

DANIELL
KOEPEKE

DARING
TO TAKE UP
SPACE



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DANIELL KOEPKE

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The fact that you're struggling
doesn't make you a burden.
It doesn't make you unlovable or
undesirable or undeserving of care.
It doesn't make you too much
or too sensitive or too needy.
It makes you human.

Everyone struggles. Everyone has a difficult
time coping, and there are
days when we all fall apart.
During those times, we aren't always easy
to be around, and that's okay.
No one is easy to be around one hundred
percent of the time. Yes, you may
sometimes be unpleasant or difficult.

And yes, you may sometimes do or
say things that make the people
around you feel helpless or sad.
But those things aren't all of who
you are, and they don't discount
your worth as a human being.

The truth is that you can be struggling
and still be loved. You can be difficult
and still be cared for. You can be less
than perfect and still be deserving of
compassion and kindness.



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When you're still having a reaction to something upsetting that happened a long time ago, it means that you need to do more work processing that trauma and that you need more effective coping mechanisms.

When you feel anxious about something, it means you haven't yet acquired the experience and evidence necessary to show you that you can do the scary thing and be okay. It doesn't mean you'll never get that evidence or that you'll struggle forever—just that this is where you are right now.

You don't need to beat yourself up. And you don't have to feel ashamed. You just have to listen. Listen to what your body is telling you, and use that information to help you grow and get what you need and navigate the world in a way that feels best for you. You aren't failing and you aren't inadequate—you're just collecting information. Your information is allowed to look different than other people's information. And no matter what anyone else feels, your emotions are important and your experience is valid.

You don't have to be productive to be worth something.
Doing more doesn't make you better or smarter or more
valuable. And taking a break doesn't make you lazy.

It makes you human. No one can endlessly
work without needing time to decompress.
No one is always going and doing and creating.
Every person needs quiet moments and slow days.
Days when you don't have energy to do anything
more than just exist.
And you're allowed that. You're allowed to rest.
You're allowed to slow down and breathe.
To have days where you aren't working
toward some greater purpose or plan.

Resting is productive in its own right. You can't be successful
if you're running on empty.
And you can't give the best version
of yourself if you're constantly neglecting your self-care.
There's strength in being someone
who honors what they need to cope and survive.
Strength in honoring your seasons and giving yourself
permission to shed everything you're carrying
for a moment so that you can bloom at a later time.

You deserve to rest if you need it. You deserve to have days
reserved for doing nothing. Even if other people with your
same struggles did more. Even if you "could have" pushed
yourself a little harder. Even if you took a break yesterday.
Whatever you manage to do today is enough.
No matter what, you're enough.

There's nothing shameful about being sensitive.
It doesn't make you weak or inadequate or too much.
It just means you experience the world a little more
intensely. And that doesn't have to be a bad thing.

There's strength in being soft.
Strength in being raw and open and affected.
It might translate into more hurt and heartbreak,
but it also translates into deeper love and meaning
and relationships. It gives you greater insight into
who you are and what you need to feel whole.
It increases your capacity for kindness
and compassion and empathy.
It makes you intimately connected to
the things and people around you. It lets you notice
things other people miss and love in ways other people
often don't know how to share.
It's your light, and it's a gift. And you don't owe it
to anyone to hide that part of who you are.

You aren't a burden. Your feelings aren't wrong
and your reaction isn't too much.
You're exactly the way you're meant to be.
You're sensitive and still worthy.
You're emotional and still valid.
You hurt and you feel and you struggle, and you're still enough.

Everyone navigates the world differently.
Your way of feeling and experiencing is allowed to be
different. It doesn't matter if another person wouldn't be
upset over something that hurt you.
It doesn't matter if they can cope with a struggle that
debilitates you or if they can move on from something that
takes you a long time to process. Your sensitivity is valid.
It's human and normal. And giving yourself permission to
honor your experience is never anything but brave.

It's a lie to think that you don't deserve love if you aren't able to love yourself. You deserve it. You deserve companionship and care and relationships that feel good and spaces where you're cherished and valued. Even if you have days where you want to crawl out of your skin and disappear. Even if there are moments when you feel inadequate and unlovable. You don't have to be alone just because you're battling your own darkness.

Carrying that weight doesn't make you defective or too much or unworthy of love and belonging. It makes you human. It makes you someone who's internalized judgments that were never yours to carry. It makes you someone who's survived a lifetime of trauma and loss and pain. Someone resilient and inconceivably brave. Someone courageous enough to connect, despite the lies in your head. And there's no shame in that.

So please, don't withdraw or close yourself off. Self-hatred doesn't get unlearned through isolation. It's unlearned through love. Through connection and care. Through having relationships and gathering evidence that you can be imperfect and struggling and still be valued. That you can hurt and be at war with your head and still be wanted. I know it's hard to trust, but you belong. And no matter how much darkness you're carrying, you deserve to love and be loved.

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Poetry from
the author behind the
INTERNAL ACCEPTANCE
MOVEMENT,
I. A.M.

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It's not just okay to make self-care a priority—it's imperative.
You're allowed to put your needs first.
You're allowed to say no to people.
You're allowed to turn down plans and take longer
and go more slowly.
You're allowed to give yourself the majority
of your time and energy.
That isn't selfish and it doesn't make you a bad person.
It's self-care, and it's survival.
You don't owe it to anyone to sacrifice
what you need to cope and survive.
You can't pour from an empty cup.
You can't effectively take care of other people
if you aren't first taking care of yourself
and your own needs.
Your self-care is fundamental to being a
source of care and support for others.
Shrinking and ignoring
your needs helps no one.

Trust that it's okay to put your needs first.
You deserve to take care of yourself.
You deserve to have the time and space
and energy to get your needs met.
You deserve to exist under conditions that
feel comfortable and allow your
best self to come through.

Daring To Take Up Space

by Daniell Koepke

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DANIELL KOEPKE is a writer, clinical psychology doctoral student, and therapist in training. She is also the founder of a space called the Internal Acceptance Movement (I. A.M.), which seeks to promote mental health and foster self-acceptance. Her writing is guided by the concept of unapologetic vulnerability—giving people permission to honor their feelings as they come and to take up space in the world as their authentic selves. She is a firm believer in the idea that vulnerability can be a superpower that connects us, eradicates shame, and helps us heal. For more information about Daniell and weekly quotes, you can find her on social media.

[instagram.com/unapologetically.humann](https://www.instagram.com/unapologetically.humann)

Stop minimizing and discounting your feelings.
You have every right to feel the way you do.
Your feelings may not always be logical, but
they're always valid. Because if you feel something,
then you feel it, and it's real and true for you.
It's not something you can ignore or wish away.
It's there, gnawing at you, tugging at your core,
and in order to find peace, you have to give yourself
permission to feel whatever you feel.
You have to let go of what you've been told you
"should" or "shouldn't" feel, because there is no
"should" when it comes to feelings.
You feel what you feel, and it's okay.
Your feelings can't be wrong because they're yours.
Not your partner's. Not your friends'.
Not your family's or your peers' or your coworkers'
or random strangers' you meet in passing.
They're yours. And you don't need anyone's
permission or approval to feel them.
Your feelings are important and they matter.
You matter—and it's more than okay to feel
what you feel. Don't let anyone, including yourself,
convince you otherwise.

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That you can hurt and be at war with your head and still be wanted. I know it's hard to trust, but you belong.

And no matter how much darkness you're carrying, you deserve to love and be loved.

You're not where you want to be. And it's okay. Everyone starts somewhere. This is where you are right now. It doesn't mean you'll be here forever. It doesn't mean you're stuck. It just means this is where you stand today. I know this journey feels so overwhelming. I know it feels impossibly long and difficult and painful. And I know there are days when it feels easier to give up. But the truth is that most things worth having don't come easy. Change takes time. Getting to a better place takes time. You aren't a failure because it's taking you so long or because you're struggling just to start. You aren't weak or incapable. You're human. This work is hard. It's uncomfortable and mentally and physically taxing and terrifying—and it makes sense that it would take you time. It makes sense that this is a struggle.

You don't have to solve your whole life overnight. And you don't have to feel ashamed for being where you are. All you have to focus on is one small thing you can do today to get closer to where you want to be. Slowly and lightly, one step at a time. You can get there. Every effort you make adds up over time. And you're capable of doing that work. So breathe and trust that it's okay to be here today. Trust that something better is coming. Trust that you have what it takes to get there.



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