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The Big Tiny: A Built-It-Myself Memoir

By Dee Williams



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Part how-to, part personal memoir, *The Big Tiny* is an utterly seductive meditation on the benefits of slowing down, scaling back, and appreciating the truly important things in life.

More than ten years ago, a near-death experience abruptly reminded sustainability advocate and pioneer Dee Williams that life is short. So, she sold her sprawling home and built an eighty-four-square-foot house—on her own, from the ground up. Today, Williams can list everything she owns on one sheet of paper, her monthly housekeeping bills amount to about eight dollars, and it takes her about ten minutes to clean the entire house. Adapting a new lifestyle left her with the ultimate luxury—more time to spend with friends and family—and gave her the freedom to head out for adventure at a moment's notice, or watch the clouds and sunset while drinking a beer on her (yes, tiny) front porch.



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The Big Tiny: A Built-It-Myself Memoir By Dee Williams Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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Even those who are contemplating downsizing may not be familiar with the DIY tiny-urban-house movement Williams describes. Imagine a floor space smaller than an average-size living-room rug with an external peak elevation of less than 10 feet and an open-space “ceiling” height of less than seven feet. Now picture a sleeping loft above the 84 square feet below. That’s it. The entire house. Williams explains that she was driven by a need to build a home and to be at home “in the world and in my body” after awakening in a hospital following a cardiac incident that caused her to reevaluate and change her life. “Feeling like a woman learning to swim,” Williams recounts studying DIY manuals as bedtime reading, and learning, hands-on, the finer points of using the correct tools to build a floor frame and much more as she undertakes securing prefabricated walls to the trailer-skeleton. She calls on friends for help with hoisting walls. Here Williams has built an engaging and inspiring how-to/memoir that goes beyond the DIY perspective. --Whitney Scott

Review

“Visitors to [Dee Williams’] property may be forgiven for thinking someone had taken up residence in a beautifully built pine-and-cedar toolshed out back....[an] affecting memoir...she writes in *The Big Tiny* of finding a centeredness and peace in her little house, of being less fearful, more alive. Some of the best passages are when she describes the sensory experience of being inside: smelling raw cedar and knotty pine; listening to the weather.”

—Steven Kurutz, *The New York Times*

“[N]o one makes the idea of living in a home the size of an area rug more appealing than Dee Williams...Williams’ inspiring memoir will resonate with anyone on a quest to downsize, de-stress, let go or feel at home...an endearing, funny writer...[*The Big Tiny*] is a book as intimate and draw-you-in-close as Williams’ little abode. She reveals her fear and fearlessness, allowing readers to feel like visitors across her tiny table, knees touching, her dog by your side.”

—Janet Eastman, *The Oregonian*

“[A] delightful encounter with the Tina Fey of the sustainability world, an empowered woman unafraid to admit she accidentally glued her hair to her house, as well as an incisive thinker on contemporary experience....a hilarious and poignant memoir...Williams does more than share the travails of building, moving into and living in her bitty abode. She writes a down-to-earth manifesto for living life with intention and for geeking out, diving in, caring too deeply and trying too hard in general.”

—Mary Louise Schumacher, *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

“In *The Big Tiny*, Dee Williams creates a portrait of humanity through her own compelling experience. That she has written about home and life with such humor and vulnerability, and in her own unique vernacular, makes her story all the more universal.”—Jay Shafer, author of *The Small House Book*

“Williams has built an engaging and inspiring how-to/memoir that goes beyond the DIY perspective.”

—*Booklist*

“*The Big Tiny* is irresistible. Dee Williams is as much fun on the page as she is in person. Comic, silly, and soulful, she takes us on her journey to simplify her life and along the way tunes in to our own inner desire to pare down to our nearly naked selves.”—Jim Lynch, author of *The Highest Tide* and *Truth Like the Sun*

*“The Big Tiny is a beautifully written narrative, one that goes beyond happiness and living simply. The power of Dee’s words will touch your heart, make you laugh, cry, and change your life.”—Tammy Strobel, author of *You Can Buy Happiness (and It’s Cheap)**

“The Big Tiny is comedic, eloquent, and damn informative all at the same time. If Dee Williams’ story hasn’t inspired you to reevaluate your life already, this book just may be the swift kick in the pants you need—the final awakening blow all rolled into one biblio-burrito of bad-assness.”—Derek “Deek” Diedricksen, HGTV host and honcho of Relaxshacks.com

*“Dee Williams aims for happiness 85 percent of the time, but I think you’ll be 100 percent happy with the wisdom she shares in this beautiful book.”—Chris Guillebeau, author of *The \$100 Startup**

About the Author

Dee Williams is a teacher and sustainability advocate. She is the co-owner of Portland Alternative Dwellings (www.padtinyhouses.com), where she leads workshops focused on tiny houses, green building, and community design. Her story has been featured on *Good Morning America* and *NBC Nightly News*, and on NPR, PBS, MSNBC, CNN, and CBC. She has also been profiled or featured in hundreds of online blogs and articles, and in print media including *Time*, *The New York Times*, and *Der Spiegel*. Williams lives in Olympia, Washington, with an overly ambitious Australian shepherd, in the shadow of the house of dear friends.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mark Maney:

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Irene Hoyt:

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