



Ethics With The Stars: Popcorn, Pitfalls, & Poor Decisions

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Viewer Discretion Advised!

- Some of the clips you will see today are vintage and may include outdated language, cultural references, and behavior that do not reflect current professional standards or today's societal values.
- Multiple clips contain enough profanity to make a sailor blush. I have included these -- not for shock value, but to demonstrate the intensity of the moment.



Viewer Discretion Advised!

- The clips you will see today have been intentionally selected for our educational purposes – to explore ethical dilemmas, boundary issues, and clinical decision-making.
- I ask that you view them through a clinical and professional lens, setting aside personal reactions to language, tone, or insensitivity to specific diagnoses or populations, and to focus on the presented ethical themes only.

What is an Ethical Dilemma?

An ethical dilemma occurs when a person faces two or more conflicting moral choices, none of which completely resolves the situation in an ethically perfect way.

If ethics were easy, we wouldn't need a three-hour training!

Set the Scene



She's Funny That Way

- A 2014 comedy film.
- A Broadway director hires Izzy, a “call girl” for sex. After getting to know her, he offers her \$30,000 to stop being a sex worker.
- Izzy dreams of becoming an actress, and ironically, she is auditioning for a part in a movie as a “call girl.”
- The movie goes through many twists and turns of Izzy trying to become an actress while trying to distance herself from her old life as a sex worker.
- This scene begins with Izzy seeing a therapist.

Set the Scene



Never Have I Ever

- 2020 Netflix series.
- Centers around Devi, an Indian-American, 15-year-old girl, whose father recently died.
- Devi becomes paralyzed due to her psychological trauma.
- One day, in an attempt to see her crush, she miraculously recovers and stands.
- She is trying to deal with her grief, her identity, and her school life.
- In this clip, she has just lied to her mother about a bird breaking her window, and she runs away from home to her therapist's office.

Set the Scene



The Sopranos

- An HBO series that ran from 1999 to 2007.
- An American crime drama.
- It focuses on a Mafia boss, Tony Soprano, who suffers from panic attacks and reluctantly seeks help from a therapist, Dr. Melfi.
- This series is widely regarded as one of the greatest and most influential television series of all time.
- For this reason, we will be watching several clips from the series.

Set the Scene



The Sopranos

- Tony (the client and mob boss) explains to Dr. Melfi that he missed the last session because he had food poisoning from eating bad chicken salad.
- *There is a “call girl” reference in this clip as well

Set the Scene



The Sopranos

- Dr. Jennifer Melfi is at a dinner party with several colleagues.
- Her supervisor, Elliot, is at the party, and he is sitting directly across from her in this scene.
- In their earlier supervision session, he references a specific study to make his point about the difficulties of working with sociopaths.
- In several sessions, Elliott has told Jennifer (Dr. Melfi) that she should stop seeing Tony, as he is in the mafia and a dangerous criminal. He explains she could face moral and legal consequences.

*Keep your eyes on Elliott to hear the ethical dilemma.

Set the Scene



The Sopranos

- Tony brings Dr. Melfi coffee, and she has a conversation about gifts in the therapeutic setting.
- The session is interrupted with a phone call about her car.
- She later finds out that the starter has been replaced with a brand-new one.....

Set the Scene

The Sopranos

- Tony has not seen Dr. Melfi in a while.
- He recently watched the movie *Prince of Tides*, which is about a therapist falling in love with her client (we'll watch a clip later).
- Watching this movie prompts Tony to call Dr. Melfi and ask her out on a date.
- Before he calls, he sends her flowers and a box of **Tide**, laundry detergent (she had shared in a previous session that **Tide** reminds her of her mother).
- He later schedules an appointment with Dr. Melfi under a different name to get in to see her to discuss further.
- We pick up the scene where he calls to ask her to dinner.

Set the Scene



In Treatment

- An HBO drama running in 2008 & 2009.
- The series follows a 50-year-old psychotherapist, Paul Weston, as he sees his patients in his private practice at his home.
- The idea of the show is that each episode represents a therapy session.
- During the series, Paul begins to question his abilities and motives with his patients, so he seeks help from his former supervisor he has not seen in over 10-years.
- In 2021 the season was rebooted with a new therapist named, Dr. Brooke Taylor.

Set the Scene



In Treatment

- Paul, the therapist, has been seeing his patient, Laura, for about a year, and she has just professed her love for him in this session.
- Before opening up to him about her feelings, she explains that she almost cheated on her boyfriend, Andrew, with a random man in a bar restroom the night before their session.

Set the Scene

In Treatment

- This scene picks up with Paul, having a session with his old supervisor, whom he has not seen in roughly ten years (also, they may have had a romantic relationship—it's unclear).
- He was 30 minutes late for his 5 o'clock session, due to traffic, and the supervisor says it is time to end at 5:53 and offers to pick things up at the next session.
- He explains that he goes five to ten minutes over time with his patients and becomes annoyed at her unwillingness to do so.

Set the Scene



In Treatment

- This scene is from the 2021 version of *In Treatment* with Dr. Brooke Taylor as the therapist.
- We pick up with Dr. Taylor answering a call from a patient late at night.
- This clip is quick and short, so pay close attention to the beginning to catch the ethical dilemma.

Set the Scene



Good Will Hunting

- 1997 Drama film
- 20-year-old Will is a self-taught math genius who was recently paroled after a prison term.
- He works as a janitor at MIT and spends his free time drinking with friends.
- Will and his friends start a fight and he is arrested.
- One of the MIT math professors realizes that Will can solve math problems that his students can't understand.
- This professor keeps Will from going to jail by getting him to agree to see a therapist.
- Will begins to see Dr. Sean Maguire, who has recently lost the love of his life to cancer.

Set the Scene



Good Will Hunting

- Will has seen many therapists during his life. He has antagonized them, alienated them, or angered all of them to the point that they have been unwilling to see him again.
- This scene is the first session with a new therapist, and he attempts to figure out how to anger this therapist in an effort to get out of therapy yet again.
- Will senses a “weak spot” in the therapist and decides to follow his instincts to see if he is correct, by criticizing a painting in the therapist’s office.

*Don’t forget the therapist is just returning to practice after his wife has died.

Set the Scene



What About Bob?

- A 1991 comedy film.
- Bob Wiley, a mentally unstable patient, begins seeing the egotistical psychotherapist, Dr. Leo Marvin.
- Dr. Marvin has just written a new book, called *Baby Steps*, and he believes it will make him famous.
- Things really go wrong when Dr. Marvin tells Bob he will be on vacation with his family for a month.
- We will analyze two clips from this movie.
- This first clip is Bob's first meeting with Dr. Marvin.

Set the Scene



What About Bob?

- This clip picks up with Dr. Marvin explaining to Bob that he is going on vacation for a month.
- He encourages him to read his book, *Baby Steps*, and to call his colleague if he needs to talk.
- Bob becomes very resourceful by calling Dr. Marvin's answering service and tricking them into telling him the exact address of his vacation home.
- He takes a bus to the town and then has a couple, who have been feuding with Dr. Marvin for years, drop him off at Dr. Marvin's house.

Set the Scene

Shrinking

- A comedy drama that premiered on Apple TV in 2023.
- The show is focused on the life of Jimmy, a therapist who has grown annoyed with his patients' inability to solve their problems.
- He begins giving them the "answers" to help speed up the changes they desire.
- His approach initially seems successful, but he keeps what he's doing a secret from his fellow therapists, aware of the ethical violations.
- We will analyze two clips from this series.

Set the Scene

Shrinking

- This scene starts with three therapists “hanging out” in the kitchen where they work.
- A client comes in and says he’s taking protein bars.
- The therapists start talking about having favorite clients.

Set the Scene



Shrinking

- This clip begins with Jimmy, the therapist, seeing Grace in his office.
- He has been seeing her for two years, and all she ever does is complain about her husband.
- Jimmy no longer has patience for this and tells her to leave her husband.

Set the Scene



Prime

- *Prime* is a 2005 romantic comedy.
- Rafi is a recently divorced 37-year-old woman who becomes romantically involved with David who is 23-years old.
- Rafi has been seeing a therapist, Lisa, since her divorce. Unbeknownst to Rafi, Lisa, her therapist, is David's mother.
- Lisa finds herself in an ethical and moral dilemma of counseling her son's girlfriend.
- Lisa seeks supervision, but she and the supervisor agree it's ok to keep seeing Rafi, because it's probably going to just be a fling.
- When the relationship doesn't end, she ends up having to tell Rafi that she is David's mother.

Set the Scene

The Prince of Tides & Ordinary People

- We will watch a clip from both of these movies.
- After watching both, we will compare and contrast them.
- Watch closely to see the differences.

Set the Scene



Prince of Tides

- A 1991 romantic drama film.
- A man, Tom, finds out his sister, living in NYC, has attempted suicide.
- Tom and his wife are not getting along and have not been intimate in months, so he decides to leave his home in Charleston and go to NYC to help his sister.
- Tom goes to meet with his sister's therapist to see if he can help her bring his sister out of a dissociated state in the hospital.
- Tom has just told Loewenstein, the therapist, about how he and his sister were raped by home invaders when he was 13, and how his brother and mother killed them. He went on to explain that the family buried the bodies beneath the house and never spoke of it again.

Set the Scene

Ordinary People

- A 1980 drama film.
- The movie follows the disintegration of a wealthy family following the accidental death of one of their two sons and the attempted suicide of the other, Conrad.
- Conrad has recently returned home after spending four months in a psychiatric hospital.
- He feels alienated from his friends and family and seeks help from a therapist, Dr. Tyrone Berger, who discovers Conrad was involved in the sailing accident that killed his brother.
- Conrad is now dealing with PTSD and is seeking help to cope with his emotions.
- This scene picks up with Conrad needing reassurance that his therapist is not going to abandon him, now that he knows he was involved with his brother's death.

Set the Scene



Grey's Anatomy

- Series began in 2005.
- Focuses on the personal and professional lives of interns, residents & attendings.
- Meredith Grey is the main character.
- This scene begins with Meredith seeing a therapist after putting herself in several high-risk situations.



There's No Easy Button...

Ethics is never as clear-cut and easy as Hollywood makes it look. From therapists losing it (*Good Will Hunting*) to giving ultimatums (*Shrinking*) to making snap judgments (*The Sopranos*), today's clips remind us that ethical practice means slowing down, reflecting, and always seeking supervision.

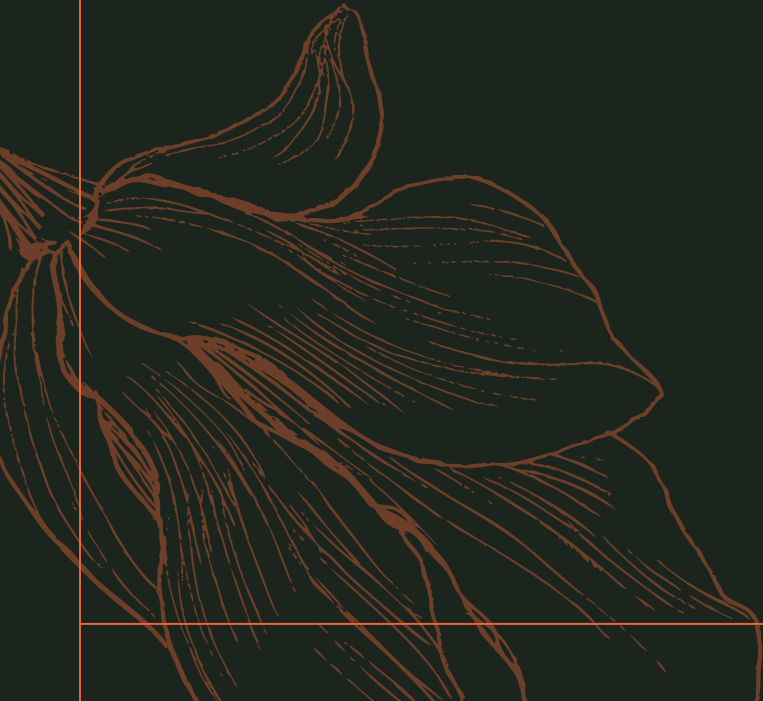
That's All Folks!

REMEMBER:

If it feels like a movie plot, it's
time to call your supervisor!



The following are slides in the event of
extra time



Set the Scene



The Sopranos

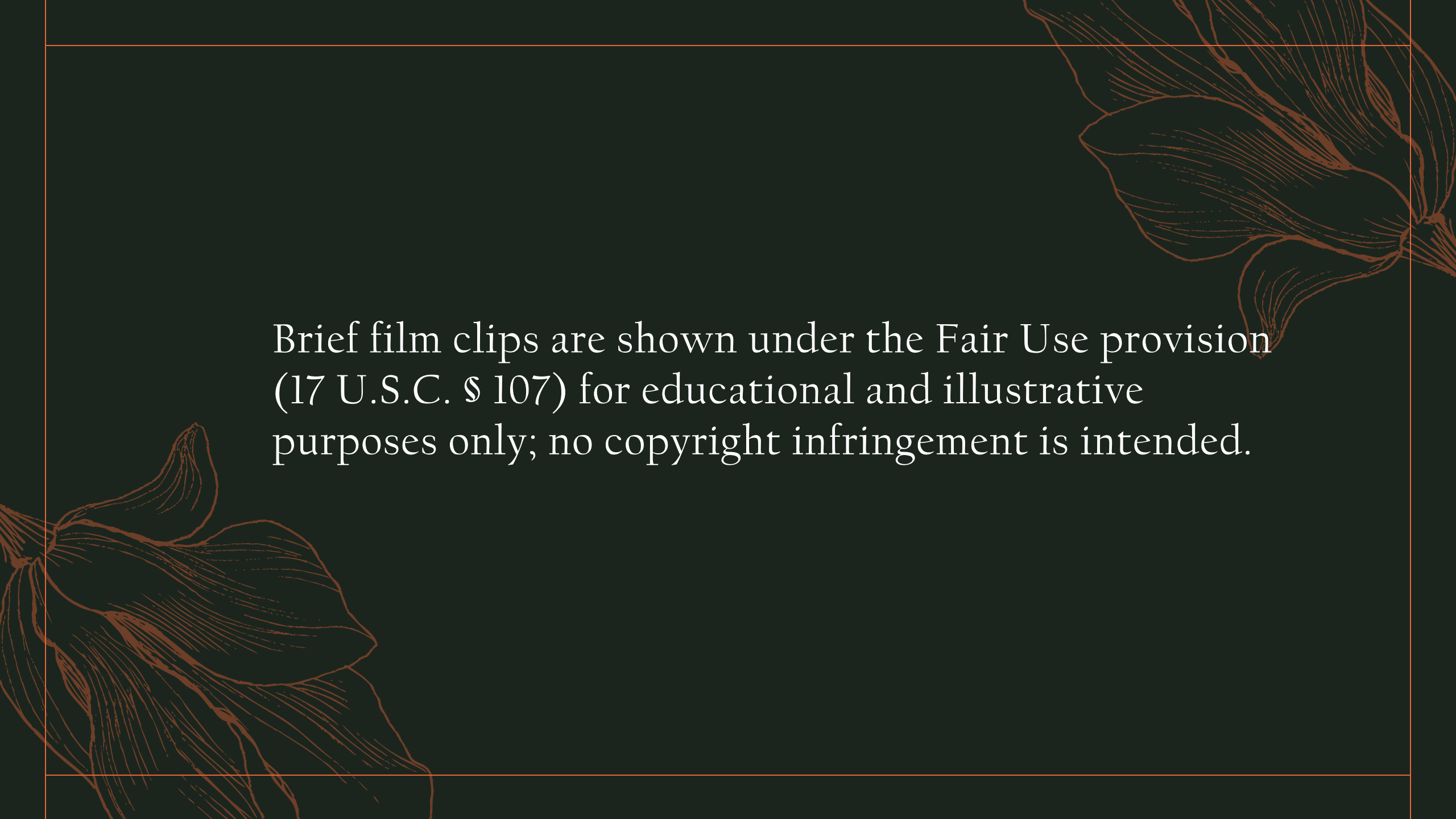
- Carmella visits a therapist
- She tells the therapist that her husband is in the mafia and that he commits crimes.
- The therapist is extremely difficult to understand, but he is very directive with her.
- He tells her to.... “Take her kids, what’s left of them, and go.”

Set the Scene



The Sopranos

- Tony is having a dream that he is in a session with Dr. Melfi.
- He explains that his nephew Christopher died and that he is relieved, because he was always afraid Christopher would use drugs, get high, and go to the FBI about Tony's crimes.
- Tony tells Dr. Melfi that he is happy Christopher is dead and that he has killed other friends and family members.



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