



World Campus Psychology Club AT PENN STATE

Issue No. 8 May 2020

Mind Over Matters WCPC Monthly Newsletter

Building community and identity by encouraging members to share ideas and experiences, and offering support to one another in pursuit of present and future educational goals.

Club News

By MoM Editor Jessica Kramer

Congratulations to our newest set of psychology graduates! Best of luck in all your future endeavors. You did it!

Our club's fundraiser is up and running! Please check out the newest set of designs created by your club's executive officers. This year we are offering a variety of t-shirts, tank tops, mugs, hoodies, bags, and even stickers. To order, please visit this [link](#).

In our past general meeting on May 19, 2020, we met Dr. Vijayeta Sinh, a licensed psychologist with over 13 years of experience. She gave a presentation on teletherapy, where she explained how teletherapy gives an understanding of the client's problems, strengths, or desires. Teletherapy has been helping others tackle the anxiety paradox, existential anxiety, and by strengthening one's self-care during COVID-19. One of the pros of teletherapy she gave was that this type of therapy gives flexibility and

spontaneity, yet a few cons are that it is harder to read non-verbal behavior, technical problems do occur, and it can be anxiety provoking for some individuals who might not be as comfortable on webcam or with the visual sessions. How can you make the most of virtual sessions? Dr. Sinh recommends to appreciate the moments of pause or silence, try to talk about topics that were not already brought up in the session, and lastly be open-minded while this is here and be patient



with the process. If you missed this month's meeting, please reach out to one of your executive officers for a copy of the recording.

As this semester comes to a close, I want to thank all of the amazing and dedicated writers who contributed their articles this past year! As my term of MoM Editor comes to an end, it has been wonderful getting to know so many new and current WCPC members, while bringing your stories into the light. We were able to bring back the newsletter after a 2-year hiatus. Let's keep that momentum going for next semester's issue! Make the most out of this time and don't stop becoming the best versions of yourselves. Thank you all for making my term such an enjoyable experience! Have a great summer!

Sincerely,

Jessica Kramer



Upcoming Webinars

May 28, 2020 @ 10 AM EST

The Treatment of Complex Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Dependence (4 CEs)

Presenter: David R. McDuff, M.D. Price: \$69.00

Dr. McDuff will discuss the common clinical models of recovery and addiction, the Parallel Timeline Method, substance abuse treatment, the recovery process, and adolescent substance misuse. He will also go over co-occurring mental disorders of complex addictions, the key elements to a successful addiction recovery, as well as developmental models.

To register, please click this [link](#).

June 4, 2020 @ 12:30 EST

The Essential Ingredients Needed in Becoming a Play Therapist (3 CEs)

Presenter: Erin Dugan, Ph.D, LPC-S, RPT-S, NCC, CRC. Price: \$59.00

This webinar will discuss techniques used in play therapy, while identifying the main objectives, history, and foundation of play therapy. Interventions will be described, as well as the types of portable play therapy materials for different environments. Dr. Dugan has been a Registered Play Therapist for over 10 years.

To register, please click this [link](#).



[Creating Thriving Relationships](#) (No CEs available)

Presenter: Lisa Firestone, Ph.D and Daniel Siegel, M.D. **Price: Free**

This free webinar is available for anyone who is interested in learning more about how you can create a thriving relationship with your partner. Dr. Firestone and Dr. Siegel will discuss mindful strategies to promote joy, closeness, and presence in relationships, while also describing the plane of possibility, essential elements, collaborative communication, and more.

To register, please click this [link](#).

[Overcoming Insomnia and Changing Your Relationship With Sleep \(1.5 CEs\)](#)

Presenter: Daniel Zamir, Psy.D. **Price: \$15.00**

Dr. Zamir will give insight on Sleep Restriction Therapy, the impacts and causes of insomnia, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), tips on getting a better night's sleep, and more.

To register, please click this [link](#).

June 13, 2020 @ 11AM EST

[The Practice of Tele-mental Health and Use of Social Media: Ethical, Legal, and Clinical Issues for Practitioners \(3 CEs\)](#)

Presenter: Jeffrey E. Barnett, Psy. D, ABPP.

Price: 59.00

Similarly to our past general meeting this month, Dr. Barnett's webinar will go over the definition and uses of tele-health, the legal, ethical, and clinical challenges, legal requirements for providing psychotherapy online, clinical examples, three different waves of technological advances, and areas of concern regarding the integration of various technology.

To register, please click this [link](#).



Psychological effects of COVID-19 - Part 2

By: Jessica Kramer

This semester truly has been different than all others. COVID-19 hit the U.S. like a storm and before we knew it, colleges around the country switched to teaching their classes fully remotely for the remainder of the semester. It has been quite some time since I originally came in contact with my COVID-19 article contributors. For some it has been 1-2 months in total. Because of this, I checked-in to see how my contributors are doing during COVID-19/ this quarantine. If you have not read part one of this article, please refer to this [link](#).

Quarantine has affected us all in a number of ways. For some individuals, it was the first time they were enrolled in an online class, whereas for others, online classes were already the “norm” in their daily life. During this period, students are thinking ahead to see if they are going to attend next semester, if they are going to take a gap year, and are deciding whether or not they are going to enroll in a smaller class load next semester if it will be given remotely. While students are pondering questions of the future, thinking of their future occupation or even a job out of college, many remain excited for their next stages in life. I asked my contributors the following questions:

Did you find the transition to online classes stressful? Will you continue to take online classes in the future or do you prefer in-person classes instead?

Anna Ronkainen, a University of Kentucky student, explained how “this experience has definitely changed my perspective of online classes. I used to believe that they would be more difficult and confusing than in-person classes. Now I understand that they have many benefits and can be a great alternative when in-person classes do not fit my schedule.” The transition to online classes, “was really a Godsend” for Claudia Navarro, a graduating senior from the University of Houston (UH). Claudia described that she can’t stay focused for a long period of time, which is why “having had my last classes online was amazing. I could pause or rewind whenever I wanted, making my notes so much better.

On the other hand, some students are not favoring the transition to remote classes as much. Jojo Spatz, a University of Buffalo student, explained that she “really hated the switch to online classes, it was much harder for me to process information outside of the classroom. If next semester is in person, or even if I can just live on campus, I’m very excited for it. If classes remain online I will likely take the minimum credit requirements because online learning really doesn’t work for me, I would happily finish college never taking another online course.” Lea Hernandez, a UH student, described “the transition was stressful in a sense that the courses that I was taking were specifically hands-on in the field so it was difficult to “imagine” vs actually doing, but the University of Houston (UH) really provided the best tools to lessen the stress.” A student who wished to remain anonymous from UH also found the transition to be “somewhat stressful”. She described, “I had taken online classes before, but it was different to have all of them online. Not only that, but not being able to go out as well. In past online classes, I had the availability to go to the library to do my work or meet up with classmates. That is what made this stressful for me— that even communication became online! In the future I would definitely prefer in-person classes because it’s a very different environment.”

What has been your stress relief?

When asking my contributors what their current stress relief has been during quarantine, many have been exercising and spending more time outdoors to relieve their stress. Claudia Navarro is trying to do activities that will take her mother's mind off the news. "We pray, watch movies/series, cook together, talk, and have cheat days where we order food," she said. Additionally, she is taking short walks around the apartment complex with her and is encouraging her mother to keep in contact with her friends.

A UH student, who asked to remain anonymous described how "being at home with my family is a blessing and I try to appreciate it, but there are moments when I miss going out to keep myself busy such as volunteering, going to church, hanging out with friends and just simply by changing environments. So for the moment, that I walk/jog around my neighborhood, it is my stress reliever." Although exercise has been helping others, for Lea Hernandez, she found her relief in "talking it out with others who could relate and then literally moving on while creating ways to do that. Once this is over it will be hard to social distance since I will be going into the profession of becoming a teacher in public education. I will practice sanitizing and disinfecting not only my classroom, but my home as well. I will also implement that as a teacher with my students." For Dr. Anthony Nelson, a Professor of Psychology at Penn State World Campus and principal investigator of the Online Social Perception Lab, nature photography and hiking/walking have been his stress relievers. Double major Anna Ronkainen said that "taking walks, being in nature, taking a drive, and spending time alone has helped."

How has your present situation changed due to COVID-19 since the last newsletter was published?

For many of my contributors, it seems that their present situations are looking better. "So this was my last semester and our graduation was postponed and TBD for a reschedule. Since before I now feel way less stressed due to me completing my semester," said Lea Hernandez. Jojo Spatz's mother is a nurse practitioner as mentioned in my previous COVID-19 article. She described that the stress level in her house "is much lower now that the number of covid patients my mom sees is down. She did have to get tested a few weeks ago, but fortunately the test came back negative and it was just a cold." Some students had other plans after graduation but due to COVID-19, they are on the backburner. Graduating senior, Claudia Navarro, is beyond relieved and excited for the future. Although she did not plan on attending commencement or even having a "nice photoshoot", instead she "paid for a trip to a gorgeous state in Mexico called Oaxaca. Not sure if the trip will actually happen, but if it's postponed it will be for a good reason, so it will be fine." She described that "some days are better than others, but you know, we always try to remain focused on the gratefulness that God has allowed us to stay safe and healthy throughout all these days. It needs to be taken one day at a time, and do the best to not let our minds wander around all the horrible scenarios that could occur." It was also great to hear that Anna Ronkainen is feeling "more stable in my mental health now than when the last newsletter was published." She described that although she is back to living with her parents, "it has been stressful changing living arrangements several times in the last few months." The newly graduate from UH, who asked to remain anonymous, explained that she will start nursing school in the fall. She described that a lot has changed due to COVID-19, such as her "church services have been through Zoom". She has also been "teaching her 5-year-old sister her school material from a laptop and materials at home as well. Everything has changed in order to stay safe and take precautions!"

A Teacher's Perspective as described from Dr. Anthony Nelson, a Professor of Psychology at Penn State World Campus and principal investigator of the Online Social Perception Lab:

How has your present situation changed due to COVID-19 since the last newsletter was published?

We have since relocated our RV from a more urban area in Florida to family's property in rural Pennsylvania, where we feel less at risk. As full-time travelers, our travel plans are still up in the air. On one hand, living full-time in an RV can afford the opportunity to easily engage in social distancing. We can go deep into the woods and not see another person for 3 weeks at a time. However, with each state having different guidelines, knowing what will be open and what will be closed when we get there makes traveling difficult.

How have you accommodated your lessons for all students and students with disabilities during COVID-19?

I have accommodated students through lax enforcement of deadlines. I have had a few requests from students to reduce the number of assignments they have to complete, and while I understand the circumstances from which these requests are made, I have rejected them because I think it does a disservice to the students. You all pay a lot of money to receive a quality education, and I don't think the answer is to reduce that quality. However, I will gladly give more time to complete assignments, and I have also issued several deferred grades, which prolongs the semester for a student by up to 10 weeks, allowing more time to complete the required coursework.

How have you kept your students engaged?

I am trying to communicate with students more, via more announcements on Canvas, and through the use of Microsoft Teams. I want to maintain a steady stream of communication so students feel comfortable coming to me if they are facing challenges.

Since remote learning has become the 'norm', do you think that the stigma around online classes will lessen?

Yes, and no. I think some on-campus students are realizing that they enjoy remote learning, and they may be likely to transfer to an online campus, like World Campus. With that said, Penn State's polling of students indicates that most students do not enjoy remote learning. It's important to note though that the type of learning that other Penn State campuses are doing remotely is much different than the World Campus model. We use an asynchronous model, allowing students to learn on their own time. Our courses have been developed over time, often with the assistance of instructional designers, to provide a quality education to our students. During this remote learning period, other campuses are still using a synchronous model, meaning that students log into their courses at defined times. The courses are still largely lecture based. And these courses were put online with only a week's notice. This is not nearly enough time to build a quality online course. So I worry that students will see these courses as a reflection of online education as a whole, when in reality, our World Campus courses are of a higher quality. With all of this said, I think online education will grow after this, and I think that is great news for World Campus.

A Principal's Perspective as described from Bonnie Capes, Principal of Crossroads South Middle School in South Brunswick, New Jersey:

How has your present situation changed due to COVID-19? Did you find the transition to online classes/ working remotely challenging?

As the building principal of a large middle school, our world was changed in an instant. We went from having thriving and vibrant hallways filled with the typical middle school student to struggling to connect in a "virtual" world. At our school, we pride ourselves on connecting with each and every student. We prioritize teaching students before teaching content. We make sure every student is "seen" every day and even had our yearly theme as #ConnectXRDS. Going into a virtual setting took away our ability to have this valued human interaction. We have not been in physical school since March 10th and will not conclude the school year until June 22nd. It has been an extraordinary challenge.

Furthermore, this impacted staff just as much as our students. I had nightly phone calls from teachers in tears wishing to just see their students again, wanting to say goodbye, and wanting to let them know that they are still here for them no matter what. However, the human spirit is resilient. We embraced this "new normal" and used our beliefs to guide us. Humans first, teach from the heart, and connect. Every single staff member has gone above and beyond to reach and "see" our kids. They are delivering supplies, hosting daily meetings beyond the district expectations, creating staff videos to bring joy, making home visits (with social distancing) to those most at-risk students, and the list goes on.

We started a huge social media presence for daily video morning announcements and even a weekend "show" so the kids have something to look forward to. We are in the works of creating a "Survivor" themed show involving popular challenges. The kids can vote each week for the winning team and in the finale, we will announce who has "survived" the end of the school year. There is a lot of sadness and scariness going around right now. However, our kids still need hope. This is what we are trying to accomplish with these videos and projects...and it is working! The kids love it and are reaching out to me more than ever before. #ConnectXRDS.

Are your teachers teaching regular school hours online or is there a limit on the amount of Zoom hours/classroom hours they are teaching per class?

The teachers are technically providing a combined 4 hours of work. (This is inclusive of 7 classes/day for the MS student) In the beginning, the workload was very challenging and teachers were working around the clock. We had to set some boundaries as to the typical response time and what the "working hours" for the day would be. They are equivalent to what our normal "in session" day would be. This actually came as a huge relief to our staff, as they, too, need time to recharge and unwind. The pace they were keeping was not sustainable. As I shared in a letter to our parent community, this is all new to every one of us. We are going to continue to work with the "Goldie Locks" principle in mind. We will need to find out what is too much or not enough, in the hopes of finding what is "just right" for every one.

How have teachers been able to accommodate students who do not have computers, tablets, or even internet access to do their schoolwork?

Our district has loaned Chromebooks to any and every family who is in need. We have worked to also provide resources for free Wi-Fi and in many cases, our staff delivered these devices directly to students' homes. After the first two full weeks of "virtual school", our teachers gave the students a survey to see who was working from a phone or even sharing a device. We could see that this was not ending soon and what some were able to put up within the short term, was not going to last for the long haul. During this time, we must have given out another 75 devices - sometimes two per family, where there were multiple kids trying to access school.

What do you recommend to other students right now who are going through this huge adjustment?

Being remote is difficult. As humans, we truly thrive on interacting with others. We are in a crisis situation and every family has a different challenge to overcome during this time. Most importantly, it is not about the school work...it is about connecting with your peers and your teachers. You are learning more than a textbook or online resource can teach you right now. Staying connected and talking to others during this time is critical.

Editor's note: Although these are very trying times right now, remember that we are all going through this in our own way, with our own story, at our own pace. Remember to reach out to see how others are doing at this time, try by checking in on a friend you have not heard from, and by making the most of these moments you have with those closest to you. Maybe even give yourself a goal each day to complete, but use your time wisely. This semester for many students and teachers has been quite a turn on the everyday "college life/routine". With only a week's notice to change classes into a completely different format for some and starting a schedule that was once so foreign to you in such short notice. You all have to give yourself a lot of credit for getting through a semester with many bumps and turns. No matter what semester you are in your college career, know that if you can get through this, you can tackle the impossible. Good luck to all of you and have a safe and blessed summer!

“ People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. **Forgive them anyway.**

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. **Be kind anyway.**

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere, people may deceive you. **Be honest and sincere anyway.**

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. **Create anyway.**

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. **Be happy anyway.**

The good you do today, will often be forgotten. **Do good anyway.**

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. **Give your best anyway.**

In the final analysis, it is between you and God.

It was never between you and them anyway.”

- Mother Teresa

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

By: Leena Khuffash

Happiness starts with the relationship that you have with yourself. This relationship you have with yourself is very important and it helps you have an external perspective. Having this relationship leads to self-care and when you take care of yourself, speak kindly to yourself, and accept yourself to create an important bond and sense of self trust.

Getting to know ourselves on an intimate level allows us to sense when things are misaligned. Remember that it is a strength to seek help when you need it. We also need to bear in mind that everyone is on their own journey of self-discovery. Happiness is not based on your relationship with others, not with your job, not with your money, but with YOU. Start nurturing this relationship with yourself today.

To nurture this relationship with yourself, consider practicing self-compassion, simply put, start by taking care of yourself as you would to a good friend (Neff, 2016). According to Kristen Neff, a leading expert on self-compassion, there are three parts:

1. **Mindfulness**: This helps you come into the present moment and also by overidentifying what is bothering you (Neff, 2016).
2. **Common humanity**: Rather than making yourself feel isolated, self-compassion focuses on our shared humanity; everyone around the world goes through rough patches. Sharing our real-life challenges cuts across all boundaries and helps to bring us closer (Neff, 2016).
3. **Self-kindness**: Practice self-kindness instead of self-judgment. Try treating yourself as you would to a dear friend. You might say something like, “You’ll get through this situation too; you always find a way” (Neff, 2016).

This article is a reminder to all of us that we need to be kind to ourselves. Remember to put on your oxygen masks first before going out there and helping others.

Pandemic Psychology

By: Kara Shaffer

The last few months have been a time of uncertainty and worry for people all over the globe. And whether one is quarantined at home or braving the outside world as a frontline worker, this pandemic is testing our psychological stamina. These stressful circumstances are difficult and are more likely leading to increased memory problems, depression, anxiety, and appetite changes for many people. While I can't speak for every individual, interviews with family and friends have confirmed these changes in psychological functioning and behavior as well.

How could this pandemic be affecting our memory? Although it is unlikely we will forget the experiences associated with COVID-19, our memories for non-related information, such as school work during this time, may falter. Schmidt and Schwabe (2011) explain in their article *Splintered by Stress* that stress can make learning new information difficult. If the stressors of COVID-19 are activating the stress response while one is attempting to study for an exam or write a paper, information studied or read during this time will be less memorable down the road. While actively worrying about public health, job security, or the stock market, the brain will favor habit memory over cognitive, or flexible memory. This may be why trying to finish up this semester has been so challenging for many of us. On the

other hand, the events related to the pandemic - how it felt being trapped at home every day, how it felt to be in public wearing a face mask for the first time, and details surrounding the frightening news reports. These events will be forever seared into our memories. The activated stress response during these events arouses the hippocampus and amygdala, increasing memory consolidation (Sapolsky, 2004). So, for those of us in a constant state of worry and stress regarding the pandemic, episodic memory for anything other than the pandemic, may be compromised.



Anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues are likely more prevalent in many people's lives right now as well. While these societal changes can lead to increased anxiety and depression, many of our usual coping strategies have been compromised as well. Social connection, exercise, access to a healthy diet, hobbies, and much more are all not readily available to us as they may have been before. Experiments mentioned in Sapolsky's *Taming Stress* (2004), found that psychological stress is

worsened when there is a lack of coping outlets, less sense of control, little social support, and little hope that things are getting better. Without the usual coping mechanisms, there is an increased circulation of stress hormones, leading to a more aroused state, such as anxiety. When this state is combined with the helplessness that many of us may feel, it can lead to depression. Other mental disorders may be on the rise as well with the increased concern over germs and sanitation. Many of us are washing our hands and sanitizing as much as possible. For those predisposed to Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) or mysophobia, these new practices can be reinforcing.

An increase in psychological distress leads me to my last point, which was validated by almost all of the family and friends that I interviewed this week. Anxiety, depression, and stress lead to appetite changes. In the questionnaire responses I received, 96% reported that their appetite is influenced by anxiety, depression, and stress. When it comes to hyperphagia and hypophagia, 42% of my interviewees reported that they eat more when stressed, while 33% reported that they eat less. Those who reported to eat when feeling depressed were more likely to eat *while* experiencing depression, while those who reported feeling

stressed or anxious were more likely to either eat less, or eat more *after* the stressor had subsided. These differences in appetite are explained by the delicate corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) and glucocorticoid balance during stress. As Sapolsky (2004) explained, While the sympathetic nervous system (SAM) is activated during a stressor, CRH works to inhibit appetite. After the stressor has subsided, glucocorticoids, which increase hunger, remain in circulation for hours. My interviewees that reported eating more in response to emotions and stress said that they typically go for sugary, starch, or junk food. As Sapolsky mentioned, these foods are typically faster and easier to access and are the off-limits food of “restrained eaters”- people who are typically restricting their food intake to maintain or lose weight.

Overall, this pandemic is influencing our memory, emotions, and eating behaviors as a result of their stress response. While the situation may seem bleak and frightening at times, I like to remind myself of the resilience and strength of humans, especially in times of crisis. When I focus on the quality time I am getting with my family, my gratitude for frontline workers, and the *temporary* nature of this situation, I am able to get through each day with a sense of hope.

Unrequited Brain, On Love

By: May Talbert

Your love is my drug, love on the brain... These are not just song lyrics. They are true analogies of what takes place to our brain when we are overwhelmed with emotions of love and passion for one another. Love can be addicting, exhausting, and can keep us coming back for more.

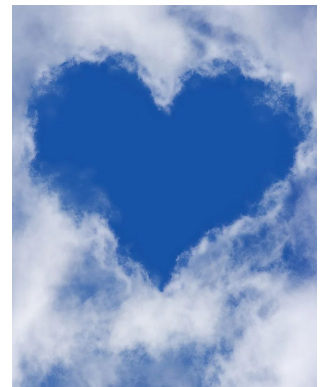


The initial emotional response that occurs when in romantic love changes several drivers in our brain. “Dopamine activates the reward circuit, helping to make love a pleasurable experience similar to the euphoria associated with the use of cocaine or alcohol” (Love and the Brain, n.d.). This is why we become addicted to repeating our patterns, which repeat the strong or heightened emotional response, just as someone addicted to drugs would.

Love can be envisioned as an addiction, like so, when the target of interest does not return the same feelings of attraction, affection, or love. One may become preoccupied by trying to achieve the others’ affection or attention. When it is unrequited, it could potentially cause the person being rejected to have extreme emotions. They feel the need to try harder to achieve the acceptance of the other party. This can ultimately end with the rejectee in a downward spiral of emotional disruptions, depression, or even having thoughts or attempts of committing suicide.

Loving someone so passionately can definitely hurt your heart when the rejector does not have the same sentiments in return. It feels devastating, heart crushing, and down-right depressing. It is imperative to recognize that the rejector may have their own legitimacy in not possessing the same sentiments. Hindsight is always 20/20 and perhaps you won’t understand what the purpose of that individual is in your life at that point, but everybody that crosses your life path serves a purpose that may be understood later.

So, how do you overcome this grief and addictive sense of passion for the other individual? Emotional pain and heartbreak can cause physical mayhem on our bodies as well. First, you need to let it go. If you haven’t, take time to communicate with the rejector about your emotions and try to get those feelings off your chest. Once you have completed this you can move on knowing you expressed your emotions by accepting that your rejector doesn’t feel the same. Surely it’s not easy, but most importantly, you need to recognize moving on will make you stronger. Letting go of your attachment to that individual will release your devastated feelings. There is more ahead in your future awaiting you and wasting your time on someone not receptive to you is assuredly not someone worthy of all you have to offer. Lastly, keep taking care of yourself. Take time to appreciate little things that make you content. Take bubble baths, read, light candles, exercise, spend time with true friends, family, and keep on loving yourself!

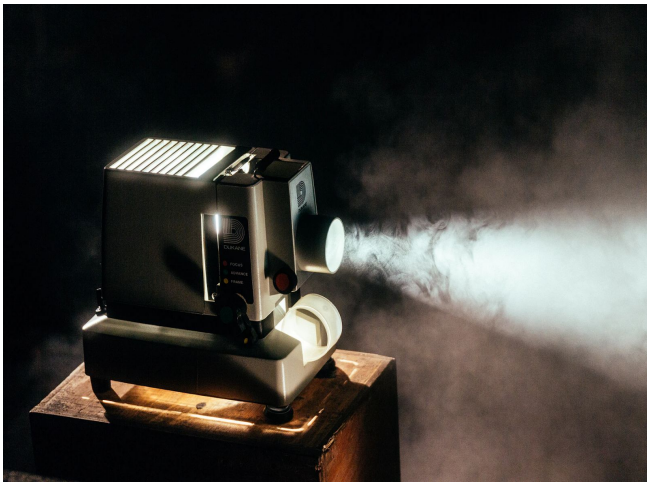


Mental Health and Substance Abuse Movie List!

By: Angel McLaughlin

While themes of mental health and substance use often intertwine in many of the movies because of the close relationship between the two, I separated them by the primary focus of the movie.

Substance Abuse Related Movies:



Everything Must Go (2010) – Will Ferrell – Substance Use

The Fighter (2010) – Mark Wahlberg & Christian Bale –
Substance Use

Flight (2012) – Denzel Washington – Substance Use

A Star is Born (2018) – Bradley Cooper & Lady Gaga –
Substance Use

Ben is Back (2018) – Julia Roberts – Substance Use

Heaven Knows What (2014) - Arielle Holmes & Caleb
Landry Jones – Substance Use

28 Days (2000) – Sandra Bullock – Substance Use

Requiem for a Dream (2000) – Jared Leto, Jennifer Connelly, Ellen Burstyn, Marlon Wayans – Substance
Use

Factotum (2005) - Matt Dillon, Lili Taylor – Substance Use

When a Man Loves a Woman (1994) - Meg Ryan, Andy Garcia, and Ellen Burstyn – Substance Use

Gia (1998) – Angelina Jolie – Substance Use

Clean and Sober (1988) - Michael Keaton, Kathy Baker, Morgan Freeman

My Name is Bill W. (1989) – James Woods, Jo Beth Williams, and James Gardner – Substance Use

Day of Wine and Roses (1962) - Jack Lemmon, Lee Remick – Substance Use

Mental Health Related Movies:

A Beautiful Mind (2001) – Russell Crowe

Matchstick Men (2003) – Nicholas Cage

It's Kind of a Funny Story (2010) - Keir Gilchrist, Zach Galifianakis, Emma Roberts

Silver Linings Playbook (2012) – Bradley Cooper, Jennifer Lawrence

The Perks of Being a Wallflower (2012) - Logan Lerman, Emma Watson, Ezra Miller

Welcome to Me (2015) – Kristen Wiig

Girl, Interrupted (1999) – Wynona Ryder, Angelina Jolie

Black Swan (2010) – Natalie Portman

Charlie Bartlett (2008) - Anton Yelchin

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975) – Jack Nicholson, Louise Fletcher & Will Sampson

Benny & Joon (1993) - Johnny Depp, Mary Stuart Masterson, Aidan Quinn

The Soloist (2009) - Jamie Foxx, Robert Downey Jr., Catherine Keener

The Hours (2002) - Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore

It's a Wonderful Life (1946) - James Stewart, Donna Reed, and Lionel Barrymore

Manic (2001) - Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Michael Bacall, Zooey Deschanel, Don Cheadle



Black Swan and the Concept of Narcissism

By: Amanda de Almeida

Darren Aronofsky's 2010 movie, the *Black Swan* tells the story of Nina, a talented ballerina who is chosen as the lead dancer in her company's montage of *Swan Lake* (Tchaikovsky et al., 1911). However, the pressure of her mother and the threat of a new dancer's arrival makes Nina go through intense behavior and personality transformations, exacerbating her narcissistic personality according to Freud's concept.

Narcissism is the expressed affection directed to the ego itself with the unconscious intention of rescuing attention and energy invested in the first years of life (Freud, 1914). This affection fuels the selfish and individualistic attitudes of each human being, but it is also what drives us to want to be better. This is a "condition for the formation of the self, even getting confused with the self" (Garcia-Roza, 1995).

In the movie the *Black Swan*, we see the character Nina portrayed by Natalie Portman, searching exhaustively for the attention and recognition of others. Her self-objectification becomes pathological, she feels everyone, and everything is about her making her become paranoid. This unhealthy obsession with being perfect is what Freud called Secondary Narcissism, and it causes Nina's descent into madness.

Her relationship with mentor Thomas Leroy constitutes an example of narcissistic love, in which there is an affection directed towards an admired person, who represents what she wants to be. He influences Nina in the search for self-knowledge by awakening her sexuality. This results in the split of Nina's personality, showing that she had within herself to be her best. Just as *Swan Lake* tells the story of a swan queen who has an evil double, Nina has her personalities fighting to take control of herself.

Primary Narcissism is related to infancy and self-focus as a survival tool (Perogamvros, 2012). However, in Nina's relationship with her mother, we see a symbiosis that indicates this primary Narcissism failed to resolve itself. Her mother's own Narcissism is reborn through her child and transformed into an object of love. However, when Nina changes, she no longer corresponds to her mother's ideals. In one scene, Nina traps her in the bedroom, causing an outbreak of anger, which triggered hallucinations. Nevertheless, this process that seemed to be self-destructive leads the character to develop and achieve independence.

The classic Freudian concept of Narcissism deals with self-love and objectification. During infancy, focusing on oneself and prioritizing one's needs over others is related to survival. This is considered a healthy stage of development. However, when objectification surpasses childhood, where this individual needs constant attention and praise to the detriment of others, it becomes pathological. In Aronofsky's film, we see a successful illustration of this essential psychoanalytic concept. Through Nina, we see a story of insecurity and constant search for affirmation by a self-centered young woman losing her sanity in search of an ideal.

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