

Themes of loss and determination in the film "still alice"

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“ Still Alice” is a film about a woman who is diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease. Throughout this movie, it touches on the big themes of loss and determination. With these main themes, we see the journey that Alice and her family go through during the course of her illness. These themes also show the inner strength that Alice has. After watching this movie, viewers are able to have a greater understanding of self and what makes people who they are. For people who are in the health profession, watching “ Still Alice” will help gain a greater understanding of how the stories told by patients are able to help develop and improve their care.

In “ Still Alice”, the themes of loss and determination are seen throughout the movie. Viewers are able to see how loss and determination come into play during the movie and with Alice’s progress with the disease. The theme of loss may be the biggest within the movie. Viewers see her progression throughout the movie, the slow and continuous loss of Alice’s memories, the loss of certain members of her family due to their inability to cope with her disease and the loss of her self-identity “ I used to be someone who knew a lot. No one asks for my opinion or advice anymore. I miss that. I used to be curious and independent and confident. I miss being sure of things. There’s no peace in being unsure of everything all the time. I miss doing everything easily. I miss being a part of what’s happening. I miss feeling wanted. I miss my life and my family”. Viewers witness the loss of Alice’s independence when it comes to everyday tasks, the loss of people’s belief in her abilities to do small things like hold her newborn grandchildren, “ I’m not a poet, I am a person living with Early Onset Alzheimer’s, and as that person I find myself learning the art of losing every day. Losing my bearings, losing objects,

losing sleep, but mostly losing memories". Even though loss is a big part of the movie; viewers also get to see the determination and inner strength Alice has. She is determined to be who she was before the diagnosis for as long as she can, she tries all sorts of methods to maintain herself and by doing this we see her resilience, that even when she forgets something, she still tries. Her strength and determination can be clearly seen where she says " I am not suffering. I am struggling, struggling to be a part of things, to stay connected to who I once was. So live in the moment I tell myself. It's really all I can do. Live in the moment"(Still Alice, 2015), she has come to a point that she accepts that her disease is not going to go away for getting better, but she is determined to make the best of what she has.

There are many narrative theories involved throughout different stages of " Still Alice". Overall the movie holds more features of a quest narrative with restitution and chaos type narrative moments seen sporadically throughout the movie. This is a predominantly a Chaos narrative as Alice sees her illness is only going to get worse; there is nothing to make it better " I wish I had cancer. People wear pink ribbons for you and go on long walks. I wouldn't have to feel like a social ... I can't remember the word". Whilst this movie is mainly a chaos narrative, there is also a strong quest narrative link as Alice eventually comes to terms with her disease and uses her experience to help inform others when she speaks with her daughter Lydia, explaining what having Alzheimer's disease is like; and at a Alzheimer's conference where she gives a speech and shares what happens to her to encourage understanding of what having the disease is like for her. Some restitution

narrative points and moments happen at the beginning of the movie; Alice hates that she is sick, that she is no longer what she considers to be normal and that she might lose what it is to be her, she doesn't want to be sick and just wants to be healthy again.

What makes a person who they are changes between each person, some would say their personalities while others would say their interests or careers. In this movie, viewers are able to get an understanding of self and what makes people who they are. During this film, we see Alice's struggle to remain who she was before her diagnosis. " Still Alice" is a movie that shows how certain diseases can change an individual's concept of self; of what makes them who they are, and we also see how others view of Alice changes over the duration of the movie. Alzheimer's is a particular disease that people claim that it robs themselves and their loved ones of ' self' because once the disease affects a certain area of the brain, a decline is noticed in that corresponding function. Once Alzheimer's disease symptoms develop, sufferers often say that they are treated like they are no longer a person and are ignored in public as if they do not exist.

The telling of narratives is a vital part of how people converse, understand knowledge and incorporate new information into our lives and can improve the outcome for patients as it allows for greater communication between healthcare providers and the patients. By allowing a patient to tell you their story, whether it is about their life or what is happening at the moment, you help ensure that the lines of communication are open and that the patient can trust you. Having the patient trust you means that they will be more

willing to share their needs with you, allowing everyone involved in their care to acknowledge their needs and formulate the best plan for their care.

Listening to patients stories, you are able to get a greater understanding of the person; you are able to get information about their background, education, culture and social situations that you might not have been able to obtain through just asking the person set questions. Gaining a better understanding of the person then leads to being able to mold the conversation to a way that will be more beneficial to the patients understanding, whether that conversation is about their condition and how it could potentially affect their lives, rather than just giving the patient leaflets on what to expect, or informing them of the benefits of a lifestyle change.

As a film about a woman who is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, " Still Alice" touches on inner strength, determination and loss. In focusing on these themes we are able to see the journey that Alice and her family face during the course of her illness. These themes also show the inner strength that Alice has. After watching this movie, audiences will be able to have a greater understanding of self and what makes people who they are. I believe " Still how listening to a patients story will allow for better considerations when it comes to their care as professionals are better informed about their needs.