

# Psychology and movies

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A Beautiful Mind A Beautiful Mind is a biographical drama, which was directed by Ron Howard in 2001. Critics received it positively and some time later psychologists began to use it for teaching purpose. The movie is based on the true story. It depicts the life of John Nash, a prominent mathematician, who is paranoid schizophrenic.

The main character is really genius, but unfortunately, this fact does not mean that he cannot have a mental illness. He suffers from schizophrenia experiencing some symptoms that are characteristic for such a diagnosis, namely paranoid ideations, hallucinations, delusional thinking and distorted perception of reality. This disorder has a great impact on John's everyday life, on his relations with friends and family and on his work as well.

Schizophrenia is a mental disease that is very serious and incurable. It affects many people and does not depend on the race, economic group or age.

People, who suffer from it, have disorganized mind, behavior and language. They usually see, feel or hear the things that are not real. In most cases, the symptoms of schizophrenia come out in twenties or earlier but in the movie, they occur when Nash is 30. The main problem of John Nash is the absence of his ability to distinguish what is real and what is not. Anyway, he coped with the problem very accurately and neatly.

The film itself is a good portrayal of a mental disorder and that is why it is suitable for the research of different psychological concepts and topics. What is interesting, A Beautiful Mind tells not just the story of a schizophrenic, but it also depicts the effect the disorder has for the family, how it causes the

breakdown of one's reputation and the ability to combine schizophrenia and genius. To understand the main idea of the film and the peculiarities of the given case of schizophrenia, one should come to grips with the plot of the movie. At the beginning of the film, John is a typical student of Princeton University. He shares his room with another student Charles who very quickly becomes his good friend. John is showed as unsociable person; he skips classes and likes to 'spend time' with numbers rather than with other people.

He does not know how to communicate with women and they think he is brutal and rude. Being a student, John Nash begins to work on his game theory, which later becomes the most prominent of all his works. After graduation, Nash starts working as a teacher of calculation at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He thinks that his classes are useless but students like them and listen very attentively to whatever he explains. Once he gives his students a difficult task to cope with and later on one of the students, Alicia, comes to his office to discuss it and to present her solution.

Eventually, young people fell in love and marry. They seem to have a happy family, to live calm live, but everything changes at a moment. The world of Nash turns upside down after his visit to Charles, the friend of his who works at Princeton. After the meeting with friend and his niece, John runs into a man in black who works for the Department of Defense. The latter gives John a task to decode the messages from the Soviets that are implanted in numerous newspapers and magazines. This man also says that he has to work secretly and thus should place his reports in an unmarked mailbox.

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John follows all the instructions but he understands that it is not right and may have a bad impact on his life. Exhausted with all that happens to him, John becomes paranoid and his wife notices it. Alicia does not know what to do. She wonders what the cause of her husband's odd actions is. She calls to a psychiatric hospital and asks for help.

Doctors take Nash to hospital, trying to explain that he is ill and needs treatment. Nash thinks that all these men are the Soviet agents and do not believe them until Alicia shows him all the documents that was considered to be 'top secret'. Thus, John faces the truth and understands that all his work for the government was just a hallucination. He accepts the truth as it is and let psychiatrists help him. After many painful shock therapies, Nash leaves the hospital and begins to live at home, where he has to take special antipsychotic drugs. These pills suppress his feelings and emotions and one day he stops taking them.

In a short time, his delusions return. He does everything that agent tells him and continues decoding the secret messages. Once Alicia discovers that Nash has revived his 'work for the government' and tries to assure him in its nonexistence again, but the behavior of the schizophrenic makes her leave the house and run away. John sees Charles and his niece and at this very moment, he understands that they are just delusions as they have always been of the same age. This episode is the climax of the film that indicates the beginning of John's struggle with himself and the harsh reality. Nash realizes that the best way out is to ignore the delusions and to live an ordinary life.

He thanks all of them for the memoirs and asks not to bother him anymore. Nash starts working with students in the library and finishes his work on the game theory. He is allowed to teach again. Once a man comes to Nash and informs him that he is to be awarded the Noble Prize for his game theory. Their conversation is the most touching moment of the movie, as professor's colleagues honor him by giving him their pens. Eventually, he wins the Nobel Prize and gives a moving speech to the audience and his wife, who has managed to stay with him despite all hazards of life.

Speaking about John's relations with other people and his influence on them, I may say that throughout the movie he is shown as socially withdrawn and awkward person. He communicates with his friends and Alicia but apart from them, he sees and hears his friend Charles, his niece and the agent of the Department of Defence, who are not real. Nevertheless, they are very vivid and real for the main character and they definitely influence his life and behavior. When he loses his reputation, students are afraid of him and cannot accept him and his genius. For people John Nash is just a mad person who is diagnosed as schizophrenic.

The film A Beautiful Mind depicts the integration of an ill person into the society and displays how to cope with the mental disease. John's delusions have a very complex character. As for me, they symbolize some hidden features of his character as well as his intentions. Charles is a symbol of John's desire to communicate, however he seems to be completely unsociable. The character of Charles' niece tells about his innocence and desire to learn new information about the world.

Finally, William Parcher is a symbol of John's adventurism and readiness to apply his 'beautiful mind' to practice. Describing the issue, one cannot help describing the effect of John's illness on his wife Alicia. She is definitely hurt by it more than anybody else. She suffers great emotional stress and she feels helpless, as she cannot do anything to cope with John's schizophrenia. This evidence from the movie proves that the mental illness has a great impact not only on the sufferer but also on the people around him. While the schizophrenic has to deal with the symptoms of the disease, his family is to accept his behavior.

My personal attitude to John Nash may be described as respectful and admiring and the reasons for it are obvious. He lost everything and faced a nasty illness, which destroyed all his life and plans for the future. He managed to overcome the problem and to live a successful life without paying attention to his delusions. They damaged his life and career and many people in such a situation will not be strong enough to live on. However, he copes with it and deserves the public recognition and high esteem.

It goes without saying, that his strengths surpassed his weaknesses and he learnt how to live with the illness and to remain a man and a good person despite everything. His example shows the audience that it is possible to live with difficulties, such as schizophrenia and to suffer its symptoms. It teaches us to understand people who either have this diagnosis or other mental illnesses. I chose this movie because I think that its greatest achievement is the representation of schizophrenia to healthy population, who think about schizophrenic people as about those who just talk to themselves and do odd

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things. The movie A Beautiful Mind helps people to understand why these things happen and what ill people feel. What is more, they can understand that it is not very easy for schizophrenic just to pull himself together and live on.

Generally, this film is very interesting not only for common people but also for psychiatric educators who use it for teaching audiences about schizophrenia, its peculiarities and the impact it has on people. Other film's strong points are the perfect cast and director's work and good portrayal of the development of psychosis and its effects. Speaking about the clinical representation in the movie, one may say that it is true to life and that is why the film is worth being watched and analyzed. The film makes me feel inspired and thoughtful. Intriguing story of John Nash cannot leave the audience indifferent because of the feelings it evokes.

It tells us about the inspiration, love, life and troubles of the main character who teaches other ill people to remain strong and struggle with imagination for the sake of the family and its members. There are a lot of moving episodes in the film, such as the climatic scene when John realizes that he is ill at the end of the story. After having watched the film, the majority of the audience is inspired to learn more about real John Nash and his life, which is a little bit different from the one depicted in the film. As for me, I like the main character of the film as well as his "beautiful mind". Summing up, the psychology in A Beautiful Mind provides a good lesson for the ordinary people and it teaches them to practice their self-awareness. Despite the film is somehow different from the real life of John Nash, it is shot not to show the

biography of a person but to depict the mental illness and to show how one may live with this problem.

The main character managed to return to normal life by becoming self-aware and by ignoring the tiresome symptoms of schizophrenia. The movie depicts the constant struggle, which is not easy to endure. However, the main character could do this and achieved success.