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Representations of Alcoholism in Pop Culture: The Mom Project

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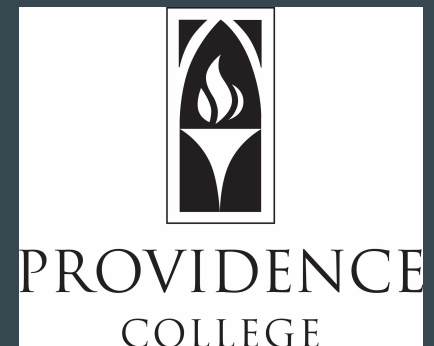
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Mom - the Catalyst for Conversation on Women in Addiction Recovery in Pop Culture

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Television Series Info:

- ❖ Aire date: 2013, on CBS
- ❖ Created by Chuck Lorre.
- ❖ Actresses: Allison Janney & Anna Faris

Summary of *Mom*:

- ❖ Mother/daughter duo in addiction recovery
- ❖ 3 generations of females all under the same roof and supporting one another in a sober lifestyle
- ❖ Call attention to stereotypes while also re-shaping and educating the audience on a life in recovery



Ideology of a Sitcom & Humor

Power of connection & relatability

- ❖ Similar interests in television shows or music & other media topics sparks relationships and tells a little bit about the person
- ❖ Opens up an opportunity to talk & for conversation

Humor as a way of coping...

- ❖ Power in the physical release of laughter
- ❖ Laughter as a means for connection
- ❖ Easier to talk about abstract topics & difficult dialogue (ex. addiction)

Comedy in the media is normally male dominated...

- ❖ This is seen with comedians or actors such as Chris Rock, Jimmy Fallon, Robin Williams, yet it is does not typically come from women



Questions asked

What themes ?

Why those themes ?

What did I find ?

- ❖ 12 steps in AA recovery
- ❖ Genetic Predisposition & Family Trends
- ❖ Replacement Addictions



The 12 Steps in AA

“12 simple steps that let you off the hook for ruining someone’s life” (Baker, Gorodetsky, & Lorre, 2013).

Just about every episode shows the at an AA meeting...

- ❖ Stereotypes: story telling, coffee drinking, people trying to be unseen
- ❖ Reality: this is where they realize most mistakes and make connections.

- ❖ Case Example...
 - Christy thinks that the world is against her & that everyone else is bad, however she realizes in a meeting that it is really her/her own actions. She goes back and apologizes to everyone such as her mother, boss, kids, & even a drugstore worker whom she offended.

- | | | | |
|----------|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable | 7 | Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings |
| 2 | Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity | 8 | Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all |
| 3 | Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him | 9 | Made direct amends wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others |
| 4 | Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves | 10 | Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it |
| 5 | Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs | 11 | Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God... |
| 6 | Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character | 12 | Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message... |

Genetic Predisposition

“you could never tell by looking at her” (Baker, Gorodetsky, & Lorre, 2013)

“fatal disease of alcoholism” (Baker, Gorodetsky, & Lorre, 2013)

- ❖ Addictions tend to run higher in families & those with a history of addiction trouble seem to be at higher risk
 - could be the same addiction of different (ex. substance trouble, gambling, sex, etc.)
- ❖ Similar to that of a disease or illness
 - Ex. breast cancer, MS
 - Mental health diagnosis (ex. anxiety, bipolar)

In reference to *Mom...*

- ❖ Connects these ideas
- ❖ Introduces proper language & background knowledge of addiction and its historical/scientific properties
- ❖ 3 generations all under the same roof & follow similar patterns

Replacement addictions



- ❖ Properties of addiction can be generalized for the purpose of this argument by a struggle with overcompensation & habit... thus leading to the idea of replacement addiction once something is stopped.

- Typically seen in recovery
- Highlights the comorbidity aspect that is masked
- This is where intervention must occur

- ❖ References in *Mom..*

- The phrase “I need a drink” is often followed by a meeting or turn to another addictive property
 - Ex. all three women sit in the living room together on the couch and eat chips or junk food when they feel overwhelmed
- Using men and sex as a coping mechanism to replace her alcohol troubles

References

Baker, B., Gorodetsky, E., Lorre, C. (Producer). (2013). *Chuck Lorre Productions* [Mom].
Los Angeles, CA: CBS.

Thank you !

Questions?