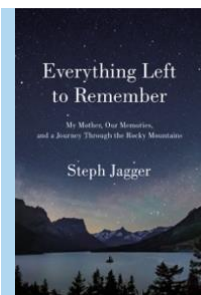


Discussion Guide



Everything Left to Remember

Steph Jagger

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272 pages

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Travel Health

Summary

This inspirational mother-daughter memoir follows two women on a poignant journey through a landscape of legacy and loss. As they road-trip through the national parks of the American West, they explore the ever-changing terrain of dementia, deep remembrance, and motherhood. A staggeringly beautiful examination of how stories are passed down through generations and from Mother Nature, *Everything Left to Remember* brings us the wisdom of remembrance under the constellations of the vast Montana sky.

Questions

1. Throughout *Everything Left to Remember*, Jagger draws on nature for support in the process of healing and discovery. What is your relationship like with nature? In what ways do you (or could you) draw on the natural world for support?
2. Jagger focuses on femininity and how it was defined for her as a child. She writes “My parents thought my contribution to this place, to this world around me, was my appearance, my ability to delight.” Because of this, her anger towards the supposed feminine led to a suppression within herself. Through her experience with getting closer to her mother—her first example of femininity—over the course of her trip, Jagger has several realizations about her relationship with femininity. What realizations around gender came to you as you read? What about realizations about your own mother and what you internalized about the feminine by watching her relationship to it?
3. Jagger travels to the Rocky Mountains with her mother, who is suffering from Alzheimer’s. In this shared experience, she chronicles the good, the bad, and the magical, from her mother’s moments of clarity, to tense car rides to unpacking life-long frustrations, all of which are part of caregiving for a loved one facing cognitive decline. What did this exploration illuminate for you about caregiving?
4. Jagger would have known in advance that this would be a journey her mother would never remember. Why do you think it was still important for her to take her mother?

5. There is much inside of the book about how our relationships with our parents/primary caregivers shape our identities. What is or was your relationship with your parents and/or primary caregivers? What awareness or questions about how you were raised came to the surface as you read?
6. Forgetting is a major part of Jagger's memoir. Not only does her mother's Alzheimer's cause her to forget parts of herself and lose her autonomy, Jagger also observes how we seem to be forgetting the world around us; how, in many ways, it is disappearing. Jagger notes how the glaciers in Glacier National Park will soon disappear, how animals native to particular regions are near extinction, and how historically sacred places such as the Grand Prismatic Springs are treated as attractions. Why do you think it was important for Jagger to chronicle her mother's deterioration with that of the natural world? What do you see as the parallels between these two types of forgetting?
7. In telling her experience, Jagger places importance on allowing oneself to wholly embrace the array of emotions that come with caring for a parent suffering with Alzheimer's. She shares about acute frustration, anger, and grief in reaction to her mother's symptoms, the change in her personality, and the shift in their relationship. When have you experienced an array of emotions that felt both complicated and interwoven? What emotions did you let yourself feel and what emotions did you hold back? What does that illuminate?
8. Jagger explores a series of dreams that occur on the trip. Is the exploration of your own dreams a part of how you make sense of the world? Why or why not?
9. Surrender is a major theme throughout *Everything Left to Remember*. What does "surrender" mean to you? What elements of surrendering have been supportive to you?
10. Jagger writes about motherhood both in terms of physical mothering as well as the archetypal mother. She shares that her mother's first survival skill as a woman, as she crossed the threshold from maiden to mother, was to forget. Thinking of your journey through different seasons of your life, what have been some of the tools or skills that have carried you through those thresholds?
11. Jagger explores the idea of "re-memobering" ourselves – bringing back together parts of ourselves that we have been split off from and/or cast away. What parts of you and/or your identity might you forgotten or severed from? How might you start the process of re-memobering them?
12. Jagger looks to nature for mothering and also explores how she can self-mother. How do you mother yourself? Regardless of the gender(s) you do or do not identify with, what might self-mothering look like for you?