

HOW

TO

HOLD

POWER

A Somatic
Approach to
Becoming a
Leader People
Love and
Respect

30+ EMBODIMENT
PRACTICES TO
EMPOWER YOUR TEAM
AND LEAD WITH
INTENTION

PAVINI MORAY, PhD

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—NIR EYAL, best-selling author of *Hooked* and *Indistractable*

HOW TO HOLD POWER

*A Somatic Approach to Becoming
a Leader People Love and Respect*
By Pavini Moray, PhD

OCTOBER 10, 2023 | North Atlantic Books

Page count: 272 | ISBN: 9781623179243

\$19.95 USD/ \$25.95 CAN

Ebook ISBN: 9781623179250

\$13.99 USD / \$25.95 CAN

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 North Atlantic Books

“Becoming a leader who can feel yourself means tuning in to what matters to you. From the inside out, you learn to align your actions and practices with what feels right.”

ABOUT THE BOOK

Work landscapes are changing. Concepts of authority and hierarchy in the workplace are being questioned, values of equity and social justice are becoming priorities, and the conventional rules and expectations for work have shifted.

With this change, many leaders are wondering how to navigate a new reality. While you want to lead with ethics and integrity, you may struggle with embracing a position of power and authority. You want to do right by your employees, but you're not sure how—and as a result, you put yourself through so much stress that you burn out.

While many leadership books tell you what to do once you become a boss, very few help you *feel* like a boss. In other words, how do you develop the body of a leader? This is where somatic educator and coach Pavini Moray comes in.

Moray believes that **the secret to being an ethical, inspirational boss is rooted in your own body**. Drawing from client case studies and their own experience as a manager, Moray offers trauma-informed embodiment practices—breath, grounding, observing, centering, and moving—through concrete examples that show how to use these skills in a variety of common workplace settings. The second part of the book addresses “soft skills”—including consent, listening, receiving feedback, and repair after conflict—that help you become a leader people love.

In more than 30 simple exercises, reflections, and daily practices, you’ll learn how to:

- Live in your body and inhabit your power
- Ground and re-center when you’re thrown off by a mistake or problem
- Soothe the “Ouch!” of negative feedback
- Work with triggers in the office, yours or an employee’s
- Turn workplace conflict into a source of positive change and growth
- Help your employees voice their own needs and feel heard
- Understand the nuances of consent beyond contract negotiations
- Gracefully acknowledge mistakes
- Repair relationships with employees, colleagues, and clients

Holding power is complicated, and professional burnout is no joke. By developing the body of a leader, you can become a boss who truly listens to your employees; leads with inspiration; and brings your whole self to work every day. You can create change that lasts.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Pavini Moray (they/them) has started, failed, and succeeded at many businesses. As a serial entrepreneur, they have built private practices, a worker collective, and a for-profit company. These experiences have shaped them into an embodied, service-oriented leader. A Montessori educator at heart, Moray has developed a trauma-informed methodology for embodied relationship skills, teaching hundreds of students how to lead and learn.

Moray is also a somatic coach specializing in trauma and relationships. Their identity as a queer, trans, non-binary founder gives them insight into outsider culture and accessibility. Moray holds an M.Ed in Curriculum and Design and a Ph.D. in Somatic Psychology.

ADVANCE PRAISE

“This book addresses one of the biggest challenges of leadership: how to hold on to your humanity while maintaining empathy for those you lead, all while meeting your bottom line. Written with clarity and warmth, the book shares best practices through powerful examples and transformative, easy-to-access exercises.”

—Nir Eyal, author of *Hooked* and *Indistractable*

“Perfectly timed and necessary reading for today’s leaders. *How to Hold Power* is filled with inspiring insights, stories, and practical exercises to implement right away. Reading this book feels like Pavini Moray is sitting calmly beside you, ushering you on a journey to becoming a more grounded, impactful, and sought-out leader. Highly recommend this book!”

—Carrie Melissa Jones, community builder, entrepreneur, and community management consultant

“This book offers a roadmap to becoming a leader that people love. Weaving experiential practice with hard-won insight, Pavini has written a book that will be indispensable for anyone who wants to lead in a powerful, embodied way.”

—David Treleaven, PhD, author of *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness*

“Drawing from decades of experience in somatics, Pavini breaks leadership down into its most essential components: boundaries, consent, and listening. Chock full of effective and practical suggestions for how to deal with workplace triggers and conflict, *How to Hold Power* will help you develop a meaningful leadership practice. Filled with compassion and wisdom, this book is a must-read book for every leader who wants to hold their power with skills and grace.”

—Becky Margiotta, author of *Impact with Integrity: Repair the World Without Breaking Yourself* and cofounder of the Billions Institute

“Pavini offers a unique voice in the world of embodied leadership. They can only be described as one who has great courage and has worked hard to accomplish and realize what it means to be embodied in truth and wholeness. Breaking down a system to understand how to realize this is an invaluable offering to the world at a time when it is deeply needed.”

—Lucia Horan, 5Rhythms Lineage holder and Executive Somatic Coach

“Pavini Moray is compassionate about the pressures those in positions of leadership face, having lived those pressures, while at the same time holding those leaders to a high standard. The book shows how a path of development based on connecting to our sensations and emotions allows us to be better bosses. In addition, it remains practical and grounded and provides leaders a set of practices to be the bosses they aspire to be. It is a must-read!”

—**Pete Hamill, PhD**, senior teacher at Strozzi Institute and founder of Uncommon Leaders Ltd

“With a balance of personal stories, humor, and notes on somatic leadership, Pavini Moray delivers an easy-to-read book that will benefit a wide range of folks at every level of leadership.”

—**Meredith Broome**, Master Somatic Coach

“*How to Hold Power* is a practical and invaluable guide that is accessible, down-to-earth, insightful, and honest. It will help readers transform the way they lead and the way they live their lives. If you are ready to rethink your relationship to leadership and power, to lead with compassion and empathy, to strengthen your communication and listening skills, and to work on creating and honoring boundaries, read this book, work through its exercises, and be ready to become a boss or leader that inspires others.”

—**Jennifer Lenhart**, owner and lead teacher at Satsang Yoga Studio, Berea, OH

“By combining content with real-time practices, Dr. Moray lays out an easy-to-follow roadmap that guides the reader on a journey of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and finally, self-leadership—skills that any boss must master before they can lead others. *How to Hold Power* is sure to become an essential resource for any boss who wants to pursue personal growth toward more conscious leadership.

—**Michelle Coyle**, president of BGSD Strategies

“Dr. Pavini Moray has crafted a mind and heart-opening journey of discovery for anyone in the world of work and beyond. *How to Hold Power* belongs alongside all of your best business and management books, and by your bedside. For the business leader, you will get immediate practices that open avenues of empathy and vision. For visionaries, you will find delightful pathways to patience, presence and perseverance.”

—**Steven Hoskinson**, founder of Organic Intelligence

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Why is a different approach to leadership needed?

What are the different types of power? Why is it important to develop more consciousness around how you hold power?

Consent is usually associated with sexuality and relationships. How does consent culture translate to the workplace?

Listening is an important and useful tool to have as a boss. What can you do to listen more effectively? How does having an embodied presence enable good listening?

What does it mean to have a trauma-informed workplace, and why is it important now, more than ever, to create workplaces that meet people where they are?

How does developing somatic awareness benefit all of your relationships, both personal and professional? How can it help you level up your entire life?

EXCERPT

Fair warning: as you learn to focus on what's happening inside, you will notice more of your needs. If you could get by on five hours of sleep before, you may find that you need to pay attention to sleeping more. If you used to be able to skip breakfast and lunch, you will probably need more snacks as your body starts talking.

Becoming embodied means starting to listen to your body, which is essential for building trust with your body. This will enable you to have more compassion for the experiences and needs of others. In addition, your employees will trust your decisions more because they observe your groundedness and self-care. A well-rested, well-fed, hydrated boss who moves their body is more resilient, more patient, and more in tune with others.

The skills that got you into leadership are not necessarily the same skills that make you an excellent leader. In order to get where you are, you have likely had to hustle and grind, stay focused and exert effort. And it may be surprising to learn that hustling and grinding are not necessary skills for embodied leadership. Embodied leaders are not urgent. They are present. Your nervous system is guiding everyone you lead. Take note: They will respond to how you are more than to what you say.

In order to level up as a leader, you have to learn to be and to feel in a new way. It's a hard sell; I get it. Any hesitation or misgivings you're having as you read this are to be expected. You're being invited into new ways of thinking and being, and the old ways can get kind of testy about that. As you instigate a process of somatic change, you can be kind to the parts of you and the strategies that have gotten you where you are. Consider expressing gratitude to them and reassuring them you will call on them if needed.

As you age, this trusted body relationship becomes more and more valuable because it involves learning to prioritize long-term self-care over short-term gain. Remember that your body is your only friend who is there from your first breath until your last. It is an underutilized resource you have access to, for free, all the time. Want to know if someone's telling the truth? Do a gut check. Want to know what your next career move should be? Learn how to drop in and listen to the unequivocal truth your body offers. Your body doesn't speak in words. It speaks in feelings and sensation. Learning how to interpret this language is your new task.