

Everyone Thinks I Should Be Coping

When the world expects you to look okay before you feel okay, grief can become something you perform as well as something you carry.

People may stop asking, expect you back at work, praise you for being strong, change the subject when you mention the person or loss, or assume that time should have made things easier. Their expectations do not set the timetable for your grief. Coping can mean getting through the hour, cancelling something, crying in the car, asking for help or doing only what is essential.

The pressure I feel to look or act okay

What people seem to expect from me now

What is actually true for me underneath

I NEED TO SCREAM — STOP TELLING ME I SHOULD BE OKAY

This is the page where you do not have to reassure anybody, minimise the loss or sound as though you are “doing well.”

Write the things you edit out in conversation. The anger, exhaustion, resentment, sadness and pressure are allowed on this page.

I am sick of hearing...

What nobody seems to understand is...

I do NOT need to be told...

What I really want to scream is...

The Things People Say

Some comments are meant kindly and still hurt. You are allowed to notice their impact without deciding the other person is bad.

"You're so strong." "At least..." "Everything happens for a reason." "They would want you to be happy." "You need to keep busy." "Are you still struggling?" Sometimes a sentence lands like a demand to make your grief smaller for somebody else's comfort.

Words or comments that have stayed with me

What those words made me feel or do

What I wish had been said instead

Masking Grief

Looking functional and feeling okay are not the same thing.

You may smile, work, answer messages, care for other people or say "I'm fine" because explaining feels too difficult. Masking can protect privacy and help you get through necessary situations, but doing it constantly can be exhausting. You get to choose where you are honest, where you are private and where you need less performance.

Where I feel I have to perform being okay

What it costs me afterwards

One place or person where I could take the mask down a little

Work, Responsibilities and Returning to “Normal”

Grief can affect concentration, memory, decision-making, energy, patience and confidence. A familiar role can suddenly require much more effort.

Returning to work or responsibilities does not mean grief has ended. Consider what is essential, what could be adjusted and what support would make the load more manageable. Small practical changes can matter: clearer priorities, fewer non-essential demands, breaks, written information, flexible expectations or somebody else taking one task.

The responsibilities that feel hardest right now

What could be reduced, delayed, shared or adjusted

What I would like to ask for

When I Am Expected to Support Everyone Else

You can care about other people's grief without becoming responsible for holding everybody together.

Families and friendship groups often fall into roles: the organiser, the practical one, the listener, the person who stays calm. If you are usually the strong one, others may forget that you are grieving too. Your needs do not disappear because somebody else is hurting.

The role I seem to have been given

What I am carrying for other people

What I need permission to put down

Boundaries That Protect My Grief

A boundary is not a punishment. It can be a way of protecting limited emotional energy.

You might need to decline invitations, leave early, stop answering questions, ask people not to offer advice, change a family tradition, take time alone or ask someone to check in rather than waiting for you to reach out. Boundaries can change from day to day.

Something I am allowed to say NO to

A sentence I could use: "I appreciate you asking, but right now I need..."

A boundary I need people to respect

What Genuine Support Looks Like for Me

Support is personal. What comforts one person may overwhelm another.

Perhaps you need someone to listen without fixing, practical help, company without conversation, permission to talk about the person who died, a lift, food left at the door, help with paperwork, fewer messages, more messages, or somebody willing to sit beside the difficult feelings.

What helps me feel supported rather than managed

What tends to make things harder

The person / people I might be able to tell what I need

My Grief Does Not Need to Be Visible to Be Real

There is no reliable way to measure grief by looking at somebody from the outside.

Laughing does not cancel grief. Having a good day does not mean you are “over it.” Going back to work does not mean the loss matters less. Crying months or years later does not mean you have gone backwards. Grief can live alongside ordinary life, pleasure, frustration, love, tiredness and moments when you are not consciously thinking about the loss.

What I want to stop measuring myself against

Evidence that I am allowed to grieve in my own way

What “coping” could realistically mean for me today

You Do Not Have to Perform Recovery

Your grief is not a public progress report.

A message from Maggie

Other people may want reassurance that you are okay because they care, because they feel helpless, or because grief makes them uncomfortable. But you do not have to make your experience smaller to make it easier for somebody else to witness. There is no correct point at which you should stop mentioning the loss, stop having difficult days or return to the person you were before. You are allowed to be capable and grieving, laughing and grieving, working and grieving, exhausted and grieving. Let your version of coping be honest enough to include what you actually need.

What I need to hear when I feel pressured to be okay

One expectation I can release today

Further reading and support: Megan Devine — It's OK That You're Not OK (2017). Julia Samuel — Grief Works (2017). Lois Tonkin — Growing Around Grief model. Cruse Bereavement Support provides information and bereavement support.

If grief feels unmanageable or you are worried about your safety, seek appropriate professional or urgent support.