

# The Work No One Sees

Category: Finding Balance

written by Hetty Eisenberg | December 19, 2025

It's still dark, and I've already gotten everything ready. Backpacks are packed with snacks and books, clothing laid out, shoes located, a quick breakfast prepped. Sometimes I've even logged in remotely to review my clinic schedule. As the sun rises, my husband leaves just as the kids wake up. The stage is set, and the day begins.

Moments like this sharpen a paradox I carry. As a physician and mother in midlife, the accomplishments that once defined me are now overshadowed by caregiving. My days are filled with tending to my children, checking in on my parents, and doing my best for my patients. The presence I once feared I'd have to sacrifice for success now flourishes. And yet, in the quiet spaces between acts of care, I feel the discrepancy between the outward picture and the unseen labor that makes it all possible.

The irony is that the work filling my life is extraordinary in its intimacy but invisible by nature. Our world values what can be counted, and in doing so overlooks the fabric of human connection. Titles and measurable outputs remain the currency of success. There are no promotions for patience, no headlines for care. The quiet tending of others can feel like a kind of disappearance, even as it holds everything together.

Even in medicine, where presence with suffering is the heart of the job, the act of caring is the least visible part. We earn bonuses for RVUs and note completion. Supervisors track metrics. But numbers are not what compel me. I live for moments when a patient moves from darkness into light, or when a small expression of relief shifts the room. We are trained to diagnose and treat, yet being truly present is our greatest achievement.

At home, the proof of effort is also invisible: mother, wife, daughter, manager of endless details. If I forget the library book, I can still turn it into a lesson in teamwork. The work is tedious and profound, and rarely acknowledged, except perhaps in the radiance of our children and the respect we show our elders.

Sometimes I wonder: what if success in midlife were defined not by what we produce, but by the connections we sustain? What if invisible caregiving were the mature expression of ambition rather than a detour from it?

When success becomes relational rather than performative, the unseen work comes into view. This is not a disappearance, but the foundation of a visible legacy.

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