



Mind Matters

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Cinema therapy; using the power of film to heal and grow

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I'm sure my dad must have seen himself in the main character, played by Gene Hackman, of the 1986 movie *Hoosiers*. In the movie, Coach Norman Dale (Hackman), a character based on actual Indiana high school basketball coach Marvin Wood, leads the basketball team of a microscopic rural farming town to the state championship. I recall, quite vividly, watching the movie with my dad on our television in the back room of our house. He loved the movie. I did too. I loved the movie so much that I've proceeded to watch it countless times over the years. Indeed, *Hoosiers* has become one of my personal classics.

Like many other movies in my collection, I watch it when I need to remind myself of a particular concept and ingrain it in my brain. *Hoosiers* has always been the go-to movie when I'm needing reassurance to trust myself. Because I am primarily a visual learner, movies have a way of affirming messages for me in a powerful way. I know I'm not alone. My dad, being a visual learner himself, used movies in the same manner. In fact, the two of us spent lots of time watching movies together and then discussing the main message we took away from them. Just as vividly as I remember watching *Hoosiers* with my dad, I recall him saying simply that the movie was about forgiveness. Until I watched the DVD for the umpteenth time recently, I never understood completely what he meant.

Just like Norman Dale in the movie, my dad carried a huge regret, surrounding a mistake he made, around for many, many years. Although my dad's mistake didn't involve physical assault, it did result in his disbarment from the practice of law in 1981. Regardless of the fact that my dad paid all of the consequences for his mistake early on, he was unable to forgive himself enough to return to the practice of law, his first true love, until right before his death 17 years later.

When my father passed away in the hospital due to a routine procedure that had gone very wrong, he left behind his wallet, keys, glasses, and a study book for the bar exam. He was three pages from the end of the book and would have completed his course of study just in time to re-take the exam the following week. The memory of the last time I spoke to my dad came back to me when I last watched *Hoosiers*. At that time, he had told me that there's no human mistake too big to be

forgiven, and that we are often the ones to hold the biggest most unforgiveable grudges against ourselves, even after everyone else has forgiven us.

He reminded me of Coach Norman Dale from the movie, how he had to truly forgive himself in order to believe in what he was doing, despite overwhelming numbers of adversaries. He reminded me that we all deserve another chance, no matter where we find ourselves when we get that first tiny glimmer of hope back. Having said all of this, I leave you with two main thoughts; movies can be extremely therapeutic due to their combination of visual imagery and language (see www.cinematherapy.com), and never let the grudges you hold against yourself keep you from fully living your life.

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