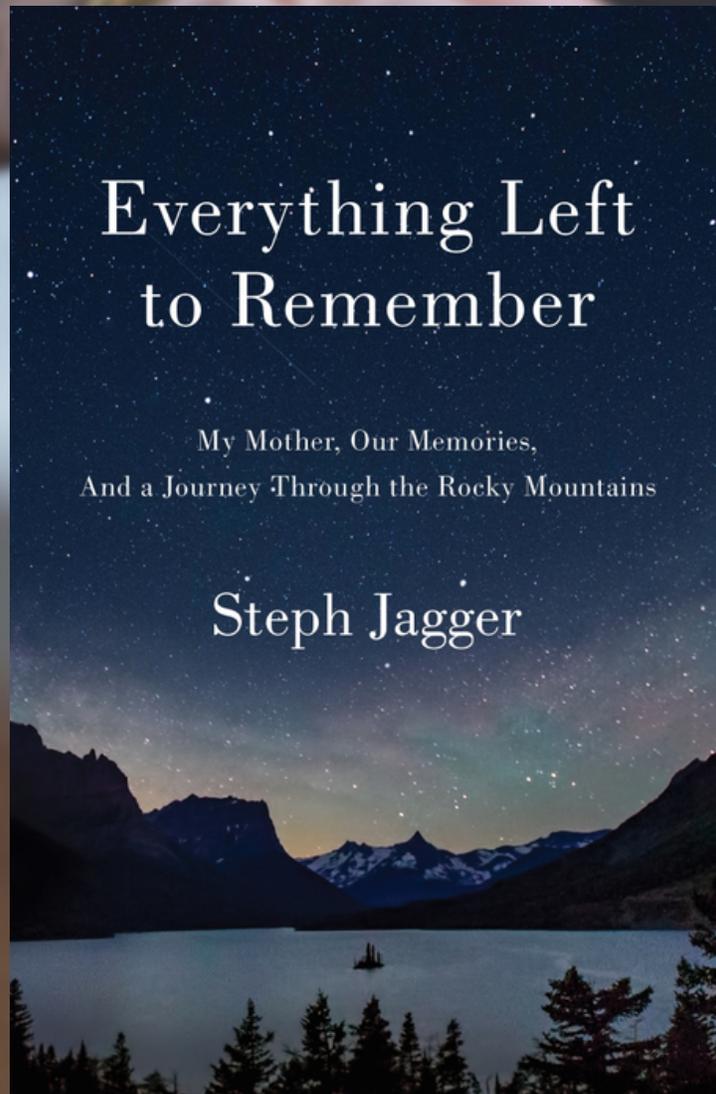




STEPH
JAGGER

A Reader's Guide

A collection of meditations and prompts to gently edge you into deeper connection with the book and yourself.



OUR TOP 12 FOR READING BETWEEN THE LINES

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?

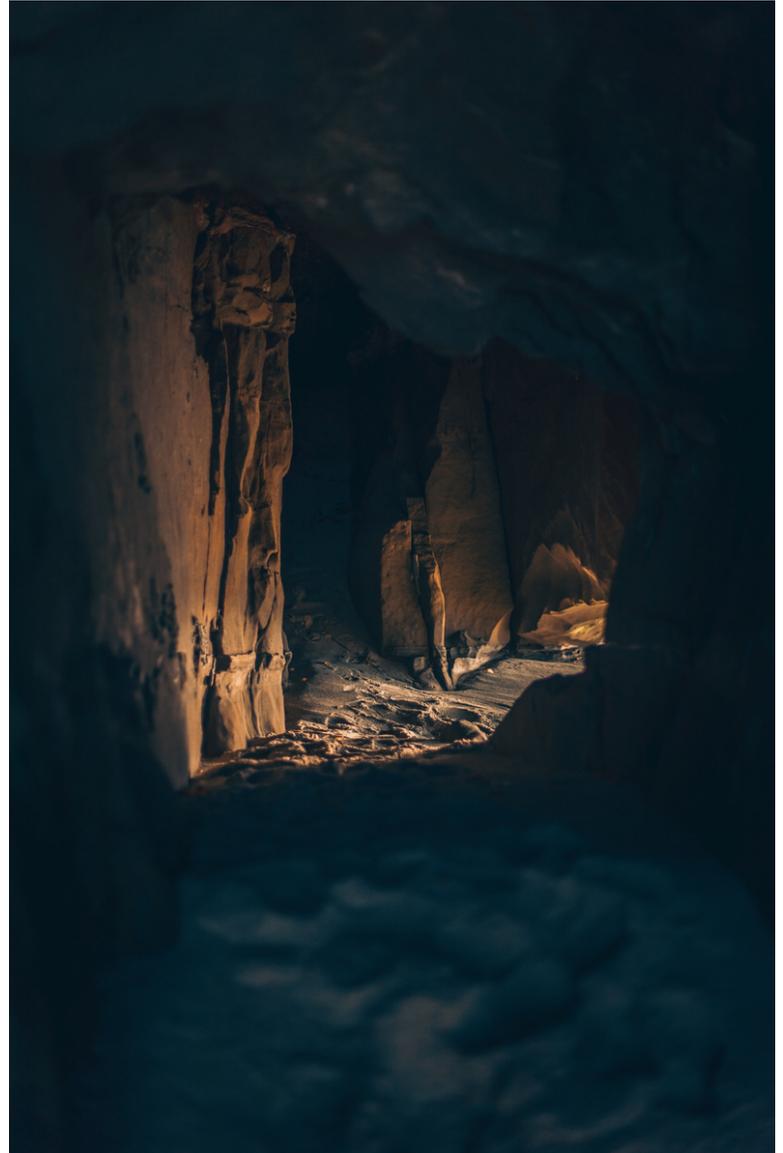
Speaking of, could you get yourself into nature now? Like, right now? Gentle nudge to walk outside and let your feet touch the earth. Close your eyes and feel the sun (or rain, or wind, or snow) on your face. Let the aliveness outside of you confirm the aliveness inside of you.

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" (p. 95). Because of this, her anger toward 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?

We invite you to grab your journal, and let the words flow. What words come up to describe your mother? What words surface as a way to describe the feminine? Are those things similar or contradictory? We invite you to keep writing.





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 lifelong frustrations. This adds up to some (but not all) of what it means to take part in the love and care for a person facing cognitive decline.

When have you cared for another, in the short or long term? What qualities did that bring forward in you? What did you learn about yourself through the process? What does all of this illuminate for you about caregiving?

4.

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 Spring are treated as attractions.

We see presence as a form of remembrance, of honoring that which is. What is something that you wish to remember? And what might be an act of devotion to remember said item?

For instance, we wish to remember the way the tides move at sunset. As a form of remembrance, we'll head to the shore every evening this week with each of our senses activated. Phone left in the car, we'll practice presence as we experience the tides with our eyes, ears, nose, touch, and taste.

Your turn . . .



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 like with your parents/primary caregivers?

What traits, both pleasant and not-so-pleasant, of your parents' live in you? If you're anything like us, you carry traits that you've disliked seeing or perhaps even judged in your parents. Is there a way of accepting those within yourself? Of reframing them and setting them free within you? Is there a way, that with awareness and maturation, those traits could shine as something with beauty?

Explore. Breathe in and out.

6.

Jagger would have known in advance that this would be a journey her mother would never remember.

This was about the journey, rather than the destination or "outcome".

Let's explore this concept. The invitation here is to create something and then forget it.

Perhaps you hum a song or dance, knowing those experiences will simply ring through the air and be gone. Maybe you write a poem in pencil and then erase it. Or you whittle a staff and place it in the fire. What does it feel like to be with your creation and to also let it go?





7.

Surrender is a major theme throughout *Everything Left to Remember*.

What does “surrender” mean to you? As an exercise of surrender, we’ll suggest laying on your back on the floor. Lie here for at least five minutes. Breathe into each of your muscles from head to toe. Feel the earth beneath you. Is there anything “holding” you in this moment? Is there an expression of gratitude you could offer?

9.

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? If you haven’t already, we’ll encourage you to place a journal bedside. When you awake in the morning, write down everything you remember from your slumber. Images? Great. Emotions? Colors? Sensations? Wonderful. Write it all down.

After a month, look back at your dream log. What stands out to you? What piques your interest? What gives your heart a flutter or your stomach a churn? Let your intuition lead from there.

8.

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 feel complicated and interwoven? What emotions did you let yourself feel, and what emotions did you hold back? What does that illuminate?

Might we suggest a wee visual here as well?

1. Draw a person (that’s you!)
2. Outside and around the body, write/draw the emotions that you let yourself express.
3. Inside the body, write/draw the emotions that you did not express.

Look at your drawing. Can you feel those unexpressed emotions within you now? If so, where in your body do you feel them? What are the sensations? Is there a movement or sound you can make that might match them, that might help them move up and out without having to name them or why they might be there?

10.

Jagger explores the idea of “re-remembering” 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 have you forgotten or severed from? How might you start the process of re-remembering them? Make a list of 10 action items that could be supportive in remembering your self.

Hint: For us, we usually start with the senses. What music will call part of us in? Food? Smells? You get the idea...

12.

Jagger looks to nature for mothering and also explores how she can self-mother.

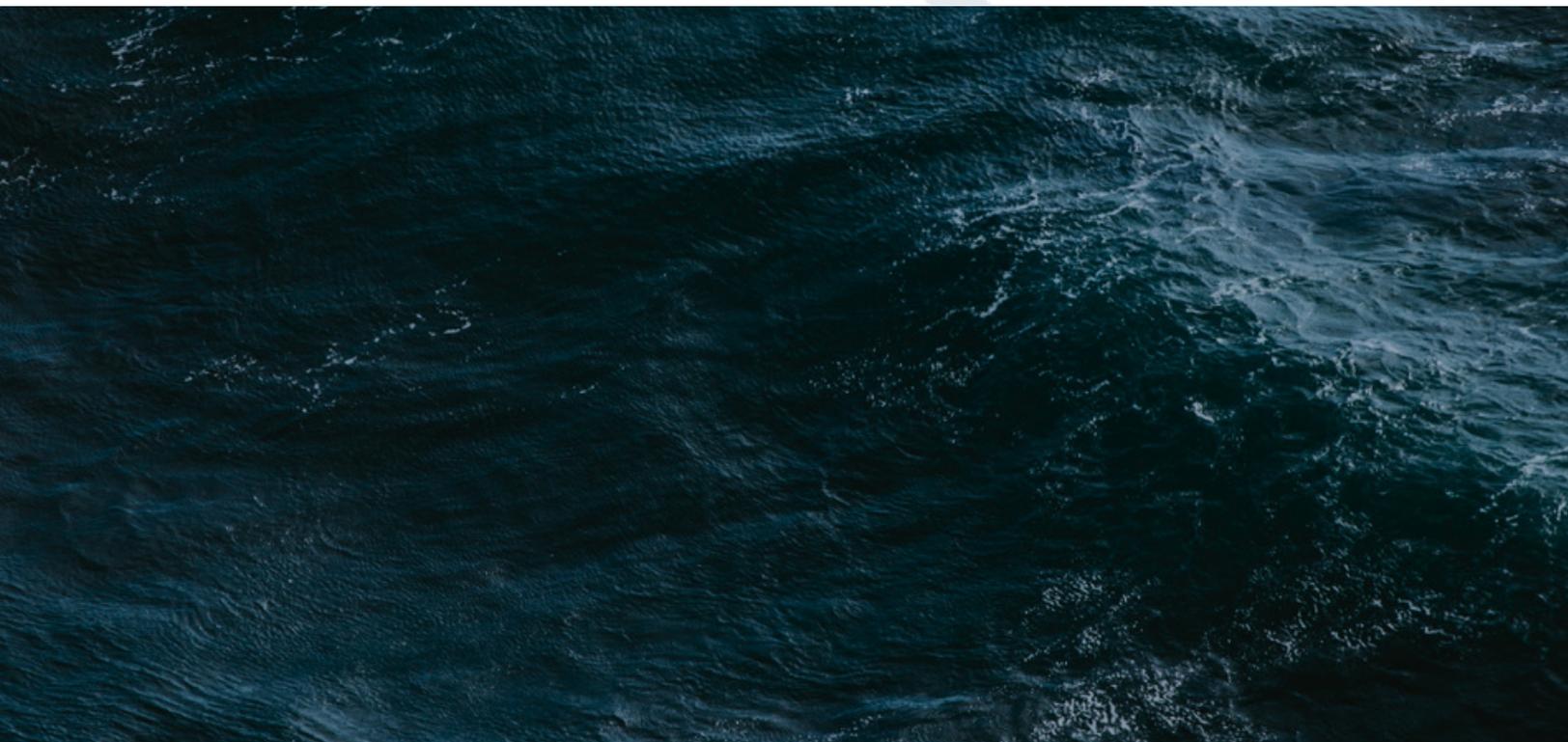
How do you mother yourself? Regardless of the gender(s) you do or do not identify with, what might self-mothering look like for you?

Hint: Let's start with love...

11.

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? Draw symbols for these tools in your journal. As you look at them, ask if they might need to be sharpened or retired. Ask if you might need to add an additional tool for a current or upcoming threshold?



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