

# Child to parent abuse depicted in film and arts

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# INTRODUCTION:



The portrayal of parents being abused by their children in movies and art is a less common but equally powerful narrative that explores complex dynamics within families.



This subject can have a significant social impact by shedding light on issues that are often underrepresented or misunderstood.



Here are key aspects of this impact:

# 1. Highlighting an Overlooked Issue



- **Breaking Taboos:** Child-to-parent abuse is a sensitive and often stigmatized topic. Films and art that depict this form of abuse challenge societal norms and taboos, bringing attention to a hidden problem that many families face but are reluctant to discuss.
- **Expanding the Narrative of Abuse:** Traditionally, abuse in media is portrayed with children as victims. By focusing on parents as victims, these works broaden the conversation around abuse, showing that it can occur in multiple directions within a family.



### 3. Influencing Public Perception

- ▶ **Challenging Stereotypes:** Traditional views of family roles often place parents in a position of authority and control. Art and films that depict child-to-parent abuse challenge these stereotypes, presenting a more nuanced view of power dynamics within families.
- ▶ **Raising Awareness:** Such portrayals can help raise awareness about the realities of child-to-parent abuse, including its emotional, psychological, and sometimes physical dimensions. This awareness can lead to greater recognition of the issue in society and among professionals who work with families.





- [Adolescent Violence to Parents](#) - Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group resource booklet for parents and carers
- [Holes in the Wall](#) – a blog on child to parent violence and abuse
- [SAFE!](#) deliver the [Building Respectful Families](#) programme to families in Thames Valley affected by Child to Parent Violence.

## 4. Impact on Policy and Social Services

- **Advocacy for Support Systems:** Increased visibility of child-to-parent abuse in media can lead to calls for **better support systems** for affected parents. This might include counseling services, support groups, or legal protections that acknowledge the complexities of these situations.
- **Policy Development:** By bringing attention to the issue, these portrayals can influence policymakers to consider the unique needs of parents who are victims of abuse by their children, leading to the **development of specialized resources and interventions.**

NO HAY NADA COMO EL AMOR DE UNA MADRE



## 5. Reflecting and Critiquing Society

- **Commentary on Modern Parenting:** Some works use child-to-parent abuse as a lens to critique modern parenting styles, societal expectations, or the pressures placed on families. For example, the movie *Mommy* explores the impact of societal and economic pressures on a single mother dealing with her son's violent tendencies.
- **Exploring Power and Control:** These narratives often delve into themes of power and control within the family unit, questioning who holds power and how it can shift, sometimes unexpectedly, between parents and children.

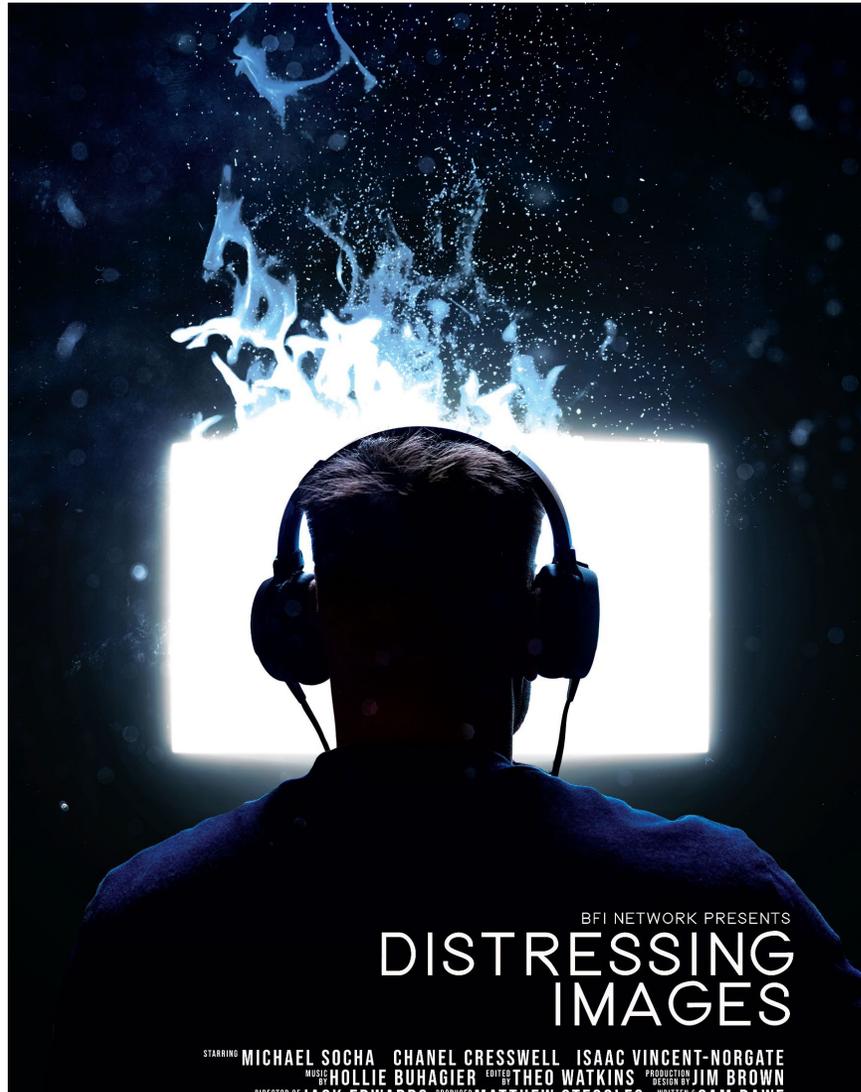
## 6. Impact on Families and Victims

- **Validation of Experience:** For parents experiencing abuse, seeing their struggles reflected in movies or art can be validating. It can help them feel less isolated and more understood, encouraging them to seek help.
- **Emotional Triggers and Healing:** While these portrayals can be powerful, they can also be emotionally triggering for those who have experienced similar situations. However, they also have the potential to facilitate healing by opening up dialogue and providing a sense of shared experience.



## 7. Ethical Considerations

- **Sensitivity in Portrayal:**
  - As with any depiction of abuse, it is crucial that filmmakers and artists handle the topic of child-to-parent abuse with care.
  - Misrepresentation or sensationalism can do more harm than good, potentially reinforcing negative stereotypes or trivializing the experiences of those involved.
- **Balancing Drama and Realism:**
  - While dramatic portrayals can be compelling, they must be balanced with realism to avoid exaggeration or the creation of unrealistic fears.
  - The goal should be to provide a truthful depiction that contributes to understanding rather than simply shocking the audience.



- ▶ “We will be discussing the following films that address sensitive topics related to abuse, so please be prepared for potentially distressing content.”

The statistics are against me  
But I am not a statistic  
I am a person  
Hear My Story



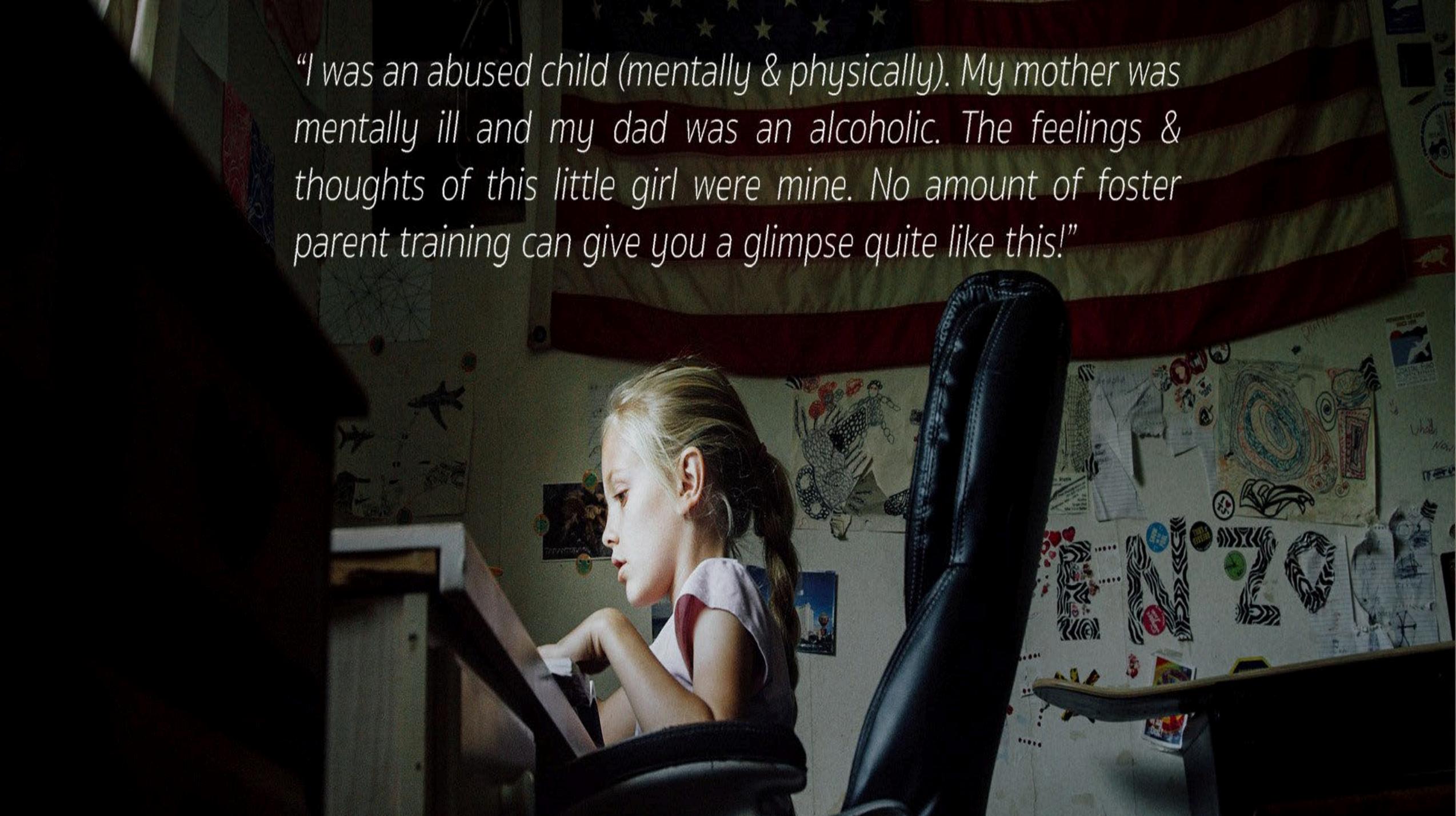
## ReMoved

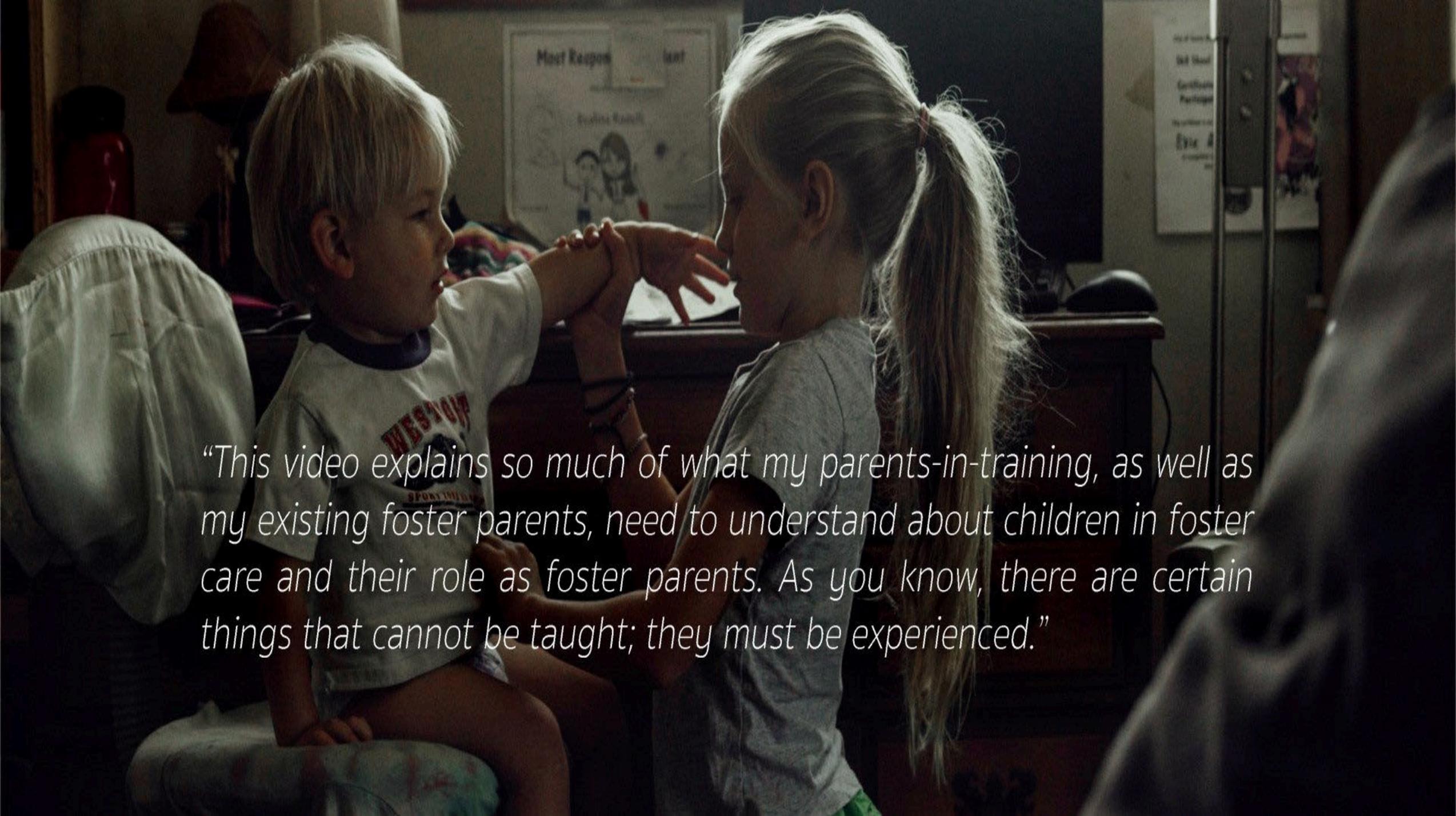
- ▶ “ReMoved” is a two part short film told in the first person narrative of a young girl named Zoe who is removed from her home, along with her little brother Benaiah, due to domestic violence and child abuse.
- ▶ Zoe begins a new life in the foster care system, which in some ways is an improvement, in other ways is just as chaotic, and unpredictable as the life she has been taken from.
- ▶ When placed in the home of foster mother, Ms. Law, Zoe is faced with her most difficult struggle of all – finding what is lovable in herself.
- ▶ Zoe’s behavioral and emotional struggles resulted in her being moved from one foster home to another, being rejected by her mother (the film did hint at a possible reunion) and finally, being medicated with instructions to double the dose if she did not calm down.

# Video 1



*"I was an abused child (mentally & physically). My mother was mentally ill and my dad was an alcoholic. The feelings & thoughts of this little girl were mine. No amount of foster parent training can give you a glimpse quite like this!"*



A young boy with short blonde hair, wearing a white t-shirt with "WESTON SPORTS" printed on it, sits on a chair. He is holding the hand of a young girl with long blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a grey t-shirt. They are both looking at each other. The background shows a classroom with a poster titled "Most Respect" and a desk with a computer mouse.

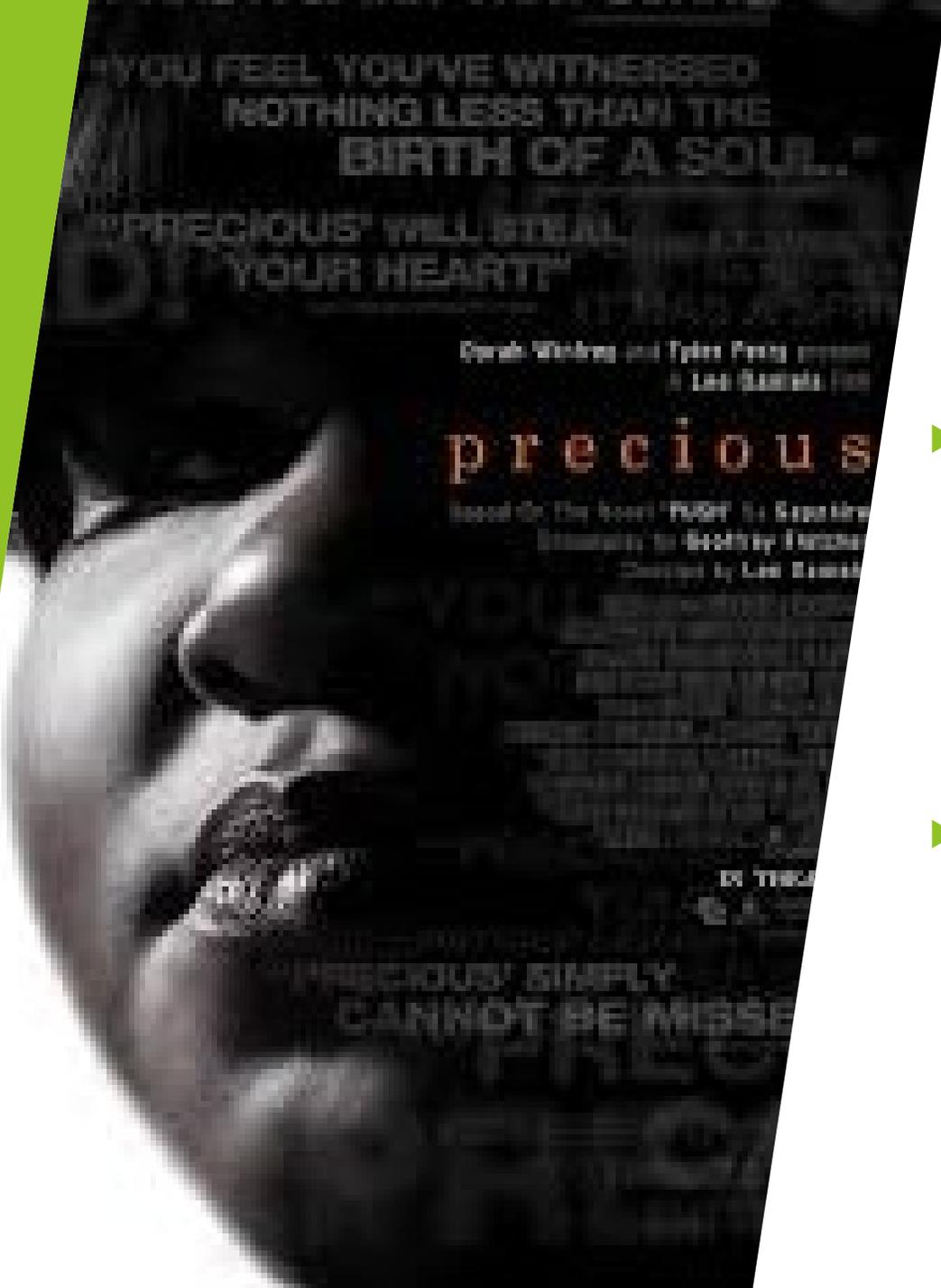
*“This video explains so much of what my parents-in-training, as well as my existing foster parents, need to understand about children in foster care and their role as foster parents. As you know, there are certain things that cannot be taught; they must be experienced.”*

# Reflections?

- **No child or situation is hopeless**
- The film conveys a message that if you can have hope in a child's future, you can change lives.
- **Foster parents should be patient**
- The film aims to encourage foster parents to be understanding and patient with the challenging behaviors of children in care.
- **Families can understand each other**
- The film aims to help families who have had children removed and taken into foster care understand each other.
- **Children can have hope**
- The film conveys a message of hope, that a child's identity is not found in their past.

# Precious(2008)

- ▶ It was the amazing story of a 16 year old overweight young black girl named Clarisse Precious Jones. Precious lived a painful life where manipulation, incest, and physical violence was common. Her life was a struggle as she was born and grew up in Harlem.
- ▶ Adapted from the novel “Push” by Sapphire – who taught reading and writing for eight years in Harlem, Brooklyn and the Bronx, to students like Precious and her peers





# Precious

- ▶ Mary Johnstone, a vile representation of some of the most horrendous abuse a parent can inflict on a child.
- ▶ She could be described as an exceptionally damaged and spiteful woman with no grasp on morality.
- ▶ Instigated by boyfriend Carl.
- ▶ She is obese, illiterate, dirt poor and living in a seedy flat in Harlem with a mother from hell. She is expecting her second child. Her first child (whom she calls 'Mongol') has Down's syndrome. Both children were conceived out of incest with her father.
- ▶ He has now pushed off, having repeatedly abused his daughter for several years. Her peers bully her, and her mother (acted by Mo'Nique) regularly but randomly hurls objects or insults at her.

# Video 2



PALLA  
PATTON

MARLAH  
CAREY

LENNY  
KRAVITZ

GABRIEL  
SIBRE

OPRAH WINFREY AND TYLER PERRY  
PRESENT A LEE DANIELS FILM

# precious

BASED ON THE NOVEL 'LUSH' BY SARAH L. GREEN



"★★★★!"

—Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun Times

"A gem of a  
film"

—A.O. Scott, NY

"Best Picture of 2009"

—Peter Travers, Rolling Stone

## Reflections?

- ▶ The moral around child-to-parent abuse underscores the devastating impact of such trauma on a child's life.
- ▶ It illustrates how the cycle of abuse can perpetuate suffering, but it also highlights the potential for healing and breaking that cycle.
- ▶ The film emphasizes the importance of seeking help, finding supportive relationships, and the power of personal agency to overcome the effects of abuse.
- ▶ It ultimately advocates for resilience and the possibility of creating a new, healthier future.

TILDA SWINTON

JOHN C. REILLY

EZRA MILLER



*The Scotsman*

"This is an  
**earth-shattering film**"



*Kate Muir, The Times*

Artificial Eye

# WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN



*Glamour*

"Ezra Miller  
gives a **knock-out  
performance** as Kevin"



*Little White Lies*



From BAFTA Award Winning Director *Lynne Ramsay*  
Based on the best-selling novel by *Lionel Shriver*



- **Plot**
- We Need to Talk About Kevin is a 2003 novel by Lionel Shriver, published by Serpent's Tail, about a fictional school massacre.
- The story is told in the form of letters from Eva Khatchadourian to her estranged husband, Franklin, about her attempts to understand her son Kevin's psychopathic nature and the school massacre he committed.
- **Characters**
- Eva is a well-developed character whose struggles with motherhood, guilt, and her relationship with Kevin are portrayed in a realistic and nuanced manner. Kevin is a hateful and inhuman son who appears to deliberately antagonize his mother.



- ▶ From the start, Eva finds it difficult to bond with her son, who seems to be manipulative and difficult. She is also resentful of the way motherhood has disrupted her career and personal life, and she feels isolated and unsupported in her new role.
- ▶ **Kevin's Troubling Behavior**
- ▶ As Kevin grows older, his behavior becomes increasingly troubling. He is unresponsive to his parents' attempts to discipline him, and he seems to take pleasure in causing them distress. He is also highly intelligent, but he uses his intelligence to manipulate those around him. Eva becomes convinced that Kevin is deliberately trying to drive a wedge between her and Franklin, and she feels increasingly alienated from her own family.
- ▶ Despite Kevin's disturbing behavior, Franklin remains blind to his son's true nature. He believes that Kevin is just going through a phase and that he will eventually grow out of it. Franklin's refusal to acknowledge the severity of the situation only serves to deepen the divide between him and Eva.

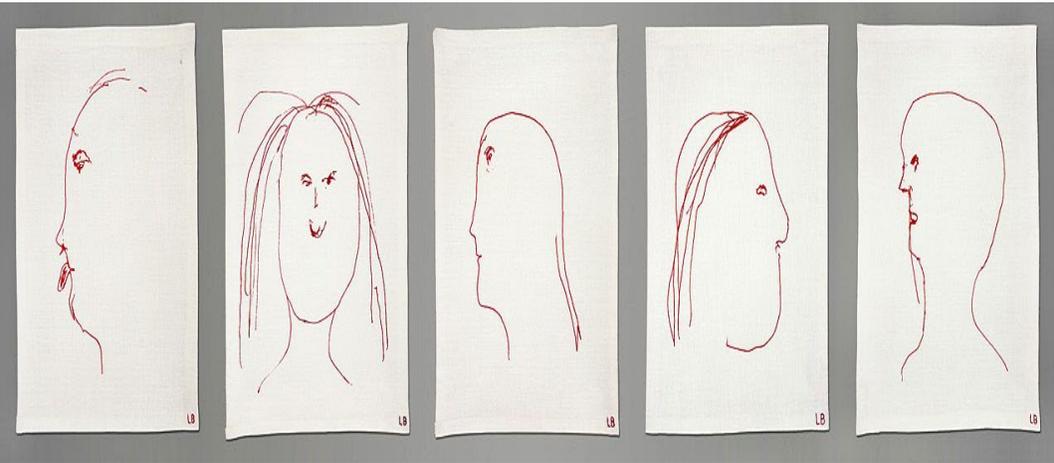
# Video 3



# Reflections?

- ▶ It is a powerful and thought-provoking exploration of motherhood, nature versus nurture, and the limits of ?parental responsibility.
- ▶ The novel doesn't offer easy answers, but it forces us to confront uncomfortable truths about the complexities of human nature and the bonds of family.
- ▶ The book is particularly concerned with the possibility that Eva's ambivalence toward maternity may have influenced Kevin's development.

- **Nature versus nurture**
- The novel and film explore whether evil is innate or learned.
- **The nature of evil**
- The film raises questions about how evil originates, how to deal with it, and whether it's an objective reality or a subjective judgment.
- **Guilt and parental responsibility**
- Eva hates her son Kevin but feels guilty for how her feelings may have affected him.
  
- **Antisocial personality disorder**
- Kevin's behavior is characterized by deceitfulness, irritability, aggressiveness, recklessness, and disregard for safety.
- **Moral processing**
- The moral processing of psychopathic individuals has a distinct neural signature. However, intensive prolonged treatment can reduce psychopathic behaviors and recidivism.



## ▶ Theater

1. **"August: Osage County"** by **Tracy Letts** - This play examines a dysfunctional family with dark secrets and interpersonal abuse, including instances of emotional manipulation and hostility among family members.

## ▶ Visual Arts

- Artists like **Louise Bourgeois** have explored themes of familial relationships, trauma, and the complexities of motherhood through sculpture and installation, often conveying the tension and pain present in these dynamics.

# CPFT Film Club

- ▶ Range of different films in CPFT film club.
- ▶ In person- Mostly advertised to Clinical staff and recovery colleges.
- ▶ Explore with staff members and share some experiences that have nuanced understanding and themes that are stigmatising.
- ▶ There could be themes of discussions around sexuality which could make themselves feel too exposed .
- ▶ There is a film club in London and Edinburgh as well linked to our film club.
- ▶ Feel free to email at [psychfilmclub@gmail.com](mailto:psychfilmclub@gmail.com) Dr Felix Clay, if you want to join the mailing list.
- ▶ We cannot provide clinical support as some of the screenings could be quite challenging as we deal with sensitive topics and hence its important to make sure that it may not be triggering

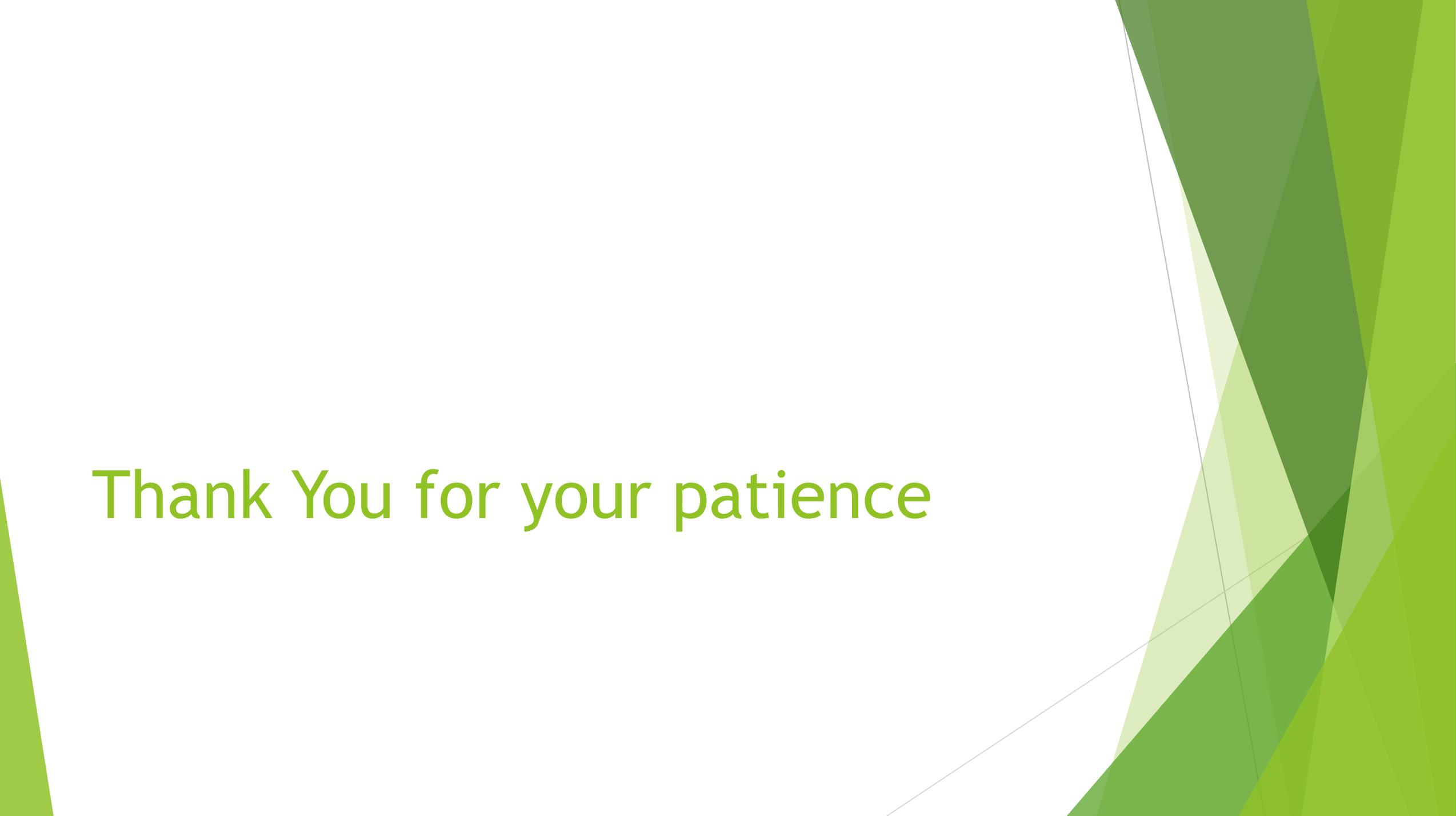
# Conclusion

- ▶ It acts as critical tool for broadening the discussion around family dynamics and abuse.
- ▶ By bringing attention to this often-hidden issue, these narratives can foster greater empathy, challenge societal norms, and encourage the development of better support systems for affected families.
- ▶ Though **ReMoved** and **Precious** shows how parent abuse could trigger a child abusing parents, **We need to talk about Kevin** challenges the fact that the innate nature in child could trigger parental abuse ;however there are quite subtle indicators of parenthood as well which needs to be looked into.
- ▶ As with any sensitive subject, such portrayals must be handled with care to ensure they contribute positively to society

# References

- ▶ You tube videos -
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOeQUwdAjE0&list=PPSV>
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R77EdyEAvms&t=23s>
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1vAglJJXew&list=PLTxrGJPYRnQo67mfbQE2wQmMkjkoZQLP2>
- ▶ <https://parentingabusedkids.wordpress.com/2015/08/28/review-on-film-removed/>

Thank You for your patience

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the frame, creating a modern, layered effect against the white background.