

Using Film to Teach Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills

Wise Mind

Dumbo

Plot: The animated movie involves the adventures of a young elephant, Dumbo, who is born with unusually large ears. He becomes separated from his mother and escapes the circus. He discovers friends, challenges, and is able to turn his unique physical attributes into a special talent.

Vignette: One day at the Circus, a group of boys begin to tease Dumbo and mock him about having large ears. Mrs. Dumbo can see that her baby is getting hurt and becomes very angry. Her anger explodes into a rampage which results in her being jailed and separated from her baby.

Discussion: What triggered Mrs. Dumbo's anger? Is her anger justified and related to real events (validation of feelings)? How does she choose to respond to her angry feelings? What is the process that leads to her being jailed? How does this interfere with her goal of protecting her baby? What other choices did she have besides the angry rampage? How could the result have been different by using the "Wise Mind" to process her emotions and then choose effect behavior?

The First Knight

Plot: Arthur, king of Camelot, weds Guinevere. Malagant, a former knight of the Round Table, wants to take over Camelot. He kidnaps Guinevere but she is rescued twice by Lancelot. Lancelot and Guinevere fall in love during the rescues, but Guinevere does not acknowledge it because she is determined to remain faithful to Arthur. Arthur asks Lancelot to join the Knights of the Round Table for saving Guinevere's life. Later, Arthur discovers Lancelot and Guinevere kissing and wrestles with the conflict between his emotional trauma and the laws of Camelot regarding the betrayal of the king. Malagant attacks Camelot during the court held to try Lancelot and Guinevere. The king is mortally wounded. Lancelot kills Malagant during the battle. King Arthur forgives them as he dies.

Vignette: After seeing Lancelot and Guinevere together, Arthur did not allow his rational mind to be controlled by his emotional mind (grief and anger). As he lay dying from the wound he received during the battle with Malagant, he was nonjudgmental. His mind was focused and he maintained awareness in the current moment. He was effective in doing what worked for all concerned. Arthur was able to integrate his emotional and rational mind to solve the problem of preserving Camelot (his objective). (Scene 44 – beginning to "I'm sorry").

Discussion: How difficult is it to maintain mindfulness to access Wise Mind when under emotional and physical stress? How does it improve one's life to achieve that skill? Can you remember times when you were able to employ your Wise Mind? How did it help you?

Mindfulness

Observe Without Judging

Peaceful Warrior

Plot: Berkley gymnast, Dan, encounters older philosophy type, Socrates, who works at a gas station. Socrates begins to mentor Dan on how to empty his mind in search of inner meaning and peace. After an accident that nearly ends Dan's chance of going to the Olympics, Dan turns to Socrates for a whole body training that allows Dan to learn lessons about life that change his perspective and help him still compete with a badly injured leg.

Vignette 1: Socrates begins to teach Dan that many people are not really as awake as they could be. (18:30-18:50). He later teaches Dan to "take out the trash" or in other words empty his mind of thinking and observe what is around him. He does this by throwing Dan in a river so that he doesn't have a chance to think, instead he can just observe what is "in the moment." (30-34)

Discussion: Do you have so many thoughts cluttering your mind that it is difficult to notice and observe what is going on around you? Have you ever noticed, when simply observing what is happening in the moment, how interesting life is and how much there is to notice?

Vignette 2: Dan is in the shower and for the first time is observing the process of showering. He notices water falling into his hands.

Discussion: Have you thought to take notice of even the simplest of tasks you do during the day such as showering?

Observing and Describing

Inception

Plot: Cobb is a specialized corporate spy and thief who secretly extracts valuable information from the unconscious minds of individuals while they are asleep and dreaming. He is wanted for the murder of his wife and is unable to return home and visit his children. Cobb is offered a chance to return home as payment for planting an original idea into a corporate owner's subconscious.

Vignette: Saito is interviewing Cobb for the job and is caught in a dream within a dream. The scenes change rapidly and he is confused about his reality. Saito is ready to give in to Cobb and tell him his secrets, until he finds himself lying on his own carpet. Saito begins to run his fingers through the carpet and detects that it is made out of polyester instead of wool. He then realizes that he is still dreaming and is able to escape the trap Cobb he placed him in.

Discussion: How can observing and describing your environment free you from feeling trapped? How do you engage in observing and describing when you are caught in a tense situation?

Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl

Plot: Jack Sparrow is trying to recover his pirate ship that was taken in a mutiny led by Barbosa. The new captain and crew are under a curse that makes them appear normal in daylight, but under moonlight they appear as skeletons. Under the curse they are unable to be killed.

Vignette: In a final sword fight with Barbosa, Jack is pierced by Barbosa's sword. He stumbles backward expecting to die. As the moonlight falls upon him he looks at his hand and discovers a skeletal hand. He recognizes that he is also under the curse. Instead of judging the situation or becoming emotionally overwhelmed by the discovery, he simply observes and says, "That's interesting."

Discussion: How does judging our own emotions keep us from making wise decisions? How do judgments about emotional responses contribute to more painful emotions? Why does judging ourselves often lead to either dissociation, impulsive behavior or harmful ways of self-soothing?

Describe

Peaceful Warrior

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Vignette: Dan's friend, Joy, who he met through Socrates, comforts him after the accident. She uses healing touch to bring him warmth to his sorrow at not being able to compete because of his accident. He notices and describes the warmth he is feeling. Joy also reminds Dan to pay attention to his "scary feelings" in the moment. (58:34 – 1:47:00)

Discussion: Can you learn to describe what you are experiencing in the moment? Are you only able to be mindful and describe warm, positive feelings, or can you pay attention and stay with scary feelings long enough to describe them?

Participate

Peaceful Warrior

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Vignette: Dan proudly shares with Socrates how emptying his mind of thoughts and being present in the moment is improving his gymnastics. However, he begins to gloat, and Socrates reminds him that he is now in the past and has left the moment. Socrates teaches Dan that participating in the moment means staying in the moment. (37:30-38:39)

Discussion: How can you continue the practice of observing and describing to that you are continually *participating* in the moment? Can you notice what tempts you to leave the moment, such as gloating does for Dan?

Star Wars – The Phantom Menace

Plot: This sci-fi film features the adventures of young Obi-Wan Kenobi, a young Jedi Knight apprenticed to Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn. They are sent as ambassadors to the Trade Federation’s flagship to resolve a dispute. The Trade Federation is secretly in league with Darth Sidious, the Dark Lord of the Sith. Darth Sidious plans to kill the two Jedi Knights as part of a plot to take over a planet.

Vignette: Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon have entered the flagship. Obi-Wan senses danger and his Master, Qui-Gon teaches him about the value of being fully mindful and aware of the present.

Discussion: How do worry thoughts prevent us from recognizing immediate events, dangers and circumstances? How can past events or future worries interfere with appropriately interpreting the present? How can dissociation and other ‘mindless’ states keep us from fully participating in the moment?

One-Mindedly

ET- The Extra-Terrestrial

Plot: Steven Spielberg’s delightful tale of a young brother and sister who encounter an alien being who becomes separated from his spaceship. They befriend the alien and help him to contact and reunite with his ship. A deep friendship develops.

Vignette: The brother and sister provide shelter for the alien in their home. Their recently divorced mother in unaware that they are harboring an alien. They try to explain to their mother how they encountered their new friend, but she is so pre-occupied with the painful events of her own life that she does not see the alien even though he is “right under her nose.” The humorous vignette shows how being preoccupied contributes to not seeing the obvious.

Discussion: What is it like to have too many things on your mind at once? Have you ever felt so unaware of what is happening that you miss important information? How did it affect your decision making? How can learning to be more mindful of the present help you understand how to respond to immediate concerns?

Effectively

Peaceful Warrior

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Vignette: Socrates begins teaching Dan about mindfulness and being present in the moment. He challenges Dan to stand in an awkward position for as long as he can. It becomes evident quickly that Dan cannot do this for very long. He is not very effective at keeping his mind clear enough to be still. (21-23:34?) Later in the movie, after learning how to clear his mind so he can be more mindful, he impresses his fellow gymnasts and coach with a superior performance. (35-37) While this clip does not show it, Dan later tells Socrates how mindfulness has helped his gymnastics performance.

Discussion: As you learn to be more mindful, fully participating in the present moment, without judgment and one-mindedly are you more able to be effective at whatever you are doing in that moment? How do thoughts about the present and future keep you from being effective?

Emotional Regulation

Generating Opposite Emotions

Invincible

Plot: The 1976 Philadelphia Eagles decide to hold open tryouts for a spot on the football team's roster. Vince Papale, a 30-year-old bartender, decides to try out for the team with the support of all his friends. His wife left him abruptly and took all of their furniture. She left a note saying that he would never be anything in the world. Papale eventually makes the team after numerous setbacks during try outs.

Vignette: Vince carries his wife's note with him and uses it as motivation as he goes through training camp. After he begins dating Janet and makes the team, he reads the note one last time and crumples it up and throws it away.

Discussion: How can we turn defeating messages into motivation? What are ways to keep doing what you feel ashamed about, and ultimately succeed?

Identifying Obstacles to Changing Emotions

When Harry Met Sally

Plot: Harry and Sally meet at the end of college on a drive to NY. Their paths keep crossing but they remain friends. They each have many relationships, including Harry marrying and divorcing. As their friendship develops, Harry and Sally realize that they are in love.

Vignette: Harry and Sally's best friends have married each other. They are arguing over whether to keep the husband's wagon wheel furniture, Harry gets angry over the unimportance of such an argument and storms out of the apartment. Sally tried to help Harry understand that he cannot express his feelings every time he has one. Harry, in turn, helps Sally see that her method of not feeling any emotion is equally unproductive.

Discussion: Do you let yourself feel all of your emotions, both positive and negative? Do you feel them too much and express them all? Or, do you try to suppress some or all of them? Healthy emotional regulation means learning how to feel your emotions and when it is appropriate to express them. Try to identify obstacles that get in the way of changing what you do with your emotions and develop healthier patterns.

Generating Opposite Emotions

October Sky

Plot: High school boys from a poor coal mining town hope to win the state science fair and obtain scholarships for college.

Vignette: When one of their experiments goes awry, they are discouraged and want to give up. They begin fighting among themselves. When a classy convertible car drives by with a beautiful woman, they realize their goals are worth working for. They are no longer discouraged and continue finding a way to do their science project.

Discussion: How can we keep focused on our goals in the face of adversity and challenges? What are ways of generating opposite emotions when we are immobilized by fear, anger or depression? How does being able to generate opposite emotions help in emotional regulation?

Taking Opposite Action

Chocolat

Plot: in a captivating comedy, Viane arrives in a tranquil, old fashioned French town. She sets up a Chocolaterie and creates wonderful chocolate confections that inspire the straight-laced townspeople to allow themselves to enjoy some of life's simple pleasures. She experiences rejection by the Count (also the Mayor of the village), who gossips about her "immorality" to the villagers. Viane further alienates the Count and townspeople by befriending the nomadic "River Rats" who they consider to be "shiftless and untrustworthy." She is assertive and holds to her values. She accepts the River Rats. When the leader of the River Rats comes to town, she is finally able to recognize her own emotions and desires.

Vignette: Viane was mindful of her current pain of rejection but chose to act in opposition to her emotions by her kindness to all who came to her Chocolaterie, eventually winning their hearts. She handled the distress caused by the Mayor's gossip by contributing to others. She was compassionate and encouraged her customers to soothe their worries and senses by enjoying the simple pleasure of chocolate. An example of Viane's kindness I portrayed in a scene when Josephine, a customer, who stole some chocolate returns and wants to pay for the chocolate. Viane welcomes her and listens with compassion to her story of abuse. (Scene 8- "I forgot to pay you" to "You make the most wonderful chocolate, then skip to Scene 10- Josephine knocks on door to Josephine kneeling on the floor"). Another example of Viane's kindness and making positive emotional events happen occurs when the old grandmother visits the Chocolaterie. She complains that she is not allowed to see her grandson because her daughter believes the grandmother to be a "bad" influence on her son. This conversation was painful for the grandmother. Viane listens to the old woman mindfully and empathetically. The grandmother accepted her physical condition and chose how she wanted to reduce her distress by doing and eating what she liked. (Scene 7 – Begin with "You sure you didn't but booze in this? To "She won't even let him ride a bicycle").

Discussion: How does understanding and accepting your emotions help reduce vulnerability to "Emotion Mind"? How does kindness to others increase positive emotions and build self-respect? Do you think Viane developed the ability to tolerate and accept distress? How did she do this? Why is self-soothing important when one is in distress?

Increase positive emotional events

Pride and Prejudice (Excell Entertainment Group, produced by Daniel Shanthakumar)

Plot: This fun, modern-day makeover of Jane Austen's tale features the adventures of Elizabeth Bennet and her friends who try to find true love amidst daunting obstacles.

Vignette: Elizabeth and her friend are both despondent following disappointing encounters with boyfriends. They sink into depressive symptoms and stay in bed for several days until two other friends come over and invite them to go out and share some fun together. The four friends indulge in an "ice cream feast" and laugh together. This lifts moods, decreases the depression and they feel ready to go out and face dating again.

Discussion: How can you identify enjoyable activities that can lift and change negative moods? How does this give you a sense of empowerment over painful emotions? How is a mindful encounter with choosing to eat ice cream with friends different from a mindless binge? Why is it important to incorporate mindfulness into choosing events that are positive and uplifting?

Taking opposite actions

Batman Begins

Plot: young Bruce Wayne accidentally falls into a deep well that leads to a cave. He is swarmed by bats and becomes very frightened. Later both of his parents are killed by a thief. The plot shows Bruce's journey from being a helpless and frightened boy to becoming the mysterious Batman who fearlessly fights against crime.

Vignettes: Young Bruce falls into the well but is rescued by his father. His father soothes his fears by explaining that most scary creatures act aggressively because they are afraid. He also explains that falling down can teach us how to get back up and learn to be strong. Fast forwarding the film is another vignette where as an adult Bruce returns to the bat cave of his childhood fears and faces his fear. He stands up bravely as bats swarm around him and he is no longer afraid. He chooses the identity as Batman as a symbol of his victory over his fear and his willingness to fight against crime and injustice.

Discussion: What is it like to confront fears rather than to mindlessly escape through dissociation, self-mutilation or other harmful ways of coping with painful feelings? What makes it difficult to take opposite action? How does taking opposite action help us to have power over fears and painful emotions? How can it help to regulate painful emotions?

Blocking emotions vs ruminating

The Mission

Plot: This award winning film is set in Brazil during the early history of Spanish settlements. A young priest establishes a mission with indigenous tribes high in the mountains. The indigenous people develop a strong community and are greatly loved by the priest. Rodrigo is a mercenary who is involved in slave

trade and captures indigenous people to sell as slaves to Spaniards. In a fit of jealous anger, Rodrigo kills his beloved brother and is imprisoned. The young priest attempts to rehabilitate Rodrigo by taking him to the mission to work with the indigenous people who hate and fear him.

Vignette: The priest visits Rodrigo in prison and persuades him to join him at the mission. Rodrigo begins his penance which involves carrying a heavy load of objects that represent his former life as a mercenary. They journey up the steep, mountain trail to the mission with Rodrigo showing little emotion. Rodrigo stubbornly refuses to believe that there is a penance severe enough to overcome his actions. He blocks all feelings of tenderness, remorse or grief over the loss of his brother. His emotional numbness interferes with his ability to change. When he enters the village, the indigenous tribe members recognize him and attempt to kill him. Rodrigo is forced to face his feelings of fear and remorse. The priest saves him from death and Rodrigo releases cathartic tears as he allows himself to feel his emotions. This is the beginning of changes that teach him to love and defend those he has previously persecuted.

Discussion: How does refusing to use the emotional mind keep us stuck in ineffective behaviors? How can emotions help us to understand ourselves and our world more clearly? Why is feeling emotions sometimes so difficult and frightening?

Sense and Sensibility

Plot: This film is an adaptation of a Jane Austen novel. Two sisters struggle to find happiness in relationships. Both struggle with painful feelings until they find lasting love.

Vignette: Towards the end of the movie Edward, thought to be married by the Dashwood family comes to visit Eleanor. Eleanor has long been in love with Edward and also supposes him to be married. Edward confirms to the family that in fact he is not married. Eleanor permits herself to experience some audible emotion.

Discussion: What can some of the consequences be of not expressing emotion? What are the cons of not expressing emotion of being willful in not accepting or expressing emotions? How does Eleanor's emotional expression differ from her sisters and hers?

Distress Tolerance

Lars and the Real Girl

Plot: Lars, an excruciatingly shy twenty-something living in a small town in the north, is so socially avoidant that he will not come to dinner at his brother's house. Unexpectedly, he introduces Bianca, a life-sized doll, as the girl of his dreams. The interpersonal comedy and drama of human response unfolds as Bianca volunteers at preschool, gets a job at the mall, and a variety of townspeople find their own ways of facing a charming delusion.

Vignettes: (Bianca) In this scene, Lars introduces his mannequin/girlfriend to the family. His brother is dumbfounded, his sister-in-law is surprised and willing to stay open-minded, and Lars becomes expansive in describing his girlfriend's background.

Discussion: What evidence of mindfulness do you see in Gus, Lars' brother? What evidence do you see of mindlessness? What was effective? What was ineffective?

Vignette: (Outpouring of Love) After adjusting to social interaction with a life-sized doll, the town and family are saddened when Lars explains that Bianca is dying. This scene depicts the response of friends, delusion notwithstanding.

Discussion: Does the behavior of the middle-aged women in town seem like a realistic depiction? What actions or statements depict willingness?

Pursuit of Happiness

Plot: This movie, based on the life experiences of Chris Gardner, a San Francisco stock broker. After several years of financial struggle as a salesman trying to support a wife and young child, he applies to be an intern training to be a stock broker. He learns that the position is unpaid, his wife leaves, and he is in the position of being a single parent, homeless at times, working toward a better life against difficult odds. Father and son in the movie are played by real-life father and son, Will and Jaden Smith.

Vignette: In this scene, Chris Gardner and son return, after a long day, to find they have been evicted from their motel. Exhausted, hungry and confused, they face the circumstances with a mix of skill and difficulty.

Discussion: What examples of skillful distress tolerance do you notice? How do these actions influence the situation? What examples do you notice of poor distress tolerance? How do these actions make the situation worse? Can you think of other strategies that might have been beneficial?

Willingness vs Willfulness

Sense and Sensibility

Plot: this film adaptation of a Jane Austen book shows two sisters trying to find love and good relationships amidst challenges.

Vignette: Marianne is devastated when Willoughby chooses to marry another woman rather than her. On the way home from London Marianne and her sister Eleanor stay at a house belonging to a family (The Palmers) friend. The Palmer's house they are staying at overlooks the grounds of Willoughby's family home, Marianne decided to go for a walk to look at Willoughby's house and grieve. The weather becomes very stormy and Marianne becomes soaked through. Colonel Brandon rescues her and brings her back to the house. Marianne is critically ill and not thought to survive. This movie is a period piece set in 19th Century England.

Discussion: How did Marianne's willfulness serve her? What were the consequences to her and to those she loved? What were the consequences to Willoughby?

Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl

Plot: Jack Sparrow is trying to recover his pirate ship that was taken by a mutiny led by Barbarossa. The new captain and crew are under a curse that makes them appear normal in the daylight, but under moonlight, they appear as skeletons. Under the curse, they are unable to be killed.

Vignette: At the beginning of the first movie Jack Sparrow having been marooned on an island is returning to port in a small dingy. The dingy is sinking; Jack simply waits to get to port and steps on the quay as the dingy finally sinks. He is not discouraged and remains confident.

Discussion: What might Jack have felt besides willingness to accept? How might he have become willful? What might have happened if he had? What happens to us when we cease willingness and become willful?

Self-Soothing

Legally Blonde

Plot: The film follows the adventures of a young woman as she attempts to attend law school in an effort to win her boyfriend back. In the end, she discovers her own strength and finds a more healthy relationship.

Vignette 1: In the first scene of the movie Elle Woods is being dumped by her boyfriend in a restaurant. She becomes very distraught and cries and "makes a scene." Elle leaves the restaurant and will not ride in the car with her boyfriend. Eventually she gets into the car and rides to her fraternity house. The next morning two of Elle's friends go to Elle's room and find her eating chocolates and watching a soap opera (attempting to self-soothe). Elle is still very distressed.

Discussion: What are the effects of permitting our emotions to be ruled by our emotions? What benefits or costs do you see?

Vignette 2: Elle's friends persuade Elle to go to the beauty parlor where Elle becomes inspired to go to Harvard to essentially demonstrate to Charlie that she is as intelligent as he is and worthy of his affection.

Discussion: How can soothing ourselves be beneficial? Besides chocolate, movies and beauty parlors, what other self-soothing techniques can be used?

Improving the moment

Bridge to Terebithia

Plot: Two families move to a small town. A boy and a girl from each family become friends and allies as they tackle adjusting to a new school, dealing with bullies, loneliness and other challenges that they confront. The girl introduces the boy into a creative world of fantasy that they share after school. The nearby woods are transformed into an exciting land of adventure that provides a soothing respite from the distress of daily challenges. Following the tragic drowning of his friend, the young boy builds a bridge over the river where his friend was drowned. He and his little sister are able to soothe their grief by making the place safe and returning to the places where they find solace.

Vignette: The boy and his little sister become estranged over events surrounding the neighbor girl's death. The boy decides to heal the relationship with his sister by building a bridge that symbolizes their mutual return to the fantasy land they had loved and shared with the girl.

Discussion: How can meaningful rituals painful emotions? Can you identify activities that can provide respite from painful emotions when you cannot change or escape the situation? Why is it important to take the time to take care of yourself when painful or stressful events occur?

Contributing

The Illusionist

Plot: The film is placed in 19th century Europe. Young Edward is fascinated with magic. The young Duchess Sophie is fascinated with his magical tricks and soon they fall in love. Her father discovers their relationship and because of Edward's status as a poor commoner, they are forced to not see each other. Edward leaves and travels the world, learning wonderful magic illusions. He changes his name to Eisenheim and becomes a noted and wealthy illusionist. His fame leads him to command performance before the Crown Prince who is engaged to Duchess Sophie, now a woman. This encounter re-ignites their love. Intrigue, magic and "ghosts who expose the Prince's evil nature all weave a magical story of illusion and love (the ending is the biggest surprise illusion).

Vignette: Edward returns to his native city. His childhood poverty and low status had robbed him of love and broken his heart. Now he is very wealthy and uses his love of illusions to distribute money to poor children in the city.

Discussion: How can working to change the unfairness of life soothe distress? Can you think of cases where emotional pain has led to advocacy and social change? How can contributing help one to find meaning in adversity?

Generating opposite emotions

French Kiss

Plot: The very opening of the movie shows Kate attempting to overcome her fear of flying so she can travel to Paris with her fiancé. She is attempting to distract herself by using therapeutic skills in a flight simulator.

Vignette: Finding out that her fiancé "Charlie" has become engaged to another woman Kate finds the desire to travel to "save" Charlie greatly increase and she finds herself on a plane heading for Paris. Once again she is very anxious. A fellow passenger Luc begins to tease her about her fear. Kate becomes so angry with Luc that she begins to argue with Luc. Totally distracted by opposite emotions she forgets her anxiety and is able to fly to France.

Discussion: What do you think the effect of experiencing opposite emotions might be? What was Kate's original emotion? How was she able to change her fear?

Pushing away from a current situation

O Brother, Where Art Thou?

Plot: Three convicts on the lam meet up with a blues singer who has sold his soul in the hope of finding fame. They try to avoid police who doggedly seek to capture them. On the run, they encounter a variety of fascinating characters and adventures. This clever comedy, based on Homer's Ulysses, is set in the depression-era south.

Vignette: The foursome has just barely managed to escape from a sinister representative of the law who is attempted to burn them out of a hideout in a barn. They retreat to the woods where they can relax in safety. They each share hopes and dreams for the future while being entertained by mellow blues music from the singer.

Discussion: How does it help to focus on goals and dreams when feeling distressed? Can 'taking a break' from stress and difficult situations rejuvenate you and help you to sustain effective behavior?

Distracting Thoughts

French Kiss

Plot: The very opening of the movie shows Kate attempting to overcome her fear of flying so she can travel to Paris with her fiancé. She is attempting to distract herself by using therapeutic skills in a flight simulator.

Vignette A: Katie is unable to manage her anxiety on a flight simulator. Her "distracting song" (using *alternate thoughts*) does not work and she runs out of the flight simulator and gets her money back. She is unable to radically accept her anxiety. Since Kate is unable to fly to Paris her fiancé travels alone and breaks his engagement to Kate in order to marry a French woman he meets in Paris.

Discussion: What does not being able to use distress tolerance cost us? What does giving into our emotions create the opportunity for others to do? How would be able to distract our thoughts be helpful to us?

Radical Acceptance

The First Knight

Plot: Arthur, king of Camelot, weds Guinevere. Malagant, a former knight of the Round Table wants to take over Camelot. He kidnaps Guinevere but she is rescued twice by Lancelot. Lancelot and Guinevere fall in love during the rescues, but Guinevere does not acknowledge it because she is determined to remain faithful to Arthur. Arthur asks Lancelot to join the Knights of the Round Table for saving Guinevere's life. Later, Arthur discovers Lancelot and Guinevere kissing and wrestles with the conflict between his emotional trauma and the laws of Camelot regarding betrayal of the king. Malagant attacks Camelot during the court held to try Lancelot and Guinevere. The king is mortally wounded. Lancelot kills Malagant during the battle. King Arthur forgives them as he dies.

Vignette: After Lancelot rescues Guinevere, he pressures her to leave Camelot and come with him. She replies, "I can't have everything I want." In a later scene, Arthur discovers Lancelot and Guinevere embraced in a kiss. (Scene 36- beginning to King dropping his head) He confronts them. She tries to explain to the king her love for both the king and Lancelot. Arthur says she must choose between them. She chooses the king. Guinevere says, "You have the best of it. My will is stronger than my heart. My will holds me steady to my course through life." (Scene 37 – Beginning to she bows her head and covers her face). These statements illustrate Guinevere's ability to accept a situation she could not change and her ability to use her Wise Mind in trying to resolve the problem.

Discussion: Without accepting reality in relationships, life, and situations, can you live a life worth living? How does acceptance, distress tolerance (not getting what you want very badly) affect your quality of life and relief from suffering, even when you feel pain?

French Kiss

Plot: The very opening of the movie shows Kate attempting to overcome her fear of flying so she can travel to Paris with her fiancé. She is attempting to distract herself by using therapeutic skills in a flight simulator.

Vignette: Towards the end of the movie Kate finds herself with Luc in the South of France confronting Charlie and his new fiancée on the beach. During the course of the story Kate has had to undergo many anxiety arousing circumstances. Kate explains to Charlie that there is no country or house too safe that actually risking is part of life.

Discussion: How can *radically accepting* our emotions, rather than avoiding them be helpful to us? How might accepting our emotions be helpful to our relationships?

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End

Plot: This fun pirate fantasy follows the adventures and misadventures of Capt. Jack Sparrow as he attempts to reunite with his fellow pirates.

Vignette: Jack Sparrow is lying "dead" on a white beach. Jack does not fight the fact that he is dead but rather begins to watch the many crabs appear on the beach and then the crabs moving Jack's ship, the Black Pearl. Jack then begins to follow the crabs and the ship in order to board the ship.

Discussion: How can radically accepting our situation assist us? What results can occur if we don't? If Jack had not accepted the fact that he was dead what would have happened? How did accepting the fact that he was dead actually lead to him becoming alive again? How did Jack "play the hand" he was dealt and what was the result?

Interpersonal Effectiveness

Options for Asking and Saying "No"

Twenty-Seven Dresses

Plot: This romantic comedy gets its name from the female lead who is "always the bridesmaid but never the bride". It follows her adventures in learning how to find a good relationship.

Vignette: In this movie the main actress has problems saying "NO!" to anyone's request. She spends most of her weekends attending other people's weddings and looking after her boss. She does not have much of a life of her own. In a bar scene, she and a reporter sit together having a drink and he attempts to help her practice saying, "No!"

Discussion: When we won't say "no" what problems can arise? What would be a skill set that you can practice so you can have self-respect? What are some reasons why we have problems saying no? What are some of the "worry thoughts" you experience when you say "no." What are some of the counterchallenges you can use against your worry thoughts?

Pride and Prejudice (BBC/A&E version)

Plot: This film is a period piece set in Southern England in the early 1800s. It chronicles a relationship between a seemingly arrogant, but sensitive man and a woman who learns to love him.

Vignette 1: This film is a period piece set in Southern England in the early 1800's. Mr. Collins a parson is to inherit his cousin's estate on the death of his cousin (Mr. Bennet). Mr. Collins comes to visit Mr. Bennet and Mr. Bennett's five daughters. Mr. Collins also has the intention of proposing to one of the daughters and since the eldest, Jane, is taken transfer's his affections to the second eldest Elizabeth. Elizabeth does not know or like Mr. Collins well. In this scene, Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth and she refuses. Mr. Collins insists that Elizabeth is only declining due to being coquettish. Elizabeth assures him that this is far from the case and she intends to never accept Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins, rejected withdraws and Mrs. Bennett, (Elizabeth's mother) scolds Elizabeth for rejecting Mr. Collins and insists that Mr. Bennet makes Elizabeth accept Mr. Collins. Mrs. Bennet tells Elizabeth that she will never speak to Elizabeth again. The scene finishes with Mr. Bennett telling both Elizabeth and her mother that Elizabeth now has a dilemma, if Elizabeth does not marry Mr. Collins then Mr. Bennet will not speak to her and if she does marry Mr. Collins then he will not speak to her.

Discussion: Why is it important to think through whether it is appropriate to ask for something or to say no to a request? What could Mr. Collins have learned from this? In this case what should his intensity of asking been? What should Elizabeth's intensity of declining have been?

Vignette 2: Towards the end of the film Lady Caroline deBurg pays a visit to Elizabeth's home. Lady Caroline has come to confront Elizabeth on whether Elizabeth is engaged to Lady Caroline's nephew Darcy. Lady Caroline desires that Darcy should marry her own daughter. Lady Caroline attempts to bully Elizabeth into saying "No." Elizabeth is assertive and does not step down. The scene ends with Lady Caroline leaving quickly in her carriage.

Discussion: What was the intensity of asking in this situation? What should it have been? What happens when we apply a high intensity of asking to a low intensity situation? How can we identify when it really is appropriate for our "No's" to be of high intensity? What happens if people are angry with us when we say "No.?" What skill can we use if we are fearful of individuals being displeased with us?

Identifying the Situation

Who's on First? (Available on the video, "The Naughty Nineties")

Plot: This classic Abbott and Costello skit uses a discussion of baseball and multiple meanings of words and names to create an entertaining example of a failure to accurately communicate. Abbott and Costello verbally spar and become frustrated when the language they are using has different meanings for each of them. They fail to see where their communication breaks down and the resulting dialogue is hilarious.

Vignette: As they watch a baseball game together, questions and answers become a confusing mismatch of meaning. Neither can identify what is causing the failure to communicate and frustration increases. The audience can clearly identify the problem which increases the humor.

Discussion: Have you ever tried to resolve a conflict when neither is capable of understanding the other? How does it help to identify what is keeping the discussion stuck? How could Abbot and Costello help each other to resolve the conflict?

Mastery and self-respect

Chocolat

Plot: In a captivating comedy, Viane arrives in a tranquil, old fashioned French town. She sets up a Chocolaterie and creates wonderful chocolate confections that inspire the straight-laced townspeople to allow themselves to enjoy some of life's simple pleasures. She experiences rejection by the Count (also the Mayor of the village), who gossips about her "immorality" to the villagers. Viane further alienates the Count and townspeople by befriending the nomadic "River Rats" who are considered to be 'shiftless and untrustworthy.' She is assertive in holding to her values. She accepts the "River Rats". When their leader comes to town, she is finally able to recognize her own emotions and desires.

Vignette: Josephine flees her abusive husband and takes refuge in Viane's apartment. Viane helps Josephine realize she does not have to put up with abuse (Scene 10). Later in the movie, Serge, Josephine's husband, breaks into the apartment in the middle of the night to attack Josephine and encounters Viane. A struggle ensues. He criticizes Josephine by saying she does not even know how to use a skillet. When he attacks Viane, she protects herself by hitting him with a skillet, (Scene 12).

Discussion: How does teaching and learning new skills help to build mastery? How did Josephine learn how to become assertive? How does identifying and labeling obstacles to changing emotions motivate your own behavior? How did approaching fear and facing her fear of her husband help her to build mastery and self-respect?

Antwone Fisher

Plot: The film of hope and resilience is based on the real-life experiences of a young black soldier who was raised by an abusive foster mother and sexually abused by her daughter. He seeks to find his real parents and create a loving family. The story centers on his experiences in therapy and how it helps him to make peace with his past and build rewarding relationships in the present.

Vignette: Antwone returns to visit his former foster mother. He hopes to discover information that may lead to finding his birth family. Through therapy and his own resilience, he has learned to assertively stand up for himself and speak the truth to his foster mother and her daughter. He displays courage and strength as he confronts his abusers and is able to influence his foster mother to tell him the name of his birth father.

Discussion: Have you ever had to do something difficult in order to maintain your sense of self-respect? How did you find the strength to do so? How do you feel when you are able to act effectively and maintain your own self-respect?

Objective Effectiveness

Night at the Museum

Plot: A young, unemployed, divorced father takes a job as a night watchman in a museum. He wants to prove to his son that he can be responsible and hold a job. He is terrified to discover that the exhibits come alive at night and decides to quit his job. Rather than risk the respect of his son, however, he decides to stay on the job and master his fears. His young son has the opportunity to see and participate in the wonders of the museum at night and decides that his father is really his hero.

Vignette: When the father quits his job and leaves the museum he runs into his son and his wife's new husband. Rather than let his son know he is quitting his job, he decides to return and face his fears. He has

an encounter with the museum curator who demands to know why the exhibits are not in proper order. The father tries to explain but suffers embarrassment and humiliating remarks from the curator. He stays focused on his objective of keeping his job, however, and endures the humiliation for the sake of the relationship with his son.

Chocolat

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Vignette 1: An old grandmother enters the Chocolaterie asking, "What's the décor, Early Mexican Brothel?" Viane ignores the rudeness and talks to her kindly.

Discussion: How does choosing to ignore the rudeness or personal attack when one understands that the rudeness is prompted by the other's personal emotional pain, help build and maintain relationships?

Vignette 2: Viane observes the grandson drawing. She notes that he is very talented and asks him to draw a portrait of his grandmother knowing how meaningful this gift from her grandson would be to the grandmother. In the course of Viane's conversation with the boy, he tells her that the village people are talking about her and consider her to be immoral. When Viane learns that the mayor is continuing his campaign against her by trying to put her out of business, she goes to his office and confronts him saying, "What are you telling people?" She insists that he stop his verbal attacks.

Discussion: How can you being very firmly assertive help to solve a problem, correct an injustice, modify an aversive situation or obtain one's legitimate rights in personal encounters?

Enchanted April

Plot: This movie is a period piece in the early 1920s in England and Italy. It tells a story of a month's holiday in sunny Italy by several English women who learn from each other.

Vignette 1: This movie is a period piece in the early 1920s in England and Italy. It tells a moving story of four women all in different life circumstances that come together to enjoy a month's holiday in sunny Italy. In this scene Lady Caroline Desda is sunning herself. The older woman, Mrs. Fisher, is annoyed that Caroline has not attended breakfast. The excuse the other women give Mrs. Fisher is that Caroline has a headache. Mrs. Fisher goes to confront Caroline and suggest she take castor oil. The scene ends when Caroline wonders if Mrs. Fisher would rather find Caroline well than ill. This scene occurs soon after arriving in Italy.

Discussion: What were Caroline's objectives? Was she effective? What skills did she use? When have you been able to achieve your objectives and still feel that you have self-respect effectiveness and also relationship effectiveness?

Vignette 2: The next scene is between three of the women: Mrs. Fisher, Rose, and Lottie. Since Mrs. Fisher is out confronting Caroline, Rose and Lottie have been touring the Villa they are spending their holiday in. They discover a cozy sitting room and occupy it- Rose reading, and Lottie writing a letter to her husband. Mrs. Fisher returns and is angry. Mrs. Fisher, in her own mind, has established the sitting room as hers and is angry that Rose and Lottie are using the room. Lottie manages the interaction in a kind and direct way, stating to Mrs. Fisher what she would like to have happen in the future.

Discussion: Was Lottie a force to be reckoned with? What skills did she use in conversing with Mrs. Fisher? Was Lottie effective, and if so why? When have you asked for what you wanted and been rewarded for it? What skills did you use? What happens if you don't ask for what you want?

Legally Blonde

Plot: The film follows the adventures of a young woman as she attempts to attend law school in an effort to get her boyfriend back. In the end, she discovers her own strength and finds a healthy relationship.

Vignette: Elle goes to the library with a basket of muffins with the objective of joining a study group that includes her ex-boyfriend and his new fiancée. The fiancée is not at all happy with the idea and insists that Elle cannot join the group. The rest of the group goes along with the fiancée. Elle turns to walk away

dejectedly when another female student is insulting her. Elle challenges the female student insisting that had the student attended one of Elle's sorority parties, Elle would have welcomed the woman.

Discussion: What skills for objective effectiveness did Elle attempt to use? What could she have used? What happens when the environment is not receptive to our objectives? What were the characteristic's in the environment that ensured she could not meet her objectives? Was there ever a time when you could not meet your objectives because of powerful factors in the environment? When this happens, what choices do you have to still be effective?

Jericho: Season I: Episode called "Long Live the Mayor"

Plot: Jericho, small town, in Kansas finds itself cut off from the rest of the country after a mushroom cloud appears on the horizon. As each episode unfolds, the town deals with various crises such as how to survive the nuclear fallout, how to find food, how to get along, keeping law and order in the town and questions about what is happening and is the country under attack are on all the town's people's minds.

Vignette: Jake, the mayor's son, who is helping to keep law and order in the town makes a deal with an outlaw, MacAfee, who stole food from the town. MacAfee offers to exchange the food for one of his fellow outlaws being held in prison (5:26-6:04) Jake agrees to MacAfee's deal only to not follow through with it at the town's request. (17:51-18:32) Soon after, MacAfee's men help their imprisoned fellow outlaw escape. Rather than kill them, Jake explains to his colleague why they should not seek revenge. Rather than act impulsively to bring justice to MacAfee's wrongdoing, Jake wisely sees how he can preserve the relationship with MacAfee to help the town at a future date find food and arms (19:40-21:50)

Discussion: Are you often so focused on making something right or perfect in a relationship, that you miss seeing what benefits a relationship can have? In this extreme example, sitting with uncertainty is tough for Jake's colleague. He immediately wants to seek justification by killing MacAfee's men. When do you act impulsively to justify uncomfortable feelings rather than sit with them long enough to think about what your goals are in your relationship?

French Kiss

Plot: Kate tries to get her boyfriend back by overcoming her fear of flying and following him to France. She ends up unexpectedly falling in love with a troubled Frenchman who owns a vineyard. The two find romance and a shared love of making wine.

Vignette: Towards the end of the movie Kate finally has the opportunity to sit down with Charlie over dinner and divide up their possessions. She is clear on the objective of what she wants and completes the task with minimum emotional involvement, even though at this point in the movie Kate believes she still loves Charlie and is trying to lure him back. Charlie finds his "new" less emotional Kate very attractive. The scene finishes when they dance.

Discussion: How does Kate use objective effectiveness skills? What are the consequences for Kate, for us when we consistently allow our emotions to cloud our objective effectiveness? Describe a time when you permitted your emotions to get in the way of what you wanted? What happened? How could your objective effectiveness skills worked for you? Which skills have been particularly helpful?

Night at the Museum

Plot: A divorced man has been unable to maintain employment. He hopes to be a success in order to win the respect of his son. He takes a job as a night watchman at a museum but is not warned of the strange nighttime changes that occur. At night, everything in the museum comes to life and he must tangle with a T-Rex skeleton on the rampage, Genghis Khan and his loyal henchmen, a pharaoh's mummy who holds the secret to great power, a key-stealing monkey and other historical figures who are played with fun satire and great special effects. This fun family comedy depicts the man's willingness to continue working to win his son's respect in spite of the mayhem in the museum.

Vignette: After the first night in the museum, he quits his job. As he is leaving, he runs into his ex-wife's new husband and his son. His son tells him he is anxious for a tour of the museum and his pride for his father and his new job. The man realizes that in order to achieve his objective of winning his son's respect, he must return to the job. His first challenge when he re-enters the museum is to explain to the snide and sneering museum director how displays were altered during the nights. The man contains his own feelings in service of his objective.

Discussion: Have you ever had to ‘hold your tongue’ in order to get what you really want? Why is it important to keep in mind your goals and objectives when encountering difficult interpersonal interactions?

Relationship Effectiveness

The Princess Bride

Plot: Princess Buttercup has been abducted. The Dread Pirate Roberts seeks to rescue her. His efforts are challenged by Montoya who is a superb swordsman. Both Roberts and Montoya learn to respect each other and join together to rescue the princess. They become close friends and allies.

Vignette: Roberts is climbing a steep cliff in order to reach Montoya who plans to kill him when he reaches the top. The two engage in a respectful dialogue and agree to fight as gentlemen when Roberts reaches the top. As the two engage in a sword fight, they both act in a way that preserves the relationship in spite of their differing agendas. The resulting relationship serves both of their best interests and they become close friends.

Discussion: Why is it important sometimes to protect a relationship even if you cannot get everything you want? What is it like if you try to “win the battle but lose the war” by sacrificing an important relationship in order to get your own way? Why is it important to determine your priorities before you engage in an interpersonal conflict?

Chocolat

Plot: In a captivating comedy, Viane arrives in a tranquil, old fashioned French town. She sets up a Chocolaterie and creates wonderful chocolate confections that inspire the straight-laced townspeople to allow themselves to enjoy some of life’s simple pleasures. She experiences rejection by the Count (also the Mayor of the village), who gossips about her “immorality” to the villagers. Viane further alienates the Count and townspeople by befriending the nomadic “River Rats” who are considered to be ‘shiftless and untrustworthy.’ She is assertive in holding to her values. She accepts the “River Rats”. When their leader comes to town, she is finally able to recognize her own emotions and desires.

Vignette: When Viane does not join the church, dresses differently, and has a child but was never married, the Count gossips about her to the villagers.

Discussion: How does it feel to be rejected unfairly? How does being kind to others build mastery and relationships?

Legally Blonde

Plot: The film follows the adventures of a young woman as she attempts to attend law school in an effort to get her boyfriend back. In the end, she discovers her own strength and finds a more healthy relationship.

Vignette: Part way through the movie Elle is having a manicure at a salon. Paulette is her manicurist. A UPS man comes into the Salon to deliver a package to paulette. Paulette has a crush on the UPS man but is not assertive and has no skills in keeping the relationship or even starting the relationship. Elle signs for the package and attempts to educate Paulette in the art of flirting, suggesting she offer him a “beverage.” Elle also teaches her the “bend and snap” flirt. The scene should finish when Paulette try’s tim imitate Elle with her “bend and snap.”

Discussion: What skills does Paulette lack? What would be the cost for Paulette, for you, of not having those skills? What interpersonal skills for relationship effectiveness would you think would most benefit you?

Relationship Effectiveness and Self-Respect Effectiveness

You’ve Got Mail

Plot: This modern update of a Jimmy Steward film, “Little shop around the corner,” shows the relationship of a couple who believe they have never met but correspond by email to complain unknowingly about each other. When they realize they have really grown to love their “enemy,” they must decide whether to solve their differences and stay together or lose the relationship.

Vignette 1: This movie is a remake of the “Little shop around the corner.” Maggie Kelley is an owner of a book store in New York. Joe Fox is running her out of business. What both are unaware is that they have been emailing each other in a chat room. They both agree to meet in a café. In this scene Joe Fox comes to the restaurant, realizes that Maggie is the “shop girl” he has been writing to. He enters the café as Joe Fox

and does not tell Maggie who he is. The interchange is hostile from Maggie (who still does not know that Joe is her email pal and the man she is waiting to meet). The scene ends when Joe says “that’s my queue.”

Discussion: What were Maggie’s objectives in the scene? Did she get them? What was the cost? If she wanted to use relationship effectiveness or self-respect effectiveness what skills could she use? When have you needed self-respect effectiveness skills? What happens if you meet your objective, but don’t feel self-respect?

Vignette 2: The following scene Maggie is writing her processing of the above events to her secret email pal (Joe Fox). She describes herself as “cruel,” in a short scene, but much more gentle and honest.

Discussion: What is the difference between Maggie in the first vignette and the second? What skills did she use in the second vignette? What did using relationship effectiveness and self-respect effectiveness help her achieve? How did these two vignettes feel to you?

Return to Me

Plot: In this movie Minnie Driver plays a woman who is the recipient of a heart transplant. The movie shows her developing relationship with the former husband of the donor.

Vignette: In this movie Minnie Driver plays a woman who is the recipient of a heart transplant. The man whose wife was the donor of her heart (neither he nor she knows this) comes to the restaurant which Minnie’s father owns and Minnie works as a waitress. The man’s ‘blind date’ is extremely aggressive and harasses Minnie to bring a certain bottle of European water. Minnie in a passive aggressive act empties the bottle water and fills it with tap water. Minnie is observed by the man. The scene finishes with the blind date exclaiming that you can always tell the difference between regular and this particular exclusive bottled water.

Discussion: What emotional reactions got in Minnie’s way of objective, self-respect and emotional effectiveness? What could she have done when someone was so hostile? When has someone been hostile to you? How did you react? How did your reactions affect your objective, self-respect and relationship effectiveness? What skills could you now use? How might these skills have changed the result of your past reactions to a hostile person?

Self-Respect Effectiveness

National Treasure

Plot: Ben seeks to clear his family name while preventing the secret location of a lost treasure from falling into the wrong hands. The search for the treasure involves stealing the Declaration of Independence. Ben holds the key to the coded messages that lead to the treasure but he must find it before the enemy find’s him and decodes the map.

Vignette: an expedition to the arctic discovers a riddle hidden in a meerschaum pipe. Ben is able to decode the riddle that discloses a treasure map hidden on the back of the Declaration of Independence. His companions propose to steal the document. Ben realizes that the only way to prevent the theft is to risk his own life. He decides that this is his most important priority and stands firm.

Discussion: What is important enough to you that you would take risks to secure it? How can you protect the values, relationships and things that matter the most to you? What price would you be willing to pay to protect them? Why is it helpful to clarify your own values in interpersonal relationships? How does this maintain self-respect?

Dialectic of Own Needs vs Relationship Needs

The Joy Luck Club

Plot: The film traces the intergenerational lives of four women and their daughters. Each mother’s story of leaving China and coming to America is depicted and interwoven with her daughter’s efforts to remain a part of her mother’s culture while integrating into the American culture. The film beautifully illustrates common themes in first and second generation acculturation.

Vignette: A second generation Chinese daughter marries a Caucasian man from an affluent American family. The family knows little about their new daughter-in-law’s culture. They react to the marriage in a negative way. The young wife reacts by becoming very submissive to her husband and fears offending him. This negatively affects their relationship as he longs for her to be more herself. She offers to cook his dinner and asks what he would like. He tells her to fix something that she would like, but she cannot identify any of her own wants or wishes.

Discussion: How does failing to value your own needs in a relationship affect the relationship? What happens when one person is not really “present” in the relationship by disclosing their own thoughts, needs and wishes to the other? Why is it important that there is a balance between taking care of oneself and taking care of the other?

As Good as it Gets

Plot: A narcissistic writer who struggles with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder puts inordinate demands on others as he always puts his own needs first. He is quite insensitive to the wants and needs of anyone else. He establishes relationships with a young single mother and a sensitive gay painter who is his neighbor. The two of them help the writer to become more aware of others. The characters are cleverly played with both humor and compassion.

Vignette: The writer goes to his regular restaurant for dinner and finds that the usual waitress is not there. This creates considerable anxiety for him because his routine is interrupted. He copes by insulting everyone around and nearly gets himself beat up.

Discussion: How can ignoring the needs and feelings of others affect relationships? Can it ‘backfire’ and you lose getting what you want? How are others likely to respond if you consistently put your own needs ahead of others instead of keeping a balance between your own and others needs?