# The Radical Practice of Care

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BY HEATHER HURLOCK

# Caregiving isn’t easy.

My husband is spending the next three weeks in a recliner with his legs elevated in the living room. It’s the temporary recovery zone we set up after his hip replacement surgery. He’s not only grappling with the physical toll of healing but the emotional weight of feeling like a burden, not just when he asks for what he needs but when he asks for what he wants and can’t get himself.

We’ve been navigating the quiet intimacy of care, where small details become charged. Kombucha must be poured into a particular glass. His drawing time requires a Dixon Ticonderoga pencil, no substitutes. His watercolor paper? Only the right size will do. He’s particular, yes. And I’m exhausted.

This is how healing looks in our home right now. It’s specific. It’s tender. And it’s not easy.

But here’s the truth: **care is an act of love as well as an act of labor**. It’s an intentional choice to meet another’s needs without losing yourself in the process.

# The Underrated Strength of Empathy

There’s a growing narrative in some corners of our culture that frames care and empathy as weaknesses, even as liabilities. We’re hearing that empathy is “misplaced energy,” that compassion and care make us too soft for a world in flux. Some are going so far as to label empathy itself as “the fundamental weakness in Western civilization.”

That’s ludicrous.

Empathy is the emotional intelligence that makes care possible; without it, care becomes hollow, mechanical, and just empty obligation.

Empathy and care aren’t the problems in our world. The problem is the erosion of connection and community. The problem is that the systems that should nourish care have been frayed by burnout, division, and a culture that prioritizes individualism over interdependence.

Right now, my husband needs a lot of care. He’s not used to being still. Holding space for my husband’s healing, for my two teenage daughters—busy with their clubs, their first jobs, their momentum into the world—and for the ambitious work I’m building at Super Age (a community designed to nurture longevity, wisdom, and collective flourishing) is tough right now, but it is also a privilege.

Caregiving is a daily practice to keep showing up, heart-forward, without losing my center. But isn’t that the work of modern living? To care fiercely while caring for yourself, too?

# Empathy ? Compassion

Here’s something important I’ve learned along the way: empathy and compassion aren’t the same.

- **Empathy** is the ability to feel what someone else is feeling, to sit in the discomfort, the tenderness, the ache.
- **Compassion** is empathy in motion. It’s the commitment to act wisely and help without getting swallowed by another’s emotional tide. It’s the choice to care.

This difference is critical. Compassion requires that we show up fully with our boundaries intact so we don’t burn out under the weight of another’s experience.

For me, compassion is filling my own cup while pouring into others. It's knowing when to say, "Yes, I'll get your sketchbook," and when to say, "I need a walk before I can be fully present for you."

# The Backbone of Thriving Communities

At Super Age, we talk about rejecting the anti-aging narrative and embracing the reality that aging is living. Aging is resilience. Aging is proof that we are still evolving, still choosing to participate, still caring. And here's where care becomes revolutionary.

We need more elders who are *strong, wise, and compassionate*, who can lead not just with strategy and intellect, but with emotional intelligence and community-first values.

Empathy is not a threat to progress; it's the glue that holds our communities together through rapid technological shifts and unsettling authoritarian currents. In a world obsessed with optimization and individualism, care is radical. It's the art of saying, "I see you, I respect you, and I will hold space for your humanity while holding space for mine." In a time when the word "belonging" is being banned, care is the most essential thing we can do.

Would it be easier to disengage, to numb out, or to let cynicism tell me that empathy is the problem? Sure. But care, grounded in empathy, patience, and boundaries, is what forges strong families and communities that endure.

That's why I choose to keep caring.

# The Call

Care is how we fortify ourselves and others against burnout, disconnection, and despair. It's the through-line that will carry us, not just through caregiving moments like the one I'm in, but through whatever collective future we're shaping next.

Empathy and compassion are not outdated relics. They are the modern skills we need to move through this age of uncertainty into one of interdependence and shared vitality.

So today, I'll pour the kombucha in the glass. I'll source the right pencil. I'll steady myself, not just because it's "my role," but because care is a choice I make every day to love well, lead well, and live well.

**Write and tell me about your stories of care** and what empathy means to you.

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**WRITTEN BY:**



# Heather Hurlock