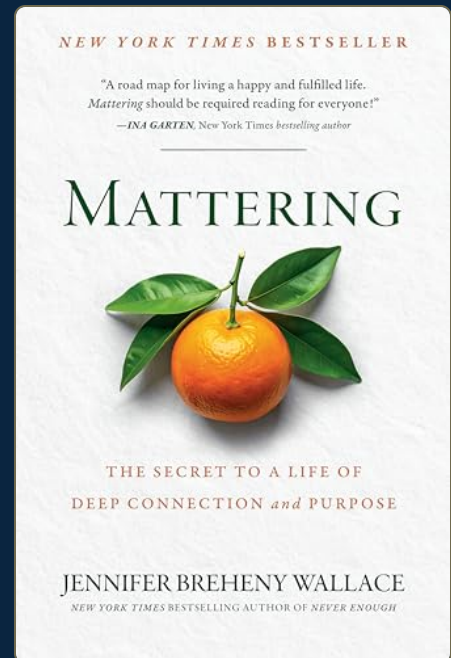


YOU MATTER

The Secret to a Life of Deep Connection and Purpose.
Jennifer Breheny Wallace.

JP Morgan put this on their list for students and interns. That got my attention. If they want their young people reading it, I want us looking at it.



5 LESSONS + HOW THIS APPLIES TO YOU

Hey family. JP Morgan put this book on their list for students and interns. I am not going to turn this into a sermon. It is not a church book. But that list got my attention. If they want their young people reading it, I want us looking at it. Here is what I think they want you to walk away with. And here is what it hit in me.

01 Not the same as achievement

02 Valued and adding value

03 Relied on, not too much

04 Known and invested in

05 The erosion is real

THE NEED NOBODY PUTS ON A RESUME

Jennifer Breheny Wallace spent years on this and it hit the New York Times bestseller list in January 2026. Her subject is a human need most people have never named: mattering. She defines it in two halves. You feel valued by the people around you, and you have a real opportunity to add value to them. Both halves, or it does not work.

Her argument is that under the loneliness, the burnout, and the political noise there is a deeper problem she calls an erosion of mattering. And the sharpest thing in the book, especially for a list aimed at interns, is her insistence that mattering is not the same thing as achievement, popularity, or success. You can have all three and still not have this.

1

Mattering has two halves

Being valued by others, and having a real chance to add value to them. One without the other leaves a hole.

2

It is a need, not a nicety

Wallace puts it alongside food and water as a requirement for wellbeing, not a bonus.

3

It is not achievement

You can win everything and still not feel you matter. That is why high performers burn out in ways that confuse everyone around them.

4

Recognition means for who you are

Being appreciated for your character, not only for your output. Output-only praise teaches people they are replaceable.

5

Being relied on, but not too much

Depended on enough to feel necessary. Not so much that you are being used.

6

Feeling prioritized

People make actual room for you in their time and attention, not just in their words.

7

Being truly known and invested in

Someone knows the real version of you and is putting something into you on purpose.

01

LESSON 01 OF 5

MATTERING IS NOT THE SAME AS ACHIEVEMENT

FROM THE BOOK

Wallace draws the line hard: mattering is not achievement, not popularity, and not success.

That distinction explains something that otherwise makes no sense. People who are winning by every visible measure can still feel hollow, and no amount of additional winning fixes it, because achievement was never the thing that was missing.

MY NOTES — HOW THIS APPLIES TO YOU

BUSINESS

IF YOU HAVE A BUSINESS

A good year on paper does not tell me whether the people in my company feel like they count. Those are two separate scoreboards, and the second one is the one that decides who is still with me in three years.

MINISTRY

IF YOU HAVE A MINISTRY

Numbers can go up while the actual work of caring for people goes down. If I only ever measured what is easy to count, I would miss the entire point of what I am doing.

CAREER

IF YOU ARE BUILDING A CAREER

Do not build a career where the only thing holding you up is the next win. That structure holds until the first year you do not win, and then it does not.

FAMILY

WITH YOUR FAMILY

I try to praise my kids for who they are and not only for what they produced that week. Praise attached only to output quietly teaches a kid that the love is attached to output too.

02

LESSON 02 OF 5

YOU NEED TO BE VALUED, AND YOU NEED TO ADD VALUE

FROM THE BOOK

Her definition has two halves. You are valued by the people around you, and you have a genuine opportunity to add value to them.

Most people fixate on the first half. The second half is the one that gets neglected, and it is why being taken care of without being needed still leaves people empty.

MY NOTES — HOW THIS APPLIES TO YOU

BUSINESS

IF YOU HAVE A BUSINESS

Making somebody feel appreciated is only half the job. I have to give them work that actually matters, where the outcome would be worse without them. Appreciation without real responsibility reads as pity.

MINISTRY

IF YOU HAVE A MINISTRY

The fastest way to lose a volunteer is to thank them warmly and never give them anything that counts. People stay where their contribution changes the outcome.

CAREER

IF YOU ARE BUILDING A CAREER

In your first job, ask for work where your absence would be felt. That is worth more to you than a better title on a task nobody needs.

FAMILY

WITH YOUR FAMILY

My kids need to be needed in our house. Real chores with real consequences, not decorative ones. Being useful to your own family is part of how a person learns they matter.

RELIED ON, BUT NOT TOO MUCH

FROM THE BOOK

One element of what she calls the mattering core is being relied on, with a careful qualifier: but not too much. That qualifier is the whole thing. Under-rely on somebody and they feel useless. Over-rely on them and they stop feeling valued and start feeling used. The gap between those two is narrower than most leaders think.

MY NOTES — HOW THIS APPLIES TO YOU

BUSINESS

IF YOU HAVE A BUSINESS

I have leaned too hard on my best people before, because they were the ones who never said no. Being the person everybody depends on stops being an honor and becomes a burden faster than anyone admits out loud.

MINISTRY

IF YOU HAVE A MINISTRY

The most committed volunteers are the easiest ones to burn out, because they will not tell you when it is too much. Watching that line is my job, not theirs.

CAREER

IF YOU ARE BUILDING A CAREER

Being the reliable one is a real advantage right up until it is the only thing you are. Say yes to what builds you and learn to say no without a speech.

FAMILY

WITH YOUR FAMILY

Isabella and I watch how much weight the older kids carry with the younger ones. Some is good for them. Too much quietly turns a child into staff.

04

LESSON 04 OF 5

BE TRULY KNOWN, AND INVEST IN SOMEBODY

FROM THE BOOK

Two more elements of the mattering core: feeling prioritized, and being truly known and invested in.

Prioritized means people make actual room for you in their time, not just in their language. Known means somebody has the real version of you, not the presentable one, and is deliberately putting something into you anyway.

MY NOTES — HOW THIS APPLIES TO YOU

BUSINESS

IF YOU HAVE A BUSINESS

I know which of my people are carrying something heavy outside of work, because I asked and then I remembered. That is not soft management. It is the difference between a team and a roster.

MINISTRY

IF YOU HAVE A MINISTRY

I would rather know twenty people well than be recognized by twenty thousand. Being known is the thing that actually changes somebody, and it does not scale, and that is fine.

CAREER

IF YOU ARE BUILDING A CAREER

Find one person a little ahead of you and be genuinely useful to them. Then find one person behind you and do the same. Careers are built in those two relationships more than in any application.

FAMILY

WITH YOUR FAMILY

Time is the only honest way to show a kid they are a priority. Not gifts, not speeches. Blocks of unhurried time where nothing else is competing for me.

05

LESSON 05 OF 5

THE EROSION IS REAL. DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT WHERE YOU ARE

FROM THE BOOK

Wallace argues that underneath social media, the pace of modern life, and the political noise sits a deeper crisis: an erosion of mattering.

The useful part is that this erosion is local. It happens in specific rooms, teams, and houses, which means it can be reversed in specific rooms, teams, and houses. You do not need to fix the culture to fix your corner of it.

MY NOTES — HOW THIS APPLIES TO YOU

BUSINESS

IF YOU HAVE A BUSINESS

I cannot fix what social media is doing to people. I can make sure that in my company, every person knows exactly why their work matters and who is counting on it. That is a small perimeter and it is mine.

MINISTRY

IF YOU HAVE A MINISTRY

Most people walk into a room already suspecting they are interchangeable. The job is to make that suspicion obviously false within a few minutes of them arriving.

CAREER

IF YOU ARE BUILDING A CAREER

You will be around people who feel invisible. Learn names, remember details, say the specific thing. It costs almost nothing and it is remembered for years.

FAMILY

WITH YOUR FAMILY

The erosion starts young and it starts at home. Isabella and I would rather over-correct on making our kids feel necessary here than send them out looking for it somewhere that will charge them for it.

BOOK 6 OF 9

WHAT DID YOU GET OUT OF THIS

This is book 6 of 9. These are books JP Morgan wants their new people and interns to read. What did you get out of going through this? Let's discuss this in the comments.

I love you.

This is the YEAR OF DISCOVERY.

YEAR OF DISCOVERY
GREATER IS COMING

Rick