Danny Wedding

Movies and Mental Illness

Using Films to Understand Psychopathology

5th edition

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Movies and Mental Illness

About the Author

Danny Wedding, PhD, MPH, retired from the University of Missouri School of Medicine to become the Associate Dean for Management and International Programs at the California School of Professional Psychology, Alliant International University, San Francisco. In this role, he had oversight responsibility for psychology graduate programs in Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Mexico City. He subsequently chaired the Department of Behavioral Science and Neuroscience for the American University of Antigua School of Medicine and served in a variety of roles for the American University of the Caribbean in Sint Maarten. Danny is a retired navy captain who was a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellow, working in the Senate, and an APA Congressional Science Fellow, working in the House of Representatives. He is the former editor of *PsycCRITIQUES: Contemporary Psychology – APA Review of Books*, the senior editor for Hogrefe's book series on *Advances in Psychotherapy: Evidence-Based Practice*, and the coauthor of *Positive Psychology at the Movies: Using Films to Build Virtues and Character Strengths.* Danny's best-known book is *Current Psychotherapies,* now in its 11th edition. He lives in West Linn, Oregon, where he continues to write and lecture on the portrayal of mental illness in contemporary cinema.

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Dedication

For Ryan Niemiec and Mary Ann Boyd

Two wonderful colleagues who walked beside me on this long and fascinating journey ...

Acknowledgments

I am constantly writing about and discussing movies, and there are numerous friends and colleagues to acknowledge. Many of the new film entries included in each new edition of *Movies and Mental Illness* grew out of discussions with these individuals, especially those who are mental health professionals interested in the fascinating ways in which psychopathology is portrayed in film.

Rob Dimbleby, my Hogrefe editor, is an extraordinary publisher, a true visionary, and a valued friend. I appreciate his enthusiasm for publishing an expanded and enhanced fifth edition.

I am also grateful to Mary Ann Boyd and Ryan Niemiec, cherished colleagues and friends, who served as coauthors of the first four editions of *Movies and Mental Illness*. This edition is dedicated to the two of them. Their ideas and writing are found on almost every page, but I remain solely responsible for any errors.

Many people provided specific feedback or suggestions relating to the psychopathology or movie portions of the book. These comments helped me make solid improvements in this edition. Thanks go to my colleagues in two divisions of the American Psychological Association: The Society for Media Psychology and Technology, and the Society for the Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts. The members of these two divisions made multiple recommendations for films we have included in this new edition.

I benefited from hundreds of discussions about films with my oldest son, Joshua Wedding, and my peripatetic younger son, Jeremiah Wedding (whose decision to major in film studies was no doubt influenced by my habit of watching two or three movies each week). Kayley Harrington, Kristine Harrington, and Thomas Harrington also made numerous useful suggestions, along with their respective partners, Aaron Bach, Laurie Dukart, and Krystle Bartholomew.

I also benefited from numerous films discussed with my wonderful wife, Karen Harrington; she shares my passion for films (but not always my passion for films dealing with depression, pathology, and suicide). Karen's mother, Dorothea (Dody) Schwaiger, also helped with this edition – in part by walking away from several films after 15 minutes, helping Danny know when films were too confusing, provocative, or disturbing for the typical viewer (e.g., *Bone Tomahawk, The Snowtown Murders*, and *We Need to Talk About Kevin*).

Dr. Kimberly Kirkland arranged for me to spend the fall semester, 2022, in Sint Maarten (the Dutch side of the island) where I served for one semester as interim Associate Dean for student affairs for the American University of the Caribbean (AUC), a medical school where I have taught off and on for 20 years. I worked *very* hard, but my evenings and weekends were free (and lonely). This provided time to see dozens of films, and I was able to finalize this book while on the island.

Ms. Mounia Hanzazi, an AUC librarian, was also tremendously helpful in ensuring I had access to primary source material while away from my usual libraries and librarians.

This book has opened some incredible speaking opportunities. Drs. Moira Nakousi and Daniel Soto arranged for me to present talks on *Movies and Mental Illness* in Santiago, Chile; Dr. Catherine Sun invited me to keynote a conference in counseling psychology in Hong Kong; Dr. Saths Cooper invited me to present on the topic at the International Congress of Psychology in Cape Town, South Africa; Prof. Paul Crawford arranged for me to present at an International Health Humanities conference sponsored by the University of Nottingham; and I was able to present on the topic of bipolar disorders and cinema at the 12th International Review of Bipolar Disorders in Nice, France. The Nice talk coincided with the by-invitation-only

Cannes Film Festival (*Festival de Cannes*), and I was able to use a flyer for *Movies and Mental Illness* to establish my credentials as a serious scholar and a writer with a genuine interest in films.

Finally, I want to thank the seven individuals who translated earlier editions of *Movies and Mental Illness* into Spanish, Korean, Turkish, Japanese, German, Italian, and Polish.

I appreciate the feedback from my colleagues, friends, family, as well as the many readers who have taken time to share suggestions and opinions. I hope you will let me know when you come across a great film that should be discussed in the next edition.

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Foreword to the Fifth Edition

When Dr. Wedding asked me to write this foreword, I experienced the full range of what I guess are pretty predictable emotions. Rather than naming the rather embarrassing first iteration of my feelings, I'll ask you instead to picture my 5-foot 6-inch frame walking through the majestic woods of New Hampshire with a puffed-up chest and a spring to my step. I've written about movies for much of my career, and *Movies and Mental Illness* is the altar on which every mental health professional who writes about film has felt compelled to leave an offering. Dr. Wedding's book is a masterpiece. Nobody else has come even close to the scholarship, creativity, and almost impossible inclusiveness that await you in this fifth edition. As a result of this high, it took me longer than I'd care to admit to actually put pen to paper. Instead, I imagined over and over again that I had already written what would be the most celebrated essay in the history of the world that endeavors to discuss film and psychology. This, I recognized, was the Walter Mitty stage of writing. I was Danny Kaye in 1947 or Ben Stiller in 2013. The same Walter in both films, and both films perfectly capturing my state of mind. That's the magic of movies.

But next came anxiety and fear. After all, if I have placed this book on the altar, then it is, by definition, beyond description. Imagine trying to write an introduction to something for which your admiration has come close to worship. It is akin to describing something awesome, something that is in its essence uncapturable. The magic of movies struck again. This time nearly suffocating me in one of those groovy space suits in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. I was dumbstruck as I watched the planet Jupiter grow large and ominous, and my writing was delayed despite the pesky fact that the clock refused to stop ticking.

Like a delirious pinball, I ricocheted from one film to the next, looking to rescue myself from the paralysis of my task. I settled on the warnings of Captain Picard in *Star Trek: Generations*. Chatting with Commander Riker, Picard contemplates the passage of time. "Someone once told me that time was a predator that stalked us all our lives," he muses. And to be honest, I was awfully close to being captured and devoured by time's most pernicious weapon – that monster we call procrastination. But then I remembered that Picard, ever the optimist, turned the metaphor of predatory time on its head. "I rather believe that time is a companion," he tells us. "What we leave behind is not as important as how we lived." If we are talking about how we live, then it is here that I must confess that I have lived my life with and through the movies. My father took me to see *2001: A Space Odyssey* when it came back to the theaters in the mid-1970s. I have been enamored of Star Trek from the moment I had the capacity to turn on the television set by myself. Onscreen stories are inextricably tied to who and to what I am.

As I thought more about this foreword, I borrowed from the sense of responsibility and challenge that virtually every story about the intoxication of exploration has at some point unfailingly depicted. This assignment would not become the *game over* moment from *Aliens* that has come to exemplify giving up. This assignment would be my invitation to discover and to be amazed. My paralytic fear became Caliban's resolve in *The Tempest*. "Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments will hum about mine ears," he says. Rather than eschewing the island that made him, he embraces and celebrates the magic of his predicament. To me, Caliban's thousand instruments are the countless movies that have enriched my life. As if to prove my point, I noted that *The Tempest* has enjoyed more than five different movies adaptations, and I adore every one of them. If the deformed Caliban can look upon his island with wonder, then I can certainly write this foreword with the same spirit of discovery and awe.

By now you'll sense that the biggest impediment to my celebrating *Movies and Mental Illness* wasn't time, or grandiosity, or even my lingering fear of abject failure. The impediment was the subject itself. To borrow again from Shakespeare, the "past is prologue." I have never not loved movies. As such, I lose all sense of time when I thumb through this book. Wedding so seamlessly mixes the nuanced world of psychiatry with the nuanced world of movies that every time I sat down to write this essay, I would read a chapter or two, and then I was off to the cinema yet again. The wonder of our modern world is the immense and immediate accessibility of film. All you need is a laptop or a theater and a willingness to pay a few bucks. Because of this book, I discovered gems like *The Boy Who Could Fly*, revisited long forgotten favorites like *Birdy*, and soared through the clouds with the giddy and increasingly dangerous teens in *Chronicle*. In other words, every time I opened this book, I risked getting lost in at least three movies, each well over an hour long. I therefore feel this foreword ought to contain at least some form of warning. *Movies and Mental Illness* is that gift that at the same time becomes the best kind of trap. Hours will collapse as you read. You will turn to YouTube to search for the most obscure but illuminating movie clips. You will scan your local library for the DVD of that film that is no longer streaming. If you live in a rural setting as I do, you'll drive hours to see that one film that just happens to be playing at that funky arthouse cinema nestled like a shrine on Main Street in some small New England town.

The real impediment to this foreword is knowing when to stop reading and to start writing. For a psychiatrist, this book is like the table of luscious food in *Pan's Labyrinth*, but without the terror of the Pale Man to stop you from eating. Without the Pale Man's menace, you have infinitely more freedom than the girl in Guillermo Del Toro's haunting film. You can take more than just a grape. But with a feast like this at your fingertips, how in the world does one begin?

I suppose it is best to start with what is perhaps already obvious. Since humans have been humans, we've told stories. We had movies way before we had movie projectors. Homer describes each scene of *The Odyssey* as if he were intimately familiar with the local cinema in ancient Athens.

> But Odysseus aimed and shot Antinous square in the throat
> and the point went stabbing clean through the soft neck and out –
> and off to the side he pitched, the cup dropped from his grasp
> as the shaft sank home, and the man's life-blood came spurting
> out his nostrils –
> thick red jets –
> a sudden thrust of his foot –
> he kicked away the table –
> food showered across the floor,
> the bread and meats soaked in a swirl of bloody filth.

(Book 22, *Slaughter in the Hall*, translated by Robert Fagles)

My goodness, this could have been written by Quentin Tarantino! The magic of stories rests in their iterative dialectic. We hear or we watch the same tales again and again, and yet when these stories are done well, they feel as fresh as the break of day. Thank goodness for the endless creativity of humanity.

But there is another constant with which this introduction must reckon. The variety of stories that we tell is matched only by the variety of madness that we suffer. Depression, mania, psychosis ... these illnesses have been described for thousands of years. Say what you want about the flawed *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 5th edition (DSM-5). I will maintain that some form of the DSM was written long before the American Psychiatric Association (APA) claimed this catalogue as its own. Pathological states of mind have always been integral to our stories. In fact, I would go so far as to say that pathological states of mind are the *essence* of our stories. If you'll accept this supposition, then it stands to reason that movies themselves are perhaps our best and most accessible

modalities toward understanding representations of mental illness. They are also among the most jarring means through which we can observe the many ways that these illnesses and their treatments can be dangerously represented. Is *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) a warning against the cultural entanglement of the conforming lens of psychiatric diagnosis, or a celebration of the uncrushable potency of human individualism? The answer, I'd argue, is both. Not surprisingly, this iconic film is mentioned more than 20 times in *Movies and Mental Illness*.

What makes *Movies and Mental Illness* so special is that it goes beyond simply cataloguing the mental states that occur in movies. Wedding writes that *Cuckoo's Nest* shows us the dangers inherent in the powers given to psychiatric hospitals, and at the same time compares it with the 1948 film, *The Snake Pit*. He notes that the risk of inhumane treatment for psychiatrically ill individuals exists whether the person being treated is feigning the illness, as in *Cuckoo's Nest*, or quite authentically suffering from a psychiatric syndrome, as in *The Snake Pit*. These nuggets of truth are the golden bits of wisdom that rest within the pages that follow.

Stories are incredibly powerful, and stories told on the screen are perhaps the most powerful of all. Movies invite us and envelope us. They challenge us and they rescue us. There are hundreds of movies mentioned in *Movies and Mental Illness*, each one a different story, and each one a variation on the same familiar theme. After all, a good movie is nuanced and fresh and, simultaneously, recognizable and familiar. This book works because the same can be said of psychiatric illness. Each person suffering from mental illness is overwhelmingly different and relentlessly familiar. We know people who suffer. We *are* people who suffer. The thread that ties us to movies is the thread that ties us to each other, and that is the thread of common experience. As we sit currently in the midst of an epidemic of mental suffering, the thread of psychological anguish is an all too common experience. This is hardly a newsflash, but we must keep this in mind as we read this book. Movies represent

a potent arm in our arsenal toward fighting the stigma against mental illness. Movies can also help us to find new ways to understand and to treat psychiatric syndromes.

In *Spiderman*, Uncle Ben tells Peter Parker, "With great power comes great responsibility." That's what this book gives its readers: Power and responsibility. And to prove my point, it is worth remembering that this very sentiment was expressed in stories well before there were movie screens. In the first century BC, the fable of *The Sword of Damocles* tells us that Damocles becomes terrified when he is allowed by King Dionysius to occupy the throne for even a day. The responsibility of this power overwhelms him, and he gladly steps away from his brief stint as king. As with all good stories, this warning surfaces again and again throughout the millions of stories we've told each other since the beginning of time. From Damocles to Spiderman, we see through stories the responsibility we carry, and it is in this spirit that I ask you to enjoy this book. Read the following pages carefully, and watch the movies that you discover thoughtfully. If you teach about mental illness, this book should never leave your desk. If you are a clinician treating mental illness, this book should be among your most cherished guides. And if you suffer yourself, then let this book be your salve.

We are all in this together. We are all, all of us, teachers and clinicians and patients. Fortunately for all of us, this amazing book is written for whatever hat we happen to be wearing at the time that we begin to read.

Steven Schlozman, MD
Chief of Child Psychiatry
University of Vermont

Preface

Drama is life with the dull bits cut out.

Alfred Hitchcock

I wrote *Movies and Mental Illness* because of my conviction that films are a powerful medium for teaching students (in psychology, social work, medicine, nursing, and counseling), engaging patients, and educating the public about the fascinating world of psychopathology. In addition, I wrote the book because I genuinely love watching and talking about movies. While the title is *Movies and Mental Illness*, this book also addresses serious problems that do not reflect mental illness per se, including neurodevelopmental disorders, physical or sexual abuse, and violence.

The first edition of *Movies and Mental Illness* grew out of a series of lunchtime conversations between a psychiatric nurse (Mary Ann Boyd) and me. Inevitably, these conversations included some discussion of recent films we had seen, and whether we thought the portrayal of whatever illness was depicted was accurate. The notes grew into a series of index cards, and the index cards eventually became the first edition. Later, a gifted young psychologist and cinephile named Ryan Niemiec joined the team. Mary Ann and Ryan have both moved on to other projects, but I have persisted in watching hundreds of new films and adding some discussion of almost all of them to this edition.

There are numerous changes made to each new edition, in part because dozens of excellent films have been released over the 8 years or so between editions that need to be included in any book that purports to be both contemporary and comprehensive. Over a hundred recent films have been added to Appendix 6 that illustrate psychopathology. Although it is impossible to list every film depicting every disorder, the book identifies and discusses the most important films that illustrate or involve psychopathology. The reader will find a significant number of these new films discussed in the relevant chapters.

Films are remarkable pedagogical tools, and my students have always appreciated the time I have taken to collect and organize video clips to use in the classroom. For example, I believe watching Michael Haneke's *Amour* captures the pathos associated with caregiving with raw emotion and a vivid power that can never be had by simply reading about neuropathology.

One way to approach *Movies and Mental Illness* is to simply start with Appendix 6 and a highlighter, identifying interesting films, and then seeing what I have to say about them in the book.

I have updated the list of favorite films in each category ("Author Picks"). Mary Ann Boyd and Ryan Niemiec helped me identify these films. We did not always agree about which films were most important for readers to see, but we negotiated and debated each list and eventually selected around 10 films for each chapter that balanced artistic merit and clinical relevance. This addition is in response to the frequent requests for our recommendations for movies that can be used to help train mental health professionals and students from various health professionals.

I relied heavily on Rotten Tomatoes and the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) to refresh my memory on films that I had viewed years ago, or to get a second opinion regarding ratings for films.

I have continued to expand the sections on international films in each chapter. Often these films are more powerful and accurate than anything filmmakers in the United States have produced. I hope this will entice readers to watch more foreign language films; this is an especially interesting and rewarding way to learn about other cultures. In addition, watching foreign language films using Language Learning with Netflix (LLN) makes acquisition of a new language relatively easy and almost fun.

In discussing psychopathology, I occasionally reveal endings or surprise twists to films, and this may spoil these films for some readers. I apologize in advance if this occurs.

The book was originally designed to supplement core texts in abnormal psychology; if the book is being used in this way, the relevant core chapters in the primary text should be read before reviewing the corresponding chapter in *Movies and Mental Illness*. Professors using the text to teach psychopathology can download supplemental material (see Notes on Supplementary Materials at the end of the book for instructions on how to obtain them) including questions that can be assigned to students to answer before coming to class. In addition, each appendix is available to download and share with students.

I will occasionally present detailed and specific information about mental illness, but these facts are almost incidental to the discussion of the films themselves, and I have tried to avoid redundancy with the many fine textbooks that already explain psychopathology in considerable detail. I assume the reader will look up unfamiliar terms or discuss them in class, and I have not always defined each new term.

I am a clinical psychologist and a college professor, and I've found that the judicious use of films dramatically increases students' and clients' understanding of abnormal behavior. For example, when lecturing about alcoholism, I sometimes supplement my lectures with a "demonstration" of delirium tremens using *The Lost Weekend* to illustrate withdrawal, and Denzel Washington's character in *Flight* to illustrate tolerance. Before a lecture on bipolar disorder, I ask my students to watch *Touched With Fire* or *Silver Linings Playbook*. All four films provide intensity that simply cannot be captured by a classroom lecture or on the printed page. Likewise, when working with a client going through a divorce who becomes incensed over the behavior of their spouse, I might recommend watching *Kramer vs. Kramer* or *The Squid and the Whale*. A counselor working with parents attempting to understand and cope with their adolescent child's suicidality might consider reviewing *Boy Interrupted,* and the parent of a trans child might find *Cowboys* meaningful and relevant. I have found that discussion of films offers a wonderful way to open clinically relevant areas that have not previously been explored.

One of the best experiences of my professional life was spending a year teaching graduate students in psychology at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea. I taught a course on psychopathology using *Movies and Mental lIllness* as a primary text. A modified syllabus for this course in presented in Appendix 2. In addition, Appendix 3 lists a number of websites that your students will find interesting, relevant and useful.

I occasionally discuss obscure films when a small section relates in a meaningful way to the points made in the chapter. There are also classic films such as *Psycho*, *A Clockwork Orange*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* that have tremendous pedagogical value, and I take great pleasure in introducing a new generation of students to these movies. In addition, films such as *Pelle the Conqueror* or *Antonio's Line* are occasionally included, even when there is no direct connection to psychopathology, because the films are provocative and moving and are good illustrations of psychological phenomena. For detailed examples of these and other films depicting character strengths, resilience, and various positive psychological phenomena, I recommend a book I coauthored with Ryan Niemiec, *Positive Psychology at the Movies: Using Films to Build Character Strengths and Well-Being*, which discusses over 1,500 films. Ryan will be publishing a new edition of this book in the future as sole author; he is primarily interested in positive psychology, and I am primarily interested in psychopathology, and we have each agreed to serve as the single author for the book we feel most comfortable writing – that is, *Movies and Mental Illness* for me, and *Positive Psychology at the Movies* for Ryan.

Many readers will disagree with the ratings I have assigned films included in Appendix 6. However, it is important to remember that my ratings are based *primarily* on the pedagogical value of the film, and only secondarily on the film's artistic merit.

I am including my email address below, and I hope both professors and students will write to me after reading this book. I also hope those readers who share my enthusiasm about movies as a teaching tool will recommend additional films that I can include in the next edition of *Movies and Mental Illness*.

Danny Wedding, PhD, MPH
danny.wedding@gmail.com

Chapter 1

Films and Psychopathology

For better or worse, movies and television contribute significantly to shaping the public's perception of the mentally ill and those who treat them.

Steven E. Hyler

For contemporary audiences, attending movies is an experience that provides catharsis and unites the audience with their culture in much the same way that the tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus performed these functions for 5th-century BC Greek audiences.

Glen Gabbard and Krin Gabbard (1999)

Introduction

In all human perceptual experience, nothing conveys information or evokes emotion quite as clearly as our visual sense. Filmmakers capture the richness of this visual sense, combine it with auditory stimuli, and create the ultimate waking dream experience: a movie. The viewer enters a trance, a state of absorption, concentration, and attention, engrossed by the story and the plight of the characters. When someone is watching a movie, an immediate bond is set up between the viewer and the film, and all the technical apparatus involved with the projection of the film becomes invisible as the images from the film pass into the viewer's consciousness. The viewer experiences a sort of dissociative state in which ordinary existence is suspended, serving as a psychological clutch (Butler & Palesh, 2004) in which the individual escapes from the stressors, conflicts, and worries of the day. This trance state is further enhanced in movie theaters where the viewer is fully enveloped in sight and sound, and in some instances, experiences the sense of touch through vibration effects. No other art form pervades the consciousness of the individual to the same extent and with such power as cinema. Many consider movies to be the most influential form of mass communication (Cape, 2003).

Hollywood took the original invention of the cinematic camera and invented a new art form in which the viewer becomes enveloped in the work of art. The camera carries the viewer into each scene, and the viewer perceives events from the inside as if surrounded by the characters in the film. The actors do not have to describe their feelings, as in a play, because the viewer directly experiences what they see and feel.

To produce an emotional response to a film, the director carefully develops both plot and character through precise camera work. Editing creates a visual and acoustic **gestalt**, to which the viewer responds. The more effective the technique, the more involved the viewer. In effect, the director constructs the film's (and the viewer's) reality. The selection of locations, sets, actors, costumes, and lighting contributes to the film's organization and shot-by-shot **mise-en-scène** (the physical arrangement of visual images). Arısoy and Gökmen (2021) have described the ways in which lighting can be used creatively to enhance both significance and fear in horror films, using *Dogtooth* (2009) as an exemplar film.

The Pervasive Influence of Films

Humans are creatures whose lives cry out for meaning and purpose, and we impose meaning even on random and unconnected events. In 1944, psychologists Fritz Heider and Marianne Simmel made a simple animated film using two triangles, a circle, and a box. Each shape moved, seemingly in a random manner. They asked people to watch the short film and describe what was happening. Inevitably, these research subjects "interpreted the picture in terms of [the] actions of animated beings, chiefly of persons" (p. 243). In short, viewers *created a story*, even when none existed. *We need stories in our lives*, and movies provide a compelling vehicle for sharing these stories. David Carroll has noted,

> By creating stories of our lives, we construct the salient features of our social identity, our sense of identity in relation to the important others in our lives. Our ability to construct stories that highlight the central features of our lives is an essential part of what it means to be a human being living in a social world. (Carroll, 2013 , p. 121)

Film has become such an integral part of our culture that it is the mirror in which we see ourselves reflected every day. Indeed, the social impact of film extends around the globe, and movies produced in Hollywood are watched in movie theaters in Europe, Asia, South America, and Africa, often in remote and surprising locations. Traveling is a personal passion, and I was surprised – and delighted – when I gave

international lectures and discovered that many people in my audience had watched and loved many of the films I cherish.

The widespread popularity of online movies, streaming video (e.g., Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu), nominally priced Redbox rentals on street corners, the use of unlimited rentals for a monthly fee, and in-home, cable features like On-Demand make hundreds of thousands of movies available and accessible to anyone in the world (and certainly anyone with Internet access). We are no longer limited solely to the film selection and discretion of the corner video store. In addition, people now have wide access to films beyond Hollywood, including access to films from independent filmmakers, even those from developing countries. Moreover, with the affordability of digital video, neophyte and/or low-budget filmmakers can now tell their stories within the constraints of a much more reasonable budget without sacrificing quality (Taylor & Hsu, 2003); this increases the range of topics and themes that can be covered. Award-winning films such as *Gravity* (2013), *Rust and Bone* (2012), *The Revenant* (2015), and *Life of Pi* (2012) were all shot using digital video. However, some directors, such as Quentin Tarantino and Christopher Nolan, have been adamantly opposed to digital video, with Tarantino claiming, "If I can't shoot on film, I'll stop making movies" (Bramesco, 2016).

The current ubiquity of movie streaming is illustrated by the success of companies like Netflix, and Blockbuster's decision not to buy Netflix in 2000 has gone down as one of the biggest boardroom mistakes in corporate history. In 2010, Blockbuster filed for bankruptcy after losing $1.1 billion; at that time, Netflix was worth around $13 billion (Graser, 2013). Netflix's stock value has dramatically increased since then, although competition in the streaming market also has increased markedly, with companies like Disney, Amazon, and Apple all competing with Netflix.

Films have a greater influence than any other art form. This influence is felt across age, gender, nationality, and culture – and even across time. Films have become a pervasive and omnipresent part of our society, and yet people often have little conscious awareness of the profound influence the medium exerts.

Films are especially important in influencing the public perception of mental illness, because many people are uninformed about the problems of people with mental disorders, and the media tend to be especially effective in shaping opinion in those situations in which strong opinions are not already held (Heath, 2019). Although some films present sympathetic portrayals of people with mental illness and those professionals who work in the field of mental health (e.g., *The Three Faces of Eve*, *David and Lisa*, *Ordinary People*, and *A Beautiful Mind*), many more do not. Individuals with mental illness are often portrayed as aggressive, dangerous, and unpredictable; psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, and other health professionals who work with these patients are often portrayed as "arrogant and ineffectual," "cold-hearted and authoritarian," "passive and apathetic," or "shrewd and manipulative" (Niemiec & Wedding, 2006; Wedding, 2017). Psychiatrists are often negatively portrayed in the cinema (Gabbard & Gabbard, 1999), and psychoanalysts have been ridiculed and misrepresented in numerous films (Sabbadini, 2015).

Films such as *Psycho* (1960) perpetuate the continuing confusion about the relationship between schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder (formerly multiple personality disorder); *Friday the 13th* (1980), *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), and *The Adopted One* (2020) all perpetuate the pernicious misconception that people who leave psychiatric hospitals are violent and dangerous; movies such as *The Exorcist* (1973) suggest to the public that mental illness is the equivalent of possession by the devil; and films like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) make the case that psychiatric hospitals are simply prisons in which there is little or no regard for patient rights or welfare. These films in part account for the continuing stigma of mental illness. Many of these themes are explored in Sharon Packer's book *Mental Illness in Popular Culture* (Packer, 2017).

Stigma is one of the reasons that so few people with mental problems receive help (Corrigan, 2018). The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) estimates that only half of those with mental disorders reach out for help with their problems, even though many current treatments for these disorders are inexpensive and effective (NIMH, 2023). In addition, there is still a strong tendency to see patients with mental disorders as the cause of their own disorders – for example, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) has polling data that indicate that about one in three US citizens still conceptualizes mental illness in terms of evil and punishment for misbehavior.

Psychiatrist Peter Byrne (2009) has pointed out that films rarely portray mental illness or mental health practitioners accurately, but he also makes the compelling point that the job of a director is to create a film that will generate revenue for producers and investors, and it is not necessarily their job to educate the public. Byrne has described five rules of movie psychiatry:

1. Follow the money: Filmmaking is a commercial enterprise and producers may include inaccurate representations in their films to "give the public what they want".
2. Film begets film: Every new film draws on previous films within the genre.
3. Skewed distribution hides more films than censorship ever did.
4. There are no mental health films, just mental illness ones.
5. If it bleeds, it leads: Violence, injury and death often ensure prominence of a story in both news and film. (Byrne, 2009, pp. 287–288)

Byrne's points are well-taken, although I would challenge Number 4, because Ryan Niemiec and I wrote a book titled *Positive Psychology at the Movies* (Niemiec & Wedding, 2014) in which we document over 1,500 movies that display character strengths and other healthy aspects of human psychology, including positive mental health. This edition of *Movies and Mental Illness* also describes many films that offer positive depictions of mental health, and Dr. Niemiec has followed up our positive psychology book with a 2020 article in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* titled "Character Strengths Cinematherapy: Using Movies to Inspire Change, Meaning, and Cinematic Elevation" (Niemiec, 2020).

Positive Psychology at the Movies is clearly an exception, however. Most books, like *Movies and Mental Illness*, focus on negative depictions of mental illness. Johnson and Walker (2021), as editors of a recent book titled *Normalizing Mental Illness and Neurodiversity in Entertainment Media: Quieting the Madness*, examine those films in which portrayals of mental, emotional, and developmental disabilities succeed.

Movies can portray powerful role models that can be especially meaningful for children and young people. *Black Panther* (2018) and *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* (2022) are two examples. Both films are based on positive representations of Black culture. Zakia Gates (2022) noted that *Black Panther* promotes belief in Black power, excellence, and intelligence, and the film offers a role model of a Black female scientist, in the character of Suri. They note that there are few such models of Black male scientists, and ask: "If LeBron James conducted a critical analysis using physics and mathematics to make a 3-point shot, then what is the likelihood that young Black males' interest in the STEM programs would increase?" (p. 115).

Cinematic Elements

A film director must consider countless technical elements in the making of a film, often orchestrating hundreds of people, many of whom monitor and pass down orders to hundreds or thousands of other collaborators. However, there are three general phases involved in making a film.

The time spent prior to filming in the **preproduction phase** is often seen as the most important. Many directors *storyboard* (draw out) every shot, and choreograph every movement for each scene to be filmed. Countless meetings with each technical supervisor (e.g., cinematographer, costume designer, set designer, electrician) are held to facilitate preparation, coordination,

and integration. The director will also scout out locations, work to cast appropriate actors for the various roles, and may rework the screenplay.

In the **production phase**, the director attempts to film their vision, working closely with the actors and actresses to encourage, stimulate, guide, or alter their work, while carefully monitoring camera angles, lighting, sound, and other technical areas.

In the **postproduction phase**, editing and laying out the musical score and background sounds are major areas of focus. The director integrates each of these elements while working to honor the original purpose, message, and underlying themes of the film.

Some of the most important cinematic elements are summarized with film examples in Table 1. Of course, these three phases exclude

Table 1. Film elements with movie examples

Film element	Explanation	Classic example	Recent example
Themes	Overall meaning, messages, motifs (e.g., love, good vs. evil)	*It's a Wonderful Life* (1946)	*Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019); *The Tale* (2018)
Cinematography	Visual appeal, framing, camera work, lighting	*Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)	*Roma* (2018); *1917* (2019); *Nightmare Alley* (2021); *Oppenheimer* (2023)
Pacing	Movement, fluidity	*Jaws* (1975); *Fargo* (1996)	*1917* (2019); *Marriage Story* (2019)
Sound	Music, score, sound effects	*Ben-Hur* (1959); *Jaws* (1975)	*Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018); *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi* (2022)
Mood	Tone, atmosphere	*M* (1931)	*The Snowtown Murders* (2012); *The Lighthouse* (2019)
Art	Set design, costumes	*Star Wars* (1977)	*Little Women* (2019); *West Side Story* (2021)
Dialogue	Conversation, modes of communication	*Annie Hall* (1977); *Pulp Fiction* (1994)	*Green Book* (2018); *Belfast* (2021)
Acting	Character portrayal, depth and quality, casting	*The Philadelphia Story* (1940)	*Joker* (2019); *Nomadland* (2020); *The Power of the Dog* (2021)
Editing	Continuity, transitions	*Citizen Kane* (1941)	*Ford v. Ferrari* (2019); *Tick, Tick … BOOM!* (2021)
Screenplay	Storyline, plot; original or adapted to the screen	*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)	*The Power of the Dog* (2021); *Minari* (2020)
Direction	All elements together, quality of film overall	*A Clockwork Orange* (1971)	*Parasite* (2019); *The Power of the Dog* (2021)

countless other tasks involving financing, budgeting, marketing, and other business, administrative, consulting, and legal aspects. A mental health consultant may be used with certain films and may play a key role in any phase, particularly involving fine-tuning the screenplay and helping the director and actors understand psychological and related phenomena; I believe mental health consultants should be sought out for *every* film portraying a psychological condition or a therapeutic encounter. Unfortunately, such consultants are sorely underutilized in cinema. However, the directors of films such as *A Beautiful Mind*, *Antwone Fisher*, and *Analyze This* did use psychologists and/or psychiatrists as consultants. Stephen Sands, a pediatric neuropsychologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York was a technical adviser for *Analyze That* (2002), starring Billy Crystal as a psychiatrist and Robert De Niro as a mobster. "De Niro was so eager to accurately portray mental illness that he visited a psychiatric hospital where Sands worked and participated in a group therapy meeting" (Stringer, 2016).

Directors attempt to artfully integrate the technical elements of sound, camera, and lighting fluidly with the plot, themes, pacing, and tone of the film, while eliciting quality acting performances. Danis Tanovic, director of a film that won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, *No Man's Land* (2001), about the Bosnian-Serbian war, speaks to many of these elements as he describes the shock and disharmony of the war that he attempted to depict in his film:

> This shock is something I have reproduced through my film. On one side, a long summer day – perfect nature, strong colors – and on the other, human beings and their black madness. And this long, hot summer day reflects the atmosphere of the film itself. Movements are heavy, thoughts are hard to grasp, time is slow and tension is hiding – hiding but present. When it finally explodes, it is like fireworks – sudden, loud, and quick. Panoramic shots of landscape become unexpectedly mixed with nervous details of action. It all lasts for a moment or two, and then tension hides again, waiting for the next opportunity to surprise. Time slows down again. (Danis Tanovic, quoted in the DVD insert for *No Man's Land*)

Changes in color and sound significantly impact the viewer's experience of a film. Butler and Palesh (2004) offer the example of Steven Spielberg's manipulation of these cinematic elements in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). In addition to screams turned slowly into sobs or mumbles, colors are subdued to an almost black-and-white appearance so that when red is introduced in the battle scenes amid the muted background, the depiction of the reality of war becomes even more vivid for the viewer.

For the most skilled directors, virtually everything that the camera "sees" and records is meaningful. The sense of subjective experience produced by a sequence of **point-of-view** shots facilitates the viewer's identification with the film's characters, their perceptions, and their circumstances. Extreme **close-up shots** and a variety of **panning techniques** facilitate the importance of an emotional expression or inner conflict or develop pacing for the film. **High-angle and low-angle shots** give emphasis to character control, power, strength, weakness, and a variety of other dynamics. For example, in *American Beauty* (1999), high-angle shots are used at the beginning of the film focused on Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey) to indicate a passiveness and submission to authority prior to his transformation to a strong-willed, commanding character. In *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), a high-angle shot of Andy Dufresne in the rain with his arms raised symbolizes redemption and makes the character appear Christ-like (see Figure 1). High-angle shots were also often used in Alfred Hitchcock's films, and they – like his cameo appearances – became part of his cinematic signature.

Contrast this image with a different low-angle shot also reminiscent of the crucifixion of Christ in *Cool Hand Luke* (1967; see Figure 2).

Each viewer possesses unique perceptual preferences, prior knowledge about the film's content, and preconceptions about the images the film contains that mediate their perceptions

Figure 1. High-angle shot from *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994, Castle Rock Entertainment). Produced by Liz Glotzer, David V. Lester, and Niki Marvin. Directed by Frank Darabont.

and experience. Rarely, if ever, do any two viewers have an identical experience when viewing the same film. Each viewer subjectively selects, attends to, and translates the visual and acoustic images projected in a theater into their own version of the story. Often viewers are affected by, or identify with, the film's characters so strongly that it appears clear that the defense mechanism of **projection** is present. This process is facilitated when the viewer can anticipate the storyline, the plot, or the outcome. The avid moviegoer quickly realizes familiar themes, similar settings, and "formulas" for plots and endings across a variety of films.

Figure 2.
Low-angle shot from *Cool Hand Luke* (1967, Jamel Productions). Produced by Gordon Carroll and Carter De Haven Jr. Directed by Stuart Rosenberg.

Some Films and Some Characters Defy Easy Classification

Although I have tried to pick excellent teaching films, some movies have characters that defy our attempts to label them. A recent example is *Oppenheimer* (2023), Christopher Nolan's magnificent exploration of the life and challenges faced by J. Robert Oppenheimer, father of the automatic bomb (Figure 6). The film is based on a biography by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin, *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer*. (Prometheus was a demigod who offended Zeus by giving fire to mortals; he was punished by being chained to a rock where an eagle fed each day upon his liver, only to have it grow back each night. Eventually, Prometheus was freed by Hercules.)

Nolan's film hints at some of the mental health problems Oppenheimer confronted during his very distinguished career. In graduate school he suffered a substantial depression characterized by dramatic and, at times, bizarre behavior (Werner, 2005). While training in the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, he is alleged to have poisoned an apple that he left to be eaten by his mentor, Patrick Blackett. Fortunately, he has second thoughts and returned to the lab to retrieve the apple before it was eaten. At one point in the mid-20's, Oppenheimer was diagnosed with **dementia praecox**, a condition that today we call schizophrenia.

> **"I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita; Vishnu is trying to persuade the prince that he should do his duty, and to impress him, takes on his multiarmed form and says, 'Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.'"**
>
> **J. Robert Oppenheimer learned Sanskrit to more fully appreciate the *Bhagavad Gita***

Oppenheimer was clearly a genius – like John Nash – and we are reminded that mental health challenges can affect any of us. The fact that his life and his various diagnoses could fit any one

Figure 6.
Oppenheimer (2023, Universal Pictures). Produced by Emma Thomas, Charles Roven, Christopher Nolan. Directed by Christopher Nolan.

of three chapters in this book (schizophrenia spectrum disorders, mood disorders, or post-traumatic stress disorder following the bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki) underscores the complexity of the brain and behavior.

It is interesting to note that Oppenheimer gave an invited address at the 63rd annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in San Francisco in 1955. He remarked,

> Psychology, to everyone who works in the field, is felt to be a new subject in which real progress and real objectivity are recent. Physics is, perhaps, as old as the sciences come; physics is reputed to have a large, coherent, connected corpus of certitudes. This does not exist in psychology, and only the beginnings of it, the beginnings of things that are later going to be tied together, are now before us. (p. 128)

Mental Illness, Mental Health, and the Human Condition

Arango et al. (2021) developed a **comprehensive atlas of risk and protective factors** for mental disorders in which they identified numerous predictors for various mental disorders. The most robust predictors were as follows: for **dementia**, risk factors included type 2 diabetes mellitus, depression, and low frequency of social contacts; for **opioid use disorders**, tobacco smoking; for **nonorganic psychotic disorders**, cannabis use and childhood adversities; for **depressive disorders**, widowhood, sexual dysfunction, childhood physical and sexual abuse, job strain, obesity, and sleep disturbance; for **autism spectrum disorder (ASD)**, maternal overweight pre/during pregnancy; for **attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)**, maternal pre-pregnancy obesity, maternal smoking during pregnancy, and maternal overweight pre/during pregnancy; while for **Alzheimer's disease**, the sole robust protective factor was high physical activity.

Mental illnesses, like those listed above, are among the most fascinating phenomena a filmmaker can depict on screen. There is, of course, much more to the human condition than psychopathology and what is going wrong with individuals. The positive aspects of human beings – happiness, achievement, talents, character strengths, interests, etc. – should not be viewed as mutually exclusive from mental struggles and disorders. Indeed, both can co-occur, and certainly one (i.e., positive psychology) can frequently benefit the other (i.e., mental disorders). In fact, while mental disorders are associated with lower levels of happiness, most people with mental disorders are happy. Elevated levels of distress do not preclude happy moods, and happiness does predict recovery from mental disorders (Bergsma et al., 2011).

In another book, *Positive Psychology at the Movies: Using Films to Build Character Strengths and Well-Being* (Niemiec & Wedding, 2014), Ryan Niemiec and I focus on what is right with people, and review nearly 1,500 cinematic portrayals of triumph, virtue, and positive influence. We use the VIA Classification system from the work *Character Strengths and Virtues* (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) of 24 universal character strengths, and discuss important cinematic examples of each (e.g., creativity, curiosity, kindness, fairness, etc.). Indeed, there is an overlap with the discussion here, as individuals with mental illness have character strengths and virtues (like all people) and often use their strengths to overcome mental adversity. Character strengths buffer people from vulnerabilities that can lead to depression and anxiety, such as the need for approval and perfectionism (Huta & Hawley, 2010). The specific character strengths of hope, kindness, social intelligence, self-regulation, and perspective buffer against the negative effects of stress and trauma (Park & Peterson, 2009). Such films are often truer to the human condition, as they are less likely to offer one-dimensional portrayals or shock-value sensationalism, and more likely to reveal the complexity and intrigue of what it means to be human. Films like *A Beautiful Mind* (2001) offer a compelling portrayal of schizophrenia, but this

film also illustrates the character strengths of love, bravery, and perseverance. See Table 7 for examples of films that speak clearly to both dimensions of the human condition.

Table 7. Films portraying psychopathology as well as character strengths and virtues

Film	Psychopathology	Virtue	Character strength(s)
Elling (2001)	Anxiety disorder	Courage	Bravery and perseverance
Away From Her (2006)	Dementia	Humanity	Love
Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters (1985)	Suicide	Temperance	Self-regulation
Canvas (2006)	Schizophrenia	Wisdom and transcendence	Creativity and hope
The Soloist (2009)	Schizophrenia	Wisdom	Creativity
Insomnia (2002)	Sleep disorder	Courage	Bravery and perseverance
American Beauty (1999)	Mood disorder	Transcendence	Appreciation of beauty
It's a Wonderful Life (1946)	Adjustment disorder	Transcendence	Gratitude and hope
A Clockwork Orange (1971)	Personality disorder	Wisdom and transcendence	Curiosity and appreciation of excellence

Top 10 Mental Illness Films

The Lost Weekend (1945)
Vertigo (1958)
Psycho (1960)
A Clockwork Orange (1971)
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)
Apocalypse Now (1979)
A Beautiful Mind (2001)
Black Swan (2010)
Silver Linings Playbook (2012)
The Father (2020)

Films Illustrating Psychopathology

Contents

Key to Ratings

ΨΨΨΨΨ	A must-see film that combines artistry with psychological relevance
ΨΨΨΨ	Highly recommended both as art and as professional education
ΨΨΨ	A good film that will interest almost any mental health professional
ΨΨ	Mildly interesting and somewhat educational; possibly worth your time
Ψ	Description provided for your information only; don't bother with the film

Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Adam (2009) Drama–Romance   ΨΨΨ
Beth gradually falls in love with Adam, a high-functioning man with autism spectrum disorder, but she eventually decides she can't make a permanent commitment to him. The film is sympathetic in its portrayal of Adam and is genuinely helpful in illustrating some of the challenges faced by highly intelligent people coping with autism spectrum disorder.

Antonia's Line (1995) Comedy   ΨΨΨ
A film with unforgettable characters, including Loony Lips and Dede, two people with intellectual disabilities who fall in love and get married. The film is a joyful celebration of life and family.

Any Day Now (2012) Drama   ΨΨ
Two gay men in a loving, committed relationship must fight to maintain custody of the special needs son they adopt. Based on a true story.

Being There (1979) Comedy   ΨΨΨ
Peter Sellers plays the role of a gardener with borderline IQ who finds himself caught up in a comedy of errors in which his simple platitudes are mistaken for wisdom. This film is a precursor to *Forrest Gump*.

Ben X (2007) Drama   ΨΨΨ
A young man with an autism spectrum disorder loses himself in videogames while plotting revenge on his classmates who torment him.

Best Boy (1979) Documentary   ΨΨΨ
Ira Wohl's moving tribute to his cousin (a man with an intellectual disability) examines the options facing the young man when his father dies, and his aging mother is no longer able to care for him. This film won an Academy Award for Best Documentary film.

Best Man: "Best Boy" and All of Us Twenty   ΨΨΨ
Years Later (1997) Documentary
A sequel to the 1979 film, *Best Boy*, documenting that director Ira Wohl's cousin has a rich, full, and meaningful life, despite his cognitive limitations.

Beyond Borders (2009, Belgium) Drama   ΨΨΨ
A short film that interweaves three stories – those of a boy with an intellectual disability (Down syndrome), a woman with multiple sclerosis, and a blind man. The common theme that binds them is the importance of positive relationships.

Big White, The (2005) Drama/Crime   Ψ
Black comedy starring Robin Williams, Holly Hunter, Giovanni Ribisi, and Woody Harrelson. Margaret (Hunter) is diagnosed with Tourette's disorder (although it doesn't match DSM-5 criteria); she has little self-control over her verbal outbursts.

Bill (1981) Biography   ΨΨ
Mickey Rooney won an Emmy for playing a man with an intellectual disability who was forced to leave an institution after 46 years in this made-for-TV movie.

Black Balloon, The (2008, Australia)
Drama–Romance   ΨΨΨΨ
A teenage boy in a dysfunctional family copes with the challenges of caring for his brother with autism spectrum disorder while his mother is bedridden because of pregnancy. The film provides excellent illustrations of the combined stresses of adolescence and caregiving.

Boy Who Could Fly, The (1986) Fantasy   ΨΨ
Love story about the affection that develops between a teenage girl whose father has just committed suicide and a new neighbor who is autistic.

Breaking and Entering (2006) Drama   ΨΨΨ
A Bosnian boy robs an architect who secretly follows the young thief home and eventually becomes involved with the boy's mother. The architect and his live-in girlfriend are raising her adolescent daughter who has a pervasive developmental disorder, but the stress of caring for the child interferes with the adults' relationship. The film also depicts seasonal affective disorder.

Charly (1968) Drama   ΨΨΨ
Cliff Robertson won an Oscar for his role as a man with an intellectual disability who is transformed into a genius, only to find himself eventually returning to his previous level of disability. (Compare this film with *Molly* [1999] and *Flowers for Algernon* [2000].)

Charlie Bartlett (2007)   Ψ
A teenage boy is diagnosed with ADHD and prescribed Ritalin. He eventually teams up with another boy to begin selling the drug to his classmates.

Child Is Waiting, A (1963) Drama   ΨΨ
Burt Lancaster and Judy Garland star in this film about the treatment of children with intellectual disabilities living in institutions.

City of Lost Children, The (1995, France)
Fantasy–Drama   ΨΨΨ
A mad scientist is aging prematurely so he tries to capture children to steal their dreams. The circus strongman

named One (Ron Perlman), who has a developmental disability, teams up with a bold, bright young girl to save the children.

Crip Camp (2020) Documentary   ΨΨΨΨ
A wonderful film about the development and history of Camp Jened, a summer camp in the Catskills for young people with various disabilities. The history of the disability rights movement is beautifully documented.

"There was a romance in the air if you wanted to experience it. I never dated outside of camp. But at Jened, you could have make-out sessions behind the bunks and different places like that."

Judith Heumann, a disability right activist, describing life at *Crip Camp*

Dangerous Woman, A (1993) Drama   ΨΨ
Debra Winter plays a woman with a mild intellectual disability who becomes involved with an itinerant alcoholic.

Day in the Death of Joe Egg, A (1972) Comedy   ΨΨ
British black comedy that examines the issue of mercy killing.

Dead Mother, The (1993, Spain)   ΨΨΨ
Drama–Thriller
Child with characteristics of autism and a developmental disability witnessed her mother's murder by a petty thief who kidnaps the child, now a woman, 2 decades later.

Dodes'ka-den (Clickety-Clack) (1970, Japan)
Drama   ΨΨΨ
Akira Kurosawa film about a boy with an intellectual disability living in the slums of Tokyo. This was Kurosawa's first color film. Although now regarded as a classic, this film was not well received by the public or by critics when it was released, and its failure led to Kurosawa's attempt to commit suicide by slashing his wrists in 1971. Kurosawa survived the suicide attempt, and eventually died at age 88 in Tokyo.

Dominick and Eugene (1988) Drama   ΨΨΨΨ
This is a coming-of-age film about two brothers. Eugene, who is finishing medical school, is the primary caregiver for his brother Dominick who has an intellectual disability and works as a Pittsburgh trash collector. Dominick's income supports the brothers, but Eugene needs to move to California for his residency.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close (2011) ΨΨΨ
Drama
An 11-year-old boy with what might be an autism spectrum disorder searches for meaning after his father dies in the 9/11 bombings of the World Trade Center.

Flowers for Algernon (2000) Drama   ΨΨ
A made-for-TV movie about an intellectually challenged man and the changes that occur in his life when he undergoes surgery to enhance his IQ. The surgery is successful, but there are unanticipated consequences.

Forrest Gump (1994) Fantasy   ΨΨΨΨ
Traces the life of Forrest Gump (Tom Hanks), who triumphs in life despite an IQ of 75 and a deformed spine. The film will make you examine your stereotypes about intellectual disability.

Forrest Gump: "Lieutenant Dan, what are you doing here?"
Lieutenant Daniel Taylor: "I'm here to try out my sea legs."
Forrest Gump: "But you ain't got no legs, Lieutenant Dan."

***Forrest Gump* (1994)**

Front of the Class (2008) Drama   ΨΨΨΨ
This film is based on the life of Brad Cohen; it deals with his courage as a child dealing with Tourette's disorder and an ignorant and unsympathetic father. Cohen later went on to become a gifted and award-winning teacher.

Girlfriend (2010) Drama   ΨΨΨ
A young man with Down syndrome inherits money and uses it to pursue a single mother he has loved since high school.

Harvie Krumpet (2003) Animation–Comedy   ΨΨΨ
A short film about a character who faces innumerous tragedies and challenges, including Tourette's disorder. Geoffrey Rush narrates the film.

Her Name Is Sabine (2007, France)   ΨΨΨΨ
Documentary
Striking documentary depicting the impact of a psychiatric institution on a woman with autism.

Horse Boy, The (2009) Documentary   ΨΨΨΨ
A family travels to Mongolia to find a shaman who can help their son who has an autism spectrum disorder. Compare this film with *Lighthouse of the Whales* (2016).

Film Index