

# I am sam – college essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the movie I Am Sam, I will be discussing two elements of communication, facial expressions and the social exchange theory of relationships. I will be describing two different scenes of the movie to show how facial expressions are an important element of communication as well as two other scenes to show how the social exchange theory of relationships works in this movie.

During the final custody hearing to determine if Sam, who has the mentality level of a seven year old, is capable of raising his daughter Lucy on his own, it was apparently very easy for Mr. Turner to manipulate him into agreeing with him.

Because of Sam's facial expressions during this scene, we can determine that he was becoming very upset with what Mr. Turner was saying to him. Rita, his lawyer, knew by the way Sam was struggling with words and the distressed expressions on his face, that he was "understandably upset." Mr. Turner knew this as well, but still proceeded to tell Sam, "You do not know what it takes to raise your daughter," and started "attacking" him as Rita said.

Sam had tears in his eyes along with raised eyebrows showing his reaction of shock, sadness, and fear. Sam told Mr. Turner that he was Lucy's father and Mr. Turner replied by saying, "Are you really? I am not talking about the fact that you got some homeless woman pregnant. The question is, if you love your daughter as much as you say you do, and I know you do, don't you think she deserves more? Don't you in your heart of hearts secretly question yourself every day?"

With that last statement by Mr. Turner, Sam broke down, started crying, and said that Lucy deserves everything and agreed with Mr. Turner. Immediately after the hearing when Lucy and Sam are saying their goodbyes, you can clearly see the love between them and the emotional pain this is causing both of them knowing that they cannot be together anymore until the courts see fit because of their facial expressions with Lucy crying and Sam fighting tears. The caseworker looks to Rita for help to get Sam and Lucy to let go of each other and Rita just put her hand up and looked away as to say, " Just let them go for now. You can see in Rita's facial expressions that it is hard for her to see Sam and Lucy go through this kind of emotional pain and she is very upset because of the tears in her eyes as well.

When Rita goes to Sam's apartment when he did not show up for his first court ordered evaluation, Sam ends up having an emotional breakdown when he said Lucy does not need him anymore because she has a new family and he knows she does not need him. Rita asked him if that was what Lucy had said and he said, " No. I just know she does not need me. When Rita said that that was the first stupid thing she ever heard him say, Sam's facial expressions showed that he was very upset, depressed, and frustrated. Rita told Sam that he could get Lucy back, but he has to fight for her. Sam started yelling because he was so upset and frustrated and he said, " But I tried! I try and I tried hard! " Rita told him to try harder and he said, " But you do not know! You do not know! You do not know what it is like when you try, you try, you try, you try, and you do not ever get there!

Because you were born perfect and I was born like this and you were born perfect! People like you do not know! People like you do not know what it is

like to get hurt! People like you do not have feelings! People like you don't feel anything! " Rita's facial expressions at this point show that she is offended, hurt, and upset because she does know what it is like and that even people like her go through bad things. Rita then has an emotional breakdown herself explaining that people like her feel " lost, little, and dispensable.

In the midst of her explaining this to Sam, she starts breaking down about how her husband is cheating on her with " someone far more perfect than her," and how her " son hates her" and she " screams horrible things at her seven year old because he does not want to get in the car at the end of the day. " When Rita takes Sam to her house to prepare him for questioning the next day at the final custody hearing, Sam talks to her about her son, Willie. Sam tells Rita that she is so lucky because she can play with Willie anytime she wants, but she says he does not want to play with her.

Sam told her that he does but " he thinks you do not want to play with him maybe. " Rita said it is ridiculous that Willie thinks she does not want to play with him because she does. The social exchange theory comes into play in this scene because it shows how Rita is helping Sam fight for custody of Lucy and Sam is helping Rita understand how Willie is feeling about her and how he is feeling neglected because neither one of his parents is around for him to be with.

While Sam and Rita are eating and preparing Sam for the questioning at the trial the next day, they are both laughing and joking around and you can see in both their attitudes and demeanors that Sam talking to Rita about Willie

helped a lot. At the end of the movie, Lucy's foster mother, Randy, brings Lucy to Sam's apartment and tells Sam that Lucy wanted to be with him.

Randy then apologizes to Sam for everything that has happened since she had custody of Lucy, and tells him that she is not going to testify against him during court the next day, but she is going to testify for him to regain custody of Lucy. Sam tells Randy " she is the red in Lucy's paintings" and how much he appreciates her and what she is doing for him and Lucy. This is part of the social exchange theory because in the next scene, you see Lucy playing soccer as she wanted to and Sam is her coach/referee. They are both extremely happy.

After Lucy scores her goal, Randy, Rita, Willie, and Sam's friends are in the stands cheering Lucy on. It is obvious that this is a winning situation for everyone because even though Sam regained custody of Lucy from Randy, Randy is still in Lucy's life and Rita is still in Sam's life even though she is not his lawyer anymore. This is a great example of a win/win situation. I feel that the movie demonstrated these two elements of communication more so than the other movies on the list because of Sam's disability.

With his disability, the main way to communicate is typically through facial expressions and gestures. Because of this, all of the characters in the movie that interact with Sam use many facial expressions and gestures as well to communicate with Sam. I also feel that this movie is a great example of the social exchange theory as well because it shows how someone's life, even someone with a disability like Sam, can be ripped apart by having the one most important thing in their life taken from them.

With Sam's disability and how society judges people with disabilities like Sam's, you would not expect very many people, especially an expensive, highly respected lawyer like Rita, to even give Sam the time of day or have the patience to listen to what his problem is. Throughout the movie, I saw how Sam gradually changed Rita's outlook on certain things and helped her realize how she was acting and how her relationship with her son was fading.

I feel that this might affect personal life because if you cannot communicate with someone else just by using gestures or facial expressions, you will have a hard time with any job dealing with the public or just being in public around a large diversity of people. Those are very important elements in communication. The social exchange theory might impact personal life because if you only look at what is good for you, and not the other people in the relationship, you may end up pushing the others away or they will just give up trying to create win/win situations so that everyone can have what they want out of the relationship.