Inside Out Film Analysis and Emotional Development

Posted on January 9, 2020

Inside Out and Emotional Development

Inside Out is an animated movie released by Pixar in 2015 featuring an 11-year-old girl, Riley. It presents her conflict in dealing with five personified emotions, namely Anger, Disgust, Fear, Sadness, and Joy. Throughout the entire film, Joy is the primary emotion. Finally, Joy and Sadness are taken away, leaving Anger, Fear, and Disgust as the moving forces in Riley's life. This situation causes an emotional imbalance as her Personality Islands begin to collapse. It is therefore left to Joy and Sadness to save the day. The movie ends with a compromise between Joy and Sadness that causes Riley to adapt to her new home.

Emotional Change Across Childhood

The film captures the emotional changes that occur at different ages in life. As Riley grows, she becomes more accommodating of her conflicting emotions. This is in line with the emotional development theory. According to Sroufe (1995), emotional responses evolve with age, where an individual reacts differently to similar situations at different ages. The concept of age does not necessarily refer to the passage of time. It is the gradual exposure to specific experiences that makes an individual grow in his or her outlook on life. The movie also emphasizes that acceptance and growth involve a balance of emotions. Walston (2009) explained the concept of "opposition of propositions," which refers to the conflict between different sets of emotions. This conflict is solved when the individual realizes that all feelings are interconnected and must exist in harmony because they are part of the individual's identity. In the movie, this idea appears when Joy tries to eliminate Sadness, and the Headquarters takes them both away. Therefore, one emotion cannot operate in the absence of others. Emotional development is also influenced by the social context (Sroufe, 1995). The emotional upheaval in Riley's life manifests when she undergoes a social change, i.e., the family's relocation to another city. The social change she experiences leads to a new emotional awareness. Garvey (2017) explores the hindrances to children's emotional development posed by changes in social patterns. From a neuroscience perspective, children develop resistance to change, which results in modification of behavior.

Limitations in the Film’s Psychological Model

Despite the movie trying its best to show the process of emotional development, it misses certain elements. First, it fails to explain the relationship between emotions and behavior. In the film, it is not clear if emotions influence thought or vice versa. Even though most psychological theorists do not agree on the matter, they have suggested several perspectives.

Emotions Behaviour and Decision-Making

According to Eisenberg (1986), emotions are the determinants of actions and thoughts because they influence the decision-making process. This perspective, however, would raise a problem if it were introduced in the movie since it would have to explain the behavior manifested by Riley before the social change triggered her conflicting emotions. Pillow (2011), on the other hand, conducted studies that revealed that some people believed that thoughts influence emotions. It would have been good for the film to show which of the two perspectives it embraces. Secondly, the movie fails to cover the whole spectrum of emotions associated with children at Riley’s age. Elements such as pride and boredom have been suggested as appropriate additives to the story since children reveal them at an early stage. In the absence of those emotions, *Inside Out* may not have been as comprehensive as it ought to be.

Lessons About the Value of All Emotions

Regardless of the criticisms stated, the movie offers several valuable lessons. First, it reveals the benefit of all emotions in an individual. The emphasis on Joy serves only to show the value of fear, sadness, disgust, and anger. Joy is apparently the most favored emotion at the start of the film, but with time Riley’s acceptance of other emotions is revealed. The idea presented is that a happy life is not a perfect life. Secondly, the resolution of internal conflict leads to stronger external relationships. Riley becomes apathetic when overwhelmed by the emotions in her and it is at that point that sadness, interestingly, saves the day. Psychologists Eckman and Keltner consider sadness as the real hero of the movie. Feeling sad can, therefore, be a sign of overcoming denial and a motivator to make the right choices.

Overall Evaluation of the Film

On a scale of 1 to 5, I give the movie a 3. I base the three points on three things I believe the film did right. First, it emphasized a holistic approach to emotional development and health. Most movies show happiness as the primary goal, but this movie brings out the idea that the real goal is acceptance of emotional conflicts. Secondly, the film does not get lost in jargon. Instead, its presentation and dialogue are very child-friendly. Finally, it stresses educational value. Within the

funny scenes are messages that can be grasped quickly by all the viewers. I deducted two points from the movie due to the following reasons; first, the film does not express the sequence of emotions sufficiently pressed, since it leaves the audience with no clue as to which comes first between thoughts and emotions. Secondly, five emotions are not sufficient to reveal the dynamics of development. *Inside Out* is an educative film that both parents and children need to watch.

References

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