

## **INFINITELY POLAR BEAR – Film at CONCA VERDE on 05.10.15 – Talk by Peter Anderson**

***Infinitely Polar Bear*** is a 2014 American comedy-drama written and directed by Maya Forbes, and starring Mark Ruffalo, Zoe Saldana, Imogene Wolodarsky, and Ashley Aufderheide. The film premiered in competition at the 10th Sundance Film Festival on January 18, 2014. The film was released on June 19, 2015, by Sony Pictures Classics.

### ***The Plot***

A manic-depressive mess of a father tries to win back his wife by attempting to take full responsibility of their two young, spirited daughters, who do not make the overwhelming task any easier.

### ***Filming***

The shooting of the film began on April 9, 2013 in Providence, Rhode Island. J. J. Abrams and Bryan Burk served as executive producers of the film.

Forbes told a reporter for *USA Today* that it was an advantage having her own daughter, Imogene Wolodarsky, play one of the starring roles: "I could make her cry. And I didn't have to worry 'What if I damage this kid forever'. Imogene's part is so demanding because of all the emotional stuff. I would go into a corner with her and I would cry about what the scene was about and tell her why I was crying and what it meant and she'd cry and then we'd go do the scene. She has such a huge heart."

### ***Release***

After premiering at Sundance, the film was acquired by Sony Pictures Classics for major territories in North America and Europe.

The film has played at several film festivals including the Deauville American Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival, and the Vancouver International Film Festival. The film was released on June 19, 2015, by Sony Pictures Classics.

### ***Reception***

The film has a score of 82% on Rotten Tomatoes, and a score of 65 on Metacritic, indicating "Generally favorable reviews".

### **Bipolar Disorder**

**Bipolar disorder**, also known as **bipolar affective disorder** and **manic-depressive illness**, is a mental disorder characterized by periods of elevated mood and periods of depression. The elevated mood is significant and is known as mania or hypomania depending on the severity or whether there is psychosis. During mania an individual feels or acts abnormally happy, energetic, or irritable. They often make poorly thought out decisions with little regard to the consequences. The need for sleep is usually reduced. During periods of depression there may be crying, poor eye contact with others, and a negative outlook on life. The risk of suicide among those with the disorder is high at greater than 6% over 20 years, while self harm occurs in 30–40%. Other mental health issues such as anxiety disorder and substance use disorder are commonly associated.

The cause is not clearly understood, but both genetic and environmental factors play a role. Many genes of small effect contribute to risk. Environmental factors include long term stress and a history of

childhood abuse. It is divided into bipolar I disorder if there is at least one manic episode and bipolar II disorder if there are at least one hypomanic episode and one major depressive episode. In those with less severe symptoms of a prolonged duration the condition cyclothymic disorder may be present. If due to drugs or medical problems it is classified separately. Other conditions that may present in a similar manner include substance use disorder, personality disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and schizophrenia as well as a number of medical conditions.

Treatment commonly includes psychotherapy and medications such as mood stabilizers or antipsychotics. Examples of mood stabilizers that are commonly used include lithium and anticonvulsants. Treatment in hospital against a person's wishes may be required at times as people may be a risk to themselves or others yet refuse treatment. Severe behavioural problems may be managed with short term benzodiazepines or antipsychotics. In periods of mania it is recommended that antidepressants be stopped. If antidepressants are used for periods of depression they should be used with a mood stabilizer. Electroconvulsive therapy may be helpful in those who do not respond to other treatments. If treatments are stopped it is recommended that this be done slowly. Many people have social, financial, or work-related problems due to the disorder. These difficulties occur a quarter to a third of the time on average. The risk of death from natural causes such as heart disease is twice that of the general population. This is due to poor lifestyle choices and the side effects from medications.

About 3% of people in the United States have bipolar disorder at some point in their life. Lower rates of around 1% are found in other countries. The most common age at which symptoms begin is 25. Rates appear to be similar in males as females. The economic costs of the disorder has been estimated at \$45 billion for the United States in 1991. A large proportion of this was related to a higher number of missed work days, estimated at 50 per year. People with bipolar disorder often face problems with social stigma.

### ***Society and culture***

There are widespread problems with social stigma, stereotypes, and prejudice against individuals with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder.

Kay Redfield Jamison, a clinical psychologist and Professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, profiled her own bipolar disorder in her memoir *An Unquiet Mind* (1995). In his autobiography *Manicdotes: There's Madness in His Method* (2008) Chris Joseph describes his struggle between the creative dynamism which allowed the creation of his multimillion-pound advertising agency Hook Advertising, and the money-squandering dark despair of his bipolar illness.

Several dramatic works have portrayed characters with traits suggestive of the diagnosis that has been the subject of discussion by psychiatrists and film experts alike. A notable example is *Mr. Jones* (1993), in which Mr. Jones (Richard Gere) swings from a manic episode into a depressive phase and back again, spending time in a psychiatric hospital and displaying many of the features of the syndrome. In *The Mosquito Coast* (1986), Allie Fox (Harrison Ford) displays some features including recklessness, grandiosity, increased goal-directed activity and mood lability, as well as some paranoia. Psychiatrists have suggested that Willy Loman, the main character in Arthur Miller's classic play *Death of a Salesman*, suffers from bipolar disorder, though that specific term for the condition did not exist when the play was written.

TV specials, for example the BBC's *Stephen Fry: The Secret Life of the Manic Depressive*, MTV's *True Life: I'm Bipolar*, talk shows, and public radio shows, and the greater willingness of public figures to discuss their own bipolar disorder, have focused on psychiatric conditions, thereby, raising public awareness.

On April 7, 2009, the night-time drama *90210* on the CW network, aired a special episode where the character Silver was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Stacey Slater, a character from the BBC soap *East-Enders*, has been diagnosed with the disorder. The storyline was developed as part of the BBC's Headroom campaign. The Channel 4 soap *Brookside* had earlier featured a story about bipolar disorder when the character Jimmy Corkhill was diagnosed with the condition. In April 2014, ABC premiered a medical drama, *Black Box*, in which the main character, a world-renowned neuroscientist, is bipolar.

The next film will be in French PAS SON GENRE – Sarà il mio tipo? On 12 October followed by the film in English A LITTLE CHAOS – rigorously spelt with an 'h'! – in Italian - Le Regole del Caos on 19 October.

This 5<sup>th</sup> Film Show is sponsored by Anderson House – the Cambridge Centre for Bergamo, CRTDrills Lingue Bergamo – the language teachers' association, the Ufficio Scolastico of MIUR – the Italian Ministry of Education and AEGEE Bergamo – the Association of Erasmus students.