

# Personality disorder theories essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Robert Redford's 1980 film " Ordinary People" demonstrates a fluid understanding of modern psychological conceptions of personality disorders. In exploring the wide-range of repercussions associated with the separate, recognized types of personality disorder, Guest's novel focused on three primary characters, all family members: a mother, father, and son . Redford's movie maintains this trio as primary characters and each character represents a specific, clinical personality disorder, or combination of personality disorders.

Before exploring the movie's portrayal of the characters and their associated personality disorders, it is useful to remember that, by clinical definition, personality disorders are not illnesses therefore those with personality disorders are not psychotic. The problems faced by those with personality disorders are those associated with fulfillment of happiness or lack thereof in one's life and in one's relationships and the disorders also, of course, cause a probable waste or loss of personal potential. " Ordinary People" develops a late-adolescent boy as its main character, which is in keeping with the clinical view that adolescence poses the most acute time for the development of personality disorders. So it would seem that Redford is both interested in investigating the implications of a fictional clinical personality disorder at its recognized height. Conrad, along with the the two other main characters in the movie exhibits clinical signs of a personality disorder.

Conrad Jarrett

Conrad Jarrett is a once-popular, once-studious, and once-beloved son from a middle-class family who, after witnessing the accidental drowning of his older brother Buck during a freak storm attempts suicide, becomes

hospitalized as a mental patient, and receives shock therapy. After being released from the mental hospital, Conrad struggles to re-enter his former middle-class life only to find that his entire world has changed. The most substantive changes are psychological.

For Conrad, life begins to close and become smaller, more threatening, and less optimistic. The clinical personality disorder which should be associated with his character is Avoidant Personality Disorder since he has withdrawn from society and suffers from feelings of inadequacy and also is very uncomfortable with criticism and engages in self-punishment. Conrad's condition seems to verge on a Schizoid Personality Disorder but very early on in his treatment with Dr. Burger, the movie shows that Conrad has, in fact, a healthy emotional response.

Calvin Jarrett Conrad's father, Calvin, is a self-made attorney who was once an orphan and is still deeply in love with his wife, Beth. He is the type of person who always seem to see the best in everything, but he has nagging doubts about himself, his wife, and his children, as well as his job and his role in society which are brought to the forefront of his mind by the tragic loss of his son Buck. Calvin's clinical condition would be diagnosed as Borderline Personality Disorder because he so lacks a strong self-identity.

Calvin's psychoanalysis with Dr. Berger reveals that his true self-identity is trying to emerge through the wreckage of his former life which he has been almost to blind to recognize. Even though Calvin and Conrad each suffer from a personality disorder, once which can be easily identified by clinical

standards and in clinical terms, the final member of the movie's primary trio of characters, Beth Jarrett, is the most afflicted character of all.

A rigid, controlling, seemingly emotionless woman who is both beautiful and well-regarded socially, the movie and novel both suggest that the son who was drowned, Buck Jarrett, was, in fact, Beth's favorite child. It is further suggested that Beth's humor and her capacity to love have been forever impacted in a negative way by the loss of Buck. Beth Jarrett In this regard, Beth Jarrett can be said to be suffering from Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder in that she must have everything from her dishes to her carpets in immaculate condition and each member of her family must also be perfectly mannered and dressed.

Behind Beth's obsessive-compulsive behavior is her paranoid-critical concern over what her social circle and her family will think about the scandal of her son's attempted suicide and also the loss of her "perfect" world. In this sense, Beth's larger personality disorder is a Narcissistic Personality Disorder but even this is not the full extent of Beth's troubles. She also seems to suffer from a Paranoid Personality Disorder and this borderline disorder is shown clearly during the scene in the movie when Beth has a breakdown while visiting with her brother and her sister-in-law.

Though Beth Jarrett's complex personality disorders are the most formidable of those presented in the movie, their relative importance is not over that of the personality disorders which afflict the other primary characters. Instead, the movie shows very capably how the issues of interpersonal relationships are shaped and influenced by personality disorders and vice-versa, how

personality disorders can sometimes arise out of our associations with particular people and situations.