

Utilizing Children's Film to Propel Identification, Conversation, and Action Steps to Address Stress in Families



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Think of your
favorite childhood
movie...

Why was this a
favorite movie?





Why use children's film?

- Characters in children's movies are often animated, hyperbolic, “larger than life”, silly, exaggerated
- Films can present viewers with new ideas and experiences, including coping mechanisms and problem solving skills.
- Identification with characters - “I want to be brave like...”



Why use children's film?

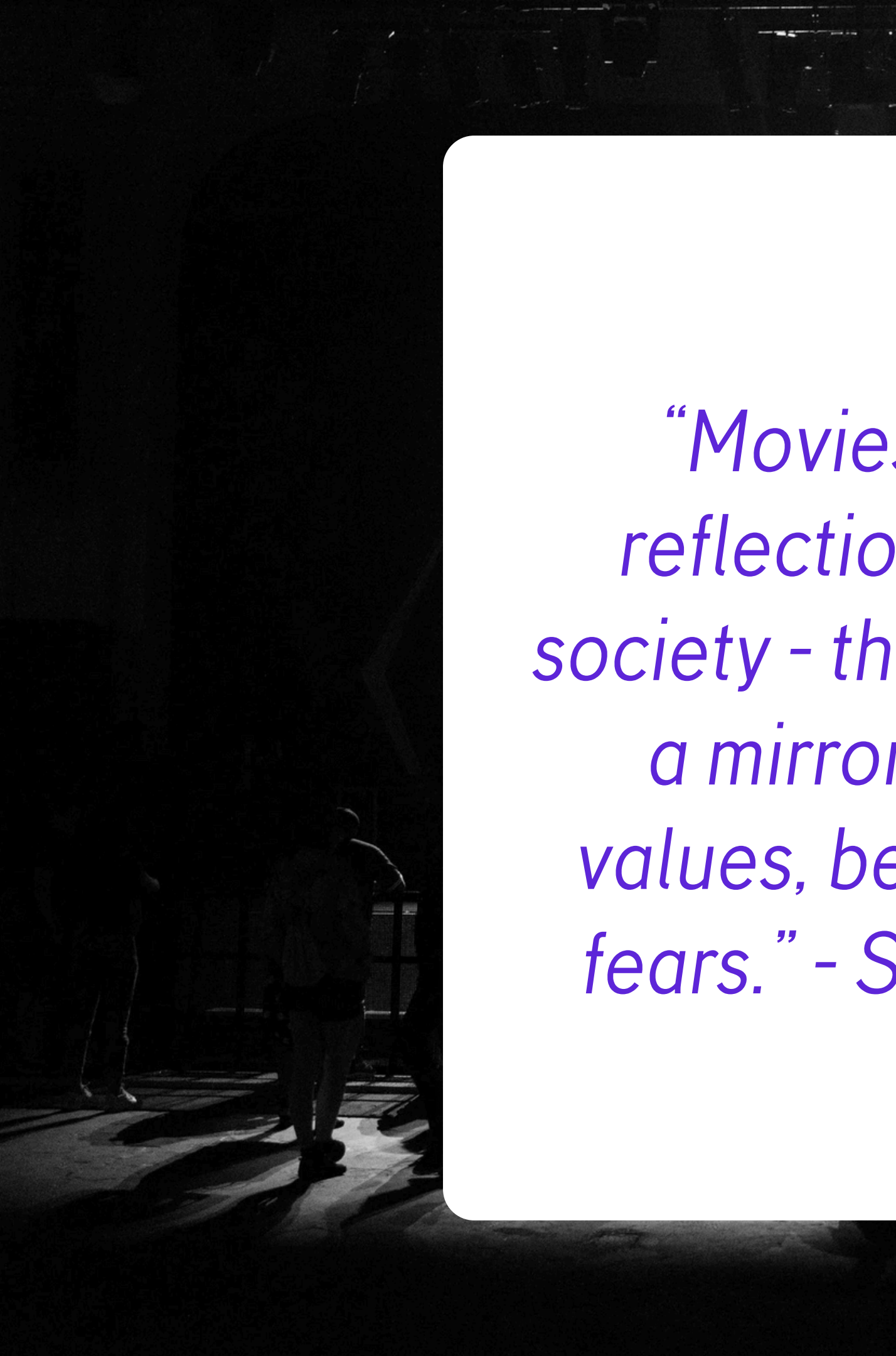
- Navigate the complexities of the world by subconsciously disconnect from personal, difficult situations while fostering empathy and compassion for the on-screen characters and situations
- Processing can lead to healthy coping, introspection and/or self-discovery
 - Viewers may mirror coping strategies observed in film
- Increase potential for eventual healing



- Non-threatening conversation starter - “The movie made me think about when you shared...”
- Films can provide comfort
- Viewers may feel less isolation - “I am not alone in this experience.”



- Practice perspective taking using movie characters
- Mock treatment plans and interventions
- Appropriate to use with all members of the family
- Use films as parenting education tool



“Movies are a reflection of our society - they hold up a mirror to our values, beliefs and fears.” - Spike Lee



Considerations

Many film genres can be used to facilitate discussion about stressors, trauma, grief, etc. Always consider the audience, their needs and interests when choosing films to view during a session or home visit. Have the family/participant take part in the selection process.

Choose appropriate content and length when selecting a movie/movie clips

Assess past experiences, vulnerabilities, timing of life events when considering use of film to facilitate discussion



ACTION!



DR. SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS

01

Themes to consider: isolation, feeling different than others, childhood trauma, lack of family



THE FOX AND THE HOUND

02

Themes to consider: change in friendships, cultural differences in friendships, transition from childhood to adolescence

03

THE LION KING

Themes to consider: Grief, loss, facing difficult situations, challenging family dynamics



Using film with staff for professional development

- Elements of movies for staff to observe from a clinical perspective:
 - Who cared for [character name]?
 - What difficult situations are presented in the film?
 - How did childhood shape the main character's development?
 - How would you engage this family to address the trauma?

Using film with program participants and families to talk about stressors and trauma

- “Tell me what was important about the movie to you”
- “What character did you like the most?”
- “What character did you dislike?”
- “What would you change about the movie/situation?”

Connect the responses back to stressors/challenges the family is facing. Allow the family to connect movie themes and characters to their own situations.



*“Cinema is a form
of art that can
inspire, enlighten,
and entertain.” -
Christopher
Nolan*



CASE STUDY - GENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND PARENTING

Time stamp:
Movie 1
Simba's Early Childhood: 00:00-25:00
Death of Mufasa: 30:00
Middle Childhood/Adolescence: 48:00
Simba Reflects on his trauma: 1:02:00
Simba Returns Home: 1:08:00-1:10:00
Restoration and Birth of Kiara: 1:11:00-1:21:00

Movie 2
Section 1: 00:00-18:00

Date:

Who helped care for
Simba? (family
members or other)

Mufasa, Sarabi, Scar, Zazu, Rafiki, Timon, Pumba

Trauma Events

- ☐ Interaction with hyenas in elephant graveyard
- ☐ Witnessing and grieving the death of Mufasa
- ☐ Scar tells Simba to run away and never return.
- ☐ Returning to the Pridelands and seeing the destruction of his home

Examples of Parenting

- ☐ Mufasa shows Simba Pride Rock and explains boundaries.
- ☐ "There's more to being king than getting your way."
- ☐ Mufasa explains to Simba his connection to others and the Circle of Life.
- ☐ Simba teaches Kiara about safety.
- ☐ Simba teaches Kiara we are part of one another.

How did Simba's childhood experiences shape his parenting?

- ☒ Simba is very protective of Kiara. He defines strict boundaries
for Kiara to abide by.
- ☒ Simba discourages Kiara from befriending Kovu because he is an
"outlander" and associated with Scar.

Two ways you would engage this family to
address the generational trauma (parenting
education, assessment, conversations, etc.)

- 1 Encourage the family to lean into their strengths and social support network to feel secure in raising Kiara and to feel she is safe and still able to exert her independence.
Use curriculum to teach the parents how to encourage safe exploration of environment and developmentally appropriate independence.
- 2 Explore Simba's readiness to work through his traumas in therapy.





References

[Neurolaunch](#)

[Northwestern University Center
for Child Trauma Assessment,
Services, and Interventions](#)

[The Movie Model of Film
Therapy.](#)

[American Mental Health
Foundation - Cinematherapy.](#)