

# Mental disorders in cinema assignment

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Mental Health Disorders in Cinema Arguably one of the most beloved movies to come from Walt Disney Pictures and Pixar Animation Studios in the 21st century is “ Finding Nemo”, an extravagant tale of a struggling father’s venture out of his comfort zone on a journey to find his only son. Although a very family-friendly motion picture, there seems to be a distinct difference in entertainment between different- aged viewers. Along the way, the courageous clownfish takes on endeavors that seem too unfeasible to be true.

Yet, they are the different characters that he fish encounters on his journey that draw the most attention to the psychological aspects. Most kids who watch this movie would not think twice about any underlying causes to the behavior of each character that makes an appearance in this film. They would merely laugh and chuckle at how goofy each individual acts. However, as a young adult in a psychology course, the characters and their backgrounds take on a whole new meaning.

Perhaps the biggest example in this movie would be Dory, the comic-relief tang fish who suffers from short- term memory loss and, debatable, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Almost the first thing that is mentioned when Dory is introduced is her diagnosis of short-term memory loss. This is the basis of her entire character, because most of the comical aspects to her role are a direct result of this disorder.

Dory’s portrayal of short-term memory loss, or anterograde amnesia, is regarded by critics as one of the few accurate displays of neurological amnesia in cinema (Baseball, 2004). Some symptoms demonstrated by Dory of her disorder include difficulty with retaining people’s names, absorbing

new information, recalling old information, and general recognition of things happening in the direct past or present (Brinkman, 2013). All of these factors point towards her disability. By definition, interrogate amnesia is “... Loss of memory for events after an incident Therefore, a person can’t store new information in their short-term memory’ (McLeod, 2011). There is one missing aspect to Dory’s case, and that is the incident that caused her. Perhaps some of the more glanced-over aspects that often go unnoticed to the everyday viewer of the film appear through the treatment and beneficial gains with regards to Dory’s interactions with others – especially her co-star, Marlin – and even her overall outlook on every situation she is presented.

Unknown to arguably most viewers, the film provides a framework for how Dory deals with her condition in her everyday life and which aspects or interactions positively affect her condition. Several aspects along her journey prove to positively develop her memory capabilities. Marlin unknowingly plays the role of a caretaker for Dory and her amnesia. The mutual need for each others presence – for different reasons, respectively – demonstrated by each of these characters proves to be the glue” that keeps them together through all of their difficult endeavors throughout the film.

However, while Marlin seems to need to fill a spot of loneliness experienced from the traumatic loss of his wife, Dory has a more significant reason in terms of her health. Studies show that a strong social support network and interpersonal relationships in a positive environment demonstrate potential positive effects on the symptoms of interrogate amnesia in patients. In the beginning of the film when Dory was introduced, she displayed strong symptoms of her disorder and her inability to remember much at all.

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This could partially have been because she was alone when in the beginning of the movie, and, in her own words, she had no friends or family. This lack of social structure in her life could have contributed to why her symptoms were so explicit and present. However, as the film progressed, Dory showed continued progress in her retention capacity and in her ability to form new memories. This could have been because she gained a social structure through her encounters with other characters and always stayed optimistic, even through the difficult situations.

This perhaps is most evident in her relationship with Marlin, as she remembers her relationship with him crystal clear and even admits near the end of the movie how she “remembers better” with him. Dory's optimism is another key aspect supported by recent studies in correlation with beneficial outcomes for amnesiacs. These studies suggest that remaining optimistic while keeping positive expectations for situations can lead to enhanced health and better recovery outcomes in amnesiacs (Lunch, 2010; Coheir, 1987). Along with Dory, several other characters display symptoms of potential psychological disorders.

Marlin shows several signs of post-traumatic stress disorder from the brutal murder of his wife; Bruce the shark demonstrates bipolar disorder or a possible addictive disorder, Chum shows signs of relapse; Debt in the fish tank shows signs of schizophrenia when she refers to her mirror image as another character named Fool; Jacques and Gurgle both show explicit signs of obsessive-compulsive disorder; and Gill displays PATS from his attempt to escape the fish tank. All of these characters and their backgrounds play key

roles into their contribution to the movie, for both comical and plot-oriented purposes.