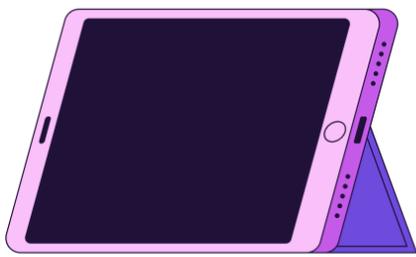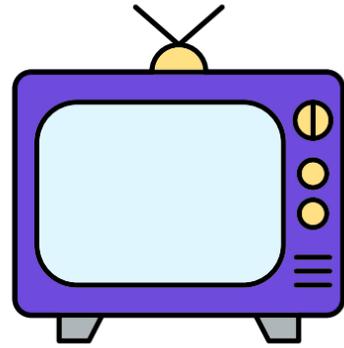# Mental Illness in the Media

The Good

Discussing mental illness on social media can help people feel less alone and create positive social relationships[1]

The Bad

"Undesirable" symptoms (e.g. neglecting hygeine) are often ignored in favour of more "desirable" symptoms (e.g. sadness, shyness). This means that some illnesses are still severely stigmatized[2]

The Ugly

Highly exaggerated and glamorous images of mental illness can lead to increased self-diagnosis and increased reports of mental illness[3, 4]

Perspectives

People who deal with mental illness typically have mixed views on whether media portrayals are beneficial or harmful. However, the consensus seems to be that *content matters.*[5]

Content Matters

There are ways to portray mental illness in a positive and educational light. Accurate portrayals can reduce mental health stigma and increase help-seeking behaviours (e.g. talking to someone trusted)[6, 7]

Film Recommendations
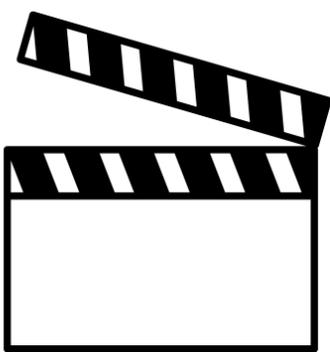
In recent years, many films have come out that portray mental illness in an accurate light that can generate awareness and reduce stigma. The Canadian Mental Health Association has a list of their top recommended films including *Inside Out, A Beautiful Mind*, and more!

[1]Akram, U. & Drabble, J. (2022). Mental health memes: Beneficial or aversive in relation to psychiatric symptoms? *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 9*(1).

[2]Jadayel, R., Medlej, K., Jadayel, J. J. (2017). Mental disorders: A glamorous attraction on social media? *Journal of Teaching and Education, 7*(1), 465-476.

[3]Bridge, J. A., Greenhouse, J. B., Ruch, D., Stevens, J., Ackerman, J., Sheftall, A. H., Horowitz, L. M., Kelleher, K. J., & Campo, J. V. (2019). Association between the release of Netflix's 13 Reasons Why and suicide rates in the United States: An interrupted time series analysis. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 59(2), 236-243.

[4]Hasan, F., Foster, M. M., Cho, H. (2023). Normalizing anxiety on social media increases self-diagnosis of anxiety: The mediating effect of identification (but not stigma). *Journal of Health Communication, 28*, 563-572. https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730.2023.2235563

[5]Kaufman, M. R., Bazell, A. T., Collaco, A., & Sedoc, J. (2021). "This show hits really close to home on so many levels": An analysis of Reddit comments about HBO's *Euphoria* to understand viewers' experiences of and reactions to substance use and mental illness. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 220,* 1-7. https://doi-org.proxy.library.carleton.ca/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108468

[6]Markiewitz, A. & Jungblut, M. (2023). Media in mental health: An approach to conceptualize the media's role in the help-seeking of people suffering from mental health issues. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 47*(4), 411-426.

[7]Thompson, A., Hollis, S., Herman, K. C., Reinke, W. M., Hawley, K., & Magee, S. (2021). Evaluation of a social media campaign on youth mental health stigma and help-seeking. School Psychology Review, 50(1), 36-41. https://doi-org.proxy.library.carleton.ca/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1838873