

# Using Cinema to Enhance Teaching Issues Related to Older Adults Teaching Strategy

## Overview of Teaching Strategy

At times a visual or story-telling method can be powerful in helping students process the complicated and multifaceted issues that surround the care of older adults.

Psychosocial issues, issues of transitions, and ethical dilemmas are often best portrayed with application to a storyline. This technique makes the topics more relevant and better helps students to connect. Storylines can prompt rich discussion and often resonate with the students' experiences to allow them to better process the complexities of caring for older adults. Cinema footage can be used in clips or in their entirety to set the stage to meet the instructors' specific objectives. This teaching strategy suggests films and film clips that portray older adults and the issues that often surround them.

The utilization of the [ACE.S Essential Actions](#) is highlighted in the processing of the movies and clips and used as guidelines in thinking about the issues presented. This teaching strategy can be used in class lecture, seminar, or clinical, and is especially effective for online components of a nursing courses.

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Develop a better understanding of the complicated issues that surround care of older adults.
- Discuss their feelings around the issues that surround the emotional needs of older adults.
- Better understand the collaborative care model in caring for older adults.
- Identify issues around the risks and benefits in decision making with issues specific to older adults.
- Identify tools that might be helpful in further assessing the issues highlighted in the cinema presentations.
- Recognize the need to be self-aware of judgments and stereotypes about the geriatric population.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the assessment of functioning of older adults.
- Recognize the impact of family dynamics in the multifaceted care of older adults.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the need to consider the concepts of individualized aging in prioritizing the mental health needs of older adults.

## Learner Pre-Work

1. The films listed below can be used individually or in their entirety. Have the students watch a film prior to class, highlighting the areas that you would like to guide the discussion in class. This can be done using a cinema processing sheet which can be given to them prior to watching the movie. In addition a film or clip can be part of an online course where students

would watch the assigned cinema piece and answer questions or lead a discussion in the forum.

## 2. Example of a Cinema Processing Worksheet

### ***The Thing about My Folks Cinema Worksheet***

- What is the central message in this motion picture?
- What type of emotions did this film create within you?
- What are the generational themes?
- How do unresolved issues in the more elderly characters impact on the other characters in the film?
- List two things this film tells you about aging in contemporary Western Society? How do you think this would be different in other cultures?
- How did your opinion or attitudes change over the course of this film?

## Suggested Learning Activities

This teaching strategy will touch many of the emotional aspects of care, including students' feelings about addressing issues of transition, end of life, and functional decline. It also enhances students' spirit of inquiry and nursing judgment.

### 1. Consider the following movies. Descriptions courtesy of the [Internet Movie Database](#):

- **About Schmidt:** It's the aging Baby Boomer generation's very own 21st-century road movie, starring Jack Nicholson, who, of course, had a memorable role in the '60s road trip classic *Easy Rider*. Instead of a young man wondering whether he'll ever amount to anything, Schmidt is an aging man questioning whether his life has had any meaning. This film can be used with students to explore Erikson's developmental stage of Integrity vs. Despair. *(This film looks at situational decision-making.)*
- **Away From Her:** Based on a short story by Alice Munro, *Away from Her* is the heartbreaking story of a woman (Julie Christie) suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. When her illness advances to the point at which she feels she needs to check into a nursing home, her husband (Grant Pinsent) drops her off and reluctantly agrees not to visit her for 30 days in accordance with the home's rules. But by the time he returns, she doesn't recognize him and has begun a romance with one of her fellow residents. *(This film looks at transitioning, management of care, collaboration with family and end of life issues.)*
- **The Beaches of Agnes:** At 80 years old, French New Wave legend Agnès Varda looks back on her life and career. We see the seaside home of her youth (and the inspiration for her first film *La Pointe Courte*), relive her marriage to Jacques Demy, and follow her through her later work. But this isn't just a victory lap or nostalgia-fest. The film follows Varda's declaration that everyone has a landscape inside, and hers is a beach. Her exuberance is contagious, and quirky touches, such as Chris Marker showing up as an animated cat, keep the energy flowing. *(This film looks at quality of life in terms of risks versus benefits and transitioning.)*
- **Driving Miss Daisy:** This film – although it also marks the progress of civil rights in the south – is in the end a film about friendship. An old Jewish woman and her

- African American chauffeur in the American south have a relationship that grows and improves over the years. Its apotheosis occurs when between two seemingly different, but not so different, people have this exchange: Miss Daisy Wertham, stuck in a nursing home, says to her chauffeur Hoke Coburn: "You're my best friend." (*This film can be used to look at functioning and changes in transition with older adults as they are faced with the challenges of aging.*)
- **Straight Story:** An old man makes a long journey by tractor to mend his relationship with his brother. (*This film focuses on transition and looking at risks and benefits from an emotional standpoint.*)
  - **Calendar Girls:** Calendar Girls is about the women of the Rylstone Women's Institute in North Yorkshire. This Women's Group produces a calendar each year based around scenes of the Yorkshire dales. In 1999, one of the ladies husbands became ill with leukemia. He would say that if the ladies planted sunflowers, he'd make sure he'd get better so he could see them. Unfortunately, he didn't pull through and in order to raise funds for leukemia research the women decided to make an alternative calendar of themselves in the nude hoping to sell a few hundred copies around their villages. This calendar in fact became a worldwide sensation, out-selling even those of Britney Spears and Cindy Crawford. The movie puts older adults in a new light and helps students think about current perceptions about what is seen on the surface with older adults in a different way. (*Transitions and risks versus the benefits of situational decision-making are highlighted.*)
  - **The Thing about My Folks:** Ben's dad Sam shows up one night with a note from Ben's mother (Sam's wife of 46 years) that states she has left. While Ben's wife and his three sisters try to find her, Ben takes Sam on a day trip to see a farmhouse that's for sale. The day trip turns into a road trip while dad and son explore their past, their relationship, and why Sam's wife might have left him. The road trip includes fishing, drinking, playing pool, sleeping under the stars, and frank discussion. Anger simmers close at hand, as do love and hope. (*Issues of transition as well as end-of-life struggles are explored.*)
  - **Strangers in Good Company:** A busload of women becomes stranded in an isolated part of the Canadian countryside. As they await rescue, they reflect on their lives through a mostly ad-libbed script. (*Issues of stereotypes with older adults, and vulnerabilities versus heartiness with the population are highlighted.*)
  - **On Golden Pond:** The loons are back again on Golden Pond and so are Norman and Ethel Thayer, who have had a summer cottage there since early in their marriage. This summer, their daughter Chelsea – whom they haven't seen for years – feels she must be there for Norman's birthday. She and her fiancé are on their way to Europe the next day but will be back in a couple of weeks to pick up the fiancé's son. When she returns, Chelsea is married and her stepson has the relationship with her father that she always wanted. (*Issues of family dynamics, independence, transitioning of relationships and taking risks are explored.*)
  - **Up:** By tying thousands of balloons to his home, 78-year-old Carl Fredricksen sets out to fulfill his lifelong dream to see the wilds of South America. Right after lifting off, however, he learns he isn't alone on his journey: Russell, a wilderness explorer troop member 70 years his junior, has inadvertently become a stowaway on the trip. The film demonstrates the tenacity of older adults and their determination to fulfill goals as they are faced with the struggles of aging. (*This film highlights assessing function and expectations as well as making situational decisions.*)

- **Wild Strawberries:** After living a life marked by coldness, an aging professor is forced to confront the emptiness of his existence. The film, directed by Ingmar Bergman, looks at difficult life questions which are often a struggle for older adults as they review their lives and establish their self worth. It is an excellent film to enhance a conversation around looking beyond the overt behavior seen in clients and a better understanding of the source of the behavior, especially in terms of examining Erikson's stage of development for older adults. (*Issues of transitioning, quality of life and expectations are explored.*)
  - **Bucket List:** As two terminally ill men escape from a cancer ward and head off on a road trip with a wish list of to-dos before they die, they discover what is really important to them. Another great film that deals with issues of transition, especially examining Erikson's stage of development for older adults. (*End-of-life issues, and a risks versus benefits analysis for the best quality of life possible are explored in the context of management of care.*)
  - **Sunshine Boys:** A vaudeville duo agrees to reunite for a TV special, but it turns out that they can't stand each other. (*This film looks at issues related to transitioning, coping with retirement, and how older adults frame the quality of their lives.*)
  - **Cocoon:** When a group of trespassing seniors swim in a pool containing alien cocoons, they find themselves energized with youthful vigor. However there are risks to this benefit of youth. This film could encourage a discussion on the value society projects onto youth, and the lack of value for older adults. (*Issues of quality of life, transitioning, and expectations are clearly seen in the film.*)
  - **Harold and Maude:** Young, rich, and obsessed with death, Harold finds himself changed forever when he meets lively septuagenarian Maude at a funeral. This film emphasizes the value of older adults and the ability to learn from their experiences. It is a great film to utilize with students to explore their own thoughts and values of older adults. (*Expectations, risks and benefits are evident in this film.*)
  - **The Notebook:** *The Notebook* is an epic love story centered around an older man who reads aloud to an older, invalid woman whom he regularly visits. From a faded notebook, the old man's words bring to life the story about a couple who is separated by World War II, and is then passionately reunited, seven years later, after they have taken different paths. Though her memory has faded, his words give her the chance to relive her turbulent youth and the unforgettable love they shared. As the main character has virtually no short term memory, it gives students the opportunity to reflect on just who are the older adults they are caring for; what lives have they lead and that they were once young. This is sometimes forgotten as students only see the older client in the here and now. (*Transitioning for both the identified client and the family is seen with each phase of the disease.*)
  - **Harry and Tonto:** When his apartment building is torn down, a retired lifelong New Yorker goes on a cross country odyssey with his beloved cat Tonto. (*This film looks at transitioning and situational decision-making.*)
2. Students can reflect on their thoughts through a journal activity that can either be guided by specific questions from the instructor or written as a free form entry. Examples of questions or reflections that may be pertinent to the processing of the movies in terms of older adults include:
- What is an alternate ending to the movie?
  - What character would you like to be in the movie?

- Which scene was most emotional for you and why?
  - Describe an example of when you cared for an older adult similar to a character in the movie.
3. As students are watching the movies have them think about what type of assessment tools might be helpful to further assess the characters in the film. For example, if a character is having issues with cognition the Mini-Cog™ might be a useful tool. If there is a concern regarding caregiver strain the caregiver strain index might be helpful.

## Materials

Most movies can be accessed through websites including Netflix or Hulu. Many colleges and universities have subscriptions to these sites, and their libraries may also loan movies out to students and faculty.

- [Internet Movie Database](#)
- [Allmovie.com](#)

## Assessment Tools

Utilize the resources in the [Try This:® Series](#) from the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing (HIGN) at the NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing. The students can watch a video, print out the tool, or read an article directly related to the tool utilized. The tools specific to mental health issues include:

- [Mental Status Assessment of Older Adults: The Mini-Cog](#)
- [Geriatric Depression Scale \(GDS\)](#)
- [Confusion Assessment Method \(CAM\)](#)
- [Confusion Assessment Method for the ICU \(CAM-ICU\)](#)
- [Modified Caregiver Strain Index \(CSI\)](#)
- [Elder Mistreatment Assessment](#)
- [The 2019 American Geriatrics Society Updated Beers Criteria® for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults](#)
- [Alcohol Use Screening and Assessment for Older Adults](#)
- [Brief Evaluation of Executive Dysfunction: An Essential Refinement in the Assessment of Cognitive Impairment](#)
- [Recognition of Dementia in Hospitalized Older Adults](#)
- [Assessing and Managing Delirium in Persons with Dementia](#)
- [Decision Making in Older Adults with Dementia](#)

## Author Information

Laureen Tavolaro-Ryley, MSN, RN  
Community College of Philadelphia  
Philadelphia, PA