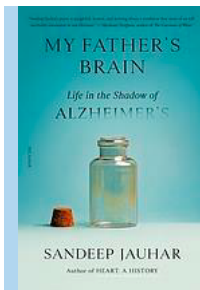


Discussion Guide



My Father's Brain Sandeep Jauhar

Farrar, Straus and Giroux
2023
256 pages
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Memory and Dementia

Summary

A doctor's memoir about his father's experience of dementia and an overview of the history of and latest findings on the disease.

Questions

1. In the Introduction, Jauhar quotes a physician calling Alzheimer's the worst of all diseases. Do you agree?
2. Jauhar writes about his father: "I loved him, cared for him, and hated him, too." What was your response to his candid self-assessment?
3. Does it surprise you that Jauhar, despite his medical training, claims that that the beginning of his father's illness he knew little about dementia?
4. Jauhar describes a "hypercognitive" bias in Western society that socially marginalizes people living with dementia. What are some examples of this prejudice in your own life?
5. What are some aspects of American life that make it so difficult to care for elders with dementia? What can be done to relieve caregiver burden?
6. Jauhar wades into the ethics of "therapeutic deception" in caring for his father. Do you think lying is a morally defensible caregiving strategy?
7. Jauhar details numerous scenes in which he loses patience with his father. What was your reaction to these experiences?
8. Jauhar struggles with following his father's advance directive because his father doesn't seem unhappy in his declining state. Do you think that was a valid response?
9. Jauhar describes a tension between his different roles as a son, father, spouse, and professional. How does this tension play out in your own life?
10. *My Father's Brain* blends memoir with science writing. Why do you think Jauhar includes science in such a personal book?
11. Jauhar writes that once his father was labeled as having a brain disease, "he became to me a minor character in our family, a miniaturized version of his former self, isolated and confined to ever-shrinking boundaries, as I stared sadly at him from outside the cage." What was your response to this statement?
12. Both of Jauhar's parents had degenerative brain diseases. Why do you think he chose to

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write mostly about his father?

13. In his family, Jauhar alone seems adamantly opposed to putting his father in a nursing home. What was your reaction to this? Are there situations in which a person with dementia would be better off going to a nursing home?
14. Jauhar writes of memory construction to reconcile the past with your feelings in the present. What are some examples of this principle in your own life?
15. Jauhar describes competing perspectives on the meaning of personhood. What are your thoughts on how to define a person?
16. Jauhar describes a scene at a day program for dementia patients in which his father is given a stuffed animal and otherwise treated like a child. What are some ways such outpatient programs could be improved?
17. The book is full of antiheroic moments. Is there a hero in the book?