



The Unexpected Film Every Family Should See This Holiday Season

Published on November 14, 2018



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***Beautiful Boy* portrays a real family's struggle with drug addiction that resonates with more and more Americans — including me**

If you want to learn about drug addiction and its impact on families, Hollywood historically has been the last place to turn. Their portrayal of addicts — often shallow and one-dimensional, lacking meaningful or genuine character development — are typically presented unsympathetically and as a persistent conflict to some other hero's journey.

That all changed with *Beautiful Boy*.

Adapted from the memoirs *Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction*, by David Sheff, and *Tweak: Growing Up on Methamphetamines*, written by David's son Nic Sheff, *Beautiful Boy* tells the story of a young man dealing with addiction and of a family doing their best to support him.

The Sheffs are a real family. There are neither superheroes nor villains. Despite David's divorce, the family unit is intact and supportive, yet constantly challenged with Nic's attempts at recovery. It's a continual physical and emotional rollercoaster and *Beautiful Boy* takes you on every high and low, sensitively and with great respect to the actual process that a family experiences when a loved one suffers from drug addiction.

I say this from experience – not just as a clinician treating addiction, but as a brother whose sibling battled it. And in the process, so did my family and I. My brother, like Nic, was a beautiful boy who was also suffering from addiction. And like the Sheffs, my family was the average American family that never saw it coming. We were an unassuming Long Island family whose life of soccer games and proms and college entrance exams and internships was shattered — but thankfully, not irrevocably. My brother has been in recovery for nine years with one relapse five years ago, which is representative of recovery – relapse happens.

At one point in *Beautiful Boy*, David has neared a breaking point of frustration, with Nic trapped in a seemingly never-ending cycle of recovery and relapse. Seeking support with other parents, he notices a sign on the wall: “I didn’t cause it. I can’t control it. I can’t cure it.”

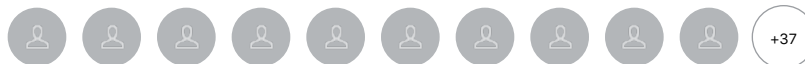
Those are real words, and they hit David hard. Addiction is unlike other problems families will face. There are more questions than answers. More problems than solutions. More struggles than successes.

I mention this now, as we approach Thanksgiving, because you may be a Sheff family. Or if not, your neighbors surely are. The Sheffs are all around us. And they do not include the Hollywood caricatures of “addicts.” They include accountants and IT folks and secretaries and tradesmen and farmers and the elderly and the middle-aged and men and women and children. **They are us.** Nic Sheff is us. And he is not to be dismissed or scorned or prejudiced or shamed.

Addiction deserves our attention and our empathy — especially now — as millions of families are being destroyed by this merciless disease. Take the family to see *Beautiful Boy* this holiday season. It is the most meaningful start of a conversation that we all should be having.

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We need honest, truthful depictions of addiction that are relatable to all - as it affects us all. Great article and I will take the family as a result

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Executive Coach ★ Creator Meaning Centred Coaching ★ Head of AoEC Executive Health Coaching ...

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I will see the film. Off the cuff my bias is for stories of recovery rather than the suffering of

addiction. I am making an assumption that this film is not yet another deep gaze into the abyss with little hopethere has been too much of that.

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