

The Pressure to Be Coping

How expectations can add another layer to grief

Understanding what may be happening

People around you may gradually return to ordinary life while your experience remains changed. Questions such as 'Are you feeling better now?' can create pressure even when they are kindly meant.

You may also place pressure on yourself to be strong, return to work, support the family, answer messages or stop talking about the loss.

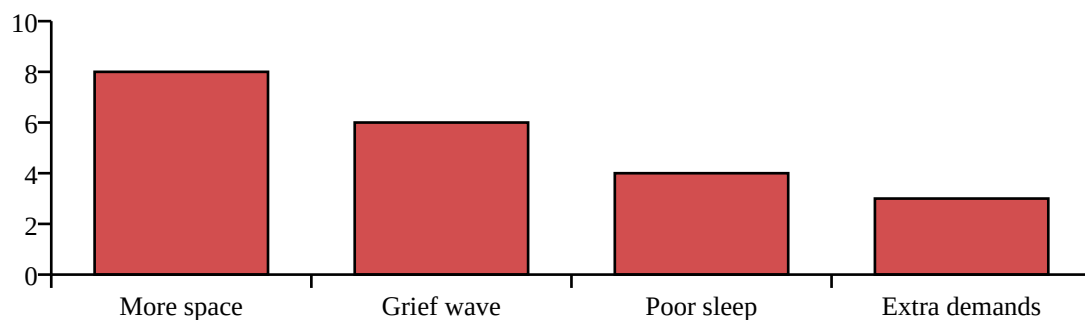
Performing 'okay' can use substantial energy. Coaching can help you identify where you are masking difficulty and where a simple boundary could protect capacity.

Common experiences

- Saying yes when you want to say no
- Trying not to upset other people with your grief
- Returning to responsibilities too quickly
- Feeling guilty for still struggling
- Avoiding mentioning the person or loss
- Comparing yourself with how others appear to cope

A useful way to think about capacity

Illustrative coaching scale - not measured clinical data



This graph is an illustrative coaching tool rather than a clinical measurement. It shows how available capacity can reduce when several demands overlap. The purpose is to help you plan from the capacity you actually have, not the capacity you think you should have.

What can make this harder

Can add pressure	May be more supportive
• Using 'should' as the main measure of progress • Explaining yourself excessively • Taking responsibility for everyone else's comfort • Agreeing to plans before checking your own capacity	• Replace 'I should' with 'What do I need?' • Use short boundary phrases • Choose safe people with whom you do not need to perform • Delay responses when necessary • Protect recovery time after social contact • Let different days require different things

A worked coaching example

A boundary can be simple: 'I'd like to come, but I may leave early' or 'I don't have the capacity to talk about that today.' You do not need a long justification.

Try the STOP - SORT - SUPPORT method

STOP	SORT	SUPPORT
Pause long enough to notice what is actually happening rather than immediately pushing through.	Separate what needs action now, what can wait and what is an emotion rather than a task.	Choose one form of support: rest, a reminder, company, practical help, a professional conversation or a boundary.

Reflection & coaching questions

Use these gently. You do not need to answer them all. One useful answer is enough for a session or a difficult day.

- Whose expectations am I carrying?
- Where am I pretending to be more okay than I feel?
- What am I saying yes to through guilt?
- Which boundary would protect energy this week?
- Who allows me to be honest?

My personal check-in

What I notice	What I need	My smallest next step

A one-week experiment

Choose one adjustment from this guide and try it for seven days. Keep the experiment deliberately small. At the end of the week, ask: Did this reduce pressure? Did it make something easier to begin? Did it protect energy? If it did not help, that is useful information too - choose a different adjustment rather than treating it as failure.

Books & further resources

Books can offer language, companionship and different ways of understanding grief. You do not need to read them from beginning to end. A chapter or a few pages may be enough.

- **It's OK That You're Not OK** - Megan Devine
- **Grief Works** - Julia Samuel
- **The Wild Edge of Sorrow** - Francis Weller

Further support

Cruse Bereavement Support offers bereavement information and support. **NHS** guidance includes information on grief after bereavement and other significant losses. **Samaritans** provides confidential emotional support on 116 123, day or night.

When extra support may be useful

Consider speaking with a GP, therapist, bereavement service or another appropriate professional if grief is having a persistent or severe effect on daily life, if anxiety or low mood is becoming difficult to manage, if physical symptoms concern you, or if you feel unable to stay safe. In an immediate emergency, seek urgent help.

A final coaching thought

The aim is not to make grief small. It is to make the demands around grief more manageable, so you have a little more room to live alongside what has happened.