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Facing and Accepting is the First Step of Dealing with Your Negative Emotions:
Inside Out (2015) and A Monster Calls (2016)

Abstract : Generally speaking, people tend to hide their negative emotions. The reason behind this behaviour is due to the stereotype that negative emotions are bad, and it might even cause mental unhealthy issues, such as depression. However, by reading the process of the feelings of the protagonists in the animation Inside Out and the fantasy A Monster Calls in this paper, we can see that showing the true emotions, which can be negative sometimes, is the first and the most important step of dealing with the emotion problems.

Keywords- adolescent literature, A Monster Calls, emotion, feeling, Inside Out

Introduction: How many times have you asked someone if he or she is alright just for getting this specific answer: “I’m fine.” which you expected before asking? People tend to hide their true feelings, especially negative ones, and people also expect others to hide their feelings, too. However, should we really hide our negative emotions and only show the positive ones? In 2011, Dr. Thomas Scheff indicates that modern societies consider that emotions are “far

less important” compare to “the material world, behaviour, thought and most everything else”, so we tend to hide our emotions (par. 2). We can even find the main characters in the animation *Inside Out* and the fantasy *A Monster Calls* are also trying to hide their negative feelings due to some reasons.

These two films are in the different genre, but the main characters are both kids; also, they both have the process of learning how to release their true emotions throughout the time. Moreover, both *Inside Out* and *A Monster Calls* were released very recent (2015 and 2016), so it somehow shows that people are more and more concerning about taking care and dealing with all the emotions nowadays. Even though these two films focused on children’s negative feelings, adults seem never get a chance to learn about their true emotions, either. Therefore, my goal is to show the importance of facing and accepting all the emotions as the first step of dealing with negative emotions. (12)

Literature review

In the article “Theories of Emotion” which was written by Kendra Cherry, it claims that emotion is a complex state of feeling which affects thought and behaviour in both physical and psychological ways. In *Book of Rite*, an ancient Chinese encyclopaedia, it defined feelings of human beings into joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, and desire, these seven emotions. According to Paul Ekman and other psychologists, human beings have six basic emotions—fear, anger, sadness, disgust, surprise, and joy. In *Emotions and Life: Perspectives from Psychology, Biology and Evolution* by Robert Plutchik, it suggested eight primary bipolar emotions: anger-fear, joy-sadness, trust-disgust, and surprise-anticipation, and all the emotions human beings have are based on these eight basic ones. In the more recent research by Julie Beck, it shows that there are only four basic emotions: happy, sad, afraid/surprised, and angry/disgusted, judge by the facial expressions.

The Wheel of Emotions is a wheel-like diagram of emotions visualizing eight basic emotions which created by Robert Plutchik not only shows how the opposite basic emotions works, but also shows the strong connection between all of them. Just like colours, emotions can be mixed and combined to function together. Those basic emotions are hardwired. Therefore, by combining two or few of them there will be some new emotion. For example, contempt could be a blend of anger and disgust, and love could be the mixture of joy and trust. Neel Burton, the author of *Hide and Seek*, also claims in his “What Are Basic Emotions?” that: “one hypothesis is that basic emotions can function as building blocks, with more complex emotions being blends of basic ones.”

People are trying to avoid negative feelings because they can get strong to the extent that might cause some health problems. Negative emotions might not only cause physical illness, but also some mental issues. Dr. Cynthia Thaik’s “Toxic Emotions Can Lead to Serious Health Problems” says: “Expressing anger in reasonable ways can be healthy, but explosive people who hurl objects and yell at others frequently may be at greater risk for heart disease”: “Prolonged bouts of anger can take the toll on the body in the form of high blood pressure, stress, anxiety, headaches and poor circulation.... All of these health issues can lead to more serious problems such as heart attacks and stroke.”

There are several things would cause depression, and emotion is usually one of the reasons. The continuous of negative emotions can cause a serious psychological disease—Depression. Dr. Thomas Scheff’s “Emotions and Depression” says: “It appears that most depression involves the numbing of emotions, especially grief, fear, anger and shame. Depression occurs when these emotions loop back on themselves, having feelings about feelings, sometimes without limit.”

Summary of *Inside Out* and *A Monster Calls*

Inside Out is an animation which talked about a 12 year-old girl, Riley Andersen, who has a happy life in Midwest moves to San Francisco with her parents due to her father's job. The five emotions—Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust affect her behavior and thought in her new life. A Monster Calls is a fantasy drama film which talked about a 13 year-old boy, Conor O'Malley, who lives with his mother with terminal cancer and has been bullied by his classmate meets a monster in his dreams. The monster tells Conor three stories and asks him to tell his nightmare in the fourth time.

Comparison and Contrast of the films

1. The reasons caused negative emotions

In Inside Out, the biggest point which caused the main character, Riley Andersen's negative emotions, is the moving to San Francisco due to her father's job. She is nervous about her new school, new hockey team, and also her new life in the new environment. It is obvious that she would feel worried or anxious as a 12 year-old girl. However, she is just a child, so she does not know how to explain her feeling just like the five emotions in her brain—Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust. The movie used five basic emotions to show how emotions affect people's thought and behaviours. As a part of Riley, Joy is trying to keep every negative emotion away from Riley just like Riley wants to let her parents think that she is happy after moving to the new house. However, Sadness cannot help but touches the console of Riley's brain, and it caused the lost of Joy and Sadness herself; in the meanwhile, Fear, Disgust, and Anger are getting out of control in Riley's brain just like Riley's reactions of her new life.

On the other hand, in A Monster Calls, the 13-year-old boy, Conor O'Malley's mother is suffering from terminal cancer, which mostly unlikely to be cured. Conor himself has been bullied by his classmate, Harry, for a long time. Also, Conor's parents divorced and his father is currently living in United State with his new family. In the meantime, Conor has dreamed

about the same nightmare several times: his mother has been pulled from a cliff by a terrifying creature from the darkness below and Conor must hold on to her hand to save her from being dragged down by the creature. Eventually, his grip fails and the creature claims his mother. Combining all the situations above, Conor feels worried, afraid, isolated, and a bit helpless in the same time.

2. The reason caused hiding negative emotions

According to Dr. Leon F Seltzer, people tend to hide or disguise the negative feelings because they are all “fear-induced”: “Perhaps paramount among our tendencies to conceal our emotional fragility from others is the fear that exposing it would make us look weak to them--and, indeed, make us feel weak and powerless ourselves.”

In Riley’s case, she wants to show her parents that “she is happy” though she is actually not. She does not want her parents to be worried about her, neither to feel that she is weak nor need to be protected since she is a “happy child”. In Conor’s case, he is afraid. He is afraid that if he shows his real emotions that everything he tries to protect right now will be gone forever, such as his mother. Both of them are “fear-induced” so that they both hide their emotions instead of understanding or explaining them.

3. The way to deal with negative emotions

When Joy gets lost in Riley’s brain, she figures out that every happy memory that Riley has is not only joyful, but also combining with sad and other emotions. She realizes that how important is Sadness. After both Joy and Sadness eventually back to the brain console, Riley finally decides not to run away from home but cries out and tells her parents her negative emotions due to her new life. By doing so, Riley’s parents understand that she has been suffered from the unfamiliar new environment, and they finally know how to accompany her to overcome it. As an animation, the movie makes look easy for Riley to change her mind from leaving home to confessing to her parents her real feeling. However, it

is the product after all the conflicts of the five emotions in Riley's brain. It shows that negative emotions, such as sadness, are not always bad. By showing it to people who care about you can let them understand your true feelings and know how to help you.

In *A Monster Call*, Conor dreams about the same monster four times. In the first three times, each time that the monster tells him a different story for him to release his emotions, but for the last time, he has to tell the monster about the truth of his repetitive nightmare—he wants this to be over. He knows his mother is not curable, but he does not want to admit that, not even think about that. He has been caring about his mother for years, but she is not getting any better even though she keeps telling him that everything is going to be alright. In the same time, his classmate, Harry, consistently bullies him and joking about his mother. It makes him sad, anxious, and angry; therefore, he starts to feel tired and wants everything to be over—which causes his guiltiness. After he tells the monster what he really think, Conor feels he is a bad person with a bad thought who needs to be punished. However, the monster tells him that it is fine to think in this way. In fact, this is the way it supposed to be. In the end, Conor cries and tells his mother that he does not want her to go, and his mother also stops telling him that everything will be fine and hugs him. That is the first time that both Conor and his mother shows there true feelings. It is also the point that Conor finally faces his real emotions and learns how to accept them. By hiding his real thoughts and negative feelings does not make anything better while uncovering the true emotions helps Conor to deal and fix his unhappy life.

Conclusion

In both *Inside Out* and *A Monster Calls*, the main characters are suffering from negative emotions because they want to hide or get rid of them, but it somehow does not help but making it worse. Riley Andersen of *Inside Out* feels sad, lonely, and anxious because of the sudden change of her life. Moving to San Francisco from Midwest makes her lose her old

friends, old school, old hockey team, and her old but familiar community. She tries to hide and stop those negative emotions working in her brain, but it almost causes her escape from home. By accepting Sadness taking control of her brain console, in the end, she finally knows that every emotion is necessary, and the best way to deal with the negative ones is to face them and accept them instead of hiding them. It also works in *A Monster Calls*. In the film, Conor O'Malley feels worried, scared, angry, tired, and also guilty. He thinks that he can keep everything in balance by hiding those negative emotions, but the truth is that facing the problem is the first step of fixing it. Therefore, with the helping of the monster, Conor faces his real feelings, accepts them, and releases himself from the miserable, unhappy life.

Although both *Inside Out* and *A Monster Calls* are movies for children, and it seems unreliable to follow what kids' movies indicate. However, it is important for everyone to learn how to deal with his or her negative emotions. Thus, the lesson that both movies have taught us does not only fit children but also everyone—the first step of dealing with your negative emotions is to face and accept them.

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