

Dreams

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF REQUIEM FOR A DREAM

Addiction, the Brain's Reward System,
and the Loneliness Beneath the Drug

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

(For Mature Audiences)

Use this guide to foster understanding,
reduce stigma, and explore the human
experiences that often exist beneath addiction.

“Addiction is
rarely only
about the
substance.
It is often about
pain, loneliness,
longing, and the
search for relief.

! FOR MATURE AUDIENCES

This content
discusses addiction
and may be
distressing for
some readers.



BEFORE WATCHING

Set the stage and
open minds.

- When people struggle with addiction, what assumptions do others often make about them?
- Why do you think some people turn to substances or behaviors that temporarily relieve emotional pain?
- What do you think people need most when they are suffering?



WHILE WATCHING

Pay attention to dreams,
losses, and the
narrowing of life.

- What dreams are each of the characters pursuing?
- What emotional needs seem to exist beneath their substance use?
- How does each character's world become smaller over time?
- When do you notice hope, and when do you notice despair?
- How do shame and isolation seem to influence the characters' decisions?



AFTER WATCHING

Reflect together and
make meaning.

- What surprised you most about the way addiction was portrayed?
- How did the film change or reinforce your understanding of addiction?
- Why do you think the article describes addiction as a disease rather than a moral failure?
- What does the film suggest about the relationship between loneliness and addiction?
- How might connection serve as part of the solution?



FAMILY REFLECTION

Go deeper with empathy, honesty, and connection.



What healthy ways
do you cope when
you feel overwhelmed,
lonely, stressed, or
discouraged?



Have you ever relied
on something that
temporarily helped
but ultimately
created more
problems?



Why can it be
difficult for people
to ask for help
when they
need it?



What helps people
feel valued, connected,
and understood?



What are some ways
families can create an
environment where
struggles can be
talked about openly?



DR. Z TAKEAWAY

Addiction is rarely only about the substance. It is often about pain, loneliness, longing, and the search for relief. When we replace judgment with curiosity and blame with compassion, we create the conditions where healing becomes possible.



DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.
Psychologist for Parenting | Z Psychology



Connection heals.



Conversations help.