ask for questions and comments. Ask if participants feel they can agree to the guidelines or if they'd like to suggest changes.

Introduction to Playing Big

In the book, Tara defines “playing big” in several different ways.

- Which definition resonates with you, or do you have a different idea?
- What does playing big mean in the context of your career at this stage?
- How has your playing big changed over time, or over different stages in your life?

Inner Critic

Tara shares her observations around how the inner critic held back so many brilliant women she knew and worked with.

- How do you see self-doubt impacting the women around you?
- How do our inner critics keep us from playing bigger in our careers and other parts of our life?

Most women believe that we'd be more successful in careers if we were more confident. *Playing Big* asserts that self-doubt **is** part of the problem, but *confidence* is not the solution. The solution is developing a different relationship to self-doubt, being aware of the inner critic voice that will always be there, but not letting it run the show.

- *What does this mean to you?*

On p. 6 of the book, Tara talks about the difference between realistic thinking and the inner critic. Check out the chart on that page with your group.

- *What is a situation where your inner critic shows up loudly?*
- *What does it say?*
- *What would realistic thinking sound like in that same situation?*
- *What's one tool from the chapter that you'll practice this week to quiet your inner critic so you can take bolder action?*

The Voice of Inner Wisdom

Participants who feel comfortable doing so can also share about their inner mentors.

- *Where does she live? What is her house like? What is her energy like?*
- *What wisdom does she offer in answer to the questions you asked?*
- *What surprised you?*
- *What characteristic of your inner mentor would you like to grow into? How will you start to do that in simple ways this week?*
- *In what situation will you check in with your inner mentor or draw inspiration from her?*

Note to Facilitator: Occasionally someone has a troubling or disturbing experience the first time they try the visualization, or some say they didn't see anything. If this is the case with someone in the group, you can start by referring them to the book. In the Inner Mentor chapter, Tara talks about her own experience seeing a disturbing and scary scene the first time she did the visualization. She also writes at length about why this can happen, and gives some suggestions on what to do next. We highly recommend revisiting the Inner Mentor chapter and reading more about ways to interpret your experience and when you should consider trying the visualization again.

Session 2: Slaying the Dragons that Keep Us Stuck

A Very Old New Way of Looking at Fear

Tara talks about two types of fear: *pachad* – the fear of projected or imagined things – and, *yirah* – 1) when we suddenly come into possession of more energy than we are used to, 2) when we inhabit a larger space than we're used to, 3) when we are in the presence of the divine.

- *What are some situations where you feel pachad? How about yirah?*
- *Why is it important to distinguish between them?*
- *When fear comes up for you, which of the 15 Fear Practices do you typically go to?*
- *What's a new tool you'd like to try?*

Unhooking from Praise and Criticism

Tara describes a number of compounded reasons why women are typically more impacted by praise and criticism.

- *Which reasons resonate most strongly with you?*
- *When has being hooked by praise or criticism stopped you from sharing your ideas or pursuing a path?*
- *What feels surprising about the statement, "Feedback can only tell you something about the person giving the feedback; it can't tell you anything essential about yourself"?*
- *Think about a time when you received negative feedback. What might the feedback tell you about the person giving it, rather than about you?*

Session 3: Skills for Playing Big

Leaving Good-Student Habits Behind

The skills that helped you succeed in school may be different from the ones you need to thrive in your career.

- *What skills did you learn and perfect in school that might not be serving you as well in the work world?*
- *What new skills do you want to practice to play bigger?*
- *How will you experiment with that skill this week?*

Hiding

Hiding strategies are the ways we brilliant women talk ourselves out of the very steps that bring us more fulfillment and enable us to have more positive impact on the world – while we convince ourselves that we're diligently moving forward.

- Which hiding strategies from this chapter do you recognize? How are they keeping you from playing bigger?
- What will you do next to become more visible and to start playing bigger now?



Leaping

In *Playing Big*, a leap is a special action that will get you out of hiding.

- How is a *Playing Big* leap different from what we typically mean when we talk about “taking a big leap”?
- What's a project or goal that you'd like to move forward on? What's a leap that you can take to get you playing bigger in this area? Does it meet the 6 criteria?

Session 4: Conclusion – More Skills & Moving Forward

Communicating with Power

Women often diminish themselves through their words in an effort to say what they really want to say, while also coming across as nice, flexible, conciliatory and calm.

- How have you experienced the double bind of being liked vs. being perceived as competent?
- Which of the undermining speech habits do you use, or hear women around you using?
- What are some ways we can add warmth to our communication while we drop diminishing phrases?

Callings

A calling, as defined in *Playing Big*, is a longing to address a particular need or problem in the world. Some callings are big, long-term projects or careers. Others are smaller, shorter-term endeavors. We can have several callings at one time and many in our lifetime.

- *Which of the eight ways to recognize a calling (p.208) feels surprising to you?*
- *What's something you've been called to do in the past? Did you pursue the calling or let it go by?*
- *What is calling you in your life now - big or small?*

Let It Be Easy

Tara asserts that making and sustaining change over the long term has nothing to do with self-discipline or willpower, but instead is created by putting in place an abundance of supports for ourselves.

- *Does this resonate with you, or sound counter-intuitive?*
- *Think of a time in your life when you were able to make and sustain change. What made you successful?*
- *How could you reframe a goal you have as an important gift to yourself – something that will bring you joy simply to pursue it?*

Conclusion & Integration

- *What concepts and skills in Playing Big resonate most strongly with you?*
- *How do you feel women playing big will impact the transition that our world is in?*

Welcome to the Transition Team!

Although you've finished the book, your *Playing Big* group doesn't need to end. Many groups continue to meet regularly to revisit and deepen their understanding of the Playing Big concepts and to practice skills.

Some groups choose to take the Playing Big course together, and we offer group discounts to organizations. You can visit www.playingbig.taramohr.com to find out more about the upcoming sessions.

- *How would you like to continue to support each other on your playing big journeys?*
- *How can you bring this work to more women and men in your organization?*