

Down is Up – Supporting notes

Target audiences

Depending on the context provided, the film is suitable for:

1. People suffering from the effects of depression
2. Carers and family and friends of those who suffer from depression
3. General awareness and insight into this very misunderstood condition.

Introduction

Down is Up is a short fable story addressing depression. It is designed to be used by teachers, counselors and trainers in conjunction with an audience that may know little about the illness.

Depression is a debilitating condition that affects every part of a person's life. Today, it is globally the leading case of mental illness, estimated to affect one in five individuals at some stage in their lifetimes. Nevertheless, for sufferers, their community and the general society, the severity of depression is still very misunderstood and often neglected.

How a person develops depression can range from anything from major lifestyle changes to unchecked stress over many years. Regardless of the causes, early intervention and awareness of depression's symptoms are the greatest weapons when fighting this serious condition. Today, there are a variety of aid resources available, as well as a range of support systems and treatments for both sufferers and carers alike.

Philosophy of *Down is Up*

The power of choice

Depression is often seen as something you 'get,' like a common cold that can be cured by taking the appropriate drugs. This, in most cases, is far from the truth. The realistic uphill battle with depression involves much courage and effort, and above all, the determination to succeed. *Down is Up* highlights the power that *individual* choices play in breaking out of depression, choices that empower sufferers to regain control of their lives.

Film is a powerful platform for understanding depression because it moves the spotlight off viewers (allowing personal biases to be broken down), while allowing the viewer to still emotionally respond to the characters in the film. *Down is Up* gives viewers an opportunity to relate to all the character's struggles, but most importantly their respective roles in the journey of recovery.

Please note!

Due to the layers of messages and use of symbols (list provided in this manual), the film is designed to be viewed more than once.

It is most beneficial for viewers to talk about the film after an initial viewing, and with the guidance of a professional, recognize the same struggles and strengths within themselves and those dear to them.

DVD chapters in *Down is Up*

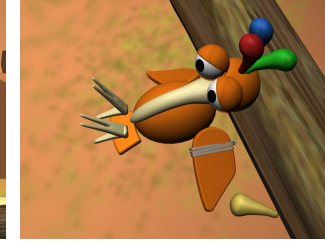
Chapter	Corresponding scene
Chapter 1	Beginning
Chapter 2	Blue falls into pit
Chapter 3	First rain of mushrooms
Chapter 4	Dragonfly tries to block Orange
Chapter 5	Dragonfly waits on mushroom
Chapter 6	Orange asks for help
Chapter 7	The ascent
Chapter 8	Crossing the log bridge
Chapter 9	The leap back in
Chapter 10	Underground at last
Chapter 11	Reunion
Chapter 12	Finale and credits

DOWN IS UP - GUIDE TO KEY THEMES

Key theme in reference to depression (in order of appearance in film)	Corresponding scene in film
1. Denial of circumstances	Orange Bird convincing himself he can still fly out of the gorge with a broken wing
2. Isolation	Orange distances himself from Blue.
3. Helplessness	Struggling to make any progress at getting out of gorge
4. (Carer) Persistence and understanding	Dragonfly doesn't take Orange's rejection of his help personally. He waits on a mushroom (see symbols), leaving the door open per se.
5. Seeking assistance	Only when pride (plumes) has fallen does Orange understand he must bring himself to seek assistance from Dragonfly.
6. (Carer) Support in companionship	Dragonfly unconditionally helping Orange climb out of gorge <i>regardless</i> of which path he insists on taking.
7. Facing challenges with companion	Crossing the log bridge, understandably haunted by his first bad experience with log bridges, Orange cannot do it alone. Dragonfly realizes this and 'lowers himself' down to walk with his friend to help him.
8. Making tough decisions alone	The cliffhanger decision. Orange must choose between escaping the gorge without his friends, or going back into the gorge to find them. When no-one can help us make a choice, we can find ourselves either totally helpless <i>or</i> empowered to take control.
9. Taking the risk	The leap back into the gorge to find his friends. To take apparent risks, to let go of fear, allows one to grow. One must find motivation to take risks. Orange's realization of how much he needs and appreciates his friends allows him to 'let go' of his personal fears, and risk flying with a broken wing.
10. Discovering alternative paths once obscured by his personal fears	The underground cavern which houses the stairs: the only true way out of the gorge of depression.
11. (Carer) Detachment	Orange must carry on without close help of Dragonfly and not depend on any one support.
12. Victory over depression	To not only escape the gorge, but to regain the freedom of flying again.



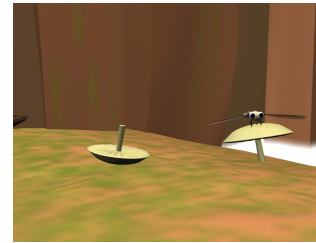
1. Denial



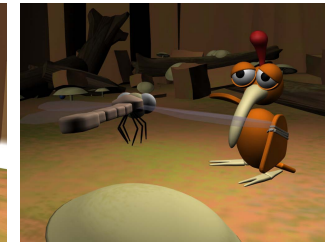
2. Isolation



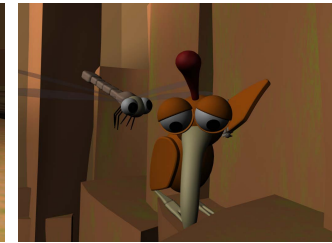
3. Helplessness



4. Understanding



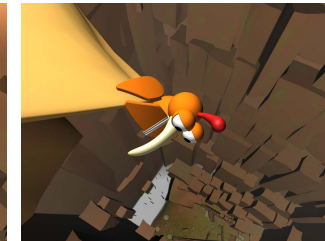
5. Seeking assistance



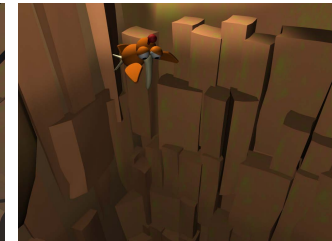
6. Support in companionship



7. Challenge



8. Decision



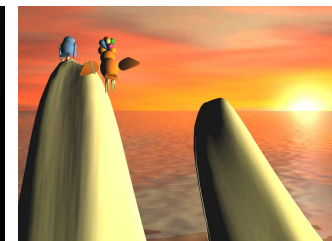
9. Taking the risk



10. Alternative paths



11. Detachment

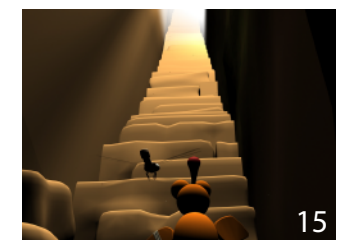
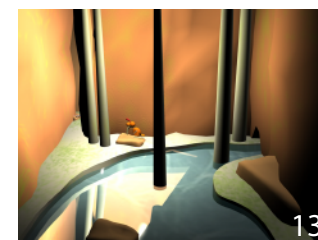
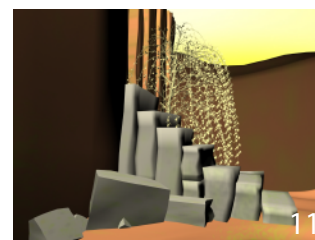


12. Victory

DOWN IS UP - SYMBOLS GUIDE

Symbolism (in rough order of appearance)	Significance in reference to depression
1. The gorge setting	The seemingly inescapable pit of depression.
2. Dragonfly	The patient carer, the loyal friend, and the unsung hero. Seen as a 'bug,' a nuisance at first, shows that even the smallest can be heroes.
3. Blue bird	A person who suffers from life experience, but has ability to accept the reality of the circumstances, and has desire to move on. He begins the story already building his way out of the gorge. Blue is also a loyal friend, who does what he can to help Orange find his way out, even though his presence is unnoticed for most of the film.
4. Orange bird	A person who suffers from life experience, but is unable to see all the possibilities and realities of his circumstances. Orange acts according to his logical albeit 'constructed' reality that the only way out of the gorge is up. Fear (the fog) is his enemy.
5. Broken wing	A pain sustained because of a life experience
6. Rainbow plumage	Pride often disables one from seeking help and recognizing the need for it. Only when Orange is humbled by his many failed attempts to climb out, and many plumes have fallen, does he seek help.
7. Mushrooms	Help gone unrecognized / help that was always there / awareness of help. Blue not only used mushrooms to point the way out for Orange, but to cushion Orange's eventual descent into the underground cavern.
8. Building the rock pile	Progressing little by little – there are no shortcuts. All great journeys begin with a single step.
9. Fog Pit	Orange's uncertainty and fear. Obscures the only way out through the underground cavern (see below).
10. Log bridges	Our experiences, and how one experience has a significant effect on another.

11. Small white steps	It is tempting to think there is a quick and easy way out of depression. These small white steps are eventually shown to be broken and leading to nowhere. The only way out of the gorge is found later, once Orange realizes that it is not his broken wing that causes him to be trapped, but his inability to see the underground steps.
12. Shattering of log bridge	The paths of true growth (e.g. bravely overcoming a fear) need not be crossed again.
13. The underground cavern	The alternative reality, obscured by Orange's fear (fog) and the insecurity of having to let go of his own constructed truth (that up is the only way out).
14. Water / Sea	Rebirth / new start / new life.
15. The bright underground steps	The way out of depression is always accessible, but is often obscured by our limited vision of circumstances, doubts about our ability to confront our fears and inability to find motivation to take risks (Orange had to confront these)
16. Flying with bandages	In a sense, <i>everyone</i> suffers from broken wings at some stage in their life. It is not the broken wing that gives Orange his 'depression,' rather, it is his inability to get out of the gorge that more accurately describes the condition. All our life experiences affect us in one way or another, and will always remain a part of us.



Suggested discussion questions to go with *Down is Up*

Possible questions before viewing

1. Why might a film about depression be titled *Down is Up*?
2. What is your current understanding of depression?
3. What do you think someone with depression should do?
4. What do you think it is like to be a friend to someone with depression?

Possible questions after viewing

Part 1: What do I think?

1. Why do you think the film is titled *Down is Up*?
2. How is depression symbolized in the film? Please discuss
3. What qualities enable Blue to find his way out of the gorge?
4. What role does the *Dragonfly* have to play in the story?
 - a. Do you think *Dragonfly's* role was important? Why? Why not?
 - b. Are there '*Dragonflies*' in your world?
 - c. What gets in the way of people using their support?
 - d. How might people overcome these obstacles?
 - e. What is the most difficult part about helping someone with depression?
5. What role does *Blue* have to play in the story?
6. What do you think the mushrooms represent?
 - a. What might have prevented *Orange* understanding the mushrooms earlier?
 - b. What might have helped *Orange* see the possibilities the mushrooms represent?
7. Why didn't *Dragonfly* stay with *Orange* once they were both out of the gorge?
8. What do you feel the fog represents?
9. What did *Dragonfly* do when *Orange* continued to reject his help? What is the significance of this?
10. What would have happened to *Orange* if he hadn't dived back for his friends?
11. In the final scene, why might the flying birds still have bandaged wings? Why is the symbolism of this so important to recognize?

Part 2: What do they feel?

1. Describe *Orange's* attitude in the beginning of the story. Why do you think this is? What are the consequences / ramifications of this attitude for *Orange*?
2. What might *Dragonfly* have felt when
 - a. *Orange* doesn't recognize that he's trying to help
 - b. *Orange* asks him for help?
3. What might *Orange* be feeling when he eventually asks *Dragonfly* for help?
4. What might *Orange* have felt when *Blue* fell into the pit?
5. What might *Orange* be feeling while crossing the log bridge with *Dragonfly*?

Part 3: What do I feel?

1. What feelings / emotions did you experience during the animation? These might include: frustration, impatience, sadness, hopelessness, confusion, relief, anger
2. Which qualities of *Dragonfly* do I respect?
3. Which qualities of *Blue* do I respect?
4. Which qualities of *Orange* do I respect?
5. Am I the type of person who would seek help when I am feeling down?
6. How would I normally respond to a friend who is feeling down?
7. How would you feel if your genuine offers to help are rejected?

Part 4: What did I learn?

1. Do you have more of an understanding about depression?
2. How might one go about recovering from depression?
3. What did you learn about being a carer of someone with depression?
4. What, in your opinion, is the most significant message in this animation?