

**Ben Franklin Institute  
National Adolescent & Young Adult Conference**

**Presents**

**Clnematherapy**

**The Use of Film in Therapy with  
Our Young Adult Population**

**with**

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**CINEMATHERAPY:  
MOVIES AS A PATHWAY TO HEALING**

**Movies can:**

- Normalize experiences
- Offer hope and encouragement
- Acknowledge realities and experiences
- Evoke emotion and offer a release (catharsis)
- Model behavior and actions
- Provide role models
- Offer new perspectives and possibilities (frames of references)
- Evoke internal strengths (resilience, coping skills, protective factors) and external resources (relationship and connection with others)
- Remind people of previous solutions
- Bring people together

In addition, as part of therapy, movies:

- Promote the therapeutic relationship and alliance
- Offer an option that most clients will consider
- Provide both auditory and visual opportunities for learning
- Are accessible to most people and can be seen in theatres, at home, etc.
- Offer flexibility-Most DVDs have different languages and subtitle options for the hearing impaired.
- Offer a large “library” of possible films and videos-many of which others have already used in cinematherapy
- Can be time-efficient

<b>FILM AND VIDEOWORK</b>
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### **TIPS FOR PRACTITIONERS USING MOVIES AS A THERAPEUTIC TOOL**

1. Normalize the exercise. Reassure clients that filmwork has been used with other clients and that results have been positive.
2. Some parents/caregivers may see watching a movie as a frivolous idea. Acknowledge their feelings and thoughts and learn more from them about how they expect change to occur. Many parents/caregivers will recognize that positive change can happen suddenly and movies are one way prompting such change.
3. Select effective role models from films. Describe the characters that the client(s) should note. What are some similarities between the client and character?
4. Match the content of a film with therapeutic issues. Provide a rationale for why a particular film is being suggested. (You can choose to be more indirect with this but take caution in doing so.)
5. Pick films that clients enjoy.
6. Choose films that evoke inspirational moods.
7. Show characters solving problems
8. Content should be addressed prior to recommending a movie. There are movies with very good content that have been assigned “PG-13” and “R” ratings, however, for numerous reasons these may not be appropriate alternatives for adolescents and/or families. Discuss content that might be offensive. Language, sex, nudity, and violence are hot points. Switch films if clients object to the ones selected.
9. Clarify the intent when assigning a film in which a client might mistake the roles identification.
10. Tell clients that if they strongly dislike a film to turn it off. Admit inevitable mismatches quickly.
11. Take advantage of powerful indirect effects.
12. Ask clients to be on the lookout for films that may be therapeutically useful. When possible, let client’s select films.

### **SOME BASICS FOR PERSONAL USE**

1. Choose a problem from your present or past.
2. From the anthology of movies provided to you or some other source, find the category that most closely matches your problem.
3. Choose a film-it is not important whether you have seen it before.
4. If you wish, invite a partner or friend to watch it with you.
5. As you watch the film (with or without a partner or friend), reflect on it by yourself. If the film had a unique message to you, what was it? What new ideas for changing your behavior or actions do you have?

<b>SAMPLE MOVIE REFERENCE LIST</b>
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**Abuse**

Doloris Claiborne  
 Matilda  
 Radio Flyer  
 Sleeping with the Enemy  
 The Color Purple  
 The Prince of Tides  
 This Boy's Life  
 What's Love Got to Do With It?  
 Where the Heart is

**Addictions**

Clean and Sober  
 The Basketball Diaries  
 The Days of Wine and Roses  
 The Great Santini  
 Hannah and Her Sisters  
 Hoosiers  
 Leaving Las Vegas  
 The Rainmaker  
 Requiem for a Dream  
 Traffic  
 28 Days  
 When a Man Loves a Woman

**Adolescence (and transition into adulthood)**

Angus  
 Breaking Away  
 The Basketball Diaries  
 The Breakfast Club  
 Dangerous Minds  
 Deloris Claiborne  
 E.T.  
 Ferris Bueller's Day Off  
 Girl, Interrupted  
 Good Will Hunting  
 Hoosiers  
 The Graduate  
 Hoop Dreams  
 Inventing the Abbotts  
 Little Women  
 Matilda  
 My Bodyguard  
 October Sky  
 The Prince of Tides  
 Rebel without a Cause  
 Risky Business  
 Say Anything  
 Scent of a Woman  
 Sixteen Candles  
 Stand and Deliver  
 Stand by Me

**Adoption and Custody**

A.I. Artificial Intelligence  
 The Good Mother  
 Losing Isaiah

**Adversity**

Amistad  
 Saving Private Ryan  
 The Color Purple  
 The Hurricane  
 The Mighty  
 Schindler's List

**Aging**

Cocoon  
 On Golden Pond  
 A Trip to Bountiful  
 Wrestling Ernest Hemmingway

**Chronic Illness**

An Early Frost  
 Awakenings  
 Lorenzo's Oil  
 Mask (w/ Cher)  
 Philadelphia  
 Steel Magnolias  
 The Cure

**Death and Dying**

Corrina, Corrina  
 My Life  
 Phenomenon  
 Shadowlands  
 Terms of Endearment

**Disabilities**

Finding Nemo  
 Forrest Gump  
 I Am Sam  
 My Left Foot  
 The Mighty  
 Simon Birch  
 The Waterdance  
 What's Eating Gilbert Grape?

**Divorce**

Bye, Bye Love  
 First Wives Club  
 Kramer vs. Kramer  
 Mrs. Doubtfire  
 War of the Roses

**Mental Illness**

Birdy  
Dead Poet's Society  
Fried Green Tomatoes  
K-Pax  
Rain Man  
What's Eating Gilbert Grape?  
The Aviator

**Family Issues**

Fly Away Home  
Inventing the Abbotts  
Joy Luck Club  
Like Water for Chocolate  
October Sky  
Ordinary People  
Parenthood  
Stepmom  
What's Eating Gilbert Grape?

**Friends and Social Support Systems**

Circle of Friends  
City Slickers  
The Big Chill  
The Hurricane  
The Karate Kid  
October Sky  
The Outsiders  
The Tigger Movie  
Steel Magnolias

**Gay and Lesbian Issues**

The Birdcage  
Boys Don't Cry  
Boys on the Side  
Philadelphia

**Grief and Loss**

The Lion King  
The Horse Whisperer  
Mr. Holland's Opus  
Ordinary People  
A River Runs Through It

**Inspiration**

Bill Elliot  
Contact  
Field of Dreams  
Forrest Gump  
Gandhi  
The Hurricane  
It's a Wonderful Life  
Legend of Baggar Vance  
Life is Beautiful  
The Majestic

Malcolm X  
October Sky  
Patch Adams  
Pay it Forward  
Phenomenon  
Places in the Heart  
Powder  
Rudy  
The Shawshank Redemption  
Star Wars

**Intimate Relationships**

About Last Night  
Groundhog Day  
An Officer and a Gentleman  
Out of Africa  
Singles  
When Harry Met Sally

**Marriage**

The Bridges of Madison County  
The Four Seasons  
Mr. and Mrs. Bridge  
Tootsie

**Men's and Women's Issues**

Hook  
How to Make an American Quilt  
A League of Their Own  
Nothing in Common  
Thelma and Louise

**Parenthood**

Parenthood  
Searching for Bobby Fisher

**Prejudice**

American History X  
Do the Right Thing  
South Pacific  
To Kill a Mockingbird

**Resilience and Coping Skills**

Apollo 13  
Hoop Dreams  
The War

**Stepparenting and  
Extended Families**

Fly Away Home  
Stepmom

**Vocational and Work-  
Related Issues**

Apollo 13  
The Doctor  
Top Gun

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