

Healing vs Coping

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You've done the work. Years of it, probably. So why does the same pain keep circling back?

A lot of what looks like healing is actually very sophisticated coping. And until you can tell the two apart, you'll keep pouring energy into things that soothe the wound without ever letting it move.

This takes about a minute. Be honest. That's the whole point.

FIRST, UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE.

Coping is how you get through the moment when something hurts. It's the automatic move: overworking, over-explaining, numbing, controlling, joking it away, shrinking and apologizing. Coping isn't bad. It's often wise, and sometimes getting through the next hour *is* the work. Your coping was brilliant once. It kept you safe when you had no other options.

But coping alone keeps you circling the pain. Managing it, rearranging it, painting over it, without ever letting it speak.

Healing is letting the truth that is underneath into the room, which is why it's harder, and why it works.

NOW, THE DIAGNOSTIC. Bring to mind one thing you've been calling growth, self-work, or healing. Then ask:

1. What did this cost me today?

Real healing has a felt price in the present. A truth you let in that you'd rather have kept out. A boundary you set that made your stomach drop. If the honest answer is “nothing, it felt good and safe,” you may be coping while calling it healing.

2. Am I letting the pain speak, or managing it?

Managing keeps you busy *around* the wound: more practices, more insight, more spiritual language. Healing lets the wound say the thing you've been working hard not to hear.

3. From where in me am I acting?

From the part that's protecting me, keeping the peace, staying safe, earning approval? Or from the truer, steadier place underneath it? Your protectors are brilliant. But a protector running the show is coping, not healing.

THE TELL

Coping is comfortable. It's the familiar move that keeps you “safe.”

Healing is letting something true in that you'd rather avoid. Remember, you have to feel it to heal it.

Not every day needs to be healing. Some days, coping is exactly right, and you can honor it as such. But if you've been doing “the work” for a while and nothing is actually shifting, this is usually why: you were soothing the wound, not allowing it to be fully felt and healed.

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BE THE WORK: The Shift from Human Doing to Human Being