

During COVID-19 pandemic, cinema debates have become an approach to expressing people's emotion. The film *The diary of Anne Frank* (1959) aroused heated discussions online. At the meantime, the film *Beautiful boy* (2018) drew the public's attention as well.

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Aimed at making a deeper explanation for the nature of cinema debates with regards to health issues, we would like to cite a review of the movie *Beautiful Boy*, which we have enjoyed at our work place before the COVID-19 broke out. Adapted from a memoir about a father and his son that was directed by Felix Van Groeningen, with Steve Carell and Timothée Chalamet starring, this movie tells about the son's experiences of battling against drug addiction. This shapes a contrast to another film we talked about before.

As an adaption of Anne Frank's autobiography in the form of diary for the film, *The diary of Anne Frank* tells a story of a Jewish family living in the back room when Amsterdam was under the occupation of German. And this movie is of great benefit for us to tackle adverse effects in emotions caused by COVID-19.

Goals of cinema debating

General goals:

- Identify and realize emotions: Art is a fertile land for emotions projection. (As is confirmed and explained by psychologists, watching films has effects on human's emotional life, that is, people are more likely to realize their emotions and attitudes.)
- Promote emotional expression: It is crucial to debate. Sometimes we will invite several audience to share their views on the film——what feelings the film brings to them and what they gain from the film.
- Get strategies for life: A common response to a movie is “Oh I would have done X instead of Y” or “The character should have chosen N instead of M”. According to personalities of the characters, while debating, we can discuss whether their choices are effective and realistic or not. Then, as a similar situation emerge in our real life, we may make a wiser choice.
- Cultivate a sense of community: Interpersonal relationship is vital to people's happy life. Even if there isn't a direct relation between movies and health, merely sharing artistic opinions with strangers, making emotional expressions and doing intellectual exercises with them can build a sense of belonging, which matters to human.
- Deny false information: Movies and documentaries are not what facilitate exaggeration, bias and illusion for foreigners. Often, when watching science fictions, we want to ask physicists to prove whether the film may be a reality. Similar situations takes place when we watch movies of other types else. If

there are botanist, nutritionist, physical therapist or other specialists, we want them to prove whether these films are true or false, either. Therefore, cinema debate is a way of disclosing unreal information as well as giving real evidences.

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Specific goals:

- ◆ *Beautiful boy*: This movie was selected by virtue of its neutral and real portray of drug addiction and its long-term effects on the whole family. In the movie, a psychologist was treating a patient, in whose family there is a drug addict. This provides us with useful insights into drug addiction, meaning that we could employ it to explain the behaviors of eating disorders and other dangerous behaviors related to diet such as gluttony and emotional eating. Therefore, the specific goals for this movie screening were:
 - Sharing the experiences of a drug addict, without glorifying or debasing him.
 - Discussing the emotions and thoughts a familiar of a drug addict, analyzing their essences
 - Accounting for multi-reasons of drug addiction, complicated and long-term therapy process in the wake
 - Comparing similarities and distinctions between drug addiction and craving for and reliance on certain food as well as narcotism

- ◆ *The Diary of Anne Frank (1995)*: This movie was selected for it accords with the normal condition of people during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. confined travelling, mental fear, confrontation with death, hopelessness for future, powerless, cohabitation for long time). Hence, the specific goals for this cinema debate were:
 - Showing various attitudes of different people in face of the crisis
 - Discussing how to lessen the negative effects of quarantine on the family and find strategies in response
 - Comparing the effects of the attitudes on individual emotional states

Methods of cinema debating

Usually, cinema debates are held in + Jandi Studio. Due to limited space, only at least 10 persons are allowed to attend. However, compared with conversation in large groups, that in small groups are more smooth.

The debating procedure is very simple: First, we display posters to our community (patients, friends, family or social media. If they show interests, we can reserve a place for them, we screen the movie on the scheduled day, sharing some popcorn going round the room to discuss over it and noting down them on a blackboard.

Since the pandemic began, the debating has been transformed into the one in online mode. At the outset, we attempted to play the movie through a video conference or live stream, but this practice involved technical and legal disputes, so we chose another method—notify our community about the movie to be screened one or two weeks in advance so that they can watch it at home whenever they can.

Then, when the debating day came, we all attended to a zoom meeting and proposed our opinions as one would do in a book club. Meanwhile, all the notes were displayed on a shared screen of Zoom's whiteboard. We have been looking for movies that are easy to find online, which are mostly available on Netflix or YouTube.

We have found some of useful points to start exchanges of ideas, all the participants are encouraged to express their views.

- “What did you think of this?” This question is simple and harmless, so the participants can share whatever pops out of their minds, which is easy for us to roughly learn the thought of each one.
- “What impact did it exert on you?” We think that emotional expression brings other people to themselves, and it facilitates us to apprehend why the audience hold some opinions about the film or character.
- “What actions, attitudes and tools were applied by the main character” It helps frame the note, record main points of the plots and reach a consensus on what we've seen.
- “What was the relationship between the characters” The interactions between characters usually foreshadow the plots.
 - In *Beautiful boy*, for example, the relationship between father and son goes through different stages, offering excellent examples for exchanges dealing with guilt, control, limits and love.
 - *The diary of Anne Frank* highlights all kinds of human interactions, the leader of patriarchy—Mr. Frank, the rebellious Anne in adolescence (curious about romance, despising rules and authority, fanciful and clownishly giggling). As to other characters, they show nearly feverish concerns for news, separating themselves from the rest of people. Also, they have a mania for fatalism and theft, indulging themselves in trifles and arts.
- “What do you think about this?” The first time we ask “What do you think about it?” we get a general response as a efficient conversation opener. But, when we ask again in a different way after everyone has exchanged their ideas, we usually get deeper answers. Participants sharing their understandings is essential for the debate to work on mutual emotion assistance. Through this question we have accesses to the participants' real plights they are facing now. As well, some of them have a family member like the drug addict in *The Diary of Anne Frank*.
- “What would you have done in the character's place?” We do not ask for remarking or refuting people's practices in the movie but to seek for some helpful ways. Amid the discussion of *Beautiful Boy*, we all agreed that actively finding help for the family with the addict is as important as assisting the drug addict with fighting drug addiction. While from *Anne Frank*, we observed the importance of pursuing nobility and chasing meanings and goals of life.
- “What do you learn?” Ask them a brief question and lead them to think what they've learnt from this activity, which can console them a lot and provide

experience for them to copy with similar issues in the future.

Results of cinema debating

General results:

- Different ways of solving a certain question were drawn from the discussion and sharing.
- Sense of identity were built among participants, thus enhancing sense of belonging in community.
- Our previous perspectives of movie were changed by cinema debating and movie has become a new platform for learning and problem-solving.

Results of *Beautiful Boy* debate:

At the time we were promoting this movie in our community, our child psychologist noticed that a mother of one of his little patients had recently found her husband abusing drugs, so she was invited to attend this cinema debate session. She was very moved by this movie, especially because she realized that she couldn't save her husband on her own, instead she needed help. Also, we witnessed effects of sharing stories since there were attendants sharing the same suffering. In return, they imparted experiences of helping their family members fighting drug addiction to her. There is a very important point that several weeks after this session, she asked for professional help from one of our nutritionist and psychologist.

During this session, we were able to discuss different aspects about the movie and drug taking in a specific way. Despite the fact that family context has an inevitable influence on the drug addicts, their family members are not totally responsible for his addiction. Besides, family should not completely attribute the drug addicts' failure of fighting drug addiction to themselves, instead, as a family, they also need to get help from other channels. After the session, our health professionals gave us valuable feedback. They made it clear that once entering our bodies, how drugs damage our brains, influencing our decision-making and behaviors. Meanwhile, our discussion also involved that side from drug taking, risk behaviors concerned about interpersonal relationships, eating disorders and food are a kind of addiction. As a result, every participant could shift the focus of their emotional problems to problems of drugs, diets and interpersonal relationships.

Results of debate:

This movie gave us a sense of indifference in interpersonal relationships after we watched it (someone has even read the original novel). This sense may occur in a family quarantined for a long time, similar to the case of blockade due to Novel Corona-pneumonia. *The Diary of Anne Frank* assisted us in discussing ways people may use to cope with these problems. At first, we decided to describe personalities of each character, what method or tool they employed while they were imprisoned and what changes happened in some of them.

For example, at the beginning of the movie, Peter's uninterested attitude towards

the current situation shapes a sharp contrast to Anne's optimism and rebelliousness. These examples got us across how some teenagers' typical attitude (disinterest, rebelliousness, depression, hope and etc.) remained unchanged even in some tough time as well as how some of them adopted a better pattern to face situations they came across. Take Anne as an example, her rebelliousness enabled herself to keep rational when others were upset.

In the same adolescence with us, the protagonist enlightened us with her nature growth toward maturity in the story, leading us to think when we go through this transition in life. What's more, from this movie we could learn how these characters draw energy from the circumstances they are placed in, such is the case for Anne's relationship with her mom that morphed from defiance to acceptance through times of forgiveness. Another example would be Anne's relationship with Peter, which started out brotherly but turned to be intimate when the two persons began sharing their thoughts and feelings with each other. Thereby, our own relationships with others during the COVID-19 quarantine can be either distant or utterly resistant, but they are up to us. If we want to have a shot, our interpersonal relationships can be rendered better and deeper.