

My Hands Know the Story

The first thing I ever fixed was a missing button on my grandfather's shirt. I was six. The thread was too tight, the stitching uneven, but he wore it anyway, like I had done something important. And maybe I had. I grew up in a loud, three-generation Armenian home where things were always being cooked, mended, or quietly brought back to life. Nothing was wasted. My grandmother never explained why we kept old jars or saved fabric scraps. She simply handed me a needle, showed me how to fold dough just right, how to make something ordinary feel cared for.

At the time, it felt like play. But looking back, I see it differently. Those afternoons at the kitchen table, my fingers clumsy with thread or flour, were lessons in more than tradition. They taught me that creation could be a form of remembering, that care does not have to be loud to be strong, and that some stories are passed down without ever being told out loud.

At school, I found myself drawn to anything broken. Wobbly robot arms in STEM club, bent frames in the art room, old furniture waiting to be repaired. I never rushed. I liked the feeling of sitting with something that was not working and quietly figuring it out. I did not always have the right words, especially in group settings, but I had a way of showing up with my hands, offering help, making things steadier.

Over time, I have realized that this is more than a habit. It is part of how I move through the world. My identity is not just Armenian. It is not just granddaughter, or the girl who learned to sew before she could spell it. It is someone who sees a crack and wonders how to hold it together. Someone who pays attention to the details others walk past.

That way of seeing has shaped the way I learn and the way I lead. I do not always speak first. I do not need to. My hands are often already reaching for what needs care.

I may never be the loudest person in the room. But I have learned that stories can live in quiet work. And my hands still know how to tell them.