

CROSS WIND PRODUCTIONS

Discussion Guide

In the Mirror Dimly

The movie, In the Mirror Dimly, deals with the complex issue of an eating disorder, specifically bulimia. There are varied reasons why an individual develops an eating disorder to cope with life issues, but most reasons lie in the individual's desire to fill a basic need.

David Wall, PhD, and Marian Eberly, RN, in their article, "Five Biblical Factors in Eating Disorder Development," state that "eating disorders are almost always unhealthy and irrational ways of meeting rational, human needs, such as the needs for love and acceptance... Eating disorder patients recover when they allow themselves to experience the grace of God's unconditional forgiveness and love, and--in this cradle of security and hope--responsibly transform their lives through healthy choices and the continual counsel of the Holy Spirit and caring people." ¹

The main character Nicole in the movie, In the Mirror Dimly, deals with the stresses of her parents' divorce, and the need for love and acceptance by developing bulimia eating disorder, characterized by binge eating and purging.

Viewing the movie can lead to healthy discussions about the need for love and acceptance and the role of relationships in meeting those needs. It may also dispel the belief that an eating disorder is a "power play" or that the individual can just stop the erratic eating patterns.

As Jena Savage states in the interview with Remuda Ranch, included on the In the Mirror Dimly DVD, that an eating disorder is a coping mechanism. And if you take the coping mechanism away, you must fill the void with the love of Jesus Christ.

It is important that the movie, In the Mirror Dimly, be viewed in its entirety before entering in any discussion or asking the viewers any preliminary questions. Think of the movies you have watched and the importance of that fresh opportunity to form your own response without any preconceived expectations. The discussions following the movie will then be more original, candid and honest.

NOTE TO FACILITATOR:

At the end of this curriculum, you will find some useful information on eating disorders and places to seek help. This information allows the facilitator to be better prepared for discussion after the movie has been viewed.

¹ Source: *Five Biblical Factors in Eating Disorder Development*, A. David Wall, Ph.D. and Marian Eberly, RN, MSW, CISW, Remuda Ranch Programs for Anorexia and Bulimia, The Remuda Review: The Christian Journal of Eating Disorders, Fall 2002, Vol 1, Issue 1.

SHORT ONE-PAGE DISCUSSION for IN THE MIRROR DIMLY

1. Nicole, the main character in the movie, copes with her feelings through an eating disorder. Why? What comfort does it give her?
2. Why is an eating disorder dangerous? Why is bulimia especially deadly? *Refer to Psychologist Kari Anderson's explanation on the DVD's Remuda Ranch Interview.*
3. According to Jena Savage from the Remuda Ranch interview, how can you help a friend who struggles with an eating disorder?
4. How did Nicole's parents handle the knowledge that Nicole might have an eating disorder?
5. Should parents "snoop"? Why/why not?
6. In what ways can divorced parents help their children cope with the divorce?

Read the following scripture verse from 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NKJV)²:

¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

7. How is this verse significant to the movie?
8. What and whom do we see dimly?
9. What does God know about us? *Thought question:* How would He describe you?
10. When Nicole looked in the mirror, what did she see?
11. How are the letters to Nicole from her Dad like our letters from God?
Discuss then read the following scriptures. Ps. 119:105; Proverbs 30:5; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 3:16-19
12. What role did Stormy, the horse, play in Nicole's healing?
13. How would you define self-esteem? *Discuss then read* Psalm 139:14-18.

² Scripture taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW KING JAMES VERSION. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION for IN THE MIRROR DIMLY

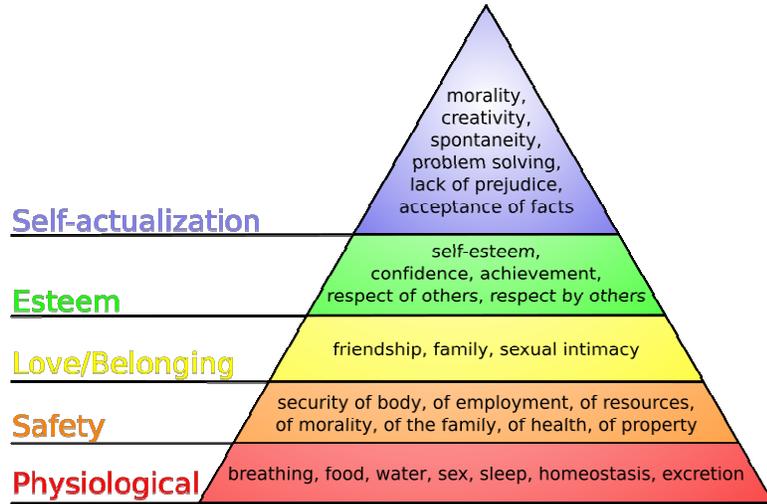
TOPIC I: PEOPLE

Nicole

1. Nicole, the main character in the movie, copes with her feelings through an eating disorder. Why? What comfort does it give her?
2. What are some contributing factors that may have caused Nicole to begin her eating disorder?
3. Why does Nicole hide her eating disorder?
4. Why is an eating disorder dangerous? Why is bulimia especially deadly? *Refer to Psychologist Kari Anderson's explanation on the DVD's Remuda Ranch Interview.*
5. What are some healthier ways of coping?
6. What makes Nicole feel like she needs to purge in order to be acceptable?
 - a) What does Nicole believe about herself?
 - b) In what ways do our culture and our peers reinforce our beliefs about ourselves?
 - c) What does God's word say about our true self-worth?
Scripture: 1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 2:10³
7. According to Jena Savage from the Remuda Ranch interview, how can you help a friend who struggles with an eating disorder?

³ All scripture references are taken from the New International Version except where noted. Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. The "NIV" and "New International Version" trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society. Use of either trademark requires the written permission of International Bible Society.

The following picture represents Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.⁴ Maslow maintains that as basic needs are met, such as those physiological and security needs, an individual addresses his/her higher needs.



8. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which of Nicole’s needs are not being met? Why not?
9. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs overlooks the need for God. Where would you place our need for God within Maslow’s chart?

After discussion, read the corresponding scriptures for each level:

- Physiological: Acts 17:26-28; Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; 2 Corinthians 4:7, 16-17
- Safety: Proverbs 18:10; Proverbs 3:7-8; Hebrews 6:19
- Love/Belonging: John 15:13-15; Psalm 68:6a; 1 Corinthians 12:27
- Esteem: 1 John 3:1; Hebrews 10:24; Proverbs 3:26; Philippians 4:13
- Self-actualization: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Philippians 4:8

Nicole’s Parents/their relationship:

1. How did the Nicole’s parents’ lack of communication and her mother’s bitterness impact Nicole?
2. How did Nicole’s parents handle the knowledge that Nicole might have an eating disorder?
3. Should parents “snoop”? Why/why not?
4. If Nicole’s mother was so angry with Nicole’s father, why did she save his letters to Nicole?

⁴ Wikipedia, Internet encyclopedia. *Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document under the terms of the [GNU Free Documentation License](https://www.gnu.org/licenses/old-licenses/gpl-2.0.html), Version 1.2 or any later version published by the Free Software Foundation.*

5. What does it mean to be “unequally yoked?” *Discuss then read* 2 Corinthians 6:14a and 15b.
6. Were Nicole’s parents “unequally yoked?” How do you know?
7. Do “equally yoked” parents ever get divorced?
8. Does Nicole believe the divorce was her fault? Why/why not?
9. In what ways can divorced parents help their children cope with the divorce?
10. Compare/contrast Nicole’s earthly father with her Father/God.
11. Are parents perfect? Why do we expect them to be? What qualities are most important for parents to have?
12. How does the relationship between Nicole’s mom and dad affect her willingness to respect them?
13. What is the benefit to Nicole of honoring her parents even though she may not respect their relationship with each other? *Read* Deuteronomy 5:16; 1 Peter 2:13-14
14. Toward the end of the movie, what steps do Nicole and her parents take to mend their relationship?

Travis:

1. What Godly characteristics did Travis display? *Discuss then read* 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.
 2. Would Nicole and her first boyfriend been “unequally yoked” if their relationship had continued? (*2 Corinthians 6:14a and 15b*) Why/why not?
 3. How do you judge whether a relationship is a good one or not?
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TOPIC II: SYMBOLISM

The Mirror:

Read the following scripture verse from 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NKJV):

¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

1. How is this verse significant to the movie?
2. What and whom do we see dimly?
3. What does God know about us? *Thought question:* How would He describe you?
4. When Nicole looked in the mirror, what did she see?
5. How is God reflected in and through you?

Dad's Letters:

1. How are the letters to Nicole from her Dad like our letters from God?
Discuss then read the following scriptures: Ps. 119:105; Proverbs 30:5; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 3:16-19
2. Would you keep an unopened letter to you on the shelf or would you read it? Why/why not?
3. *Thought question:* Does God have a letter for you in His word, the Bible?

The Horse:

1. What role did Stormy, the horse, play in Nicole's healing?
2. According to Sharon Simpson on the Remuda Ranch interview, how is equine therapy used in the treatment of eating disorders?

TOPIC III: CONCEPTS

Self Esteem:

1. How would you define self-esteem? *Discuss then read* Psalm 139:14-18.
2. *Read* Genesis 1: 26-27. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
3. Questions to ponder as a group:

- a. Are you glad you are you? *Re-read* Psalm 139:14
- b. Do you have a deep sense of self-worth? *Read* John 3:16-17
- c. Do you really love yourself? *Read* 1 John 4:19.

Activity: *Read or distribute copies of Ephesians 1:3-14 in the New Living Translation. (It is provided below in its entirety.) Have the viewers answer the following questions:*

1. List the things God has done for you?
2. What phrases does Paul use to show you the extent of God's love?
3. How are you to respond?

Ephesians 1:3 -14 (NLT)

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.**4** Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.**5** God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.**6** So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.***7** He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.**8** He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure.**10** And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.**11** Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God,* for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

12 God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God.**13** And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own* by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.**14** The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

Forgiveness (lack of bitterness):

1. How have each of the following been wronged in the movie?
 - Nicole by boyfriend
 - Nicole by cheerleader
 - Friend by Nicole
 - Cheerleader by Nicole's boyfriend
 - Wife by husband
 - Husband by wife
 - Child by parents
 - Travis by Nicole
 - Parents by Nicole
2. What were the consequences of these "wrongs"?

3. Who should be forgiven and why? What is the criteria for forgiveness? *Read* Matthew 18:21-22; Mark 11:25-26; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4-5.
4. What are the consequences for not forgiving someone? *Read* Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:31-32; Acts 8:23
5. Some wrongs seem impossible to forgive. Some that we feel even God would not forgive, like abuse, abandonment, assault, murder, etc. In fact, some girls who suffer from eating disorders have been abused. Would God ask us to forgive those abuses? Why/why not? *Read* Psalm 8:7-9; Psalm 1:5-6; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Proverbs 5:22
6. Where do we get the strength to forgive? *Read* 1 Chronicles 16:11; Psalm 28:7; Ephesians 6:10-11; Psalm 142:5-7; Psalm 147:3
7. Do we stay in an abusive situation after we forgive the person? Why/why not? *Read* 1 Corinthians 5:11; Proverbs 4:36-37; Jeremiah 29:11; Matthew 6:26.

Activity: *Lead your viewers in a time of identifying people they aren't forgiving. (Have them write the hurts down). Then have them nail those hurts on a cross you brought. Let them know that Jesus' death and resurrection took care of all of our sins as well as the sins of those who sin against us.*

Unconditional Love:

1. What kind of unconditional love did Nicole's father show her?
2. When Nicole's mother got angry, did that violate her unconditional love for Nicole? Why or why not?
3. Can you deal with someone in a firm manner to resolve a problem and still love them unconditionally?
4. Even Travis showed a level of unconditional love to Nicole after he found out about her eating disorder. How did he display that love?
5. Are there any conditions in which unconditional love runs out?
6. What role did Nicole's relationship with the horse have in her coming to understand a bit more about unconditional love?
7. How can we know God's unconditional love? *Read* Romans 8:38-39

Eating Disorders:

NOTE to Discussion Leaders:

Eating disorders are dangerous both physically and psychologically. An eating disorder is a complex issue, not a simple addiction or a problem with an easy solution. Please consider the need for professional Godly help for any student suffering from an eating disorder. The following Eating Disorder Screen may help your viewers identify eating disorder problems and seek help.

Remuda Ranch 1-800-445-1900 www.remudaranch.com

There are many facilities that offer treatment programs for eating disorders. Each individual should find a Biblically-based program that meets her specific needs. We include contact information from Remuda Ranch because we have researched their programs, visited their facility and believe it to be a reputable, Biblically based program with a success rate in the 93% rate for bulimia recovery and 99% recovery rate for anorexia.

A BRIEF AND ACCURATE EATING DISORDER SCREEN⁵

1. Do you make yourself sick because you feel uncomfortable full?
2. Do you worry you have lost control over how much you eat?
3. Have you recently lost more than 15 pounds in a three-month period?
4. Do you believe yourself to be fat when others say you are too thin?
5. Would you say that food dominates your life?

RESPONSES TO EATING DISORDER SCREEN:

Any person answering "yes" to two or more of these five questions is quite likely to have an eating disorder.

⁵ From Remuda Ranch Website at www.remudaranch.com.

The screening test above, called the SCOFF, has been validated in a primary care setting, but may also be administered in other settings. Oral and written administrations are both valid. The SCOFF picks up nearly 100 percent of anorexia and bulimia cases. It has a small false positive rate. It is therefore an excellent, rapid, and cost-effective screening tool for identifying eating disorders.

- **Morgan, J.F., Lacey, J.H., & Luck, A. (2002, April).** Validation of the SCOFF questionnaire for case detection of eating disorders in primary care. Paper presented at the International Conference on Eating Disorders of the Academy for Eating Disorders, Boston, MA.
- **Perry, L., Morgan, J., Reid, F., Brunton, J., O'Brien, A., Luck, A., and Lacey, H. (2002).** Screening for symptoms of eating disorders: Reliability of the SCOFF Screening Tool with written compared to oral deliver. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 32, 466-472.

TOPIC IV: DISCUSSION CONCLUSION

Key Gospel Truths:⁶

1. You were created by a loving God with intrinsic value apart from your appearance, gifts, talents, or willingness to do for others. (*Matthew 10:30-31, Psalm 139:14, 1 John 4:16*)
2. Nothing you have done in the past can change your great worth and value today. (*Lamentations 3:22-23, Romans 8:1, 1 John 1:9*)
3. Your life has meaning, value, and purpose. (*Jeremiah 29:11*)
4. What you are attempting to achieve through the eating disorder is a legitimate and appropriate need. It is not necessary for you to let go of this need; in fact, God intends to fulfill this need in a life-giving way. (*Philippians 4:19, John 10:10*)
5. The eating disorder may have worked to some extent in meeting your legitimate needs, but it is costing you much and is killing you. (*Proverbs 16:25*)
6. You are not a powerless victim over the eating disorder or difficult experiences from your past. There is a way out. (*Romans 8:37, 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 Cor 10:13*)
7. The way out includes an examination and transformation of your beliefs and usual ways of perceiving the world, a new schema. (*Romans 12:2, 2 Cor. 10:5*)

⁶ Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with Eating Disorders: A Christian Perspective by A. David Wall, PhD, Department of Psychological Series, Remuda Ranch Programs for Anorexia and Bulimia, from [The Remuda Review](#), Summer 2003, Vol 2, Issue 3