

when everyone asks about your parents

“how are your mum and dad?” “how are the kids coping?” after a sibling dies, the questions so often arc straight past you to the others in your family, and you find yourself reporting on everyone’s grief but your own. it is not unkindness. it is a world that does not quite know where to put a grieving brother or sister. this page is for the moment you need to put yourself back into the picture.

you can love your parents, carry them, and still need your own grief witnessed. both are allowed.

WHEN THE QUESTION SKIPS PAST YOU

you do not have to deflect forever. when you have it in you, you are allowed to gently turn the question back toward yourself:

“they’re managing, thank you, and honestly, i’m struggling too. it would help to talk about that sometimes.”

“i’ll pass that on. but if you’re asking how i am, i lost my brother, and some days that’s very hard.”

and when you have nothing left to give, “i’m holding up, but i can’t be the family update line today” is a fair and whole sentence.

GENTLE WAYS TO HOLD YOUR OWN GROUND

name your grief to one safe person. you cannot be the strong one for everyone and also be held. choose someone whose only job is to ask how you are.

let your parents see your grief, too. you may be shielding them, but shared mourning can be a comfort, not a burden. they lost a child; you lost a sibling; you can grieve side by side.

set down the role when you need to. being the organiser, the strong one, the messenger is not a life sentence. it is alright to step back and simply be the bereaved for a while.

find the ones who ask about you. a sibling-loss group, a counsellor, an old friend who knew you both, people who put the question where it belongs: how are you?

let every feeling have room. duty and exhaustion, love and resentment can live in the same day. tending others does not cancel your right to be tended.

IF THE DAYS FEEL UNBEARABLE

if you are struggling to carry on, please reach out. you should not have to hold this alone.

SADAG (South African Depression and Anxiety Group): 0800 567 567

Lifeline South Africa: 0861 322 322

you are allowed to grieve as fully as anyone.

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