

# Can't stop bickering? Try cinematherapy

Movies can help individuals and couples resolve their conflicts

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SOON, the next film you watch could help you stop bickering with your loved ones.

It all started 16 years ago when

Dr Gary Solomon began researching the impact movies had on individuals and groups. That research eventually led to "cinematherapy".

Cinematherapy uses movies as a counselling tool to deal with emotional and mental problems.

Figuring out how this helps patients led the scientific community to examine the process involved in cinematherapy and investigate exactly what happens to the individ-

ual during therapy.

Trained and qualified counselors have to be present during these sessions. Scientists now think that during therapy, the individual is able to suspend his or her disbelief long enough to confront individual issues, said Dr Solomon. For instance, a couple watching a movie together can transfer the issues that affect them onto the characters in the film. In turn, they can discuss their

problems from the perspective of those characters.

When you think about it, the idea behind cinematherapy follows the age-old adage that a picture speaks a thousand words. "Visual images are much stronger than verbal instruction, as the images create tools for discussion.

"Furthermore, the images can be viewed over and over for the purpose of reviewing the problems. Ultimately this can lead the individual out of denial," Dr Solomon said. There are many movies that deal with a variety of issues, he said, so the movie selected depends on the issue.

For instance, *Same Time Next Year* deals with themes such as saying goodbye and accepting changes in life. This kind of movie may help a patient identify an old but neglected relationship with someone significant, Dr Solomon said. "It may help them to take the initiative to pick up the phone."

Last year, Mr Frank Foo attended a movie workshop conducted by Hope worldwide (Singapore), an organisation involved in family life education programmes and volunteer activities. Hope worldwide (Singapore) is an affiliate of Hope International.

Mr Foo saw *Sons*, a film by Singapore's Royston Tan about a father-son relationship.

"What hit me most from the movie was when the father said that when a son makes a mistake, the father can forgive the son. But when the father makes a mistake, who is there to forgive him? It was very sad ... Most importantly, it opened the door to my father's world," he said. Since the movie workshop, Mr Foo has made a



**MOVIES IN HIS MIND:** Dr Gary Solomon developed cinematherapy to help patients address their emotional problems.

greater effort to spend time communicating with his father "instead of assuming he does not care".

Dr Solomon will be in town to give a talk as part of the Joyful Parenting Conference. The conference will focus on equipping parents and parents-to-be with skills that will help them enjoy the experience of raising children. The conference is an initiative in celebration of National Family Week 2006.

**Date:** June 1

**Time:** 8.30am to 12.30pm (English); 1.30pm to 5pm (Chinese)

**Venue:** HDB Hub Convention Centre, Auditorium, Basement 1

**Registration/Enquiries:** \$10 per person; \$15 for two persons (per session). Call 6539 9285 or email


joyfulparenting@fycs.org. For details, call Patricia Tay of Hope worldwide (Singapore) at 6312 9671. Or visit [www.sg.hopewww.org](http://www.sg.hopewww.org).

## THE HEALING WONDER OF FILM

Mr John Louis, president of Hope worldwide (Singapore) shares some of the more popular movies shown here during the movie therapy sessions.

- 1) *Forrest Gump*. "We use this movie at our workshop 'How to avoid marrying a jerk'. We show it to both men and women to raise awareness on how to cope with an abusive relationship."
- 2) *About Schmidt*. "This movie makes us understand and appreciate why senior citizens behave the way they do".
- 3) *Oliver Twist*. "In this movie, there are scenes where a husband beats up his wife. This shows how couples can take stock of abusive relationships."


**Louisa-May Khoo,**  
Writer, Researcher and mother of two daughters



Combining her career as a researcher and writer with a variety of personal time hobbies such as jazz dancing and golf, Louisa-May leads life fulfilled but one prone to both mental and physical fatigue. Fortunately, she has discovered the benefits of Vitalenergy as a means to maintain her busy schedule.

In Louisa-May's words:

"Vitalenergy helps me continue in my somewhat hectic lifestyle - I even have the energy to play catch ball with my two girls!"



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