

## SECTIONS

[Front Page](#)
[News](#)
[Sports](#)
[Lifestyle](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[• Books](#)
[• Movies](#)
[• Movie Showtimes](#)
[• Music](#)
[• Theater](#)
[• Travel](#)
[• Arts](#)
[• Recreation](#)
[• TV](#)
[• TV's Best Bets](#)
[• Events Calendar](#)
[Business](#)
[Religion](#)
[Technology](#)
[Community](#)
[Classroom](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Columns](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Almanac](#)
[Classifieds](#)

## ISSUES

[PCBs](#)
[Incineration](#)
[McClellan](#)
[Message Board](#)

## SEARCH

[Search Archives:](#)
 
[Browse Articles](#)
[Web Directory](#)

## DIRECTORIES

[Star Homes](#)
[Local Churches](#)
[Local Businesses](#)

## SERVICES

[Get The Star](#)
[Advertise](#)
[About Us](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Terms of Use](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)

## FUN & GAMES

[Crossword](#)

## MOVIES

### Popcorn therapy: Therapy visits the reel world

By **Cassandra Braun**  
**Contra Costa Times**  
 12-05-2002

WALNUT CREEK, Calif.

“What would you do if you were stuck in one place and every day was exactly the same and nothing that you did mattered?” pleads Bill Murray’s character Phil in Groundhog Day.

Birgit Wolz asks the same question of her patients, but she adds an instructive spin by urging them to imagine how they would enrich their lives if they were “stuck” like Phil.

It’s one way the Piedmont, Calif.-based psychologist is using movies as therapy in the latest trend of the psychiatry world, cinema therapy. Wolz is introducing East Bay residents to the avant-garde methods with her Cinema Therapy Group.

Movies like American Beauty, Annie Hall and Dead Poets Society provide copious material for the eight-member group, which meets weekly for three months to discuss how the movies relate to issues in their lives.

Participants talk about why certain movie characters leave strong impressions, good or bad, and what that might say about their values and hopes. Movies can help clarify these questions, Wolz says, which can then be used as an im-petus for personal growth — or at least an awareness.

Wolz, who’s been a practicing psychologist for 10 years, was introduced to the therapy last year at a workshop, “Movies and Mythic Imagination: Using Films in Depth Psychology,” held at the Center for Symbol and Stories. It’s a professional psychology training group based in California.

“I was very inspired because I always use imagination in therapy,” Wolz says. “Movies are images that can be used in the same ways as dreams.”

Like dream interpretation, cinematic images can be seen as symbols that represent deep, unconscious expectations and anxieties, Wolz says. But she’s careful to point out that the counseling group is not appropriate for people with serious psychological disorders.

-- PARTNERS --



- [Cleburne News](#)
- [The Daily Home](#)
- [Jacksonville News](#)

-- AFFILIATES --

**STOCKS.COM**

Enter stock ticker  
to get a quote!

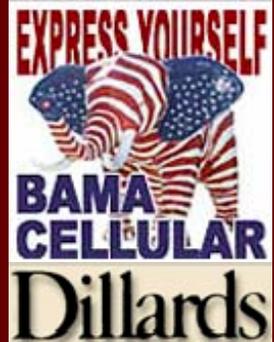
SDF MFS JF  
55 -1/4 11 -1/8

Search Now:

**amazon.com**

- [Top 100 DVDs](#)
- [Top 100 Videos](#)
- [Top 100 CDs](#)

-- ADVERTISERS --



[www.dillards.com](http://www.dillards.com)

Jigsaw  
 Puzzle Society  
 Make Me Smile

**WEATHER**

 [Current](#)  
[Radar](#)  
[Hourly](#)  
**34 F** [Past 24](#)  
[more...](#) [Video](#)

A movie fan herself, Wolz is well-aware how important these flickering images can be in a person's life. In fact, Wolz's favorite movie, Sliding Doors, was a powerful reminder to her of the diverse directions life can take.

The 1998 film stars Gwyneth Paltrow and plays with the classic "what if?" question, exploring the alternative path Paltrow's character would have taken if she had made a different last-minute decision.

If that film opened the door for a new future for Wolz, the classic baseball film Field of Dreams propelled her to act on it.

"Field of Dreams reminded me that it's really important to follow your inner guidance, as opposed to your fears. It gave me encouragement to pursue my dreams," admits the German native, who switched careers late in the game from economist to psychotherapist after recovering from a debilitating stroke.

"Sometimes we lose hope or worry how things are going to continue — a movie like that reminds us to really follow these dreams."

Some critics might argue that we do this already when we grab a rental copy of Terms of Endearment or Erin Brockovich.

True, says Wolz, but cinema therapy requires the movie viewer to take a more active role and consciously observe how the "reel" life reflects the "real" life.

Wolz admits not everyone is ready for "action," but at the very least the therapy gets people thinking and talking about questions they either couldn't talk about or weren't even aware were there.

"I've used movies in individual settings, but for me the inspiration came when I led groups," Wolz says. "When we discover things about ourselves with witnesses, it is very powerful. People inspire each other in the group. It can deepen the experience."

**Cinema therapy viewing tips**Therapist Birgit Wolz has these suggestions :

- **Prepare your viewing area. Clear things away and make sure you're comfortable.**
- **To help you focus on the present, observe your body and your breathing. Without forcing it, notice any areas of tension and try to release them through your breath.**
- **Try to turn off your inner critic.**

**2002**  
 Photo Album  
 GALLERY

  
 AMERICA REMEMBERS  
 MEMORIAL

  
 Feels like  
 Fall  
 GALLERY

  
 The New Star  
 OUR NEW HOME

Search our selection



Anniston Lincoln Mercury Dodge, 1229 S. Quintard (256) 236-7635

[News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Religion](#) | [Business](#)  
[Lifestyle](#) | [Classroom](#) | [Community](#) | [Obituaries](#)

Copyright © 1998-2002 Consolidated Publishing. All rights reserved.  
[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)