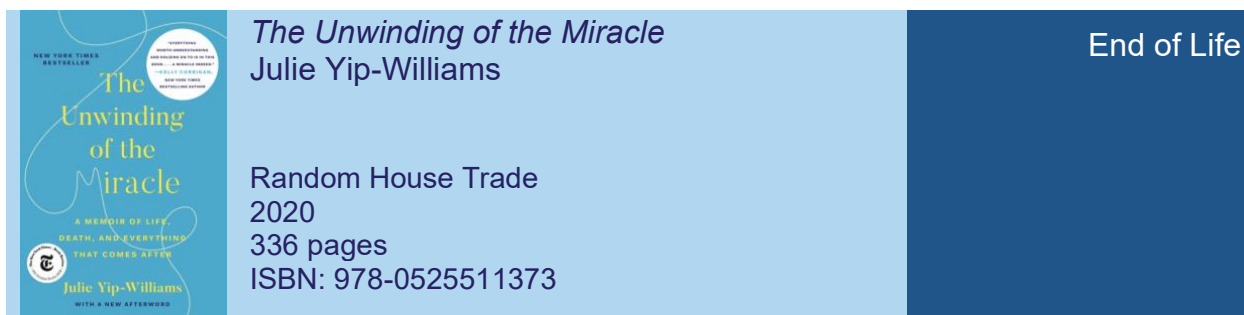


Discussion Guide



Summary

The Unwinding of the Miracle is the story of a vigorous life refracted through the prism of imminent death. When she was first diagnosed, Julie Yip-Williams sought clarity and guidance through the experience and, finding none, began to write her way through it - a chronicle that grew beyond her imagining. Motherhood, marriage, the immigrant experience, ambition, love, wanderlust, tennis, fortune-tellers, grief, reincarnation, jealousy, comfort, pain, the marvel of the body in full rebellion - this book is as sprawling and majestic as the life it records. It is inspiring and instructive, delightful and shattering. It is a book of indelible moments, seared deep - an incomparable guide to living vividly by facing hard truths consciously.

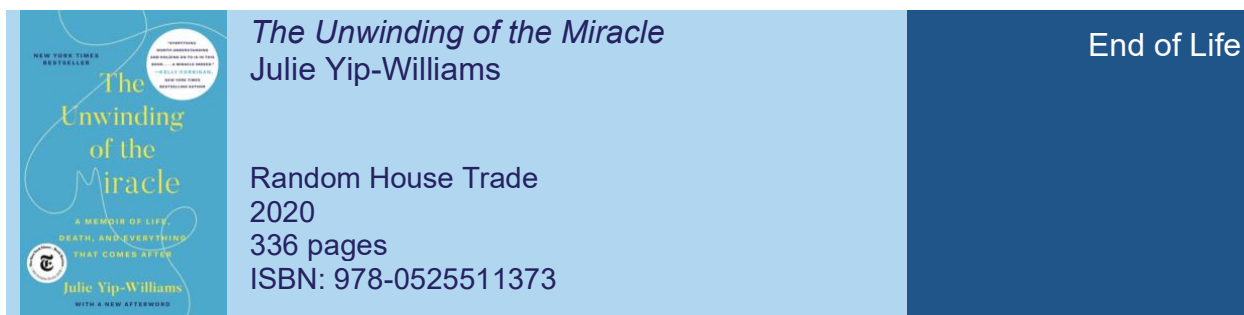
Questions

1. The prologue at the beginning of "The Unwinding of the Miracle" was written in February 2018, one month before Julie Yip-Williams passed away, and directly addresses how Julie felt about looking back at her life in the face of death. How did this set the tone of the book for you?
2. The second chapter of the book features a letter from Julie to her young daughters Mia and Isabelle, and later in the book, there is a letter to her husband, Josh. Why do you think Julie decided to include these intimate personal communications in the book? How did it make you feel to read those sections?
3. After her diagnosis, Julie writes, "Fear for Josh and my loved ones seems to live in every molecule of my body... Whatever modicum of security I once felt is completely shattered. If cancer and bad shit struck once, they can and will strike again." Have you ever felt this way after bad news or tragedy? How did you cope with this feeling?
4. Julie remarks that, post-diagnosis, she thought she would never again feel happiness "in its truest, unadulterated form" – but that her assumption was wrong. How did this shifting perspective resonate with you? Have you ever felt happiness after you were sure that you never would again?

Terms of Use: This discussion guide is attributed to the [Read with Jenna](#) and reformatted by the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) for educational use. It does not reflect the views or opinions of the author or publisher. Nor does it reflect the views or opinions of the sponsoring agencies of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Created April 2021.



Discussion Guide



5. In Julie's writing about losing her friends to cancer, she examines the way illness is often referred to as a "battle" that can be won based on hope, personality, and determination. She asks, "Who has more courage? The cancer patient who presses on with grueling treatments ... or the cancer patient who simply walks away?" How do you define courage in a situation like Julie
6. How does the transparency of Julie's journey in *The Unwinding of the Miracle* contribute to the conversation surrounding terminal illness and death? Considering her devotion to transparency, did any questions remain for you that you would have liked to ask her before her passing?
7. How did this book impact your thoughts about medical care and end-of-life care?
7. How did Julie's determination to create an identity for herself outside of her family's view of her, which was fundamentally shaped by her disability, prepare her for her cancer?
8. Sometimes the people we're closest to have the ability to hurt us the most. Discuss the beauty and the complexity of Julie's relationship with her grandmother
9. Have you listened to the podcast Julie, which supplements Julie's story in the book? How did it affect your feelings about the book?
10. Do you think *The Unwinding of the Miracle* is more about life, or death? Did your perceptions of George and Elizabeth as parents, spouses, and people in general change as the book went on? If so, in what ways.

Terms of Use: This discussion guide is attributed to the [Read with Jenna](#) and reformatted by the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) for educational use. It does not reflect the views or opinions of the author or publisher. Nor does it reflect the views or opinions of the sponsoring agencies of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Created April 2021.

