

I am sam: an analysis essay sample

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



People with special needs are often discriminated in this world. They are regarded as people who should be taken care for the rest of their lives. What if it was the other way around? What if it calls for these people to find their own haven and take care of people?

The movie, “ I Am Sam” is a story about a mentally challenged father named Sam Dawson. Sam was kind enough to take a homeless lady under his wing. For some apparent reason, the lady became pregnant with Sam’s child. They were happy at first, but everything turned otherwise when the lady left Sam after giving birth to a baby girl. She was named Lucy Diamond.

Sam did not allow his incapacities to hinder him from caring for Lucy. Armed with the support of his friends and neighbors, Sam raised Lucy by himself. His neighbor, Annie, would always assist him in catering to Lucy’s needs. Sam soon finds a job as an assistant at Starbucks, where he cleaned tables and assisted others in their needs. The time came when social services threatened to take Lucy away from him. Social services felt that Sam was incapable of caring for Lucy, and wanted her to be adopted by foster parents.

With the help of his friends, Sam was able to convince top lawyer, Rita Harrison, to take his case for free. Rita was challenged, and with the conviction of her peers, accepted the case. The constant struggle of both father and daughter were evident throughout the movie. Regardless of his condition, Sam worked hard and was determined to get his daughter back. He battled out with normal people in court, justifying his reasons that he can

take care of his daughter. In the end, Sam was granted full custody of his daughter Lucy.

The movie saw Sam as a mentally retarded father, who had the mind of a seven-year-old child. He had an active social life, but was always scrutinized for the way he raises his daughter. He emphatically lacked the mental capabilities required of people his age, but he was emotionally armed in caring for Lucy. People around him looked past his incapacities and helped him instead. Due to the overwhelming support given to him, Sam was able to raise Lucy into a bright young girl until she was seven.

According to the website of the National Mental Health Institution (March 13, 2008), Sam is considered to be autistic. In the movie, Sam explicitly showed signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), also known to others as Pervasive Developmental Disorder. The same website also stated that this disorder is characterized by permanent damage in the way these individuals think, feel, and speak. This also includes their ability to interact and relate with others.

ASD is usually detected early on during childhood with their manifestations clearly seen by the parents. During childhood, afflicted individuals have a hard time coping with the knowledge being enforced to them. There is a slim possibility that they respond to people, when called by name with their social skills diminishing. In addition to this, ASD patients rarely have eye contact with their peers. Smiling is also limited, with an inclination to a specific toy or item.

Sean Penn's performance of Sam Dawson was captivating. From the way he talked, to the way he interacted with people was excellent. Upon seeing the film, viewers are convinced that indeed, Sam has special needs. In relation to the symptoms associated with ADS, it was very rare that Sam had eye contact with people. Instead of a specific toy, Sam was very much inclined to the Beatles. As proof, he named his daughter Lucy Diamond after the Beatles song, " Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" .

Another factor was the fact that Sam was unable to control his emotions regardless of the place and time. According to the NIMH website (March 13, 2008), ASD patients have no control of their emotions, making them troublesome at times and worse, become physically aggressive. In addition to this, NIMH also stated that a consistent environment is demanded by ASD patients. They are easily disturbed and upset when a change is made in their daily routine or environment. They become stable and are contented with the constant environment and things they do in their daily lives.

As mentioned earlier, ASD develops during childhood and progresses as they grow older. The movie showed Sam being mentally incapacitated, but this never stopped him from caring for his daughter. As seen in the movie, there was consistency in Sam's environment. When anything around him was changed, he was upset. He even built a " fort" from paper when he was depressed with his custody battle in court. His lawyer, Rita, had to talk to him and assure him that everything will be alright. That was the only time that Sam was able to go out of his safety blanket.

Not much about Sam's childhood and education were mentioned in the film. All that the viewers were shown was how Lucy came into Sam's life and his relationship with his work and peers. Anyone can easily relate to the film, for the emotions were real, and the setting was realistic. The setting was primed in the present setting, with Starbucks and IHOP being Sam and Lucy's favorite hangout.

Regardless of his incapacities, Sam was able to function well in the real world. With a daughter to raise by himself, Sam was able to get a job at Starbucks cleaning tables and remembering clients by the coffee they drink. Although in constant struggle in raising Lucy and coping with ADS, Sam received the unconditional support of his neighbor Annie and his co-workers at Starbucks. The company of his peers, who were also mentally incapacitated, contributed to Sam's personality. Though he lacked mentally, Sam was filled with his emotions. His love for his daughter helped him to strive hard and do his best in everything.

Although ADS consumed Sam's personality, he was still able to make little decisions for himself. In one of the scenes in the film, Sam moved to a bigger apartment just so he can get closer to his daughter, who was placed under the care of foster parents. Although lacking mentally, Sam was able to get a job at Pizza Hut. His mind was focused on the fact that he had to prove to everyone that although he had special needs of his own, he can raise his daughter well.

Anyone who has seen the movie can attest to the fact that Sam tried to be "normal" as possible. He had normal friends, like his neighbor Annie, and his

peers from work who treated him like any other employee. Of course, Sam also had friends who were special like him. They made every day spent together blissful and memorable. Moments, such as those with friends and peers, made Sam feel accepted in this atrocious society. The strong bond that he formed with top lawyer Rita Harrison was also something out of the ordinary. Although Rita was intellectually astounding, she was able to form a friendship with someone who cannot relate to her mental capabilities.

Personally, I believe that the film has executed fairness between people with special needs in relation to the people around them. In the movie, Sam was assisted by people who cared for him in the little way that they can. He dealt with his own business, struggling to survive and cope with the fast and changing environment. What bothered me the most was the fact that social services intervened with how he raised his daughter, Lucy. For seven years, Sam was able to raise Lucy to the person that she is now. Yes, there were people who assisted him along the way, but like normal parents, Sam's capabilities in raising Lucy should not have been questioned.

Being a parent has helped Sam in a lot of ways. I guess for him, his passion for the Beatles was not the only thing constant—but his daughter, Lucy Diamond. Sam was able to surpass countless obstacles just to keep his daughter with him. This is definitely a movie recommended for people of all ages. I give it a ten out of ten stars.

References

<https://assignbuster.com/i-am-sam-an-analysis-essay-sample/>

de Luca, M., Rubin, D., Polstein, & Nelson, J. (2002). *I am sam*. [Motion Picture]. United States: New Line Cinema.

National Institute of Mental Health. (2008). *Autism spectrum disorders (pervasive developmental disorders)*. Retrieved March 13, 2008 from

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-pervasive-developmental-disorders/index.shtml>

National Institute of Mental Health. (2008). *What are the autism spectrum disorders?* Retrieved March 13, 2008 from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/autism/symptoms.shtml>