

Book review



Travelling to Infinity

My life with Stephen

Category: Book Reviews / Personal stories

Author: Jane Hawking

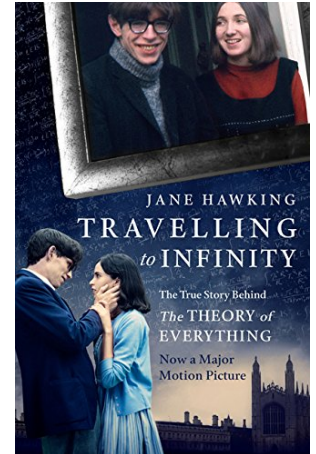
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Audience: For Community

Summary: The memoir of Steven Hawking's wife Jane and her experience with his disability and genius



Even if you've not seen the Academy Award-nominated movie *The Theory of Everything*, starring best actor Eddie Redmayne, you'll have heard of the film's protagonist, astrophysicist Stephen Hawking, infamous for his Black Hole theory.

The film emulates the memoir of Hawking's wife Jane, *Travelling to Infinity: My life with Stephen*. Jane's autobiography chronicles the exceptional life she lived with Stephen and their three children in Cambridge, UK, spanning a quarter century, from their young marriage in the 1960s to their divorce in the late 1980s.

Jane dedicated her life to supporting Stephen in his battle with motor neuron disease – a debilitating illness that crippled his body and stole his power of speech – in his pursuit of physics and in raising their family.

What makes this story so poignant is the mental fortitude both Jane and Stephen show against heavy odds; an apathetic National Health Service, the patriarchal bureaucracy of Cambridge University where Stephen spent most of his career and crippling health issues all served to weaken their resolve.

The fact that Stephen is still alive, let alone that he is an internationally-lauded genius, is testament to one man's triumph over physical disability and resilience through periods of intense despondency. Stephen's existence is a paradoxical dichotomy of intellectual genius and physical incapacity; his success thanks largely to Jane's commitment to their wellbeing.

Jane details their turbulent marriage and how she managed her suicidal thoughts. She describes her guilty state of mind over finding comfort in another man's love and feelings of sheer desperation while caring for a disabled person in unique circumstances. She found solace in her spirituality, escaping into nature, and confiding in her support network.

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Travelling to Infinity provides insight into one woman's battle to secure happiness and wellbeing for herself and her family under harrowing conditions and is well worth a read.

Reviewed by Hayley Tillard, Communications Assistant, Auckland

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