Therapists as Viewed in the Movies: The Silver Screen

Want to know how American society sees therapists? Go to the movies or watch a TV series. Projected on the screen have been, literally and figuratively, every fantasy about therapists—good and bad, comic and tragic—that lurk somewhere in the popular imagination.

In this long parade of therapist types, there are wise, daring, confrontative, saintly nurturers (like Robin Williams in Good Will Hunting); therapists who can’t keep their private lives from leaking, or pouring, over into their professional life (like Kirstie Alley in her home-office in Deconstructing Harry); noble, anguished souls almost too pained themselves to soothe the pain of others (like Gabriel Byrne of In Treatment); therapists who are buffoonishly inept (like Richard Dreyfuss in What About Bob?); and therapists who are flat-out evil (like Anthony Hopkins in Silence of the Lambs).

Whether these screen shrinks make us proud, outrageously embarrassed, sympathetic, or exasperated, they provide revealing perspectives on our own profession and the misconceptions our clients bring to therapy. Get ready for a fascinating journey of discovery as host Dr. Ofer Zur explores what the movies tell us about who we are, what people think we do, and what we can learn from these always entertaining— if not always accurate—film versions of ourselves.