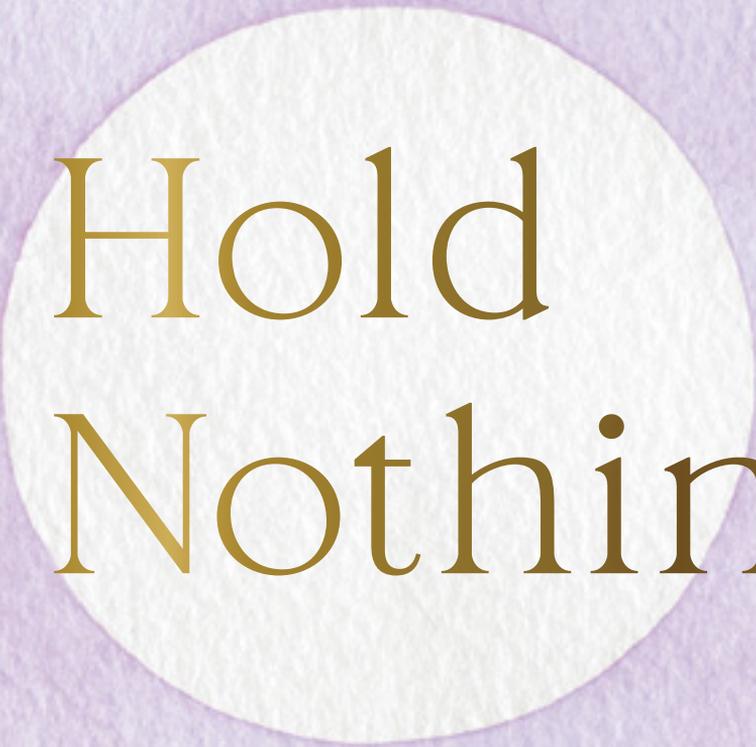


ELENA BROWER



Hold
Nothing

A COMPANION GUIDEBOOK

GUIDEBOOK

*this is a time to slow down
and let it all drop away*

1. Opening Into Presence.....	1
2. Empty of Insight.....	5
3. Witnessing the Self.....	9
4. Seeing from Within.....	13
5. Empathy	17
6. Dissolving Doubt.....	21
7. Flowers Are Sanctuaries.....	25

Hold Nothing
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1. Opening Into Presence

To open into presence is to shed what no longer fits, and settle into what is.

Rather than self-improvement, allow what needs to be released to fall away. Open into the presence beneath the layers you've accrued and trust it.

What are you currently holding as absolutely true . . . that might not be?

Pause. Breathe. Let the question resonate before responding, and trust the first thought.

Where in your life are you still trying to be *good*?

How does that striving shape your days, your relationships, your body?

PRACTICE

the soft bow

At the end of your journaling, pause.

Bring your palms together and bow to your own unfolding.

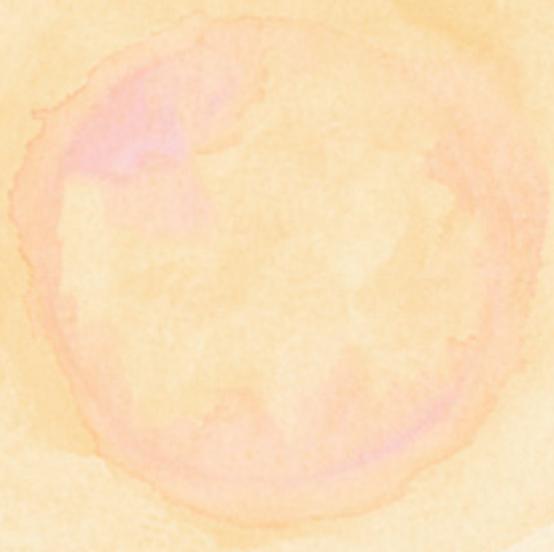
No need to rush into the next activity; acknowledge your effort with gentleness.

Shedding is subtle. You don't need to cast anything off abruptly, just notice:

What feels like performance?

What feels like truth?

Let noticing be your first act of release.



2. Empty of Insight

Seeing emptiness as creative potential, for serving without agenda, for the deep unlearning that precedes real connection. We bring this alive with humility, with more questions than answers.

The koan-like premise here: What if being *empty* is the practice? Emptiness is where we can listen, not know, and ask questions, with more acceptance.

Think of a moment when you entered a space, a conversation, or a relationship full of ideas or expectations.

Now imagine entering the same space completely empty—open. What might have changed?

Describe a time when you offered your presence—not your insight, nor a solution, just your *being*.

What unfolded that still holds meaning for you?

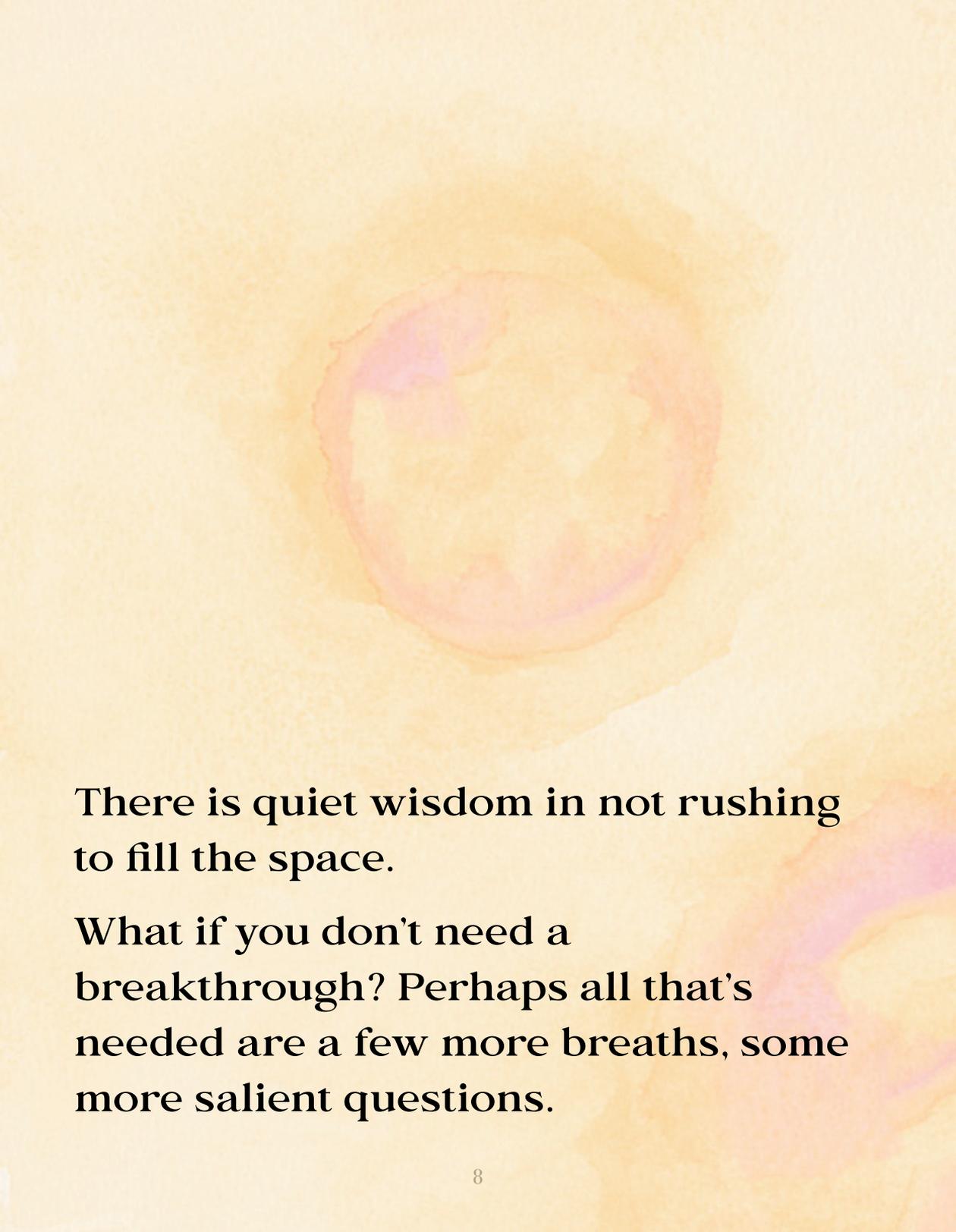
PRACTICE

empty the bowl

If you have a physical bowl or teacup nearby, place it beside you carefully and let it represent your empty, quiet mind.

Sit in the quiet of not-knowing.

Return to this anytime you feel the urge to fix, to solve, or explain yourself.

A watercolor-style background featuring a large, soft-edged circle in shades of pink and orange, centered in the upper half of the page. The colors bleed into the surrounding light beige background.

**There is quiet wisdom in not rushing
to fill the space.**

**What if you don't need a
breakthrough? Perhaps all that's
needed are a few more breaths, some
more salient questions.**



3. Witnessing the Self

During certain chapters and choices of this life, we find it difficult to face ourselves. These instances offer us rare chances to come closer to ourselves, and to start again with humility.

In this section, summon the slow courage to see yourself without needing to fix or flee.

This is the interplay between self-observation and releasing.

Practice invisibly, work intimately, be the fool with no voice.

Think of a time when your own behavior surprised or disappointed you.

What did that moment teach you about yourself?

What have you released since?

When do you feel most connected to yourself without needing to explain, post,
or prove anything?

Can you build a small ritual around that feeling?



PRACTICE

enter the silence

Set a timer for five minutes. No journal. No agenda.

Sit with your spine supported, hands resting.

Practice invisibly, work intimately, and bathe yourself in silence. Let the silence be your teacher.

When the timer ends, gently bow.

A watercolor illustration of a crescent moon in a soft, pastel sky. The moon is a pale yellowish-gold color, and the sky is a mix of light blue, purple, and pinkish tones, creating a dreamy, ethereal atmosphere.

To witness the self with kindness is a revolutionary act.

You don't need to solve your past; just be willing to come alongside yourself as you were, and begin again from now.

4. Seeing from Within

To see from within is to begin with tenderness. May this reminder serve: What you find beneath the patterns and the past is worthy of deep care.

The arc here is one of self-tending, of remembering your inner life.

What was your earliest safe place? Was it under a bed, in a book, in the woods,
in drawing, in silence?

Return there, in memory. What do you want to tell the version of yourself who
hid there?

Who has seen you truly—before you fully saw yourself?

Write their name. Write a sentence of thanks. Whisper it aloud.

PRACTICE

create a tiny altar

Find three small objects that make you feel safe, soothed, seen.

Arrange them somewhere quiet—by a bed, a desk, a windowsill.

This is your “seeing from within” altar.

Sit with it for a moment today. No need to explain it to anyone.

Coping mechanisms are typically brilliant, albeit misguided, adaptations.

With time, we can turn them into bridges toward the deeper safety of self-trust.

5. Empathy

Self-empathy is not weakness; it's a practice of accepting our reality and our humanity. It's how we learn to hold steady in the face of challenge.

The phrase “How human of me” is calling you back to efficient emotional self-stewardship. Empathy for yourself is not an indulgence; it invites integrity and a willingness to be with what is.

What are the phrases you tend to repeat when you're hard on yourself?

Rewrite one or two of them as a statement of empathy, beginning with: "*How human of me . . .*"

What do you usually do when you feel pain—emotional, relational, existential?

What might it feel like to stay, to breathe, to speak with kindness to yourself instead?

PRACTICE

self-empathy

Sit quietly, close your eyes.

Place your right hand over your heart, left hand over your belly.

As you inhale, say inwardly: “*How human of me . . .*” and as you exhale, name the feeling: “. . . *to feel overwhelmed.*” (Or sad, lonely, reactive, etc.)

Repeat for three breaths. No fixing or solving; just recognition.

Let the warmth of your hands remind you: you’re still here, still whole.

Empathy isn't the end of pain. It's how we learn to endure wisely. Offering ourselves empathy is how we practice feeling pain without abandoning ourselves.

To stay close to yourself with dignity when it hurts.

6. Dissolving Doubt

The gentle insistence of practice maps your path from vulnerability to a solid sense of self-trust.

Often a gatekeeper to something more true, doubt doesn't vanish by force. Doubt melts, slowly, in the warmth of your care and stillness. Doubt can point you toward the part of you that's ready to believe. Be sure to listen well, because the truth lands with subtlety.

Practice sitting in quiet when you can.

What practices soften the grip of your doubt? Name one practice to which you might return this week to release doubt.

What becomes possible when you practice trusting?

What has doubt stopped you from doing in the past?

What might become possible if you stopped believing that voice?

PRACTICE

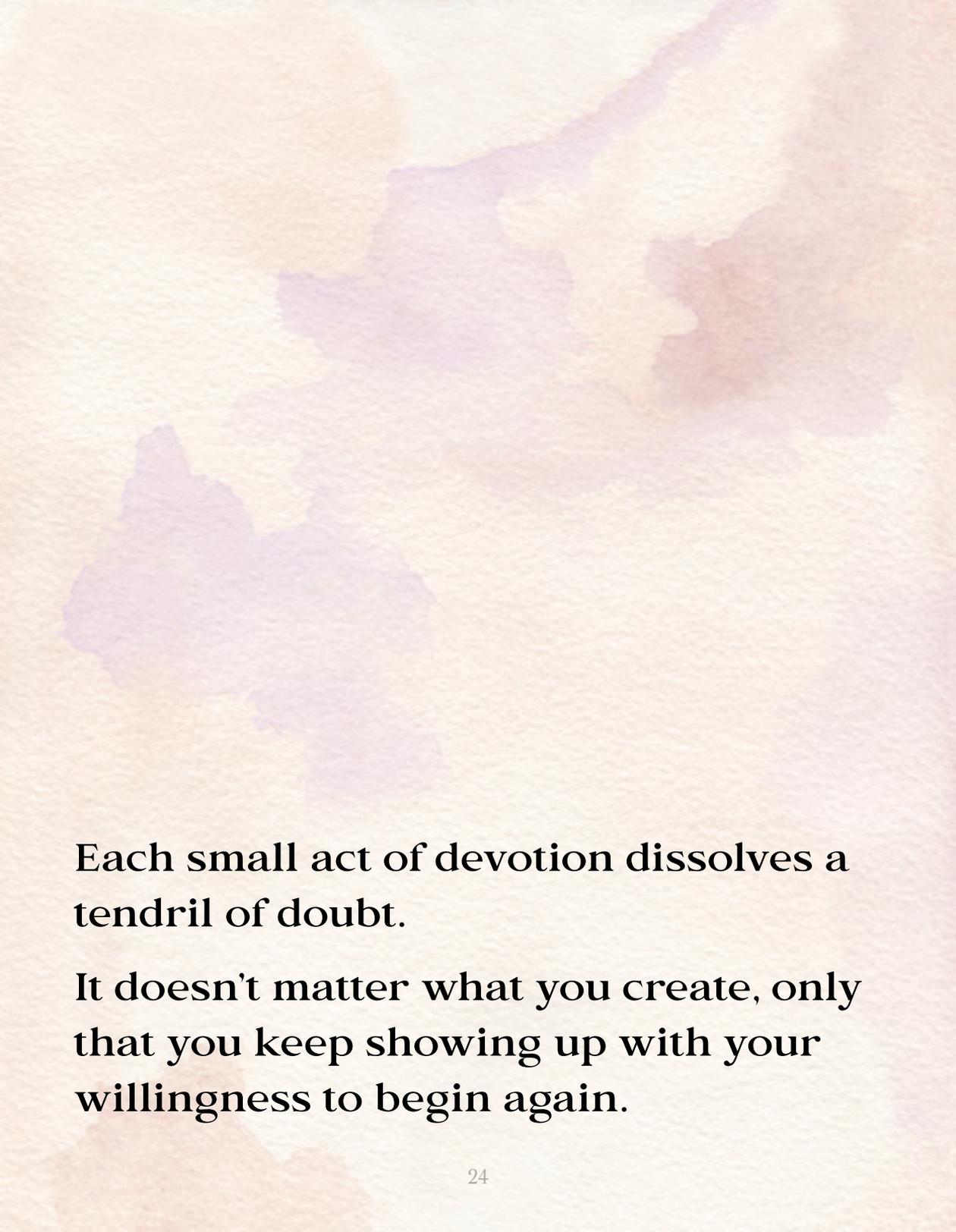
one mark of trust

Take a small piece of paper, roughly the size of a business card.

With pen, pencil, brush, or crayon, make a single mark: a shape, a line, a word, a swirl.

Let it be an emblem of your willingness to allow doubt to pass through you, so place it where you'll see it for one week.

Let it remind you of the trust you're building within yourself.



Each small act of devotion dissolves a
tendrill of doubt.

It doesn't matter what you create, only
that you keep showing up with your
willingness to begin again.

7. Flowers Are Sanctuaries

Attending to beauty as a practice, we allow the transient to become the teacher.

Highlighting solitude, impermanence, and embodied wonder, we are reminded that a flower doesn't ask or aim for meaning, it teaches by being, by falling open. By returning to the earth.

What would it be like to live your days fully, moment by moment, without needing to last forever?

What part of you is currently blooming, even if no one else can see it?

What part of you is gently returning to the soil?

What are the smallest sanctuaries in your daily life—spaces or moments where you feel briefly, purely yourself?

PRACTICE

one flower, one moment

Go outside or into a nearby shop and find a single flower, a fallen petal, or a leaf.

Bring this flower or leaf into your home. Sit quietly with it for one minute, perhaps placing it in a location in your home where you'll see it often.

Let it teach you without words. Receive from its evolution any message it holds for you.

When it fades, return it to the earth by placing it outdoors intentionally, and thank this flower:

Thank you for your brief, radiant life.

This one moment is all we have.

**This one flower of yourself, open,
quiet, just as you are.**