

What Do I Tell Them?

At some point, someone will ask.

It might be a coworker who noticed. It might be a child, loud and innocent, in the middle of a grocery aisle. It might be a friend who has been circling the question for weeks and finally says it gently, are you okay?

And you will have to decide, in that small moment, how much of yourself to hand over.

Here is the first thing to know. You are never required to explain your body to anyone.

Not to a stranger. Not to a neighbor. Not to a distant relative who means well. Your medical history is yours. Your grief is yours. You may share it, and sharing can be a gift, but it is a gift, not a toll you must pay to move through the world.

So give yourself some sentences ahead of time. Not because you owe an answer, but because having one ready takes the fear out of the question.

You can be brief. I have alopecia. It is an autoimmune condition. I am doing fine, thank you for asking.

You can be warm and closed. I appreciate you asking. I would rather not get into it today.

You can be light. This is my alopecia era. The getting ready time is fantastic.

You can be honest. It has been hard, and I am still finding my footing. Thank you for being someone I can say that to.

You can say nothing at all. A kind smile and a change of subject is a complete answer.

Practice a few of them out loud, in the car, in the shower, where no one can hear. There is real power in hearing your own voice say the words before the world asks for them. The first time is always the hardest. By the fifth time, it is just a sentence.

Children deserve a special kind of answer. They are not being cruel. They are being curious, and curiosity is how they learn. You can say, my hair fell out because of something in my body called alopecia. It does not hurt, and you cannot catch it. Most

children accept that immediately and move on to something far more interesting. Your calm becomes their calm.

Adults are harder, because adults sometimes bring advice.

You will hear about vitamins. About oils. About a cousin who tried something and it worked. About stress, and whether you have considered reducing it. Most of it comes from love wearing the wrong clothes. You are allowed to receive the love and decline the advice. Thank you, I have a medical team I trust. That sentence ends the conversation with grace.

And some people will be unkind. Not many, but some. They will stare. They will whisper. They will say something thoughtless and then look surprised that it landed. You do not have to educate every person who hurts you. Sometimes the healthiest response is to turn your body, and your attention, and your whole beautiful day, away from them.

Then there are the people who matter most. A partner. A best friend. A parent. A child old enough to worry. These conversations deserve more than a prepared sentence. They deserve the truth.

Tell them what you actually need. Say, I do not need you to fix this. I need you to sit with me. Say, when you tell me it is just hair, I feel alone. Say, when you notice me having a hard morning, ask me if I want to talk or if I want distraction. People who love you are often standing in the dark, guessing. Turn on a light for them.

And notice who shows up. Notice who asks again next week. Notice who remembers. Alopecia has a way of clarifying your circle, sometimes painfully. That clarity is a strange kind of gift.

The most surprising part of answering the question is this. Over time, the answer stops costing you so much. You say it, and your heart does not race. You say it, and you are already thinking about lunch. The words become ordinary, because you have become comfortable inside your own story.

That is not hardness. That is healing.

AFFIRMATION

I do not owe anyone an explanation for my body. I choose what I share, when I share it, and with whom. I can be kind without being available. I can be honest without being fragile. My story belongs to me, and I tell it on my own terms.