



## **Recommended movies and television shows.**

I personally endorse the following movies and television shows. I feel that they are accurate and compassionate depictions of various mental health conditions. They are organized by condition and updated regularly. I have recommended only movies and television shows that I have viewed. Julie Ridge, LCSW-R, President and Founder.  
(last updated October 1, 2014)

### **General Mental Health Conditions**

The following films and television shows depict a variety of mental health issues, often concurrent and/or mental health conditions triggered by life events.

#### **film:**

- “All That Jazz,” 1979. (Early childhood trauma turned to creativity, substance use, depression & brilliance, based on the life of Bob Fosse)
- “Charlie Bartlett,” 2007. (Abuse of psychotropic medication, fiction)
- “Girl Interrupted,” 1999. (Set on a mental health ward, based on a true story)
- “Hidden Pictures,” 2013. (A global overview of mental health, documentary)
- “King of Hearts,” 1966. (When WWII is raging, who’s crazy? The people inside the asylum or those waging war outside? Fiction.)
- “Oc87. The Obsessive Compulsive Major Depression Bipolar Asperger’s Movie,” 2012. (autobiographical film by Bud Clayman)
- “Patch Adams,” starring Robin Williams, 1998. (fact-based story, not a documentary)
- “The Snake Pit,” 1948. (childhood trauma manifests as psychosis. This post WWII fictional film also depicts an historical overview of mental asylums)
- “Shadow Voices, finding hope in mental illness,” 2009. (documentary)

#### **television:**

- “Law & Order” and “Law & Order SVU,” (numerous episodes demonstrate compassionate treatment and understanding of mental health issues).

**anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorders:**

**film:**

- “The Aviator,” 2004. (based on the life of Howard Hughes)
- “Finding Forrester,” starring Sean Connery, 2000. (agoraphobia lovingly called reclusiveness in the context of the film)
- “Oc87. The Obsessive Compulsive Major Depression Bipolar Asperger’s Movie,” 2012. (autobiographical film by Bud Clayman)
- “Unstrung Heroes,” 1995. (fiction)

**television:**

- “Monk.”

**attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder:**

**television:**

- “The Fosters” - Jesus Foster.

**autism spectrum:**

**film:**

- “Adam” 2009. (fiction, accurate portrayal of Asperger’s)
- “Autism is a World” CNN 2004. (documentary)
- “Autism: the musical” 2007. (documentary)
- “Dr. Temple Grandin: Careers, opportunity for growth,” 1995. (live interview with Temple Grandin)
- “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close”, 2011. (fiction, accurate depiction of Asperger’s)
- “I am Sam,” 2001. (autism and neurodevelopmental disorders, fiction)
- “Rainman,” 1988. (autism, autistic Savant, neurodevelopmental disorders, fiction)
- “Temple Grandin,” HBO Special, 2010. (based on the life story of Temple Grandin)
- “The other Sister,” 1999. (fiction, severe end of the autism spectrum)
- “Through the eyes of Autism,” 2005. (documentary)

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### **television:**

- “Monk” - Adrian Monk - Aspergers
- “Parenthood” - Max - Aspergers

### **bipolar spectrum and depressive disorders:**

#### **film:**

- “20/20 bipolar disorder in children,” ABC, 1/19/2000. (documentary)
- “Amadeus,” 1984. (bipolar, based on the life of Mozart)
- “Bipolar and Living Up/down,” 2011. (bipolar, documentary)
- “Boy Interrupted,” 2009. (bipolar & suicide, documentary)
- “Depression: out of the shadows,” PBS series, 2008. (documentary)
- “Francis,” 1982. (bipolar, based on the life of Francis Farmer)
- “Intimate portraits, Debbie Reynolds and Carrie Fisher,” 2011. (bipolar & substance use, documentary)
- “Lincoln,” 2012. (depression, based on the life of Abraham Lincoln)
- “The misunderstood epidemic: depression,” 2010. (documentary)
- “No kidding me too!,” 2009. (bipolar documentary)
- “Pollock,” 2000. (bipolar, based on the life of Jackson Pollock)
- “Prozac Nation,” 2003. (bipolar and depression, based on the book and life of Elizabeth Wurtzel)
- “Silver Lining’s Playbook,” 2012. (fiction, accurate portrayal of bipolar)
- “More Than Sad [teen depression]” 2009. (documentary)
- “What Dreams May Come,” starring Robin Williams, 1998. (depression and suicide, fiction)
- “Wishful drinking,” 2010. (bipolar and substance use, documentary)

#### **movies that capture altered time perception that is not uncommon during psychosis:**

- “Alice in Wonderland,” 2010. (fiction)
- “Altered States,” 1980. (fiction)

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- “The Butterfly Effect,” 2004. (fiction)
- “Cloud Atlas,” 2012. (fiction)

### **television:**

- “Homeland” (bipolar, fiction)

### **Do NOT Watch List:**

- “Black Box,” is a new television series purporting to profile a leading character with rapid cycling bipolar disorder. Though this character frequently goes off her medication to destructive result, the show expects viewers to believe that she could complete medical school and be a leading neurologist without anyone noticing she has a mental disorder. Television shows such as this set the field of mental health back decades and may result in reckless misuse of medication and the endangerment of those trying to live well with their mental health issues.

### **neurodevelopmental disorders, (including learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities):**

#### **film:**

- “Best Boy,” 1979. (documentary)
- “The Big picture: rethinking dyslexia,” 2013. (documentary)
- “The Elephant Man,” 1980. (fiction)
- “Flowers for Algernon,” the original, 1968. (cognitive impairment, fiction)
- “Forest Gump,” 1994. (intellectual disability, fiction)
- “The Green Mile,” 1999. (intellectual disability, fiction)
- “The Kings Speech,” 2010. (speech disorder, based on the true life story)
- “Like stars on Earth,” 2007. (dyslexia, fiction)
- “My Left Foot,” 1989. Based on the life story of Christy Brown, born with cerebral palsy.
- “Of Mice and Men,” original with Burgess Meredith and Lon Chaney 1939, remake with Gary Sinese and John Malkovich 1992. (cognitive impairment, fiction)
- “Profoundly Normal,” 2003. (cognitive impairment, based on a true story)
- “Radio,” 2003. (developmental disability)

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- “What’s Eating Gilbert Grape?,” 1993. (neurodevelopmental disability, fiction)
- “Yellow Brick Road,” 2006. (documentary)

### **television:**

- “The Big Bang Theory.” (non-specified neurodevelopmental issues)
- “Glee.” (Downs Syndrome) note: I’m not a fan of this show in general terms, however it’s depiction of Downs Syndrome is compassionate and caring.

### **psychotic disorders including schizophrenia:**

#### **film:**

- “20/20 schizophrenia,” ABC, 2007. (documentary)
- “The Aviator,” 2004. (obsessive compulsive disorder, psychosis or bi-polar disorder, based on the life of Howard Hughes)
- “A Beautiful Mind,” 2001. (schizophrenia, based on the life story of John Nash. Hollywood license was taken in the realm of Nash’s hallucinations. Nash did not experience the visual hallucinations depicted in the movie. Hallucinations experienced in true schizophrenia are never friendly or warm).
- “Canvas,” 2007. (psychosis, fiction)
- Historic films quality publishers: “Historic schizophrenia films,” 2007. (footage from asylums in 1940, documentary)
- “People say I’m Crazy,” 2004. (documentary about John Cadigan, available through the John Cadigan Foundation, schizophrenia.)
- “ $\pi$ , faith in chaos.” 1998. A film by Darren Aronofsky (schizophrenia)
- “Proof,” 2005. (psychosis, fiction)
- “Revolution number 9,” 2001. (schizophrenia, fiction)
- “Safety Not Guaranteed,” director Colin Trevorrow, 2012. (psychosis or government conspiracy? fiction)
- “Shine,” 1996. (psychosis)
- “The Soloist,” 2009. (based on the life story of Nathaniel Ayers)
- “Through a Glass Darkly,” 1961. (psychosis, fiction)

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### **television:**

- “Perception.” Perception is a show featuring a fictional brilliant neurologist/professor who lives with paranoid schizophrenia. His mental health issue is a deterrent when he is episodic, but he manages it well enough to engage in day-to-day tasks few ‘normal’ individuals could accomplish. I recommend this show because it destigmatizes the illness. However, people with schizophrenia rarely experience the visual hallucinations the character Dr. Daniel Pierce is prone to, and people with schizophrenia never have hallucinations that are warm and fuzzy or are love interests.

### **sociopathy and psychopathy:**

#### **film**

- “Catch Me if you Can,” 2002. (sociopathy, based on the life story of Frank Abagnale)
- “The Hoax,” 2006. (sociopathy, based on the life story of Clifford Irving)
- “SOS Summer of Sam,” Spike Lee, 1999. (psychopathy, based on the story of Son of Sam, serial killer)
- “Monster,” 2003. Starring Charlize Theron (psychopathy, based on life story of serial killer Aileen Wuornos).

### **substance use and addictive disorders:**

#### **film:**

- “Addiction why can’t they just stop?” a 14 part series by HBO, 2007. (documentary)
- Ashish Bakshi, Yale journal of Medicine & Law, video [“Interview with Dr. Nora D. Volkow, Director National Institute of Drug Abuse.”](#) April, 2009.
- “Flight,” 2012. (with Denzel Washington, substance use and addiction, fiction)
- “The Gambler,” 1974. (gambling addiction, fiction)
- “My Name is Bill W.,” 1989. (the true story of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous).

#### **television:**

- “Elementary,” CBS.
- “The Fosters,” ABC Family.

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### **suicide:**

#### **film:**

- “Boy Interrupted,” 2009. (suicide and bipolar disorder, documentary)
- “Bully,” 2011. (documentary)
- “Disconnect,” 2012. (fiction)
- “Don’t Change the Subject,” 2011. (suicide, documentary)
- “More Than Sad [teen depression]” 2009. (documentary)
- “Ordinary People,” 1980. (fiction)
- “The Dead Poets Society,” starring Robin Williams, 1989. (fiction)
- “What Dreams May Come,” starring Robin Williams, 1998. (fiction)

### **trauma and other stressor related disorders:**

#### **film:**

- “Bullied,” 2010. (This documentary centers on the powerful story of Jamie Nabozny, a gay teenage boy, tormented for years by classmates. Jamie fought back, not with his fists but in a courtroom. Narrated by Jane Lynch.)
- “The Fisher King,” starring Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges, 1991. (fiction)
- “Hotel Rwanda,” 2004. (based on the true event)
- “The Hurt Locker,” 2008.
- “Jacobs Ladder,” 1990. (post-traumatic stress disorder and war induced substance use, fiction)
- “Valentine Road,” 2013. (documentary. On February 12, 2008, in Oxnard, California, 8th grade student Brandon McInerney shot his classmate Larry King twice in the back of the head during first period. Larry died two days later. This is the true story of the deceased (an effeminate gay youth) and the murderer (a budding neo-Nazi). The film connects the human wreckage of Larry’s and Brandon’s troubled lives-both physically abused, both from broken homes, and both searching for a sense of belonging.)

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### **movies and television where people exposed to traumatic events triumph in the face of extreme adversity:**

- “Amour,” 2012. (fiction)
- “Bambi,” 1942. (loss and attachment, Disney)
- “Beasts of the Southern Wild,” 2012. (fiction, based on events of Hurricane Katrina)
- “Blood Diamond” 2006. (fiction, set in the political unrest of Sierra Leone)
- “The Book Thief,” 2013. (based on the life story of Liesel Meminger, WWII survivor)
- “Dallas Buyers Club” 2013. (based on the life story of Ron Woodroof and his fight against AIDS)
- “The Impossible” 2012. (the story of a tourist family caught in the destruction and aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, fiction)
- “Life is beautiful,” 1997. (a ‘fable,’ set in occupied Italy before and during WWII)
- “Mandela, the long walk to Freedom” 2013. (based on the life story of Nelson Mandela)
- “Saving Mr. Banks” 2013. (based on the lives of Walt Disney and P.L. Travers, author of “Mary Poppins”)

### **movies where people exposed to traumatic events turn violent:**

- “The Valley of Elah” 2006. (post-traumatic stress disorder)
- “Monster,” 2003. starring Charlize Theron (psychopathy, based on the story of serial killer Aileen Wuornos)

### **television:**

- Law & Order SVU