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## E-motion Picture Magic: A Movie Lover's Guide to Healing and Transformation

by Birgit **Wolz**, Ph.D.; Glenbridge  
Publishing, 2004, 230 pages, \$23.95

**June Wilson, R.N., M.A.**

Film can be a powerful medium. Films can draw us out of ourselves and into another character, and when they are watched with conscious awareness—and self-exploration—healing and transformation can occur. This is the core premise of *E-motion Picture Magic: A Movie Lover's Guide to Healing and Transformation*, a comprehensive book that can be used as a self-help book or used by therapists as an adjunct to therapy. The author, Birgit **Wolz**, Ph.D., a psychotherapist with extensive experience with using film as a therapeutic tool, brings her knowledge about and passion for film to the book.

Watching a film with conscious awareness or increased awareness allows the viewer to be in touch with his or her emotions, whether these emotions are desired or undesired. Our reactions to film characters can provide self-awareness and further our personal growth. In addition, how or when a movie resonates with us is often as important as how or when a movie does not move us.

**Wolz** introduces practical questions with which to increase conscious awareness and become a more astute observer: Do you remember your feelings and sensations, or whether your breathing changed throughout the movie? Notice what you liked and what you did not like or even hated about the movie. Which characters or actions seemed especially attractive or unattractive to you? Did you identify with one or several characters? Were there one or several characters in the movie that modeled behavior that you would like to

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emulate? Did you experience something that connected or reconnected you with certain values, virtues, or capacities or inner wisdom, or your higher self, as you watched the film or immediately after? Did anything in the movie touch you? The fact that a character or a scene moved you might indicate that your subconscious mind is revealing information that might guide you toward healing and wholeness.

The book's chapters include "Using Movies to Release Negative Beliefs," "Building Self-Esteem, Grief, and Transformation," "How Film Characters Affect Us," "Self-Discovery Through Film Characters," "Powerful Tools for Healing and Growth," and "Creating a Cinematherapy Group." In addition, a comprehensive film index that includes recommended films for inspiration, personal questions, social questions, children, adolescents, families, and couples, as well as symptoms of mental illness and addiction and physical illness or medical issues, will be an invaluable asset for anyone who is interested in film and therapy. Some of the movies suggested for working on self-esteem and self-awareness are *The Other Sister* (1999), *Nell* (1994), *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002), *Good Will Hunting* (1997), *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), *Ordinary People* (1980), *Bounce* (2000), *Courage Under Fire* (1996), *Seabiscuit* (2003), *A Beautiful Mind* (2002), and *Billy Elliot* (2000).

**Wolz** possesses a deep understanding of why films are such a rich source of personal insight and self-discovery, and she articulates this clearly in *Emotion Picture Magic*. This book is different from other books that address the therapeutic use of film, because it incorporates visualization exercises and cognitive-behavioral guidelines that challenge one's beliefs and encourage behavior change, in addition to film recommendations for personal growth. The book will likely appeal to individuals who want to use films to enhance their self-discovery, as well as psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, or any other mental health professional who has a desire to learn more about the power of film.

## Footnotes

Ms. Wilson is a doctoral student in media psychology at the Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, California.

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