

# Schizophrenia



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Among the various diseases that affect the mental abilities of an individual, schizophrenia is the most known mental illness, owing to its depiction in numerous movies. One such movie which deals with the subject of schizophrenia is “ Shine” directed by Scott Hicks. The movie depicts the real life story of David Helfgott, the famous Australian pianist. Through this movie, Scott Hicks presents the various episodes in the life of David Helfgott and his struggle with his mental illness.

David succeeds in his struggle against the illness and returns to the stage where he gives one of his best performances. His recovery and success as a pianist aids in removing the stigma associated with mental illness like schizophrenia. The movie presents David Helfgott as an individual who recovers after being afflicted with schizophrenia and continues with his normal life. But there are certain drawbacks in the depiction of this mental illness. The movie offers the troubled childhood of David and the abuse of him by his father, as the reason for his mental illness.

This factor as the cause of schizophrenia is erroneous and conveys a false message to the audience regarding the mental illness. The Movie The movie opens with the depiction of a mentally disturbed David who is entering a restaurant. The movie then shifts to the childhood days of David where he is participating in a music competition. David fails to win the competition and this leads to the disappointment of his father, Peter who behaves harshly with David. The movie then goes on to present the life of David, as a teenage boy.

David is offered with an invitation to continue with his studies in America upon winning the state musical championship. But he is prevented from going to America by his father. David gets another opportunity to pursue his ambition of becoming an excellent musician when he receives a scholarship which will enable him to study at the Royal College of music at London. Even though his father refuses to let David to go to London, David persists in his decision and joins the Royal College of music.

It is while performing at a concert in London that David is affected by mental breakdown, owing to which he is treated with electric shock therapy in a psychiatric hospital. After the completion of his treatment, David visits his home but his father refuses to accept him as his son. David ends up in a mental institution, “ We then catch up with David ten years later and he is a shattered man, spending his days of stagnancy in a mental institution, his talent unused, and his name forgotten”. (Leong). A worker at the institution recognizes him and takes him home.

David lives in a hostel and roams on the streets, from here the movie returns to the present life of David. After entering the restaurant, David catches the attention of all the people present there, by playing the piano. Impressed by his talent, the restaurant owner takes care of him. In exchange for the owner’s help, David displays his piano playing skills at the restaurant. David meets Gillian through the owner, whom he marries later. With the aid of Gillian, David succeeds in giving an excellent performance at a comeback concert where he is applauded by the audiences.

Psychological Disorder Through the story of David Helfgott, the movie brings forth the effects of psychological disorder of schizophrenia and his success in overcoming those effects. People suffering from schizophrenia are considered unfit to work or to be included in the society. This movie proves this notion wrong by presenting a true story where Helfgott manages to create excellent music on his piano in spite of being suffering by schizophrenia. The movie also presents the fact that recovery is possible in individuals suffering from schizophrenia.

This Oscar-winning movie conveyed several stigma-busting messages: People recover from schizophrenia. Most people with schizophrenia can work even if they have symptoms. ” (Warner 99). The movie brings forth the truth that schizophrenia can be cured and even if a person is suffering from schizophrenia, he/she can continue with his/her work life. As the movie depicts a true story, the level of functioning achieved by a person suffering from schizophrenia is realistic. It also explores the possibilities of treatment and cure of schizophrenia through the recovery of David.

The depiction of schizophrenia in the movie reflects its diagnostic criteria, for David displays the symptoms which are associated with schizophrenia. One aspect where the film fails to provide correct information is the cause of David’s mental illness. In the movie, it is implied that the abuse David suffered at the hands of his father was responsible for his mental illness. It was owing to his heredity that David developed schizophrenia but the film ignores this fact and tries to present childhood abuse as the cause of David’s schizophrenia.

The mental illness that had its onset in 1970 when Helfgott was twenty-three years old was hereditary schizophrenia and had nothing at all to do with pathological family interactions. ” (Niemi 292). The film harbors a notion in the mind of the audiences that abusive parents can be the reason behind the mental illness of their children. Experts in the medical field have criticized the movie for misleading its audiences regarding the connection between parents and the mental illness of their children.

“ Various medical experts have also protested the attribution of David’s nervous breakdown to his father’s cruelty. Severe mental illness requires at least a biological predisposition (but) Shine seems to continue a tradition of blaming parents for mental illness,” said Dr. Kenneth Rosenberg. ” (Hewlett 132). The movie projects David as a victim of childhood abuse which resulted into the development of mental illness. As the film focuses on the life of David Helfgott, the current level of understanding among the psychologists regarding schizophrenia and the effects it has on the society is not depicted in the movie.

The film aims to convey the message to its audiences that people suffering from schizophrenia can be a part of the society and provide productive contribution to the society through their work. The story of David convinces the audience that schizophrenia can be cured and a person suffering from schizophrenia can return to his/her normal life. Conclusion The mental illness of schizophrenia is depicted in the movie “ Shine” through the story of David Helfgott, a famous pianist. David Helfgott suffered a mental breakdown during his youth which led to the development of schizophrenia.

After spending many years at mental institution, David succeeds in returning to the stage with the aid of his wife, Gillian. The movie brings forth the facts that schizophrenia can be cured and people suffering from schizophrenia are fit to continue with their work. But it conveys a misleading notion about schizophrenia through the depiction of David's abusive father as the cause of David's mental illness. The true cause of David's mental illness was his heredity but the film neglects this aspect and aims to present his father as the person responsible for his mental illness.