

**EPISODE 20**

## [INTRODUCTION]

**[0:00:01] AS:** You know battling food and your body doesn't work. You want to love and accept yourself. And because you're insatiable, you want results too. And wouldn't you know, you bring the same intensity to your life, wanting to maximize your time, potential, and experiences you have here on this beautiful and wondrous planet Earth.

Fair warning, it will be a rollercoaster. But for those insatiable, that's your prime time to thrive. We're here to say "YES!" to the hunger of wanting it all. I'm your co-host, Ali Shapiro, a health coach who helps people end the losing battle of dieting and find a truce with food.

**[0:00:44] JB:** And I'm Juliet Burgh, nutritionist, fitness expert, and a co-owner of Unite Fitness Studio Franchise.

## [INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:52.3] AS:** Welcome to Insatiable Episode number 20. I am so excited to have our guest today, Tara Mohr. Tara is the author of *Playing Big* and I've personally taken Tara's course and benefited from it. So it's just such an honor to have her here today and her book *Playing Big* is just recently out in paperback so I recommend it to everyone.

Before we talk about how *Playing Big* relates to everything really, I want to give you Tara's quite impressive background and why I personally love her background as well. She's known for her unique blend of intellectual rigor and intuitive wisdom. I think such a powerful combination. It's a blend of heart mind and soul.

Again, she is the author of *Playing Big: Practical wisdom for women who want to speak up, create and lead* which is published by Penguin and was named best book by Apple's iBooks. Tara is also the creator of the acclaimed *Playing Big Leadership Program for Women*. Her work has been featured on *The Today's Show* and publications ranging from *The New York Times* to *Harvard Business Review* to *Goop* to *Maria Shriver*. What a range Tara!

[00:02:03.4] **TM:** That's always been true for me. I'm like one foot in one world and one foot in the other world. It can be really great and really confusing to me at times.

[00:02:14.2] **JB:** Well, I'm sure though that you're getting a nice mix of everything.

[00:02:17.0] **AS:** Right, right and what I can't wait to talk about in the interview is Tara's concept of the transition teams. So I think many people will find themselves in that world and we'll get to that. Speaking of two worlds, Tara received her MBA from Stanford University and her undergraduate degree in English Literature from Yale — Yin and Yang.

She is also a poet and the author of your other names, *Poems for Wise Living*. She lives in San Francisco and loves dance, art and long walks with her beloved husband and son. Also one of the things that I think is really incredible is that the *Playing Big* model has been incorporated into middle school and high schools in the US and UK to support girl's leadership development.

[00:02:58.8] **JB:** That's bad ass. That was really cool.

[00:03:03.8] **TM:** Thanks.

[00:03:04.0] **AS:** In the most tender way, right?

[00:03:06.2] **TM:** Yes. Yes, thank you.

[00:03:08.6] **AS:** Thank you so much for being here Tara.

[00:03:11.5] **TM:** Thanks for having me.

[00:03:12.2] **AS:** Yeah, I want to kick off because our podcast is called *Insatiable*, right?

[00:03:16.2] **TM:** It's such a great name.

**[00:03:18.6] AS:** Thank you, yeah and I think it reflects that all of us, we want it all and so I think when people off the bat think “Playing Big”, they think, “Oh now I have to go bigger? If I’m insatiable, I have to go bigger or go home and I’m already worn out but I want it all.” So I love your idea of playing big. So can you share that with our listeners?

**[00:03:36.3] TM:** For sure. Yeah and for anyone who’s listening, if you’re having a little bit of a tug of war in your reaction to the term “playing big”, I find that so common for women. It’s definitely a term that speaks to us. That feeling that we’re playing small is also something that speaks to us but then there’s this other side of life, “But I am already overwhelmed. I am already over busy. I am trying to be less perfectionistic and hard on myself and are you now going to tell me that I have to add this thing called playing big to my spiritual to do list and that sounds really exhausting and maybe even not the right direction for me right now.”

So yes, because we tend to have a really pumped up macho worldly view of what playing big is and that’s in fact not the definition of playing big that I am working with. My definition of playing big is it’s being more loyal to your dreams than to your fears and to use the term “tug of war”, again, most of us by nature what it means to be human, there is a tug of war between our dreams for our life and what’s calling us and then the fears that we have of what may come in going for that.

And the essence of playing big therefore is really an inner game. A lot of times, what looks like playing big is not and a lot of times what women’s true playing big is isn’t really recognizable as something “big” to the people around them.

**[0:05:15.0] AS:** I love that idea because it gets very clear when you say “your dreams”, I feel like clarity comes. At least the first couple of steps comes when you say that versus “playing big, more, more, more.” It’s like, “Oh, I know what my dreams are.” I mean it puts out a much clearer path.

**[0:05:32.8] TM:** Not playing big is not realizing all your dreams or fulfilling all your dreams, Playing big is being more loyal to your dreams than your fears. It’s something that actually everyone can fully step into today.

**[0:05:47.6] AS:** Speak more about that.

**[0:05:49.5] JB:** Yeah, that's really interesting to me.

**[0:05:51.3] TM:** Well that idea really came first for me out of my own experience, so as Ali mentioned, I had the benefit of a great education and for me, the experience of getting that sort of prestigious college degree and prestigious graduate degree was an experience of I got a lot of good education, my mind was developed, I'm sure I became a sharper critical thinker, all that left brain stuff.

But I would say the process for me of getting educated was also process of losing my voice. A process of becoming one of those perfectionistic, good girl, high achieving students that so many of us are who doesn't really trust their voice, loses their inner rebel, loses their inner Maverick, loses their creativity, all that stuff.

So by the time I found myself in my late 20's, I was like starting to say, "Okay, what happened to the girl who loved theatre and loved dance and loved creative writing and wanted to do something on the stage and in the media? Where did she go?" Because at that time I was a paper pushing program officer inside a large foundation literally wearing tweed suits.

**[0:07:16.6] AS:** I love that you remembered your suits.

**[0:07:16.6] JB:** They still make tweed suits?

**[0:07:19.3] TM:** Some of them were really nice but they were tweeds.

**[0:07:21.3] JB:** They sound very hot.

**[0:07:22.5] TM:** Yeah, they were cute. Anyway, so there I was feeling like my life looks fine on the outside but where did she go and how the hell was I going to find the courage to pick up some of those things that I knew I loved that I had put down? Because I could start to see, "Wow, I could just pursue this career path kind of easily for the next 30 years and everyone would think it was fine and I would be so sad that I had wasted my life with not doing what I

really wanted to do.” So in that process for me, one of the thoughts that came really clearly was. “Wow, I’m just being more loyal to my fears than to my dreams,” that phrase was very clear and that truth was very clear.

**[0:08:08.6] JB:** That’s a powerful phrase, by the way.

**[0:08:09.8] TM:** Thank you, and I noticed you know, when I share it, people are always, “Oh that, I know what that means,” it resonates for people. Then for me, through actually starting to work with a coach and a coach who really — my first coach, I mean this could be a long story. My first coach I love so much.

I honestly could not understand a word he said because he had such a strong accent and we were on the phone. I never knew what he was saying but his love came through the phone so strongly and the basic message was like, “Honey, whatever your dreams are, it’s okay.” So someone being that kind of witness for me and just saying, “Let’s just shine a light in there and see what these buried dreams are.”

It was so powerful and at a certain point in that process, I just got — I have to start being on my own side and it’s okay to be on my own side around those dreams even if I have no idea how we’re going to get them. So like if you can picture, I’m working in a foundation, I’m wearing the tweed suits, I have an MBA, I have a career in the social sector and I’m saying, “Somehow I want to be writing for a living, I want to be doing things on television and on camera, I want to be speaking for audiences, I want to be in the world of personal growth and self-help. All of that and I have no idea how I’m going to get there and I have no idea exactly even what I want to do when I’m there.”

So no idea and I can still say to myself, “Tara, I will be 100% on our side in going for that and figuring that out.” That’s what I mean by it’s shifting the loyalty and nothing external needs to shift at first but that’s such a powerful in our move. It literally felt to me like going from arguing with myself like standing across from myself and just counting my dreams to coming around and standing on my own side. I think that’s the beginning of changing everything.

**[0:10:07.3] AS:** I love that you say that because part of why I love your work Tara is I just think it's paradigm shifting in general right? Playing big is this inner game and what I thought, when you said, "It was my inner maverick, I lost that inner maverick," and what I love is, as women, we think our inner maverick is more of this masculine, I can do everything that I want to set myself out to do.

But I want to jump to one of the parts in your book where you redefine self-discipline. I'm going to read a quote from the book. You say, this was actually in relation to your own body image and food struggle, which I love to talk about but you said about discipline and I'd also love you to share about your concept of discipline and how maverick it can be to look at it in a different way.

But you said, basically that, "Self-discipline is better thought of as self-love and self-love manifested through the routines and rituals that we setup to enable the changes we desire to happen naturally and with ease." It makes me think, "That's such an inner maverick approach. I'm going to support myself and be on my side?"

**[0:11:09.0] TM:** Right, it's totally an inner maverick approach and I was just teaching this part of my course on Tuesday, we were on this topic and one of the things we talked a lot about was how deep the cultural conditioning is around that things are more important and more worthy when they're difficult for us to do and that if a goal is not difficult to achieve, did you really do anything important?

**[0:11:37.2] JB:** Oh I love that.

**[0:11:39.0] TM:** I am suggesting, let's make our goals easy to achieve and change really important things in our lives that way and maybe we can change more in our lives if we make it easy.

**[0:11:51.8] JB:** Let's talk about building confidence that way. I feel like you don't gain — I just don't think you gain a lot of confidence when you have these crazy hard goals where it feels like an arduous task to complete it.

**[0:12:03.6] TM:** Right, right and it doesn't work because eventually a part of us is like, "I don't like suffering, I don't like struggling, why the heck are you making me suffer so much?" A part of us says that to another part. For me, all of this Ali, it's not something I only use with food now but it came out of my experience with food, which was like I grew up in a family, maternal side of my family, pretty much everyone is either struggling with obesity or devoting their life to not be struggling with obesity, was kind of what I grew up with.

By the time I was five, I now can see in the paediatrician's reports, they were concerned about my weight and lots of food issues in the family, lots of — I started dieting early, lots of trying to do things by willpower, completely failing at that and then eventually coming to a totally different relationship with food and my body where I really gave up all the foods that are addictive for me, which are refined carbohydrates basically and sugar and all of that and wheat, and did that really consistently for 10 years and saw how it had absolutely nothing to do with willpower. Nothing to do with willpower.

**[0:13:23.6] AS:** Can you repeat that the third time please?

**[0:13:27.0] TM:** I cannot tell you, people would say, "What? You don't eat sugar? What? You haven't eaten sugar for 10 years? What? You didn't have cake at your wedding? What? You don't have cake on your birthday?" I had figs at my wedding and truly because I love figs and I can handle figs and I can't handle cake.

Just like some bodies are alcoholic, that's how my physiology which is with sugar. There was not a moment of that 10 years and then there's a hiatus with pregnancy and now I'm back on the wagon because I was so sick with pregnancy, I could only eat things like crackers and stuff for the first four months. But anyway.

There's not a moment that had anything to do with self-discipline and what it all had to do with was setting up the right supports and structures and changes in the rest of my life meaning, okay, if we notice we're picking up sugar when we're sad, what are some other things we're going to do when we're sad?

If you're having carbohydrates every day at four because you're actually exhausted, like for the first few months that I gave up sugar, I napped every single day at four because I had no idea how to live a 24 hour cycle without either sleep or a stimulant. And so if I was going to get off the stimulant, I needed sleep. Lots of other ways of processing emotions besides food. People who could sort of help hold me accountable in the beginning to the changes I wanted to make.

So all these things but when I put all those things into place then it was like a completely easy transformation. I really just came to believe from that experience that we don't make important changes out of willpower. When I looked at the research, that's completely backed up. The number one reason Americans say that they can't achieve any, not just health goals but their most important goals, is because of a lack of will power.

So if the majority of Americans think that they have a lack of willpower can the majority of the people have a lack of something they're supposed to have or are we having a delusion about this mythical willpower that's supposed to be there? And I think we're really having a delusion.

**[0:15:36.4] JB:** Now, when you were deciding to get off of sugar and refined carbohydrates, what was the desire for that? Like where was that coming from? Was that coming from you wanting to look different, feel different? Like what was the catalyst of "I'm going to make this change"?

**[0:15:52.3] TM:** Probably if I had never struggled with my weight, I don't know that I would have really wanted to make that choice just for the sanity of it. At a surface level, it was coming from "I don't want this gout to be going up and down dramatically. I don't want to not be able to go shopping for jeans." It was like the typical woman in our culture, I want to look a certain way and then over time, it also became like, "I'm really tired of missing out on life because I'm obsessing about my body and I'm really tired of going into a food coma from eating more sugar than I want to eat," those kinds of more quality of life things.

**[0:16:41.2] JB:** You felt like it needed to be like exercised out of your life versus just finding a way of I can have a little bit and for you it was like I can't have a little bit.

**[0:16:51.9] TM:** I have a little bit and I do really strongly believe that some people have an allergy that they can't have a little bit. Multiple people in my family have died from essentially the complications from sugar addiction. So I take that really seriously and it's just very clear to me, from my life experience that it's not something I can do in moderation.

**[0:17:20.7] AS:** Well and what I think is interesting about that is there's a surrendering to I think in the American narrative, it's like part of the willpower narrative, right? We hear this all the time with upward mobility. "If you try hard enough," and then we're wondering why someone like Donald Trump is having all this popularity not to get political but it's a lot of disenfranchise people.

Because we in our country, I kind of jump to the global, but we have a hard time accepting limits here. It doesn't mean that you can't be successful I think sometimes — I think often it's, "All right, here's the framework that I'm existing, we all have limits but let me find a way to support myself not beat myself up because of this but get the support that I need for what works for me." Standing in that.

**[0:18:05.3] JB:** It's funning this, I'm thinking about just — sorry to interrupt you Tara but as we're talking about like willpower and there's a lot of negativity with that right? I don't think that anybody responds well to that punishing feeling. I was actually just training a new trainer today who is coming into our gym and I was explaining to her how you don't want to use negative affirmations when you're working with someone, "Oh it should hurt, no pain no gain."

**[0:18:32.1] AS:** Can you train all trainers Juliet?

**[0:18:35.4] JB:** It's the opposite of what you want to be doing with people, you want to say like, "It should feel amazing, you should feel great in your body," not like, "It should hurt."

**[0:18:44.3] TM:** For sure. Also in my work we distinguish between should goal than gift goals. Even with a healthful or any other goal in your life, it's like, what's the way of framing this that feels like a gift to yourself and that is going to feel like a gift, not just the end result but the process along the way should feel good. If anything where it's like the ends justifies the means, it's like, I would really — that usually means that something about the goal is really coming from

your inner critic or other people in your life not from your authentic voice because the part of you wants to do is also going to be fairly resonant along the way not just when the outcome is achieved.

**[0:19:31.1] AS:** Well what's interesting too about if you frame it within willpower, you assume you don't want to make the right choice. I was just in our Truce With Food call today and I have people experiment, I have them do different experiments to figure out their metabolic type. One of the women was saying, "You know it's so interesting, I thought I loved all these bad foods but it's almost been unconscious and easy for me. I'm just naturally making the healthier choices because I'm noticing I feel better after certain combinations of fats, proteins and carbs," but she's like, "It's freaking me out because it's easy and it's the most effortless."

**[0:20:07.0] TM:** 'Cause people aren't condition to feel easy and effortless and good. We all have this tape running in our head that it needs to be hard and then it's worth it in the end, right?

**[0:20:17.3] AS:** Right.

**[0:20:18.4] TM:** It causes us to make some bad career decisions too and to choose the wrong field, to stay in things that aren't really aligned with our strengths because we think that if it's hard, that we can slug through and it can lead to some great outcome and a lot of times, the better outcome is there for us when we find the thing that feels more flow along the way.

**[0:20:40.2] JB:** Can we talk a little bit about just going back to dreams and the term "playing big" and how you were staying, it doesn't necessarily mean taking on something big, right? Because I think that when you say, "What are your dreams?" A lot of people would jump to a certain career that they would love to have or can we talk about it on just like a smaller scale and how that could be playing big as well? Because I know you talk about that.

**[0:21:04.1] TM:** Yeah, It's interesting because there's certainly assignment of women who are doing something that it seems really big or prestigious in the world's eyes and then when they tune into what playing big really means to them, it can actually be a scaling back from that, it can be doing something more creative like I think about one woman in my course who was fairly

senior in a big corporate professional services firm and at this level where there was large group of people and everyone was sort of in competition for one promotion.

She was offered this job and all of her peers were like, "Oh wow, okay she got it." And when she really was able to separate out her inner critic voice and her fears and tune into like "what's true for me?" She found that for her, playing big was staying in the role she was in, which was completely unheard of in this company because the reason she wanted to stay was because she was in the middle of this very pioneering five year project that she had started with her team.

She had hired her team, she really valued those relationships and she valued bringing this thing to a close over the five years and she also had a critique of her company, which was like we take the stars and we take them out of what they're doing to promote them and that's part of why we're not creating the long term impact we could and what we're doing.

She turned down the promotion, she had the courage to share that critique about the rate at which people were promoted in this company and did something that from the outside didn't look like playing big, it took a ton of courage and integrity for her. Then ultimately it has really led to her amazing playing big because now that five year period is over. Then she got her next more senior role, but meantime she became known as this very high integrity, very people oriented, very impact oriented person within the firm.

So that's an example of how it can look. For a lot of women it looks like leaving the thing that might be more valued in our culture but going and doing something creative or more innovative that might be smaller at first for a lot of women their playing big is not something that they make their day job at least at first. And I'm really big on pushing all of us to think about "how do you live your calling today?" If you're working in marketing and you think that your playing big is starting an artisanal food business, if you got on a coaching call with me, you would be making food and selling it that weekend.

We'd get really creative about how to do that and I would be very adamant that that calling is not asking you to quit your job. One of the things I've learned talking to so many women about their calling and really delving into what's real there is that our calling just...[bells ringing].

**[0:24:10.9] AS:** Sounds like bells in the background, you'll know it's a calling when the bells ring.

**[0:24:16.8] TM:** Our callings absolutely do not care if they are the way that we pay our mortgage, they don't. Our callings want us to respect them, they want us to listen to what they are and they want us to give them some space for expression, they don't want to be stuffed down. If that expression needs to happen a few hours a week, that's usually fine it's so much better than no hours a week. So in that paradigm, we can all start really living those callings and dreams right away and...

**[0:24:52.4] JB:** How do you guide someone with that, right? So someone comes to you and they're clearly not happy with what they're doing, it's just not their calling but they really have no idea what their calling is or even what their dreams are, they're just very lost.

**[0:25:09.3] TM:** Yup. So first of all, 99% of the time that people think they don't know what their callings are, what they really mean is, that thing that keeps showing up in my mind and heart can't possibly be my calling because I'm not qualified for it and it's too scary. It's very rare, people think they don't know what their calling is, that's usually because they discounted the thing that keeps nagging at them as "that could possibly be it". Often we can really quickly get there.

**[0:25:35.8] AS:** Would you also say that maybe they are qualified but because it isn't something to your point that they have to work really hard — because it's right in front of their face the first step, it's dismissed.

**[0:25:46.3] TM:** It could be because it's right in front of their first step, it could be because of people around them that won't approve, it could be because it's often that it seems too crazy or it's not the thing that their formal expertise or training is in. But one of the universal qualities of a calling is that we don't feel that we are who we need to be to do the calling and we don't think we have what we need to have to do it. That is not a sign that's something's not your calling. That's a sign that something is your calling.

**[0:26:14.4] JB:** So it's a level of insecurity a little bit that you're feeling externally about this thing that keeps popping up for you?

**[0:26:20.0] TM:** I always feel like, "What couldn't possibly be for me, that's too big or that's too frivolous or that's for someone with more this or that." That's part of the experience of being called is feeling like that can't be for me, feeling a lot of resistance and fear but also feeling a level of resonance when you do the thing. You feel resistance and fear when you contemplate doing the thing, you feel a lot of resonance and flow when you're actually doing the thing.

It's usually the way our calling shows up is it's either an idea or a vision about how something could be different or has something you want to create or a very vivid pain or frustration with some aspect of the status quo. It drives you crazy that the fitness industry is this way, you're just waking up at night thinking about this particular social issue and how you could change it. Or something very mundane like it's driving you crazy and such and such at your kid's school or such and such in your church or such and such in your neighborhood that you want to change.

**[0:27:21.8] AS:** One of the things Tara that you mentioned, you'll hear this voice of like, "Who am I?" And basically you talk about the inner critic and I love that you give such an anatomy of that. One thing that really struck out that I'd love to ask you about in your book is you said that when you go in to organizations or in your program, the women over 60 who were the trailblazers and pioneers, their inner critic often sounds like their mother. Not all the time but often.

Whereas the women under 60 or who have been really in the workforce, it sounds more like a boss or a colleague or something in the organization. One of the things I've noticed in my work is that women over 50, and this is just generalizations, tend to need more permission to take care of themselves, that tends to be their issue. Like, "How am I going to prioritize my care, the cooking or the exercise?"

Whereas the women under that, their food issues at the root are often, "Oh I've been told if I follow all the rules, I'm going to be happy or I'm going to feel successful," and there's often this stress of it being on that treadmill or there's an emptiness. Do you find that the inner critic behaves differently based on the era that you've grown up in?

**[0:28:32.8] TM:** Right. Definitely it's an individual deal and these are generalizations that do not apply to everyone. It was really interesting for me to observe what Ali, you're referring to of that for women and not just over 60 but even over 70, in particular there was one very large workshop on the inner critic that I did that was most of the women in their room were over 60 in their 70's and 80's.

We always talk about what's the character of your inner critic like if you were to personify it as a character and who are some of the external sources that it imitates? In this particular room, it was just overwhelming the percentage of women who felt their inner critic was their internalized mother's voice and it was a much higher proportion of women in that room than it typically is when I have a mixed age class.

That sort of sparked this discussion among those women about why that might be and that from a historical perspective, it's not to blame their mothers but if you think about okay, if your mom raising a daughter in the 40's or in the 50's and what you were raised with and what your world view would be about how women needed to behave and what was safe for a woman.

Of course then that maternal protective voice, protective intention for those moms then comes the 60's, the 70's, changing rules for women and that starts to sound like an inner critic voice for those women about how they need to behave, what role they should play in their family and the workforce and so on. Certainly I thought it was incredibly — it was just a beautiful way to see how social norms have changed that now mothers aren't becoming that kind of inner critic voice for their daughters in as universal a way.

**[0:30:35.0] JB:** That resonated with me when Ali was telling me about this the other day when we were talking about having on you on the show and I brought it up to a couple of my coworkers today and I was like — and these are women who are in their mid to late 20's and I was like, "What is your inner critic sound like?" And I brought this up.

They all said it was like a boss, they all were like, "It's like some sort of higher up figure or someone who is telling me that I need to do this or I'm not going to get to this place and just this an overwhelming sensation of like I need to be better, I need to push myself."

**[0:31:16.5] TM:** Yeah, push myself.

**[0:31:20.4] JB:** Push myself. Yeah. If you could just see the face that Tara made when you say “push yourself”. I know, it’s like again, it’s all negative, that’s not positive.

**[0:31:30.1] TM:** For me the most shocking insight, a couple of really shocking insights and just really I feel like I’ve been studying how the inner critic functions in women for the past seven or eight years now. One is just that everyone has a very loud inner critic no matter where they are in their career stage, no matter how successful they are, how profound it is.

Two that that inner critic is it’s own distinct voice and it’s not the heart of us. So lots of times when you initially think about your inner critic, you’re like, “Well that’s just me, I’m just not a confident person or I’m just really critical of myself. That’s how my brain sounds when it thinks.” That’s actually not true, it’s one strain of voice, it can become very dominant but you can learn to separate it and start to hear the other voices in you much more clearly.

**[0:32:22.9] JB:** That’s like my favorite thing is when someone will say, “Well that’s just how I am.” That’s not how you are, that’s how you’re being. That’s one aspect.

**[0:32:36.3] TM:** It’s not a choice with the inner critic. Like the inner critic is really, it’s a conquering force in our minds that can come and seize a lot of territory. With a lot of compassion it’s like, “Well that’s actually not the harder view and there’s something you can do to make that voice less central.”

**[0:32:57.4] AS:** What I love Tara is you’re so real, you’re like, “Oh, and once you start playing bigger,” ‘cause you see these memes on like Instagram, “Kick your inner critic to the curb. I’m not listening to it.” Once you start playing bigger, it’s going to get louder. Just so you know.

**[0:33:11.6] TM:** Whenever you’re hearing your inner critic, if it’s saying, “You look ridiculous in that dress or you don’t know what you’re talking about or don’t say that, someone would have said that already.” Whenever you hear an inner critic line, you can always ask yourself, “Okay, the safety instinct part of me that wants to feel completely emotionally safe all the time, what

would my safety instinct not like about this situation and why would it be trying to get me in the comfort zone?" And you'll find, "Oh, it doesn't want me to go to this party and feel awkward, not knowing anyone. It's trying to distract me about this dress and get me to stay home."

Or, "It doesn't want me to say an idea and have people not get it so it's trying to convince me to not say it." So it's always coming from our safety instinct, trying to use the strategy of the inner critic to get us to stay in our emotional comfort zone. So when we play bigger, we hear it more.

**[0:34:06.6] AS:** I always try to show to my clients about how often that inner critic then leads to like, "I'm going for cookies." Because people think they love food and I'm like, "No, you love not hearing that side of you that is the slave driver or the protector or however it comes up for you."

**[0:34:22.9] TM:** The incredible distraction and this for me was so big in my years of using food in that way, the most — from the perspective of the safety instinct, most powerful thing about the eating cookie is that then, I would spend the next 24 hours or the next week focusing on the fact that I ate the cookies and the guilt about that or the self-punishing about that or the new plan I'm launching to change that. So now I'm completely distracted from whatever the real playing big issue was, whether it was a social one or a professional one or whatever.

**[0:35:03.0] JB:** It kept you small and safe?

**[0:35:05.1] TM:** Yeah, yeah. Comfort zone. Painful comfort zone still feels better to the safety instinct than vulnerability, risk, exposure, excitement. That safety instinct is not — I always say, the risk aversion department of us, the part of us that wants to avoid risk, never talks to the joy and fulfillment department. It does not care about your joy and fulfillment, it's just trying to avoid risk. So if you're save but miserable, it's like, "We did our job."

**[0:35:38.7] JB:** Now, when you said have a session with me and I will get you cooking that artisanal food on the weekends.

**[0:35:45.8] TM:** Yeah, and the way you know that's not a sales pitch is that I haven't, I don't do sessions and I haven't...

**[0:35:51.0] AS:** Your program is completely accessible, you know, price point.

**[0:35:54.7] TM:** Thank you, yeah, that's important to me and I haven't done individual work in many years. So that really wasn't a sales pitch, really, my intention there...

**[0:36:04.0] JB:** Yeah, I'm just wondering when you said how do you get somebody to quiet that inner critic and honor their dreams?

**[0:36:12.8] TM:** Yeah, so huge part of my approach is that you do not have to quiet your inner critic and you should not expect to quiet your inner critic.

**[0:36:19.5] JB:** I love that.

**[0:36:20.0] AS:** Exactly, it's so freeing, It's like, "Oh I can still operate with this critic."

**[0:36:23.5] JB:** "Hey inner critic, what's up?" I mean, I think I know what you're saying because I hear mine all day every day and I'm just like, "Hey there, what's going on?"

**[0:36:31.7] TM:** Exactly. That's when looking at how women who are really living the self-expression and career of their dreams, what are they doing? They are not confident, they're doing exactly what you described. Twyla Tharp talk about, for people who don't know, world renowned choreographer. Every time she starts a new dance, there's a voice in her head that says, "This dance is going to be the one where everyone discovers you have no talent and walks out of the audience on opening night." She has 25 Tony awards.

Cherrie Murray, Dean of Engineering at Harvard says, "Every day I feel completely unqualified for my job." She took the job and she's showing up anyway. It's really about getting educated to understand, "I have an inner critic, everyone has an inner critic, it's an expression of my faith and instinct, therefore it's going to scream crazy lies that sound really true and my job is to hear it but not take direction from it." That's been really powerful in my own life like when the book came out I was invited to write a New York times off about...

**[0:37:38.5] AS:** It was so good.

**[0:37:39.5] TM:** Thank you. I wrote the entire thing being sure it was a waste of time, my writing wasn't good enough to be published there but I knew I'm like, "Okay wait, there's a slight chance that that's my inner critic and not reality and since I've just wrote a book about this, I should probably listen to my own advice and write even though I'm sure I'm not good enough."

Of course that was my inner critic talking and it was way off base. So it's allowing inner critic to be there and getting really wise about what it is. We haven't talked about inner mentor but that's a huge part of my work too that, Juliet in this situation you're talking about, we'd be looking at, "Yeah, what would your inner mentor have you do in that situation?"

**[0:38:19.3] AS:** Yeah, and I want to talk about the inner mentor because so much of my approach is getting people to be their own expert, especially because what I find interesting about weight loss is the failure rate is 98% but no one questions the model, they question themselves which is another version of imposter syndrome which we were just talking about on Truce With Food today. The first symptom that you're not an imposter is if you think you are one. That's like the people who are like, "No, maybe I might need to know more?" But I love this concept...

**[0:38:48.9] TM:** That's really true, but let me just interrupt a bit, there were studies that were done on imposter syndrome where extremely high achieving successful women that's where the phenomenon was noticed. So it's really true, that that's who feels like an imposter, yeah.

**[0:39:03.6] AS:** Yeah, and what I love is when Juliet was saying, when I asked the people that I work with, everyone sounds like a boss or the older generation, it's their mothers who grew up in this environment. So it's like patriarchy, we all still have it inside of us and so this concept of the inner mentor really to me is so radical in the best kind of way because you're saying, "Look, no one else can tell you what's going to work, you have to do that for yourself."

And I find that with one root issue of food, body image and weight is this lack of self-trust that's been worn away, and the obstacle is the path, right? You can't develop self-trust by listening to anybody else. I'd love for you to expand upon this concept because we're always hearing as

another to do, “Find a mentor, find a mentor.” Or, in the entrepreneurial world, people are paying \$25 grand to be mentored. Yeah. So I would love Tara for you to talk about your concept.

**[0:40:02.8] TM:** Yeah, I love that you mentioned the term self-trust because the problem with just the idea of self-trust if it’s generalized is that it doesn’t say which part of yourself you’re trying to trust. A lot of us have a lot of parts of ourselves that aren’t that trustworthy, right? Like we might have a perfectionistic part or restrictive part or a self-punishing part or a condition part. So to just say “self-trust”, that’s really hard because we’re going to lead ourselves to not so great directions if we’re trying to trust every thought and impulse we have.

So to me it’s all about getting in touch with the parts of ourselves that are extremely trustworthy and wise. That voice of inner wisdom, that voice of peace, that voice of guidance that we have for ourselves. There’s lots of vehicles in terms of spiritual practices that can help you get there, I love this inner mentor tool because it’s a very reliable accessible way for women to find that wise and trustworthy part of themselves and the basic idea of it is you do a guided visualization and we can actually provide the link so people can get it who listen to this if you want without the book.

This comes from CTI where I do my coaching and training and then I’ve sort of adapted this visualization in my own way. But you go on it through guided meditation and meet an older, wiser version of yourself. When people do that and take their body, mind and spirit through that process, they meet just not their older selves, but this amazing kind of essential self/soul self. What they see is often very surprising to them or even a little puzzling at first but also very powerful.

Then they can start to relate to that self like a mentor. But it’s the best mentor because it’s your best self, your highest self, it’s not a mentor who has an agenda for you or is threatened when you start playing really big or has baggage from their own experience. External mentors, literal, other people mentors can be great for some very specific things but Ali, as you so beautifully said, because particularly because we’re at this point in history where women are reinventing everything about what it means to be a woman and have a life and have a career and have an identity, it doesn’t work so well to just turn to someone and say, “Hmm, what did you do? Let me replicate that.” Plus, that’s not the path of anybody’s individual soul.

So yes, we need individual mentor or inner mentors, I hate the slogan “You can’t be what you can’t see,” because I’m like, “Of course you can be what you can’t see, that’s how everyone who ever did anything important did it. They became something that they never saw before.” But they probably saw it in some way in their inner vision and that’s what matters.

**[0:42:53.9] AS:** I love that so much because part of — I have two questions then that I would love for you to talk about this concept of the transition team because I think to your point, anyone who has done anything innovative and like all the systems and structures in our culture are severely broken from healthcare to the workplace to education to the criminal justice system.

**[0:43:15.0] TM:** To our presidential elections!

**[0:43:17.8] AS:** To the election process, yeah. You have this idea that we’re all called to be on this transition team and I just love that because it’s such a — I’m like, “Yes, yes!” It makes all of what you're putting out seem like a beautiful unfolding rather than, “Oh shit.”

**[0:43:34.6] TM:** Right. Yes, you totally get it, that’s a beautiful way to put it, that’s a beautiful unfolding, yes. The concept of the transition team is that we’re coming from a long history of a world that was largely designed and even just bound really by men and that we are hopefully moving into a future of a world that is designed and defined and led by both women and men.

The present is the transition. Every single one of us is on a very large transition team helping to forge that transition in our own corner of the world, in our own community, in our own industry, in our own life. Hopefully that concept can help us make peace with what is still very much incomplete in that transition, what is still unjust in that transition process and see ourselves as part of this global and multigenerational, incredible transformation.

**[0:44:46.9] AS:** Oh my god, I love that. And it adds so much meaning.

**[0:44:50.0] TM:** I’d also say, it’s not just true around gender issues but for me, spiritually I’d say, it’s also that in a broader way, to really understand that our world is a place that is all about

bringing more and more light into a world that's a real mix of light and darkness and kind of knowing that's what it is here. This isn't paradise and wasn't supposed to be paradise, this is the place where we try and bring the light in. That helps me, to know that.

**[0:45:23.9] AS:** That was my second question because you are very spiritual and Juliet knows, I'm very spiritual but I'm going through this right now this question of what happens when we die? And I feel like it's such an organizing principle for my life. So I'm curious how your spiritual orientation has trickled down into this playing big architecture.

**[0:45:49.7] TM:** So we could call *Playing Big* like *Let Your Soul Run Your Life*. I could have called it that, I didn't, but on the inside that's kind of what it's about for me.

**[0:45:59.4] JB:** Not great for marketing but.

**[0:46:01.6] AS:** I would have bought it.

**[0:46:02.8] JB:** I know you would have Ali.

**[0:46:08.7] TM:** Market — it's like, I'll just say, it's not that I didn't call it that for marketing reasons, I didn't call it that because I want to be inclusive and I know....

**[0:46:18.3] JB:** Yeah I was going to say, it resonates with more people because I think what you say the word "soul", that doesn't resonate with everybody.

**[0:46:24.3] TM:** For sure, for sure. There's nothing disingenuous — people can get a ton out of, you know, you don't need to love the word soul to get a ton out of this work.

**[0:46:33.8] AS:** You don't even need to think about your soul but I think you'll access it in the process.

**[0:46:38.6] TM:** Yeah, whether you call it that or not and you can call it my true self or whatever.

**[0:46:42.9] JB:** Intuition, whatever, yeah.

**[0:46:44.5] TM:** So yeah. I mean for me playing big is about what is your most authentic self truly long for in this life, what's the real expression of your callings, your gifts and then how do we clear all the cobwebs that obscure our light, fear, inner critic, all of that out of the way?

**[0:47:07.5] JB:** I can't stress enough how important I think when you were talking about that visualization meditation that you utilize that for people. I can't stress enough how much that has helped me in my life. I didn't call it an inner mentor, I didn't have that language around it but a guide or whomever it might be, for me it was a cat. It wasn't an actual human being but I had an animal guide that came to me and kind of showed me some things and that's just kind of woohoo but...

**[0:47:41.8] AS:** I was just gonna say, talk about you think "soul" is going to scare people?

**[0:47:45.0] JB:** Okay, there was some alligators in there too. It's like whatever comes up for you right? It's like when you're dreaming, sometimes our dreams, they really don't make any sense and are unconscious is trying to tell us something but those visualization, meditations, I know Ali has done them too. They are so profound, those of you out there, I don't work and provide that for you. Just try it. It's pretty cool, something to try.

**[0:48:13.8] AS:** Especially if you, I think the people who are super cerebral and would want to dismiss that, they need to try it the most because that was my case.

**[0:48:23.1] TM:** Yeah, right? I mean it was always hard for me to relax enough to let myself go down that road of being calm enough to get there but then once you're there you're like, "Holy crap."

**[0:48:36.7] AS:** Yeah.

**[0:48:37.5] JB:** I was always someone who liked to dream, I liked having dreams. So this is that way of, "Oh I can go into like a fun little dream right now."

**[0:48:45.1] TM:** Like a more visual. I mean, it's like we can see with contrast and Instagram. Images are so powerful and because of the way our culture has evolved, we are a lot more — we consider intellectual life to be connected to language more than images and we've lost a lot because images are really powerful in inspiring our hearts and giving us a sense of where we're going. It's really important.

**[0:49:20.0] AS:** I know we have to wrap up here soon but Tara, I was wondering, two questions, you did the epilogue of your book was post having a baby. Part of what triggered your own journey of supporting women's voices was realizing that they weren't represented in curriculums way back in high school.

One of the things that I really loved that you talked about was that you're really enjoying, I mean there was a transitional phase for sure, but you're enjoying motherhood and you're finding that you can have a career that you like and enjoy being a mother and I think that story is so important to share because connecting earlier back to, "Oh, something isn't hard, it's not worthwhile."

I sometimes think and it's all unconscious though, if we don't have these stories of joy and of creativity and of playing big in whatever way that we choose, the default is that it all has to be hard which then I'm connecting everything clear but then like, "Oh my god, then I have to choose, if it's going to be hard then I'm going to have to choose between being a mother or having a career." I'd love for you to share some of your experience and then what's your playing big edge right now?

**[0:50:26.8] TM:** Yeah, I love the connection you're making, which I think if I'm following you right is that in the same way that our culture is in love with, "it has to be hard and there has to be a struggle and there's hard choices", part of what that means is that we keep hearing and amplifying the stories of women being like, "It was so hard I realized I had to make a choice between these parts of my work or my creative life and my mothering."

We don't hear the stories for women saying, "It's working. There's things here, there's some joy here, it's okay, we can celebrate it all." That is so frustrating to me because when you look at the

statistics, the reality is that the huge volume of women who are working, having children who are choosing to work while they're raising children, those numbers are huge.

Yet of course the headline is never like, "Let me just walk you through the lives of 10 women who have been doing that and really enjoying it." So yes, that has been powerful for me and it's just really intense for me to be a mom, choosing to continue to create and work, having had to stay at home mom. I mean that just continues to be really intense to navigate what's true for me, what's inner critic, what does it mean to be a present mom? You know, all of that. So that continues to evolve.

**[0:51:56.5] JB:** Is that what's playing big is looking like for you right now?

**[0:51:59.9] TM:** It's looking like a lot of things. It's that, my work is expanding internationally a lot because the book has been translated really widely because it's that. It's having a really thriving business, it's being an employer, it's thinking about growth of that business, it's being a really meaningful financial contributor to my family when that wasn't the modelling that I grew up with. It's thinking about what I want to write about next and being as brave as I can with that, it's all those things.

**[0:52:31.7] AS:** It sounds like the theme is really transition, I don't want to say breaking barriers, but moving them forward or not even the barrier but charting new territory.

**[0:52:41.3] TM:** It's charting new territory. Yeah, it's charting new territory. That's a good way to put it.

**[0:52:46.0] AS:** Yeah, ph my god, this is wonderful. Juliet, do you have any other final questions for Tara?

**[0:52:51.2] JB:** No, just where can people connect with you Tara?

**[0:52:56.5] TM:** Yeah.

**[0:52:56.3] JB:** To see this amazing work that you do?

**[0:52:59.6] TM:** Thanks. TaraMohr.com is my main home online and I blog and write there and people can come visit there and then of course now I'm on social media too because...

**[0:53:13.2] AS:** You have to be.

**[0:53:14.2] JB:** Everyone has to be.

**[0:53:16.8] TM:** I am more one of those people who is late to the party, someone on my team...

**[0:53:18.8] AS:** Me too.

**[0:53:20.9] TM:** Funny was just like, "I don't have personal email anymore and a lot of my friends don't either. We have our work email and then we have social media and texting." I was like, "What?" So that is really interesting.

**[0:53:33.5] JB:** You have a home phone too?

**[0:53:36.3] TM:** Right. I mean, I'd give up my home phone but the email, that blew my mind. I so grew up in the blogging world here and so now I'm like, "Okay, I guess really people are on Instagram," so I'm getting with it. I'm on all those places too, twitter, Facebook, Instagram.

**[0:53:51.7] AS:** Oh my god Tara, I'm so with you, I'm like, "Social media, I feel like I'm a 90 year old." I'm not 90 but my approach...

**[0:54:01.1] TM:** She's getting so annoyed with us right now, she's just like, "Guys..."

**[0:54:07.2] AS:** Yeah, but everyone really, and I have to say, Tara was a master class teacher for Truce With Food, still is, it's one of people's favorite in the program's...

**[0:54:15.9] TM:** Thank you.

**[0:54:16.7] AS:** Yeah, and get the book, it is really — I feel like innovative and ground breaking is overused word today but I really feel like the book *Playing Big* is so paradigm shifting and get the books so you can see how all the pieces interplay together because once you overturn something like okay, playing big doesn't have to be go big or go home.

There's such a ripple effect of what that means and in the book really is put together beautifully. I love that there's journal questions, right? It's not just you talking to us, it's like, "Okay, you're giving us prompts to open up to our experience."

**[0:54:51.0] TM:** Yeah, that's true, that's my favorite thing, we didn't get so much into moment to moment practices because this was more of a chat but I just love that people are constantly like, "Oh this was the practical thing I read on empowerment and changing life." So I really value that and every topic we address that's really like, "What do you do in the moment when you're feeling afraid or when you're feeling inner critic or you need to do a negotiation?"

I really think that's — I feel like if you're going to be in the coaching space, that's your job, to be really, really practical and not just save the big concepts. I see that as my job and I have tried to provide that.

**[0:55:30.6] AS:** Totally, I appreciate that you said that and I know that is speaking of, when I took the *Playing Big* Program, that negotiation model and the tactics of it was one of the most profound helpful things. I still am grateful that I was able to negotiate not doing a project, I still think to this day that, "Oh I saved myself so much," but didn't know how to do it at the time. Yeah, that's what I love, you have this yin and yang, very high level but then let's make it practical so we can continue with the big picture change. So Tara, thank you so much for being with us and everyone check out [TaraMohr.com](http://TaraMohr.com).

**[0:56:04.3] TM:** Thank you. Thanks to both of you, thanks for listening everybody.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:56:09.7] JB:** Thank you so much for listening to the *Insatiable* Podcast, we hope you enjoy today's episode. You can connect with us on social media. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram

@julietunite and Ali @alimshapiro, M stand for Marie. Please feel free to also e-mail us any questions. We would love to hear from all of our listeners. You can reach us on [ali@alishapiro.com](mailto:ali@alishapiro.com) and [juliet@unitefitness.com](mailto:juliet@unitefitness.com). We'll see you next time.

[END]