POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AT THE MOVIES
FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND FAMILIES

What? Parents and children share the same goal—to live ‘the good life.’ Children learn in part from what they see and hear, whether modeling behavior, reading books, or viewing movies.

Why? Character strengths are foundational to well-being, and movies are a rich source with which to build character strengths and hence enhance flourishing. However, minimal resources exist for parents on how to use this powerful tool with their children and teenagers.

VIRTUE: Wisdom
CREATIVITY .... Labyrinth
CURiosity .... The Croods
JUDGMENT .... Juno
LOVE OF LEARNING .... The Ramen Girl
PERSPECTIVE .... Peaceful Warrior

VIRTUE: Courage
BRAVERY .... Brave
PERSEVERANCE .... Life of Pi
HONESTY .... Moonrise Kingdom
ZEST .... Up

VIRTUE: Humanity
LOVE .... Frozen
KINDNESS .... How to Train Your Dragon
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE .... The Princess Bride

VIRTUE: Justice
TEAMWORK .... The LEGO Movie
FAIRNESS .... Wreck-It Ralph
LEADERSHIP .... 42

VIRTUE: Temperance
FORGIVENESS .... Mean Girls
HUMILITY .... The Ringer
PRUDEnce .... The Secret Life of Walter Mitty
SELF-REGULATION .... Fantastic Mr. Fox

VIRTUE: Transcendence
APPRECIATION OF
BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE .... Worlds Away
GRATITUDE .... Coraline
HOPE .... Tangled
HUMOR .... Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium
SPIRITUALITY .... Heaven is for Real

Movies as Positive Media
- Cinematic Elevation—the ability of movies to promote altruism
- Cinematic Admiration—the ability of movies to promote self-improvement
- Entertainment-Education—movies may influence behaviors of health promotion

Movie Narratives Stimulate Emotions—which influence learning and behavior.
- Short-term, hedonic behavior change: positive affect
- Long-term, eudaimonic behavior change: insight and meaning

Immersion into a Character in a Movie
- Allows the viewer to live the experiences of the character without having to experience real-life consequences
- Increases empathy, and perhaps tolerance

Movies Build Character Strengths
- Strengths-spotting
- Overuse and Underuse
- Discussion Prompts
- Positive Interventions

Criteria for an Optimal Positive Psychology Film (Burtenshaw & Weddell, 2013):
1. Character displays (at least) one of the 24 strengths in the VIA Classification
2. Character faces obstacles, adversity, or conflict while expressing the strength
3. Character overcomes obstacles or builds/maintains the strength
4. The film overall is inspiring, uplifting in tone or mood, or reflects the human condition.