

Grief Observed: Using Movies to Move through Grief by Marty Tousley, Bereavement Counselor

Movies and DVD rentals that dramatize others coming to terms with their pain may serve as a valuable tool to help you and your family members move through the grieving process.

Getting in touch with the painful feelings of grief and releasing blocked or pent-up emotions by having a good cry can be cleansing and stress-reducing. Movies can be an effective tool in addressing certain grief issues, especially when your selections are made consciously and deliberately.

****** Before you see or rent a movie, take time to read the film's description and reviews to help you decide whether watching it will support you at this point in your grief journey. Pay attention to whatever feelings and reactions come up for you while watching it, and let yourself cry if you need to. If you're not comfortable doing this alone, ask a trusted friend or family member to watch the movie with you, and discuss it together afterward.

In this spirit, this list of movies for those in mourning is offered, categorized by the aspect of grief primarily addressed in a given film or DVD.

Mystical Experiences

The Five People You Meet in Heaven (2004) with Jon Voight, Ellen Burstyn

Northfork (2003) with James Woods, Nick Nolte

Dragonfly (2002) with Kevin Costner, Lisa Banes

Waking the Dead (2002) with Billy Crudup, Jennifer Connelly

A Rumor of Angels (2000), with Vanessa Redgrave, Ray Liotta

Sixth Sense (1999) with Bruce Willis, Haley Joel Osment

City of Angels (1998), with Nicolas Cage, Meg Ryan

Titanic (1997) with Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet

Truly, Madly, Deeply (1996), with Juliet Stevenson, Alan Rickman

Untamed Heart (1993), with Christian Slater, Marisa Tomei

Ghost (1990), with Demi Moore, Patrick Swayze

Always (1989), with Richard Dreyfuss, Holly Hunter

Hereafter (2010) with Matt Damon, Cécile De France, Bryce Dallas Howard

Guilt

Departures (2008) with Masahiro Motoki, Ryoko Hirose

Moonlight Mile (2002) with Jake Gyllenhaal, Dustin Hoffman

A Rumor of Angels (2000), with Vanessa Redgrave, Ray Liotta

Sixth Sense (1999) with Bruce Willis

Philadelphia (1993) with Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington

Ordinary People (1980) with Donald Sutherland, Mary Tyler Moore

Spiritual Reaction to Loss

Sixth Sense (1999) with Bruce Willis

Wide Awake (1998) with Joseph Cross, Timothy Reifsnyder

Shadowlands (1994) with Anthony Hopkins, Debra Winger

Finding Professional Help

Ordinary People (1980) with Donald Sutherland, Mary Tyler Moore

Understanding Different Grieving Patterns in Your Family

Remember Me (2010) with Robert Pattinson, Emilie de Ravin

The Boys Are Back (2009) with Clive Owen, Laura Fraser

Departures (2008) with Masahiro Motoki, Ryoko Hirose

Eye of the Dolphin (2007) with Carly Schroeder, Adrian Dunbar

Boynton Beach Club (2005) with Joseph Bologna, Dyan Cannon

Angel in the Family (2004) with Meredith Baxter, Ronny Cox

Finding Neverland (2004) with Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet

Straight from the Heart (2003) with Teri Polo, Andrew McCarthy

In America (2002) with Paddy Considine, Samantha Morton

Moonlight Mile (2002) with Jake Gyllenhaal, Dustin Hoffman

Marvin's Room (1996), with Meryl Streep, Diane Keaton

Little Women (1994), with Wynona Ryder, Susan Sarandon

My Girl (1991) with Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis

Steel Magnolias (1989), with Sally Field, Shirley MacLaine

Beaches (1988), with Bette Midler, Barbara Hershey

Terms of Endearment (1983), with Shirley MacLaine, Debra Winger

Ordinary People (1980) with Donald Sutherland, Mary Tyler Moore

Writing As A Way of Expressing Grief

Finding Neverland (2004) with Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet

About Schmidt (2002) with Jack Nicholson, Hope Davis

From Surviving to Transcending Your Grief

The Boys Are Back (2009) with Clive Owen, Laura Fraser

Up (2009) with Edward Asner, Jordan Nagai

The Secret Life of Bees (2008) with Dakota Fanning, Jennifer Hudson

An Unfinished Life (2005) with Robert Redford, Jennifer Lopez

On a Clear Day (2005) with Peter Mullin, Brenda Blethyn

Finding Neverland (2004) with Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet

If Only (2004) with Jennifer Love-Hewitt, Paul Nichols

In America (2002) with Paddy Considine, Samantha Morton

About Schmidt (2002) with Jack Nicholson, Hope Davis

Life As a House (2001) with Kevin Cline, Kristin Scott Thomas

Angela's Ashes (2000) with Andrew Bennett, Joe Breen

Good Will Hunting (1999) with Robin Williams, Matt Damon

Life (1999) with Eddie Murphy, Martin Lawrence

Message in a Bottle (1999) with Kevin Costner, Robin Wright Penn

Nicholas' Gift (1998) with Jamie Lee Curtis, Alan Bates

Simon Birch (1998) with Ian Michael Smith, Oliver Platt

Four Weddings and a Funeral (1994), with Hugh Grant, Andie MacDowell

Shadowlands (1994) with Anthony Hopkins, Debra Winger

Corrina, Corrina (1994) with Whoopi Goldberg, Ray Liotta

A River Runs through It (1992), with Robert Redford, Brad Pitt

Whose Life Is It Anyway (1991), with Richard Dreyfuss

Brian's Song (1971), with James Caan, Billy Dee Williams

How Green Was My Valley (1941)

Loss of A Spouse

The Boys Are Back (2009) with Clive Owen, Laura Fraser

Up (2009) with Edward Asner, Jordan Nagai

An Unfinished Life (2005) with Robert Redford, Jennifer Lopez

My Life (1993) with Michael Keaton, Nicole Kidman

Love Story (1971) with Ali MacGraw, Ryan O'Neal

Loss of A Child

Remember Me (2010) with Robert Pattinson, Emilie de Ravin

An Unfinished Life (2005) with Robert Redford, Jennifer Lopez

On a Clear Day (2005) with Peter Mullin, Brenda Blethyn

Half Light (2006) with Demi Moore, Henry Ian Cusick and Nicholas Gleaves

Loss of A Parent

Remember Me (2010) with Robert Pattinson, Emilie de Ravin

The Boys Are Back (2009) with Clive Owen, Laura Fraser

Sunshine Cleaning (2009) with Dakota Fanning, Jennifer Hudson

The Secret Life of Bees (2008) with Dakota Fanning, Jennifer Hudson

Death at a Funeral (2007) with Matthew Macfadyen, Peter Dinklage, directed by Frank Oz

Eye of the Dolphin (2007) with Carly Schroeder, Adrian Dunbar

The Savages (2007) with Philip Seymour Hoffman & Laura Linney

Two Weeks (2006) with Sally Field, Ben Chaplin

Garden State (2005) with Zach Braff, Natalie Portman

In Her Shoes (2005) with Cameron Diaz, Shirley MacLaine

Big Fish (2004) with Ewan McGregor, Albert Finney

My Girl (1991) with Dan Aykroyd, Jamie Lee Curtis

Loss of A Friend

Catch & Release (2007) with Jennifer Garner, Timothy Oliphant

The Bucket List (2007) with Jack Nicholson, Morgan Freeman

Mrs. Palfrey at the Claremont (2005) with Joan Plowright, Rupert Friend

Brokeback Mountain (2005) with Heath Ledger, Jake Gyllenhaal

Wit (2001) with Emma Thompson, Christopher Lloyd

Tuesdays with Morrie (1999) with Jack Lemmon, Hank Azaria

Four Weddings and a Funeral (1999) with Hugh Grant, Andie McDowell

Nicholas' Gift (1998) with Jamie Lee Curtis, Alan Bates

Philadelphia (1993) with Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington

Beaches (1988) with Bette Midler, Barbara Hershey

Brian's Song (1971) with James Caan, Billy Dee Williams

Midnight Cowboy (1969) with Dustin Hoffman, Jon Voight

Loss of A Sibling

Remember Me (2010) with Robert Pattinson, Emilie de Ravin

The Secret Life of Bees (2008) with Dakota Fanning, Jennifer Hudson

Walk the Line (2006) with Joaquin Phoenix, Reese Witherspoon

Ray (2004) with Jamie Foxx, Kerry Washington

In America (2002) with Paddy Considine, Samantha Morton

Little Women (1994) with Winona Ryder, Gabriel Byrne

Traumatic Loss

Remember Me (2010) with Robert Pattinson, Emilie de Ravin

Reign Over Me (2007) with Adam Sandler, Jonathan Banks

Missing in America (2006) with Danny Glover, Ron Perlman

In The Bedroom (2002) with Tom Wilkinson, Sissy Spacek

Morning (2010) with Jeanne Tripplehorn, Leland Orser, Laura Linney

Gravity (2013) with Sandra Bullock, George Clooney, Ed Harris

Loss of A Pet

Marley and Me (2008) with Jennifer Aniston, Owen Wilson

My Dog Skip (1999) with Frankie Muniz, Diane Lane

Where the Red Fern Grows (1974) with Stewart Peterson, Beverly Garland

Old Yeller (1957) with Fess Parker, Dorothy McGuire

Suicide Loss

Remember Me (2010) with Robert Pattinson, Emilie de Ravin

Sunshine Cleaning (2009) with Dakota Fanning, Jennifer Hudson

The Secret Life of Bees (2008) with Dakota Fanning, Jennifer Hudson

Anticipatory Grief

Wit (2001) with Emma Thompson, Christopher Lloyd

Tuesdays with Morrie (1999) with Jack Lemmon, Hank Azaria

Brian's Song (1971) with James Caan, Billy Dee Williams

Love Story (1971) with Ali MacGraw, Ryan O'Neal