

I'm Holding It All In

A neurodivergent space for everything you have been swallowing, hiding or carrying.

Sometimes the reaction never gets to come out. You keep functioning, stay polite, say you are fine, hold back tears, suppress anger, hide sensory distress, stop yourself stimming or swallow the words you desperately want to say. Holding it in may have helped you get through situations - but it can carry a cost.

You do not have to make it tidy

This is somewhere for the uncensored version. You can write, type, scribble, repeat yourself or leave words unfinished.

I keep swallowing...

I keep pretending...

What nobody sees

THIS IS EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN HOLDING IN

No editing. No protecting everyone else. Put it somewhere outside your body.

LET IT OUT HERE

Anger. Tears. Frustration. Sensory pain. Resentment. Fear. Exhaustion. Things you wish you had said. Things you are tired of explaining. Things that feel unfair. It all belongs here.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for the user to write their thoughts and feelings.

What Am I Afraid Will Happen If It Shows?

Holding feelings in often develops for a reason.

IF I SHOW ANGER

Will I be judged, rejected, punished, called difficult, misunderstood, seen as aggressive or told I am overreacting?

IF I CRY OR SHOW DISTRESS

Will people panic, ask too many questions, minimise it, make it about them, touch me or expect an explanation?

IF I SAY WHAT I REALLY NEED

Am I worried about disappointing someone, causing conflict, losing support, being seen as demanding or not being believed?

Who Am I Trying to Protect?

Sometimes we carry the emotional comfort of everyone in the room.

You may be protecting another person's feelings, trying to keep peace, avoiding conflict, preventing worry, meeting expectations or protecting yourself from the consequences of being fully honest. Notice the pattern without blaming yourself for it.

The person / people I am protecting

What I think I am protecting them from

What it costs ME to keep doing this

What Is Holding It In Doing to My Body?

The body can carry what has not had another place to go.

Possible signs include jaw tension, headaches, nausea, chest pressure, shallow breathing, pain, fatigue, shaking, restlessness, tears that arrive later, shutdown, irritability, sleep disruption, feeling numb, needing to isolate or suddenly reaching a point where everything spills out.

While I am holding it in...

When I finally reach my limit...

Afterwards, I tend to need...

What Do I Want to Scream, Say or Cry About?

Different feelings can need different forms of expression.

I WANT TO SCREAM...

The furious, frustrated or completely fed-up version.

I WANT TO SAY...

The words I keep editing, softening, rehearsing or never saying.

I WANT TO CRY ABOUT...

The hurt, exhaustion, grief, loneliness, disappointment or sheer effort underneath.

What Am I Allowed to Stop Carrying?

Not every feeling, task or responsibility belongs entirely to you.

Consider emotional responsibility as well as practical responsibility. You can care about people without carrying every reaction, solving every problem or making yourself smaller so everyone else stays comfortable.

Something that is NOT mine to carry

Something I want to put down

Something I need support with

Finding Somewhere Safe to Be Real

Expression does not have to mean losing control or telling everybody everything.

A safer outlet might be writing, drawing, movement, crying privately, talking to one trusted person, therapy, voice notes you do not send, sensory regulation, music, tearing scrap paper, saying one honest sentence or asking for space. Choose expression that is safe for you and others.

A place where I can let some of it out

A person I may be able to be more real with

A safe way I can express this today

You Don't Have to Swallow Everything

Expression, boundaries and support can create somewhere for the pressure to go.

A message from Maggie

If you have spent years holding everything in, letting even a little of it show can feel frightening. You may have learned that your feelings were too much, your sensory needs were inconvenient, your anger was unacceptable or other people's comfort had to come first. You do not have to release everything at once. Start by noticing what you are carrying and what it is doing to you. Find safe ways to give your feelings somewhere to exist. Your emotions do not need to disappear to make other people comfortable. They need space, understanding, boundaries and, sometimes, another person who can sit alongside them without asking you to make them smaller.

What I want to stop holding alone

Words I could use

Example: 'I have been holding a lot in. I don't need you to fix it, but I do need space to be honest.'

Further reading

- Price, D. (2022). Unmasking Autism.
- Kapp, S. K. (ed.) (2020). Autistic Community and the Neurodiversity Movement.
- National Autistic Society - masking, sensory differences, meltdowns and shutdowns.
- Raymaker, D. M. et al. (2020). Autistic burnout and exhaustion of internal resources.

If feelings become unsafe or you are unable to keep yourself or someone else safe, seek appropriate urgent support.