

Dermer, S. B., & Hutchings, J. B. (2000). Utilizing movies in family therapy: Applications for individuals, couples, and families. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 28, 163-180.

Movies, like books, can be useful and inexpensive interventions in therapy. The advantages of using movies in therapy are discussed, as well as guidelines for integrating movies as intervention. In addition, the authors conducted a survey of clinicians in order to collect their suggestions for utilizing particular movies with particular presenting problems. Results of the survey are included in the appendix.

In the past therapists have found interventions that make use of popular culture helpful in connecting with something clients already know. Popular culture includes mediums that represent the ideas, values, and beliefs of a large segment of a given society. For example, television, books, art, comics, and other forms of mass communication represent popular culture. Because this type of communication represents a large segment of society and is usually easily available, it provides a vehicle for tapping common denominators among diverse groups. Therefore, mediators of popular culture such as books, poems, and music may be used to join, teach, and challenge clients.

A more recent addition to "popular culture interventions" is the use of major motion pictures. Cinematherapy, the use of film as an intervention, is an indirect approach that can be utilized to deal with a variety of presenting problems. Movies can be used to evaluate universal family concerns as well as issues specific to culture, class, gender, power, and sexual orientation (Lappin, 1997).

The purpose of this article is to explore the use of cinema as an intervention within the realm of individual, couples, and family therapy. Previous literature regarding cinematherapy and guidelines for its use will be discussed. In addition, the authors included, in the appendix, the results of their survey of the clinical use of cinema. The appendix is a compilation of the movies suggested by participants for particular presenting problems, rationales for utilizing a particular movie, and suggestions for who should watch the movie. Participants suggested a variety of movies for use with a wide range of presenting problems. In order to make the list more user friendly for clinicians, the authors grouped suggested movies by presenting problems.

USE OF CINEMA AS AN INTERVENTION

For over a century, therapists have made use of books to help clients overcome a wide range of problems. Recently, movies have been used for similar purposes. Both literature and cinema can be used to educate, normalize, reframe, and expand ideas. In addition, cinematherapy and bibliotherapy are creative and inexpensive therapeutic interventions. However, in spite of its usefulness, bibliotherapy may be losing some of its appeal in light of new technology. The use of motion pictures is emerging as a useful alternative to bibliotherapy.

Cinematherapy, simply defined, is a specific therapeutic technique that involves selecting commercial films for clients to view individually or with others as a means for therapeutic gain (Berg-Cross, Jennings, & Baruch, 1990). Others call the use of commercial films in therapy "Video Work" (Hesley & Hesley, 1998). Video Work is defined as using "films to facilitate selfunderstanding, to introduce options for action plans, and to seed future therapeutic interventions (Hesley & Helsey, 1998, p. 5).

Few authors write about utilizing cinema as an overarching concept. Instead, most authors have written about implementing specific movies as interventions (Christie & McGrath, 1987, 1989; Duncan, Beck, & Granum, 1986; Gunzburg, 1989; Turley & Dreyden, 1990), employing segments of movies as

examples of therapeutic concepts/processes (Fleming, Piedmont, & Hiam, 1990; Hering, 1994; Johnson, 1993; Lane, 1995; Lawrence, 1991; Leskowitz, 1983; Newby, Fischer, & Reinke, 1992; Swift & Wonderlich, 1993), or comparing their cases to characters or plotlines in movies (Friedman, 1981; Weimer & Lu, 1987). Although the literature on using films in therapy is not extensive, the popularity of film interventions is growing.

One of the reasons movies are finding their way into therapy is their versatility. Films typically have universal appeal, can be integrated into any therapy modality, and can be used in individual, couple, and family therapy. In addition, this type of intervention may be used with diverse client populations. Issues such as culture, class, gender, power, and sexual orientation can be explored through film (Lappin, 1997). The versatility of film creates the opportunity, for a brief moment, to experience the world through the eyes of another.

While therapy may be out of the realm of experience for many families, movies supply a shared language for both clients and therapists. Film provides an alternative means to create change in a nonthreatening manner and affords clients the opportunity to safely access alternative ideas and behaviors (Christie & McGrath 1987, 1989). In other words, therapists can use movies to externalize problems so that clients can deal with problems at a safe distance.

Guerin utilizes the idea of safe distance in displacement techniques (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998). For instance, he uses movies to help clients gain enough distance from their problems to see their contributions to their own role within a system. "If the proper aesthetic distance is maintained, people can become emotionally involved with a movie so that it has an impact but at the same time they remain sufficiently removed to be objective" (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998, p. 162). The therapist's job is to make sure clients do not underdistance or overdistance themselves from a film. Underdistancing results in an "emotional experience devoid of reflection," and overdistancing "leads to a lack of involvement and impact" (Nichols & Schwarz, 1998, p. 162). Basically, movies are beneficial because they can connect to clients on an emotional, cognitive, and/or behavioral level. A single movie has the potential to stimulate laughter, tears, and new thoughts. Christie and McGrath (1989) hypothesize that a movie's ability to impact clients "lies in the presentation of metaphor in a number of sensory modalities simultaneously, allowing people the freedom to choose their own level of metaphor and their own mode of therapy" (p.149).

Therapists can harness the potential of movies by helping clients view them therapeutically. Hesley and Hesley (1998) teach their clients to notice how characters and their relationships change over time, to pay attention to how characters influence each other, and to verbalize their identification with specific characters. They contend that the typical way of viewing movies, in the entertainment mode, is less powerful than teaching clients to view movies therapeutically. The potential for therapeutic effects lies in the clients attention to the process of the movie and characters.

GUIDELINES FOR UTILIZING CINEMATHERAPY

The process of using film as an intervention requires preparation. Special care is needed to insure the success of this technique. The authors offer guidelines in three stages: assessment, implementation, and debriefing.

Assessment

Complete assessment and joining (engagement) is essential to any type of successful intervention, and cinematherapy is no exception (Christie & McGrath, 1989). Assigning a movie should be based upon

therapeutic judgment regarding presenting problems, family hobbies and interests, and the goal of the intervention. Hesley and Hesley (1998) suggest asking clients to name movies they identified with and what kinds of movies they typically enjoy. The following outlines the process of assessing a family in order to utilize a movie as intervention:

1. Identify presenting problems and goals for therapy.
2. Assess strengths (i.e., interests, hobbies, activities, type of employment).
3. Determine clients' ability to understand the content of the film and recognize similarities and difference between themselves and the characters.
4. Take into account issues of diversity (i.e., culture, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender) when choosing a film.
5. Based on assessment, match clients with movies.

Implementation

Once a therapist matches an appropriate movie with a family, the therapist prepares to assign the movie. Therapists should watch the movie before assigning it to clients, be prepared to offer clients a rationale for viewing the movie, and make decisions about what subsystems should watch the movie (i.e., parents, children, whole family). The following are the basic steps a therapist should follow before assigning a particular movie:

1. The therapist should always watch the movie before assigning it.
2. Provide clients with a rationale for assigning a film.
3. Decide where, when, and with whom the movie should be viewed.

Debriefing

After the family views the movie, the therapist needs to process the family's reactions. Debriefing will vary based on the therapist's personal and therapeutic style. Below are general guidelines for following up on movie assignments:

1. Schedule a session soon after clients view the film in order to debrief.
2. Discuss clients' overall impression of the movie.
3. Process perceptions and thoughts about how the movie may or may not relate to clients' issues.
4. Explore the possibility of creating a metaphor based on the movie.
5. Generate ideas with clients about how information gained from the movie may help them think, feel, or behave differently.

SURVEY OF CLINICAL USE OF CINEMA

The idea of utilizing cinema in therapy may be an appealing one, but may also be daunting to those unsure of which movies to assign. Therefore, the authors of this article have compiled a list of movies that may be useful to marriage and family therapists or other therapists that see couples and families.

The authors sent letters and surveys to members of the Kansas Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, directors of accredited marriage and family therapy programs, and other family therapists who expressed interest in cinematic interventions. Those interested in participating in the survey were asked to provide basic demographic information and suggestions for movies to use in therapy. Participants listed movies appropriate for use in marriage and family therapy, were asked to briefly describe the presenting problem for which they would assign the movie, provide a rationale that they would give another professional for such an assignment, and list which family members they would ask to view the movie.

Thirty-seven people participated in the survey. The sample consisted of 33 Caucasian participants, two African-American participants, and one EuroAmerican participant (one participant did not identify his or her ethnic background). The average age of participants was 42.89 (SD = 12.47). Respondents had an average of 11.82 years of experience (n = 36; SD = 10.52) with a minimum of 0 years of experience and a maximum of 40 years of experience. The majority of respondents held a graduate degree (doctorate = 13, master's = 21) and three participants held undergraduate degrees.

Participants suggested a variety of movies for use with a wide range of presenting problems. In order to make the list more user friendly for clinicians, the researchers grouped suggested movies by presenting problems. The list is summarized in the appendix to this article.

CONCLUSION

Like any successful intervention, cinematherapy is an adjunct to good therapy. A "flashy" intervention is never a substitute for joining, assessment, and conceptualization skills. Therefore, the authors provided guidelines and suggestions for systematically integrating cinematic interventions into therapy.

Overall, movies provide an entertaining and creative way to engage and challenge clients. They can be used to educate, reframe, create metaphors, and to develop alternative solutions. Films supply a springboard for metaphorical and literal communication.

There is no denying the influence movies have in industrialized and postindustrialized society. For a couple hours a good film helps the moviegoer transcend his or her problems and enter into a world of unlimited possibilities. Both powerful therapy and powerful films have the potential to touch people on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels.

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[Appendix]

APPENDIX

[Appendix]

Abuse (Sexual and Physical)

Delores Claiborne

Presenting Problem: Domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Rationale: Depicts effects of domestic violence and sexual abuse in the family system.

Recommended Participants: Appropriate for individuals/groups who have perpetrated sex offenses or domestic violence.

Nuts

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Sexual abuse.

Rationale: Shows some of the processes around sexual abuse. Recommended Participants: Sexual abuse survivors.

Prince of Tides

Presenting Problem: Sexual abuse; emotional incest; family secrets, and violence.

Rationale: Demonstrates difficulty of adult children pulling away from incestuous parent, violence, and difficulty healing from sexual abuse.

Recommended Participants: Sexual abuse victims or family of abuse victim.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe

Presenting Problem: Verbal abuse and physical violence.

Rationale: Shows effects of physical and verbal punishment, alcoholism, and lack of communication.

Recommended Participants: Couples and adolescents. Adolescence

[Appendix]

(see also parenting, family-of-origin, transitions to adulthood, and values/ethics)

Amacord

Presenting Problem: Adolescent adjustment, identity.

Rationale: Demonstrates struggles, issues of growing up.

Recommended Participants: Parents and adolescents.

Don Juan DeMarco

Presenting Problem: Adolescent sexual fantasies.

Rationale: Normalize adolescent fantasies.

Recommended Participants: Parents, adolescents, and others working with adolescents.

[Appendix]

The Goofy Movie

Presenting Problem: Adolescent-parent struggles, child-parent struggles.

Rationale: Nonthreatening way for adolescent/child-parent/caretaker to experience the awkwardness and painfulness of being at two different development stages and making important transitions in life, parent-child trust issues.

[Appendix]

Recommended Participants: Children/adolescents and their parent/caretaker.

My Own Private Idaho

Presenting Problem: Teenagers who want to run away.

Rationale: Demonstrates the realities of leaving home and having to live on the streets.

Recommended Participants: Adolescents.

Rebel Without a Cause

Presenting Problem: Adolescent struggles: alienation, separating from parents, forming one's own identity.

Rationale: Normalizes some teenage struggles. In addition, this is a movie from many teenager's parents' generation, so it shows the similarities between themselves and their parents at that age.

Recommended Participants: Whole family.

Adoption

[Appendix]

(see also grief/loss issues)

[Appendix]

Free Willy

[Appendix]

5/16/08

Presenting Problem: Difficulties with adoption and dynamics of inclusion.

Rationale: Shows trials and joys of adoption for families.

Recommended Participants: Adopted children, families.

Gordy

Presenting Problem: Adoption issues, losses, grief issues.

Rationale: Characterizes the struggle of being without or separated from your family; show individual going through the ambivalence of being with those who want to care (physically and emotionally) for him and desiring to be with those who should care from him (at least emotionally).

Recommended Participants: Children/families struggling with losses, especially loss of a parent or adoption.

Affairs

[Appendix]

Scenes from a Mall

Presenting Problem: Infidelity and marital problems

Rationale: Humorous look at infidelity and marital difficulties.

Recommended Participants: Couple.

Something to Talk About

Presenting Problem: Affair.

Rationale: Demonstrates that affairs often emanate out of low marital satisfaction.

Recommended Participants: Couple.

[Appendix]

Aging and Ageism

[Appendix]

(see also adolescence and transitions to adulthood)

[Appendix]

Dad

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Aging parent, shift in parent-child roles.

Rationale: Punctuates the fears and losses of both parent and child when the parent loses some of his or her physical and mental capabilities.

[Appendix]

Recommended Participants: Individuals/families struggling with declining parent.

Fiddler on the Roof

Presenting Problem: Marital burnout and difficulty throughout the life span

Rationale: Fun movie that tracks family, marriage, and traditions.

Recommended Participants: Entire family and launching age children.

On Golden Pond

Presenting Problem: Aging and relationships.

Rationale: Shows how relationships change and need to be dealt with as the family grows older.

Recommended Participants: Families and couples.

Trip to Bountiful

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Age and ageism.

Rationale: Provides a glimpse at the thought processes and perceptions of elderly people.

Recommended Participants: Anyone with an elderly family member.

Used People

Presenting Problem: Issues related to adult children and their parents and the elderly getting remarried.

Rationale: Provides a humorous, yet realistic look at what can happen in blending families and the effect on the adult children of those who are getting married.

Recommended Participants: Adult children of those getting married.

AIDS

[Appendix]

The Cure

Presenting Problem: AIDS, grief, loss, and friendship.

Rationale: Shows how a strong friendship between two young boys can be a help in facing AIDS and death.

Recommended Participants: Anyone therapist considers old enough to gain value from the movie.

Philadephia

Presenting Problem: AIDS, issues around homosexuality, and dealing with prejudice.

Rationale: Help family look at a marginalized group and a marginalized disease.

Recommended Participants: Whole family.

[Appendix]

Conflict Resolution/Communication

In a Lonely Place

Presenting Problem: "Uncontrollable" anger in a marriage or relationship.

Rationale: The film does a good job of showing how extreme anger can poison a loving relationship.

Recommended Participants: Couple.

War of the Roses

Presenting Problem: Conflict resolution and communication.

Rationale: Demonstrates end result of dysfunctional processes.

Recommended Participants: Couple.

[Appendix]

Chronic/Terminal Illness/Physical and Mental Challenges

Don Juan DeMarco

Presenting Problem: Mental illness.

Rationale: Provides those dealing with the mentally ill (especially chronically mentally ill), the opportunity to empathize with the development of a nonorganic mental illness, diffuses the pathology of some mental illness, normalizes some of the behavior of the mentally ill.

Recommended Participants: Individuals/families dealing with a mentally ill family member.

Forest Gump

Presenting Problem: Achieving in spite of labels.

Rationale: The power of a mother's belief in her son and transcending challenges. Recommended Participants: Whole family.

Mask

Presenting Problem: Child with physical disability.

Rationale: Shows how someone can deal and overcome disability. Deal with differences in social situations.

[Appendix]

Recommended Participants: Children and parents.

My Life

Presenting Problem: Terminal illness and dying.

Rationale: Demonstrates dealing with loss of parent/spouse due to terminal illness.

Recommended Participants: Adults and adolescents.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Terms of Endearment

Presenting Problem: Coping with physical illness (especially cancer).

Rationale: Shows how families deal with terminal illness.

Recommended Participants: Adult family members.

[Appendix]

Divorce

[Appendix]

(see also remarried families)

[Appendix]

Bye, Bye Love

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Divorce adjustment or divorce therapy.

Rationale: Presents three styles of dealing with divorce.

Recommended Participants: Divorced or divorcing parents.

Four Seasons

Presenting Problem: Divorce, remarriage, midlife crisis, friendships, communication problems, and marital expectations.

Rationale: Demonstrates midlife development issues, and changing expectations and needs.

Recommended Participants: Couples in midlife.

Kramer vs. Kramer

Presenting Problem: Divorce and effects of parents on children.

Rationale: Displays difficulties in dealing with divorce.

Recommended Participants: Parents and children.

[Appendix]

Eating Disorders

Best Little Girl in the World

Presenting Problem: Anorexia.

Rationale: Shows family dynamics.

Recommended Participants: Whole families.

Family-of-Origin Issues/Transgenerational issues

Hannah and Her Sisters

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Family dysfunction, enmeshment, and alcoholism.

Rationale: Shows how secrets affect sibling relationships and parent-child relationships.

Recommended Participants: Siblings, emotionally distant or emotionally enmeshed clients, and clients with alcoholism in the family.

Home for the Holidays

Presenting Problem: Family-of origin is source of a lot of stress.

Rationale: Demonstrates effects of family systems and how people try to deal with it (cutoff, triangles, enmeshment, etc.).

Recommended Participants: Whole family.

It's a Wonderful Life

Presenting Problem: Conflicts between individual and family goals.

Rationale: Demonstrates family-of-origin loyalties; sacrifice for others; meaning in life; over/underfunctioning, and effects of sibling position.

Recommended Participants: Individuals and couples.

The Joy Luck Club

Presenting Problem: Generational transmission of patterns and mother-daughter relationship.

[Appendix]

Rationale: Shows how enduring patterns can be and the difficulties and strengths in mother-daughter relationships.

Recommended Participants: Women and mother-daughter dyads.

Like Water for Chocolate

Presenting Problem: Generational transmission of patterns, family myths, and mother-daughter relationships.

Rationale: Shows the effects of holding onto a family myth or family rule at the cost of individual members of the family and the well-being of the whole family.

Recommended Participants: Parents, whole family (not young children).

On Golden Pond

Presenting Problem: Differentiation from family-of-origin.

Rationale: Shows dynamics of power and maturity of adult children with their parents.

[Appendix]

Recommended Participants: Adult children and parents.

Moonstruck

Presenting Problem: Family problems and remarriage.

Rationale: Shows how family myths and individual decisions affect the whole family.

Recommended Participants: Parents, remarried couples.

Ordinary People

Presenting Problem: Multigenerational issues, grieving, loss, suicide, and parent-child issues.

[Appendix]

Rationale: Shows the systemic effects of problems across generations and within family subsystems on the entire family.

Recommended Participants: Whole family (not young children) and parents.

Parenthood

Presenting Problem: Differentiation and adult offspring's continued anger against parents for things that happened in childhood.

Rationale: Demonstrates multigenerational issues and how holding onto one's past creates anxiety.

Recommended Participants: Whole family and couples.

Raisin in the Sun

Presenting Problem: Intergenerational conflicts over racial/ethnic heritage.

Rationale: The film focuses on three generations of African-Americans as they argue how race affects each of them.

Recommended Participants: Whole family.

Friendship

[Appendix]

The Big Chill

Presenting Problem: Loss issues.

Rationale: Shows how a group of friends each deal with their grief differently and struggle together to deal with issues around loss and grief.

Recommended Participants: Adults.

The Cure

Presenting Problem: AIDS, grief, loss, and friendship.

Rationale: Shows how a strong friendship between two young boys can be a help in facing AIDS and death.

Recommended Participants:

Fried Green Tomatoes

Presenting Problem: Intimate relationships and self-esteem.

Rationale: Demonstrates the importance of taking the lead in one's life and making changes, the connectedness in relationships, and how important friends can be in life.

Recommended Participants: Whole family or individual women.

Steel Magnolias

Presenting Problem: Grief, loss, divorce, and cancer.

Rationale: Shows how a group of female friends maintain their relationship and support each other through "thick and thin."

Recommended Participants: Anyone who needs to build and understand friendships.

Grieving/Loss Issues

[Appendix]

(i.e. death, unmet expectations, and unmet goals)

[Appendix]

The Big Chill

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Loss issues.

Rationale: Shows how a group of friends each deal with their grief differently and struggle together to deal with issues around loss and grief.

Recommended Participants: Adults.

[Appendix]

Europa, Europa

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Family loss, identity issues, and struggle to survive.

Rationale: Demonstrates the effects of how one chooses to define oneself, the struggle with tremendous loss, and how resilient a person can be.

Recommended Participants: Adults and older adolescents.

The Fisher King

Presenting Problem: Grief and guilt.

Rationale: Presents concepts of atonement and ritual as necessary in the healing process.

Recommended Participants: People stuck in the grief process.

Gordy

Presenting Problem: Adoption issues, losses, grief issues.

Rationale: Characterizes the struggle of being without or separated from your family; shows individual going through the ambivalence of being with those who want to care (physically and emotionally) for him and desiring to be with those who should care for him (at least emotionally).

[Appendix]

Recommended Participants: Children/families struggling with losses, especially loss of a parent or adoption.

Lion King

Presenting Problem: Young child or adolescent trying to deal with the trauma of the past.

Rationale: Can help a struggling child appropriately place blame and help them learn from mistakes.

Recommended Participants: Adolescent or child and parents.

Mr. Holland's Opus

Presenting Problem: Loss of dreams and expectations.

Rationale: Shows how we sometimes get so caught up in what we think we want, that we don't realize we already have what should make us happy. Recommended Participants: Families, couples, and individuals.

Once Around

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Grief and loss.

Rationale: Demonstrates how a family can come together over loss.

Recommended Participants: Whole families.

Ordinary People

Presenting Problem: Problems with grief around loss of a child and suicide.

Rationale: Shows family dynamics around grief and suicide.

Recommended Participants: Whole family (children if they are a little older).

Steel Magnolias

Presenting Problem: Grief and loss of a family member.

Rationale: Demonstrates effects of loss on family, demonstrates support systems, and grieving..

Recommended Participants: Whole family (not young children).

Truly, Madly, Deeply

Presenting Problem: Grief over death of significant others.

Rationale: Deals with the difficulty in, and ultimately the need to, let go after grieving the death of a partner.

Recommended Participants: Family and, particularly, the partner of the deceased.

[Appendix]

Vanya on 42nd Street

Presenting Problem: A family in turmoil, dealing with failed hopes, lost expectations, and forgiveness.

Rationale: Looks at midlife issues.

Recommended Participants: Adults.

Intimacy Issues/Relationships

Crimes and Misdemeanor

Presenting Problem: Intimacy and love relationships.

Rationale: Shows the complexity of love relationships and efforts to repair the past in current relationships.

Recommended Participants: Couples.

Crossing Delancey

Presenting Problem: Being single and being pressured to get married.

Rationale: Demonstrates cultural pressures as well as how older singles can start a relationship.

Recommended Participants: Adults who are single and being pressured to get married.

[Appendix]

Fried Green Tomatoes

Presenting Problem: Relationships and self-esteem.

Rationale: Demonstrates the importance of taking the lead in one's life and making changes, and the connectedness in relationships.

Recommended Participants: Whole family or individual women.

How to Make an American Quilt

Presenting Problem: Difficulties with intimate relationships.

Rationale: Confronts fear and difficulties in maintaining intimacy, committing to adulthood, and resolving differences with one's mother.

Recommended Participants: Adolescent and adult women.

Il Postino (The Postman)

Presenting Problem: Finding love and meaning in one's life.

Rationale: A beautiful, poetic movie about the meaning of life.

Recommended Participants: Adults.

Marital Relationship

[Appendix]

Breathing Lessons

Presenting Problem: Marital issues and issues with adult children.

Rationale: Shows family dynamics.

Recommended Participants: Older couples with adult children.

Fiddler on the Roof

Presenting Problem: Marital burnout and difficulty in the life span.

Rationale: A fun movie that tracks family, marriage, and traditions.

Recommended Participants: Whole family and launching age children.

Forget Paris

Presenting Problem: Marital conflict, priorities, time, and career versus marriage.

Rationale: Shows how a couple having difficulty making time for each other fail and succeed in their relationship.

Recommended Participants: Couples.

[Appendix]

Four Seasons

Presenting Problem: Marital problems.

Rationale: Demonstrates struggles in marriage.

Recommended Participants: Couples.

Parenting/Parent-Child Relations

(see also adolescence, intimacy issues, and remarried families)

Bebe's Kids

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Discipline and parenting.

Rationale: Provide opportunities to discuss difficult situations.

Recommended Participants: Parents.

Breathing Lessons

Presenting Problem: Issues with adult children and marital issues.

Rationale: Shows family dynamics.

Recommended Participants: Older couples and adult children.

Dead Poets Society

Presenting Problem: Family relational issues.

Rationale: Demonstrates impact of power imbalance in a family system and how rigidity in one member can send a system out of control.

Recommended Participants: Parents and adolescents.

The Great Santini

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Father-son relationship, change in family structure and roles, and life cycle

transitions.

Rationale: Displays how roles and structure change with father's reintegration into the home and how the family's relationships change as they go through developmental transitions.

Recommended Participants: Families and parent-child dyads. Hook

Presenting Problem: Peripheral father.

Rationale: Addresses men, family, and balancing work and family issues.

Recommended Participants: Men struggling with priorities.

Parenthood

Presenting Problem: Parent-child problems across the family life cycle.

Rationale: Normalizes many of the parent-child problems that families face across the family life cycle.

Recommended Participants: Families.

We're Having a Baby

Presenting Problem: Transition to parenthood.

Rationale: Illustrates normal developmental processes in preparing to have children.

Recommended Participants: Couples.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

[Appendix]

Down Came a Blackbird

Presenting Problem: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) tied to torture or political repression.

Rationale: Powerful account of survivors of torture and healing process. Recommended Participants: Survivors and their loved ones.

[Appendix]

Fearless

Presenting Problem: PTSD.

Rationale: Demonstrates how PTSD occurs and the resulting symptoms, and how the symptoms can destroy a relationship.

Recommended Participants: Whole family or individual women.

Power and Control Issues

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf

Presenting Problem: Family issues of power and control.

Rationale: Shows effects of power and control issues on systems.

Recommended Participants: Couples.

Religion

[Appendix]

Europa, Europa

Presenting Problem: Issues around a Jewish identity.

Rationale: Shows the struggle and hardship an adolescent faces as he tries to hide his Jewish identity during the holocaust.

Recommended Participants: Individual young adults and adults.

Schindler's List

Presenting Problem: Transcending religious prejudice, courage under adversity, and sticking with one's values even when threatened.

Rationale: Demonstrates how people can transcend prejudice through value on life and humanness.

Recommended Participants: Families (not young children) and individuals.

Remarried Family

[Appendix]

Mrs. Doubtfire

Presenting Problem: Step-family issues.

Rationale: Depicts the struggle parents who are divorcing have around custody issues. Portrays the difficulties children experience in this situation. Recommended Participants: Divorcing parents.

On Golden Pond

Presenting Problem: Stepfamilies and dealing with aging.

Rationale: Shows the often typical challenges of step-family blending and aging. Recommended Participants: Families and couples.

Used People

Presenting Problem: Getting remarried and the elderly getting remarried. Rationale: Provides a humorous, yet realistic, look at what can happen when blending families, and the effect on adult children of those getting married. Recommended Participants: Families.

Sexual Assault

[Appendix]

The Accused

Presenting Problem: Sexual assault.

Rationale: Demonstrates that despite society's often implied message that victims "asked" to be assaulted, that no one deserves to be assaulted.

[Appendix]

Recommended Participants: Victim's family.

Substance Abuse

Basketball Diaries

Presenting Problem: Substance abuse and dependence.

Rationale: Shows adolescent drug abuse, cycle of substance abuse, and recovery.

Recommended Participants: Adolescents with drug problems and their families.

Leaving Las Vegas

Presenting Problem: Alcoholism, couple dynamics, traumatized individuals, and intimacy issues.

Rationale: Shows the effects of alcoholism on couple dynamics. Portrays disengaged/cutoff

relationships, lack of intimacy in relationships, and partner with trauma issues.

[Appendix]

Recommended Participants: Couples. Richie

Presenting Problem: Substance abuse and parent/child relationships.

Rationale: Demonstrates negative consequences of not addressing problems immediately.

Recommended Participants: Parents.

Under the influence

Presenting Problem: Alcoholism in the family.

Rationale: Shows alcoholics' maintenance and family dysfunction development and breakdown of denial.

Recommended Participants: For family system.

When a Man Loves a Woman

Presenting Problem: Alcoholism and codependency.

Rationale: Shows effects of substance abuse on marriage and vice versa.

Recommended Participants: Adult couples with substance abuse. Tolerance of Differences

[Appendix]

(Also see chronic illness/physical and mental challenges, religion, and values/ethics).

Babe

[Appendix]

Presenting Problem: Rejection, uniqueness, discrimination, handicap.

Rationale: Punctuates the value of being unique and different, questions the rules that guide the status quo, creates the possibility that those whom seem to have no common ground might have much to share with each other.

Recommended Participants: Individuals/families struggling with discrimination (whether the "victim" or the "perpetrator"), families with a handicapped member, larger systems dealing with sensitivity issues.

Hunchback of Notre Dame

Presenting Problem: Dealing with difference and physical disability.

Rationale: Help families and individuals deal with differences and especially physical disabilities.

Recommended Participants: Whole family.

The Jerk

Presenting Problem: Feeling like you don't fit in or transracial issues.

[Appendix]

Rationale: Uses humor to describe race problems and "fit."

Recommended Participants: Transracial parents.

Transition to Adulthood

Brighton Beach Memoir

Presenting Problem: Family developmental issues.

Rationale: Good look at the delivery stage of the family life cycle.

Recommended Participants: Whole family.

The Graduate

Presenting Problem: Issues of development and independence versus dependence.

Rationale: Shows a young adult's struggle with the transition to adulthood.

Recommended Participants: Whole family.

How to Make an American Quilt

Presenting Problem: Difficulties in transition to adulthood for young women, difficulties with intimate relationships, and mother-daughter relationships.

Rationale: Confronts fear and difficulties in maintaining intimacy, committing to adulthood, and resolving differences with one another.

Recommended Participants: Adolescent and adult women.

Values/Ethics

[Appendix]

A Few Good Men

Presenting Problem: Struggling with values of truth and justice. Rationale: Shows the search for truth despite lures to do otherwise. Recommended Participants: Individuals and families.

Pulp Fiction

Presenting Problem: Values and normalcy.

Rationale: Good provoking discussion around values and normalcy (the movie distorts both).

Recommended Participants: Groups of adolescents. Sabrina

Presenting Problem: Trouble focusing on what is really important in life or people who think they do not have time for love or happiness.

Rationale: Demonstrates idealism, living life to its fullest, focusing on happiness (not just money), overfunctioning/underfunctioning, and that sometimes not getting what you want is really a blessing.

Recommended Participants: Individuals.

[Appendix]

Scent of a Woman

Presenting Problem: People struggling with personal integrity.

Rationale: Demonstrates what happens to those who "sellout" and those who don't. Recommended Participants: Individuals who may be trying to rationalize their behavior.

Schindler's List

Presenting Problem: Transcending religious prejudice, courage under adversity, and sticking with one's values even when threatened.

Rationale: Demonstrates how people can transcend prejudice through value on life and humanness.

Recommended Participants: Families (not young children) and individuals.