

# Film club as a tool for developing the culture of experience among parents

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**Abstract.** While observing the difficulties that parents experience in communicating with their adolescent children (for example, ignoring, misunderstanding, or underestimating the problems faced by teenagers, inability to build trust-based relationships, difficulties in discussing complex topics of interpersonal relationships, life choices, school problems, self-determination, etc.), the authors emphasized the need to search for methodological tools that can help overcome these problems of intergenerational communication through developing the culture of experience among parents. A film club for parents was chosen as a method. 30 parents of children (4–20 years old) watched a German TV series DRUCK (based on a Norwegian TV series SKAM) in Moscow from January to December 2020 offline and online. The functioning of this club was built over the methods of polylogue, non-judgmental interview, and amplification of sense. Observations, questionnaires, and interviews of the club members at the end of meetings allowed the authors to conclude the effectiveness of such a format for developing the culture of experience among parents and improving intergenerational relations. It was also proved that teen series have a great potential for developing the culture of experience among parents since they address topics relevant for teens and help observe the emotions and behavior of teens in a psychologically safe environment. Based on the study results, the authors developed methodological recommendations for organizing such film clubs and holding meetings for parents.

**Keywords:** parent-child relationships, emotional development, culture of experience, film club.

## 1 Introduction

When a person describes what happened to them or what they saw (read, heard, etc.), they thoroughly think over and better experience the situation in question: a thought is expressed in a word, and the integral act of perception is performed and completed in a full-fledged discussion. However, there are fewer and fewer people discussing artistic or personally significant events rather than the pragmatics of a certain moment.

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Considering modern social and cultural conditions, anthropologists and psychologists highlight the lack of communication tools and procedures that allow a person to naturally master the culture of experience. This issue concerns not only children and adolescents but also older people. As a rule, the parenting styles of previous generations do not take into account modern realities since the types of situations faced by modern parents have changed significantly [1-6]. To make the necessary life decisions, people need to know how they feel about certain things, which requires public images of such sensations [7]. The source of these cultural images is usually rites, myths, and art. While myths and rites disappear from everyday life, art remains accessible.

Since modern culture moves towards visualization, it seems important to turn to the cinema. When the language in which a modern person speaks and thinks changes, films and TV series can be regarded as the source of the above-mentioned images [8].

Film watching allows one to experience personally significant situations, get emotional responses, and master and adopt various forms of their expression together with fictional characters [9]. This inner work on the production of meanings is impossible without real-life communication. When individuals watch and discuss films, they become more experienced in distinguishing between emotional-semantic shades and nuances of human relations. Such a discussion presupposes special activities performed by the moderator to create an atmosphere of trust and interest in the group, agree on the rules for making statements, and build the logic for debating on such issues.

## **2 Creating a film club**

In most cases, the problems experienced by families with teenagers are accompanied by the feeling of parental helplessness and unwillingness to seek assistance [10-14]. To overcome this crisis, sometimes it is necessary to have a detached and mediated conversation with someone else in the focus of attention. Discussing similar difficulties helps to sort out one's personal challenges. The impact of a fictional work often triggers self-reflection and self-projection, revives memories from one's experience, and helps take a closer look at the life of adolescents.

To help parents solve these problems, we created a film club for the shared viewing of the TV series DRUCK [15, 16]. This series addresses the issues of first love, friendship, trust, mutual help, parent-child relationships, father's departure, divorce, sibling relationships, death in the family, depression/mental illness of parents, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, interracial and interreligious relationships, the role of religion, safe sex, sexual abuse, mental disorders, gender and sexual identity, school relationships, leadership, bullying, cyberbullying, learning stress, life choices, people with disabilities, etc. It is important that the series does not provide ready-made solutions to any problem and opens up a space for discussion.

Film club meetings were held according to the following plan:

1. Introduction. The overview of the episodes watched and preparation for watching a new episode;
2. Watching episodes by clips and discussing every clip using the abbreviated procedure "Non-judgmental interview" [17];
3. Watching a whole episode and thoroughly discussing it using the "A Hat with Questions" method [18].

To enliven such meetings, we decided to discuss not only the content of episodes but also cinematic solutions and parallels with other works of art.

In addition to face-to-face meetings, communication continued in the Facebook group. There parents could discuss the episodes they watched and read posts with additional information on their topics.

### **3 Techniques and methods of organizing a discussion**

To personalize the emotional and semantic contexts of the series, we used the following psychological and pedagogical techniques: a polylogue, a non-judgmental interview, and the method of amplification.

A polylogue emerged as a form of communication, where participants have the opportunity to express several opinions. The process implies their equal speech activity, while group discussions allow accumulating the expressed information and the presented opinions. This approach gradually forms the general semantic field of the situation or problem under consideration.

The polylogue method was developed as an intellectual and communicative tool [19] to present significant components of the situation/problem under consideration and form a field of values common to all participants. At the next stage, the semantic contexts under discussion expand, which helps each participant form and express their personal opinions. Despite its individual and personal features, a certain opinion can never be born “in one person”. It is always mediated by group opinions. While a person establishes a relationship between such opinions, they form their own.

Based on the principles of polylogue, a non-judgmental interview [17] allows bypassing the daily habit of evaluating events in such a manner as “like-dislike”, “good-bad”, “beautiful-ugly”, etc. When a person puts aside judgmental and polar statements, they can focus on the details that underline the essence of some artistic event. Discussion is based on the following statement: everyone can have any feelings in relation to the given fictional work. The club members share moments that caused their irritation or other negative emotions. According to the established procedure, this is a group interview in which participants differentiate their feelings on the piece they saw. S. Eisenstein wrote, “A work of art, understood dynamically, is just this process of arranging the images in the feelings and mind of the spectator” [20]. The above-mentioned method is based on the same principle and consists of the following stages:

1. Awakening of one’s emotional memory: an appeal to the inner world of captured images (visual, audio, or kinesthetic);
2. Legitimation and unloading of negative emotions: the opportunity to express one’s negative feelings and talk about something boring or difficult to agree with to better understand oneself and develop the exploratory attitude to the event or work perceived;
3. Emotional resources of the film or TV series screened. To awaken positive feelings, it is necessary to detect joyful and hopeful aspects, which helps realize one’s dreams and analyze the sources of creative energy;
4. Fetching deep feelings and defining where and when a certain motion picture captured the spectator truly and completely;
5. Personal identification to see oneself in the movie character or recognize manifestations, feelings, and thoughts of the characters in oneself;
6. Understanding of an artistic image, i.e. mental removal or replacement of one element to comprehend the semantic dominant of the director’s solution;
7. The main idea of a particular screening allows correlating the received experience with the sphere of everyday life.

The amplification of meanings [21] introduced by C. Jung [22] emphasizes and develops semantic contexts of the perceived material. Since an artistic image is characterized by innuendos, which also involves the perceiver in the process of co-creation, special expressive work is needed for building one’s awareness and subsequent insightful experience. In the course of discussions, the club members share their feelings on what they saw. At this stage, such feelings can be perceived vaguely, and statements can be fragmentary and unintelligible. The amplification procedure strengthens these feelings and manifests the attitude they

contain, thereby contributing to the formulation of meaning. This helps to better understand and incorporate the experience gained during the viewing.

## **4 Results**

As feedback, 11 film club members filled out a questionnaire.

In relation to motivation, they noted that they were interested in the theme, club format, and TV series. They often joined the film club to get a personal experience and check out a new format. Many parents of adolescents or those people working with teenagers wanted to understand them better. Thus, they did not waste their chance to become part of the community of like-minded parents to receive support and advice.

When asked what made the greatest impression, the respondents mentioned the shared experience, the action of collective intelligence, and the friendly atmosphere. Due to a trusting atmosphere, respect for other's opinions, and personal contribution, they managed to better understand the problem under discussion.

As the main personal result, the club members noted changes in their perception of the world around them. For example, they began to listen to other people more carefully and learned to look at problems from different perspectives. They also noticed that they could freely discuss difficult issues with unfamiliar people in an atmosphere of confidence. Moreover, many respondents recognized the need for this kind of communication.

## **5 Recommendations**

Thereinafter, we will provide recommendations for film clubs aimed at developing the culture of experience among parents.

At the preparatory stage, it is necessary to develop meeting scenarios and gather participants.

### **1. Selecting a film.**

Films and TV series featuring a variety of characters give more opportunities to identify oneself or one's children with them. A good film should touch on various topics. The context of the chosen TV series should be clear to all the participants.

### **2. Scheduling meetings.**

It is recommended to choose one approach or use their combination to discuss the following aspects:

- Actions of characters;
- Topics;
- Artistic devices.

Meeting scenarios should be developed in advance, i.e. it is necessary to prepare questions and choose a method of discussion. If a film or TV series is in a foreign language, organizers should prepare cultural comments. It is not recommended to watch with subtitles as reading them distracts viewers.

### **3. Gathering participants.**

A condition for the effective functioning of film clubs is a comfortable atmosphere of mutual trust. The creation of a friendly group ready for an open conversation and perception of different viewpoints can be achieved by informing potential participants about the film (TV series) and the topics that will be discussed.

Here are recommendations for holding meetings.

#### **1. Location.**

Important criteria are as follows: transport accessibility, the acceptance of the format and theme of a film club by the chosen site, the ability to create a cozy atmosphere. The

experience of holding such meetings during the lockdown has shown that an atmosphere of lively discussion and trust can be created online.

#### 2. Holding a meeting.

The moderator should avoid evaluations and personal interpretations, allowing participants to speak out and form their own impression of the viewing. One should keep in mind that there can be no single correct decision or interpretation.

It is advisable to build a meeting moving from simple to complex or from specific to general: firstly, participants are asked questions that are closer to everyday life, then discussions gradually move towards worldviews.

#### 3. Possible communication challenges.

The main difficulty is communication disruption, for example, the unwillingness to accept someone else's opinion and the habit of rushing to judgments.

## 6 Conclusion

The analysis of the activities conducted by film clubs has proved that they help develop the culture of experience among parents and have a positive effect on the quality of parent-child and interpersonal relationships. As a result, we confirmed the hypothesis that the teen series lays an effective basis for developing the culture of experience among parents. This format addresses the most relevant topics for adolescents and creates an opportunity to observe their emotions and behavior in psychologically safe conditions.

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