

# Take What You Need



Soft Words for Hard Days

Aundi  
Kolber

MA, LPC, author of *Try Softer*



TO:

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WITH HOPE:

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# Take What You Need

Soft Words for Hard Days

# Aundi Kolber



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# Introduction



## A Note as We Begin

**READER, I AM DELIGHTED YOU'RE HERE.** I pray that the pages ahead will serve as a soft spot to land and perhaps even a place to gather courage for the hard, beautiful work of being human.

Maybe you wonder what I mean by *take what you need*. As someone who navigated a traumatic childhood by becoming hyperattuned to what others wanted from me, I once feared making a decision that would displease someone else. This was certainly not the only way I adapted to the trauma I experienced, but I often depended on this strategy to protect me. I wanted to keep the peace at all costs, so instead of *taking what I needed*, I took what I perceived others thought was *okay* for me to need.

"Do you need help?" "Do you want to stay or go?" "Which restaurant sounds best?" Simple questions like these would fill me with anxiety and then a sinking

feeling as I set aside my own preferences in favor of what I thought I *must* say. I unconsciously transferred the terror I felt toward my father to almost everyone else, following the template he'd given me about having needs and a voice. I learned to bypass my body, mind, and spirit very early as a strategy to survive. The shame I carried for even having needs was profound.

In my work as both a therapist and trauma survivor, I've learned how incredibly common it is for us to internalize the belief that we don't have a choice or voice in our own experience. These misperceptions frequently arise in the aftermath of actually having bits of agency ripped away. This is often the cost of unresolved trauma: that even after the event ends, our bodies still carry the imprint of the pain like a thousand splinters never removed.

It's not only trauma survivors who silence their inner voice. All of us trying to survive in a world filled with pain and destruction sometimes do so as well. How often do we disconnect from our internal compass—the part of us that knows if we're thirsty, hungry, sad, or alone—just to navigate all that comes our way?

Yet I have found that it's possible to reclaim connection to our God-given bodies and needs; in fact, it's foundational to healing and repair. It's more than okay to receive what we need so that we may participate with God in tending the wounds underneath.

I now recognize how essential it is to learn to tune in to the still, small voice inside of us that supports us in discernment. This is where we listen for *God with us*. This is what helps us know how to love our neighbors with integrity and authenticity. And this is where we can attend to the embedded wisdom placed within us.

In my clients, my readers, my loved ones, and myself, I have witnessed this hope-giving truth: As we return agency, affirm dignity, and honor our ability to listen to our God-given needs, we tap into the softness and strength of healing. We create space for repair.

I've come to think of the work I do as both a therapist and author as a sort of hospitality—a way in which I can offer nourishment where there may be fear, pain, loss, or trauma. Many of us are starved for hope, care, attunement, and compassion. Many of us are hungry, but for more than just food. Through the years, I have witnessed and experienced this feeling of lack; I know how it aches to be in need in body, mind, or spirit. So what I can offer is what has been given to me in my own healing. Our God promises to set a table with good things for us (see Psalm 23:5-6), and my desire is to follow His example. I want others to know that not only can we partake of all the sustenance the Lord provides, but we can do so in the way and at the pace that will actually support us. I invite *you*, dear reader, to take what *you* need in the pages ahead.

When the day is long. When you are afraid. When you don't know what to say to someone you love. When you feel alone. When you're questioning everything. When you wonder if God is with you. When the bottom falls out. When you don't know what's next. When you do something courageous. When you don't know how to have hope. When you need to know you can try softer. When you're learning to show up for yourself.

Reader, may these love notes invite you to truly listen to your body, mind, and soul. I hope you will honor your pace, engage what's helpful . . . and take what you need, in the way that you need.

With deep hope,

*Aundi*



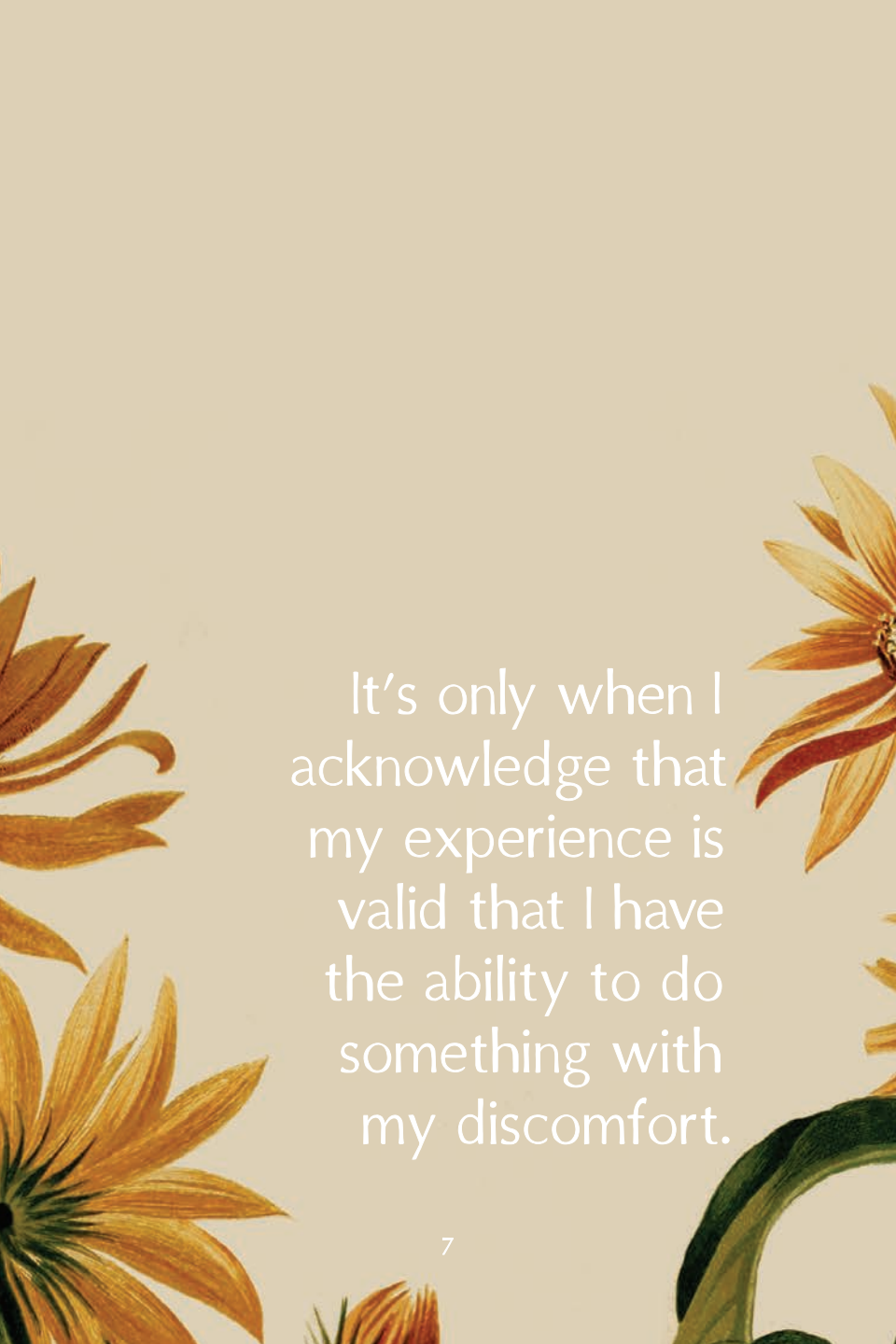
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Take What You Need When . . .  
Exhaustion Looms Large

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Perhaps you, too, know what it is like to feel overextended, overburdened, and overwrought, desperately clinging to the idea that if you just push hard enough, if you just try a little harder, you'll be able to regain control, soothe your anxious mind, and achieve some measure of success.

Our world overvalues productivity and others' opinions, so we learn to ignore the messages our bodies are giving us.




It's only when I  
acknowledge that  
my experience is  
valid that I have  
the ability to do  
something with  
my discomfort.


I believe  
God's heart  
for us is  
outrageously  
gentle.



You don't have to dismiss your pain here. You don't need to shrink it down or pretend living through it wasn't hard. You don't have to act like the shaming voices aren't still playing in your head, or like you're not still beating yourself up, or like the ways your needs were overlooked don't cut you daily. I'm not asking you to find the silver lining in your "hard." We know God is with us through it all, but that doesn't mean life hasn't cracked you open. It doesn't mean you haven't cried thousands of tears or spoken to yourself in ways you would never speak to another.



The wounds you have experienced are valid. Maybe no one has ever said that to you, so I hope you'll receive this now: What's happened in your life matters.



Psalm 56:8 says, “You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book” (NLT). God is invested in the entire arc of our humanity.



When we deny  
the reality of our  
experiences,  
we don't become  
more of who God  
designed us to be,  
but less.



We can  
learn to lean in  
with compassion  
for the wounds  
we hold.

Dear one, I'm sorry you've experienced events that required you to survive rather than live. I'm sorry you've often felt alone and unseen. I'm sorry you've had to be so strong. And I'm sorry that you've never felt safe to be gentle with the parts of yourself that have needed tenderness so badly.




God's posture  
toward any  
fragmented, hurting  
parts of yourself is  
one of compassion.



May you  
embrace this  
good news.





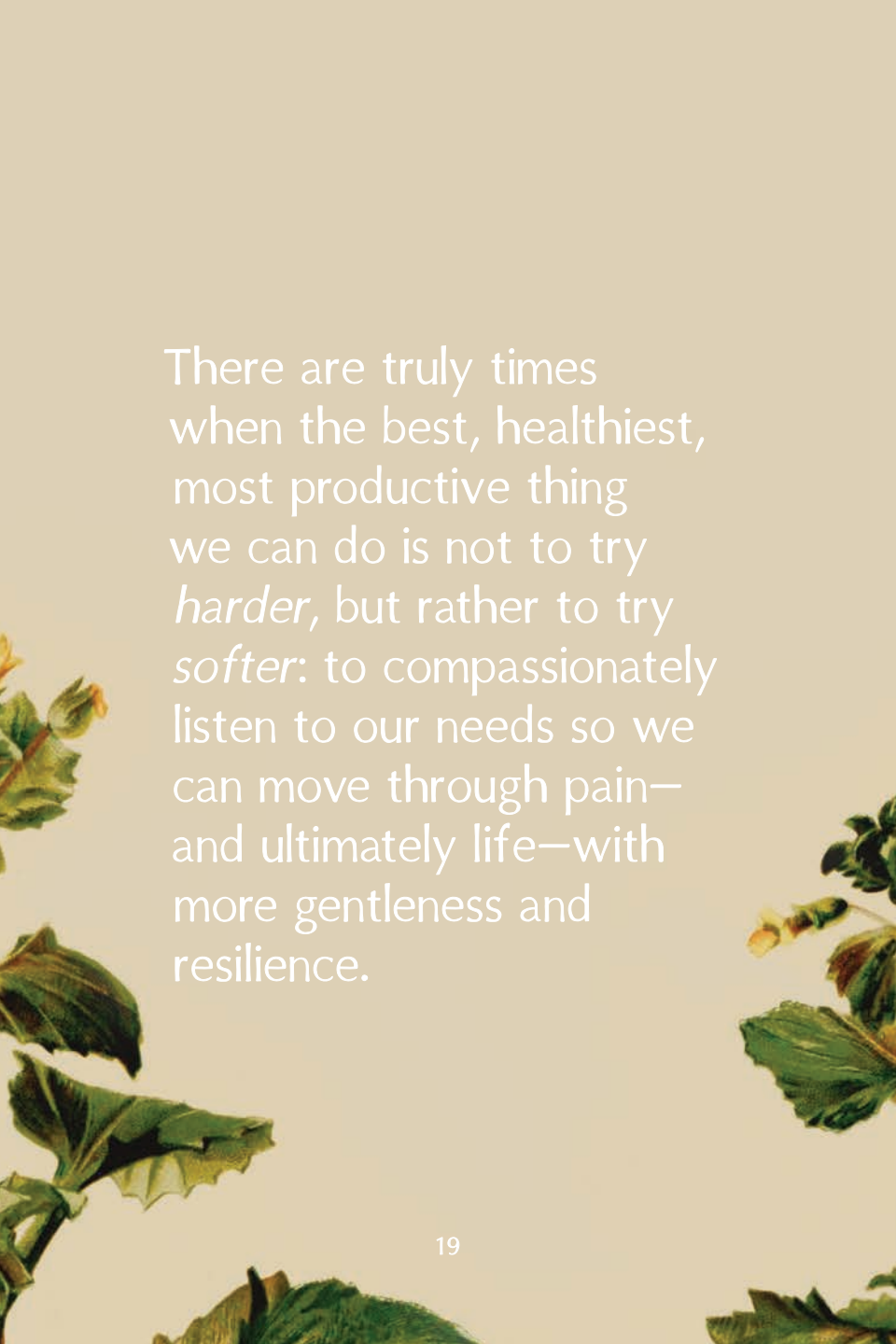


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Take What You Need When . . .  
You're Weary of White-Knuckling

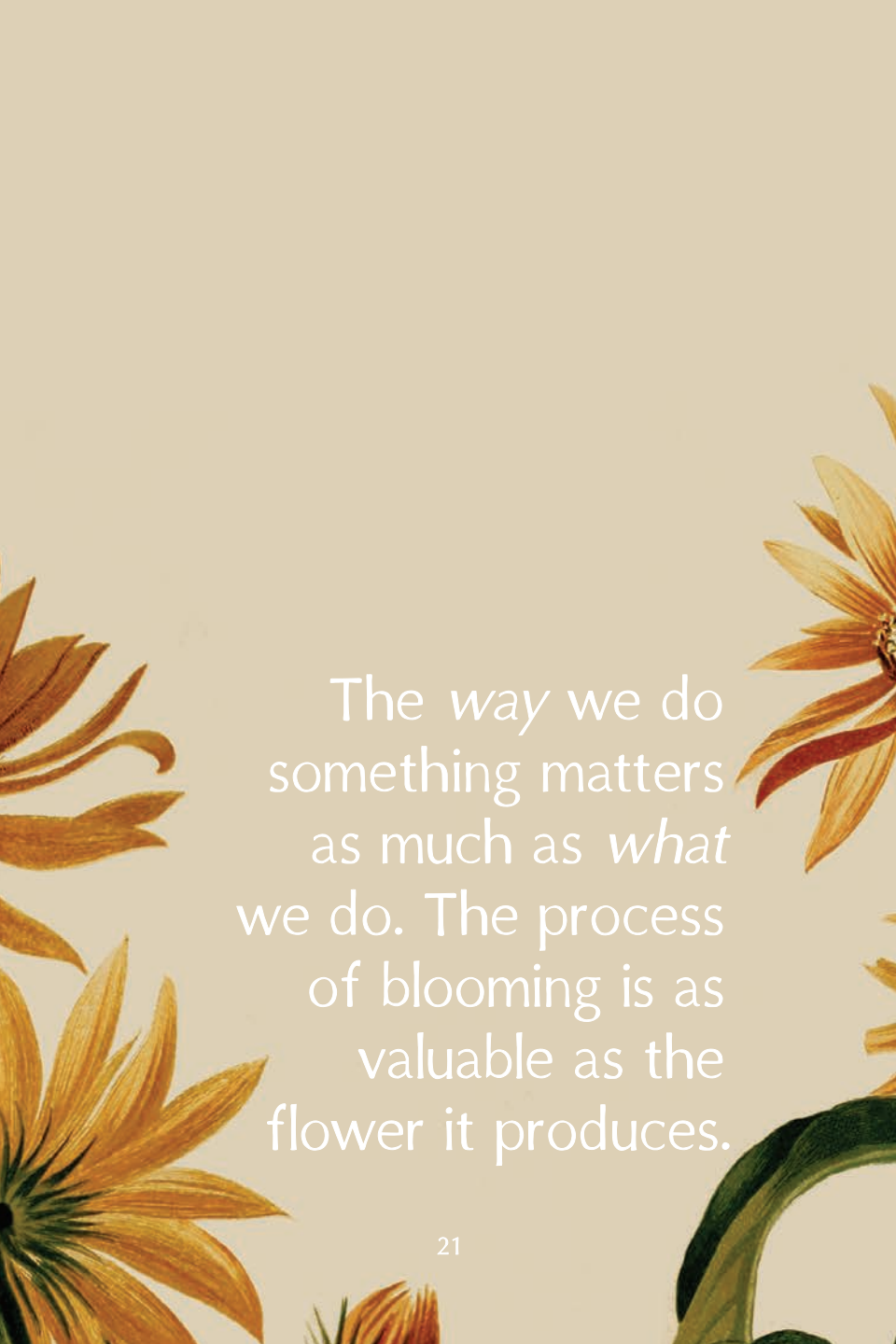
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We've learned to white-knuckle our way through life to armor up against pain and difficulty; we believe minimizing our wounds is the only way we'll be loved. We try to appear successful, productive, or simply okay on the outside, even when we're not okay on the inside.



There are truly times  
when the best, healthiest,  
most productive thing  
we can do is not to try  
*harder*, but rather to try  
*softer*: to compassionately  
listen to our needs so we  
can move through pain—  
and ultimately life—with  
more gentleness and  
resilience.

Learning to try softer won't automatically erase the pain of shame, anxiety, or trauma. It won't make people love you differently. It will not take away the wounds already inflicted. It won't give you a different childhood. But it just might change *how* you go through pain.



The way we do  
something matters  
as much as *what*  
we do. The process  
of blooming is as  
valuable as the  
flower it produces.


What would  
happen if  
you allowed yourself




to release  
your grip on  
this situation?



Dear one, we are  
invited to cease  
white-knuckling,  
because though  
it once kept us  
physically or  
emotionally safe,  
a new and gentler  
way is open to us.



Disappointing people *is* hard. And here's the thing: You will likely mess up as you practice setting limits. You will say yes when you mean no. You may take on too much at times. Perfection is not the point. It's about reestablishing your ability to honor your own voice, limits, and experience.



What if emotional health doesn't *always* look like being "the strong one"? What if sometimes it means stepping back and letting ourselves receive or grieve or feel? What if it's not just facing hard things—though that matters—but *also* knowing our limits? What if it's loving others, but *also letting* ourselves be loved?



We cannot “logic”  
ourselves into safety  
or out of trauma.



We are  
made to live  
*from* Love and  
not for it.

Only love can truly lead us home;  
only love can envision something  
different from the patterns that  
have kept us stuck.

