



I am five minutes.

I am short, small, and easy to overlook. You may not think I matter much.
But I used to belong to someone important.

You would expect me to be the simple pause between tasks, the sip of coffee while it was still warm, or the quiet breather before the next patient.

I used to be enough, but slowly, I started disappearing.

One day, I was taken to comfort a grieving family member who needed a shoulder to cry on.
Another day, I was used to cover for a staff member who already had so much on their plate.

Before long, I was divided into pieces, handed out wherever I was needed most, until there was nothing left of me to keep.

As I watch my minutes go by, I see healthcare workers who continue on even when exhausted. I see them choose patients over themselves time and time again.
I see them keep everything inside, because that is what is often expected of them to do, even when inside they are beginning to wear thin.

So, Future Patient, I want you to understand what you may not always see.

If your healthcare worker seems tired, quiet, or moving too quickly between patients, it is not because you do not matter.
It is because they have learned to carry too much for too long, and still show up anyway.

But the story doesn't end here. I have also seen change begin.

I have seen healthcare workers speak up instead of burying it within themselves. I have seen them lean on each other instead of standing alone. I have seen SEIU Healthcare stand with them, advocating for more staffing, workplace safety, and a system where seeking support is encouraged, and burnout is not accepted as the norm.

Burnout doesn't come from caring too little.
It often builds over time when caring deeply is combined with too many demands and too little time to recover.

On better days, I am no longer something they lose.
I am something they have.

A real pause.
A break.
A moment to breathe without having to explain.

And healthcare works best when those who provide care are also supported to stay well while they do it.

Sincerely,
Five Minutes