

There Are No Alligators in Heaven!

A family's perspectives on surviving the unrelenting savagery of Cystic Fibrosis

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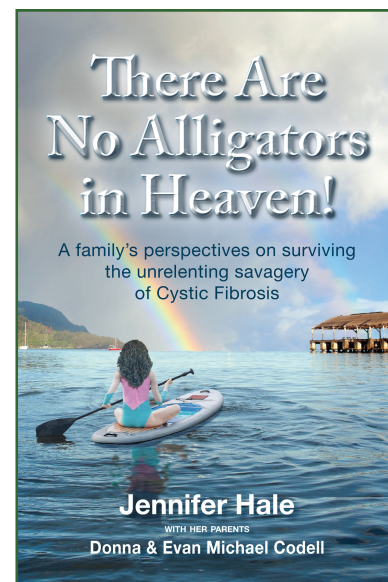
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By Jennifer Hale, Donna & Evan Michael Codell

Starshine Galaxy Foundation, \$14.95, 226 pages

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a self-help parenting guide ... a celebration of life ...***



Life is a miraculous thing, particularly when you consider the millions of things in our DNA that have to code correctly for it to happen at all. Unfortunately, it's also incredibly easy for something to go wrong leaving some people with terminal illnesses, deformities, and genetic predispositions to problems later in life. Jennifer Hale was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at the age of two. *There Are No Alligators in Heaven!* is her biography as told through her writings as well as a detailed series of interviews with her parents.

This is a book that manages to be many things: a heartfelt biography, a record of cystic fibrosis treatments over the last few decades, a self-help parenting guide to parents of children with cystic fibrosis, and most importantly, a celebration of life. Through the words of Donna and Evan Codell readers are led through Jennifer's whole life, from birth to death, and a little beyond. They paint a picture of a normal family, refusing to whitewash their experience or leave out the darker times and struggles, the personality clashes, or the various illnesses and their complications. By including things such as the less than happy family life Evan experienced growing up and Donna's panic attacks, the book makes their lives and experiences tangible and much more relatable than many other highly sanitized biographies and memoirs.

Mechanically speaking the book is easy to read. The sections taken from writings are easily discerned from the verbal interview between Donna and Evan, and the book is divided into clear sections that are easy to navigate. The last third of the book includes Jennifer's articles that were originally published by the *CF Roundtable* and give a chance for readers to really read about Jennifer's experience with cystic fibrosis in her own words ...

This is not a biography with a happy ending, but even so, it is one that manages to be inspiring and is well worth the read.