

# The **SOLUTION** *source*

Thunder Bay Counselling Centre Newsletter  
By Colleen Ginter, Clinical Counsellor at Thunder Bay Counselling Centre

*For You & Your Family*

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## Cinema Therapy

The magic of the movies. Have you ever experienced that magical moment after watching a movie where you know you left feeling different about life, the world or the way you thought about something?

Who hasn't left a darkened movie theatre after watching a particularly meaningful movie that has not been moved in some way?

Then you might be interested in taking this a step further by making use of transformational power certain films could have for you when you take advantage of their impact. Cinema therapy offers some tools for this process.

A form of therapy or self-help that uses movies, as therapeutic tools. Cinema therapy can be a catalyst for healing and growth for those who are open to learning how movies affect people and to watching certain films with conscious awareness. Cinema therapy allows one to use the effect of imagery, plot, music, etc. in films on the psyche for insight, inspiration, emotional release or relief and natural change. Used as part of psychotherapy, cinema therapy is an innovative method based on traditional therapeutic principles. (The Free Dictionary)



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## Many Faces and Forms of Cinema Therapy

But “there’s not one definition of cinema therapy”, says Oakland, California based cinema therapist Birgit Wolz, PhD, author of *The Cinema Therapy Workbook: A Self-Help Guide to Using Movies for Healing and Growth*.

“There’s popcorn cinema therapy”, which can include watching a movie for a needed emotional release. According to Wolz, popcorn cinema therapy is rather heavy on cinema and rather light on therapy.

In what she dubs as “evocative cinema therapy”, Wolz prefers to use movies as therapy to help others learn about themselves in more profound ways, based on how they respond to different characters and scenes.

It works like this, she says: “First, I ask about their personal situation and get a sense of where they are at in their lives, and then I will recommend movies that may speak to them on certain levels”.

There’s also cathartic cinema therapy involving laughing or crying, Wolz says. “This is also effective if it’s done right as a precursor or a first stage of psychotherapy”, she says. Say a person is in the midst of a depression; a movie that helps them to cry can open up different levels of their psyche, she explains to WebMD.

When watching movies, Wolz recommends sitting comfortably and among other things, noticing what you liked and didn’t like about the movie and which characters or actions seemed especially attractive or unattractive.

She also suggests asking yourself whether there were any characters in the movie who modeled behavior that you would like to emulate.

It helps to write down your answers, she says.

## A Word of Caution

But patients should not cancel their next therapy session to catch a matinee, cautions Bruce Skalarew, MD, a Chevy Chase, MD based psychiatrist and psychoanalyst and the co-chairman for the Forum for Psychoanalytic Study of Film.

Movies are often used in therapy or analysis, Skalarew tells WebMD.

“People will bring up a movie or a book, and the selection process of what they hone in on can be a clue to some obvious, or not so obvious, conflict that they are working with”, he says.

If the therapist is familiar with the movie, he or she can see distortions or anting the viewer may have emphasized, de-emphasized, or left out for deeper insights into their personal issues and struggles.

That said, Skalarew cautions that he is not advocating cinema therapy or movies as a prime means of therapy. “Like art therapy, dance therapy, and music, you can bring it into a traditional form of therapy and as an accessory it can be very useful. (Denise Mann WebMD)

One of the most meaningful things that we are left with after watching a movie might be a quote from that movie. What is your favourite quote from a movie? What did the quote say to you? What was meaningful about it?

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around it.”

*Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird*

“Everything will be all right in the end. So if it is not all right, then it is not yet the end.

*The Best Marigold Hotel*

“When a defining moment comes along, you can do one of two things. Define the moment, or let the moment define you.”

*Tin Cup*

“Everyone who loses somebody wants revenge on someone, on God if they can't find anyone else. But in Africa, in Matobo, the Ku believes the only way to end grief is to save a life. If someone is murdered, a year of mourning ends with a ritual that we call the Drowning Man Trial. There's an all-night party beside a river. At dawn, the killer is put in a boat. He's taken out on the water and he's dropped. He's bound so that he can't swim. The family of the dead then has to make a choice. They can let him drown or they can swim out and save him. The Ku believes that if the family lets the killer drown, they'll have justice but spend the rest of their lives in mourning. But if they save him, if they admit that life isn't always just...that very act can take away their sorrow.”

*The Interpreter*

“Little beat big when little smart. First with the head, then with heart. You can remember that?”

*The Power of One*

“So do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. There are other forces at work in this world Frodo, besides the will of evil. Bilbo was meant to find the Ring. In which case, you were also meant to have it. And that is an encouraging thought.”

*Lord of the Rings*

“In New York I learned that I needed to love my mother and father in all their flawed, outrageous humanity and in families there are no crimes beyond forgiveness. But it is the mystery of life that sustains me now.”

*Prince of Tides*



“Every story has an end, but in life every ending is just a new beginning.”

*Uptown Girls*

“Instead of telling our young people to plan ahead, we should tell them to plan to be surprised.”

*Dan in Real Life*

“Mama always said life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.”

*Forrest Gump*

“Why are you trying so hard to fit in when you were born to stand out?”

*What a Girl Wants*

“Oh yes, the past can hurt. But you can either run from it, or learn from it.”

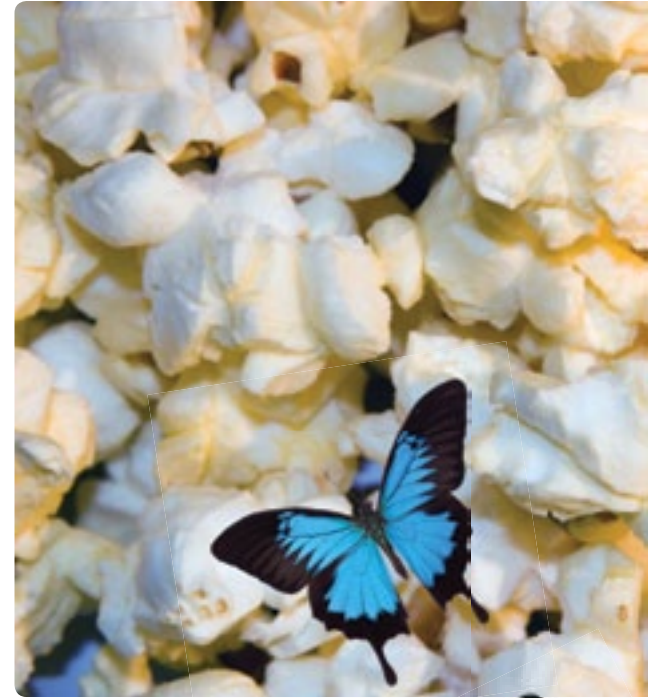
*The Lion King*

“Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.”

*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*

“Some people can't believe in themselves until someone else believes in them first.”

*Good Will Hunting*



## Themes

One of the ways individuals can find meaning in watching a movie is when it reflects a similar experience or issue that he or she has experienced or is currently experiencing. A person experiencing bullying or other types of abuse might relate to movies such as:

- The Colour Purple
- Oranges and Sunshine
- Australia
- The Power of One

A parent who wants to help their child through the grief and acceptance of divorce might find the hopeful message of the movie Mrs. Doubtfire helpful.

Experiencing the challenges of mid-life or retirement? How about watching Shirley Valentine or The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.

Are you struggling with self-worth? Watching Mr. Hollands Opus or Good Will Hunting might be helpful. Or perhaps Boys Don't Cry.

Lord of the Rings is a moving tale that addresses many themes including:

- Friendship
- Carrying on when you want to give up
- Beginnings and endings
- Death and Dying
- The questions of what is our Life's purpose

The movie series Shrek includes a number of themes including:

- Acceptance
- Gratefulness
- Appreciation

## Daytime Crisis Services

The Counselling Centre of East Algoma is now offering daytime crisis services on an immediate basis to any individual (over age 12) who may require it and believes they would benefit from an immediate contact.

This service can be accessed by calling (705) 848-2585 or simply by attending at our office in the Oaks Centre 9 Oakland Blvd. Suite 2, Elliot Lake.

The crisis service is available to all residents of East Algoma.

For more information about any of our services, contact the Counselling Centre at

**(705) 848-2585**




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