

The Real Doctor

Category: Pretending

written by Lisa Dodson | October 4, 2018

When starting residency, my husband, son and I moved in with my in-laws while awaiting closing on our house.

My father-in-law, a brilliant and respected professor at a small local college, was frequently contacted at home by students, faculty and staff. On my first night of residency “home call” (pre-cell phone), I answered the house phone and received a request to speak to Dr. Dodson.

I handed the phone over to my father-in-law, who fielded the call with a series of noncommittal responses. “Yes.” “Uh huh.” “Uh, sure.” After a minute or so, he said to the caller, “I think you might want to talk to the ‘real’ Dr. Dodson,” then handed the phone back to me.

In the throes of my intern year imposter syndrome, it hadn’t even crossed my mind that *I* was the Dr. Dodson whose assistance was being sought. My dear father-in-law gave me a lecture on believing in myself and took to teasingly introducing me as “the real Dr. Dodson.”

Now, many years and an Alzheimer’s diagnosis later, I cherish his thinking of me as his “real doctor,” even on the days when he can’t remember our shared name. I work every day to make myself worthy of his belief in me.

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