



## What Dreams May Come

Starring Robin Williams and Cuba Gooding Jr. 1998

### Characters

Chris – Robin Williams	Albert – Cuba Gooding Jr.
Annie – Wife	Ian - Son
Marie – Daughter	

This movie is a romantic drama that offers an opportunity to look at defense mechanisms in a creative and entertaining way. Defense mechanisms are born out of not wanting to feel or acknowledge reality because it seems too painful and overwhelming. We believe that defense mechanisms keep us safe. This movie offers an opportunity to see how the characters are constantly creating in their minds based on individual desires/"dreams"

As you watch the movie you will be asked to put a checkmark (✓) in the blank line \_\_\_\_\_ next to the quotes as you hear them. There are also notes that I have added (☐) for emphasis that will help you to complete this worksheet as you watch the movie or after the movie is over. When you see this symbol: ☒ you are required to fill in the answer based on the cause and effect, defense mechanism, Self-defeating Attitude and Co-dependency Personality Traits handouts.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Dreams don't deal in time Doc, time doesn't count" – Chris

\_\_\_\_\_ "I'm the one you don't want to see" -Albert

\_\_\_\_\_ "It ends when you want it to." - Albert

\_\_\_\_\_ "We're all pretty insecure at first so we see ourselves somewhere safe, comforting." - Albert

\_\_\_\_\_ "No windows. What aren't you ready to see I wonder?" - Albert

\_\_\_\_\_ "We are seeing what we choose to see"-Albert

☐ Cuba opens the wall and creates a window and suddenly we see what couldn't be seen before but it was always there.

\_\_\_\_\_ "They say we live in our minds anyway." Annie

☐ When something is very important/desired we will take extreme, sometimes irrational risks to get it.

\_\_\_\_\_ "When you do (want to see your children), you will" – Albert

☐ (The real children vs. the images he made up or the people they became to please him....this will make more sense as the movie progresses)

This handout is used in a class titled Introduction to Addictive Behaviors taught by Sheri Zampelli 2009 at Long Beach City College to help students understand and discuss defense mechanisms, self-defeating attitudes and co-dependency. If you would like to use this exercise in your class visit <http://icreatehabits.com/blog/handouts/> for additional copies. Supporting documents listing defense mechanisms, self-defeating attitudes and co-dependent characteristics are also available at the same web address listed above. Please leave this information intact when making copies.



\_\_\_\_ “Up until now you’ve been painting your own world, this is mine.” – “Leona”

\_\_\_\_ “If I would have walked out that night for our Double D you would have never been in that tunnel doing me a favor.” –Annie

\_\_\_\_ “It was the truckers fault, but my wife believes that if she had been driving the kids, the protective instincts would have....” - Chris

The above two quotes are examples of beliefs that torment Annie for years.

Daughter becomes what she thinks will get her dad’s love and attention, being who she was did not get her the love/attention she craved. What “cause” from the cause/effect diagram is this related to? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Suicides go ‘somewhere else’. - Albert

\_\_\_\_ “What you call hell is for those who don’t know that they’re dead. They can’t realize what they’ve done, what’s happened to them. Too self-absorbed in life that they’ve built this world around .....” - Albert

\_\_\_\_ “Nothing will make her recognize you. Nothing will break her denial, it’s stronger than her love. In fact, reinforced by her love.” – The “Shrink”

\_\_\_\_ “He’s into you so deep he thinks he’s letting himself down. You say he can do something and he can’t and then he thinks he’s shit. How sick is that?” – Annie. What cause is in place here? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ “Everyday I see how I’m not as good as you or anyone else.” Ian  
What possible Self-Defeating Attitude, Co-Dependency Personality Trait and/or Defense Mechanism does Ian have that could create problems in adulthood if it’s not reversed? -

What subtle defense mechanism prevents Chris (Robin Williams) from seeing his kids as they are/were? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ “There’s a man Ian never got to know. The man he was growing up to be... I see him as a father, that’s where he really shines. When he looks in his kids eyes, that kid knows that his dad really sees him, sees who he is and that child knows that he’s an amazing person, he’s quite a guy the kind you’d like to meet, I wish I had.” Chris

He finally sees his son as he is by seeing him in a different “package”. He could not see him for who he was when he was in the “son” body.



✍ \_\_\_\_\_ “Did you ever stop to think why I chose to be Albert? He was the only guy you ever listened to. Listen to me now...”

Ian chose a form that would make it so his father would finally listen to him.

✍  Notice people carrying baggage and unable to speak, they are in hell. How does this apply to the hell of addiction/co-dependency?

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\_\_\_\_\_ “I think that we’re too different to stay together...for one thing, why aren’t you in here? Why didn’t you go crazy?” – Annie

\_\_\_\_\_ “I thought I was supposed to be strong” – Chris

\_\_\_\_\_ “Sometimes when you win you lose” - Annie

People in “hell” are stuck in pain, can’t see, complaining, repeat the same thoughts over and over.

Chris falls into Annie’s “dream/illusion”, a broken dream where the house is falling apart.

\_\_\_\_\_ “You know why we chose to look so different? The old baggage, the old roles of authority, who’s the teacher, who’s the father, gets in the way of who you really are to each other.” – The “Shrink”

\_\_\_\_\_ “Once her reality becomes yours, there’s really no way back” – The “Shrink”

In Annie’s hell/“dream” house she’s living in terror. Everything is falling apart. She cannot see things that are right in front of her. She is “unconscious”. She is focused on all that is missing from her life but doesn’t mention her kids or husband at first, only the electricity, water pressure, no clean clothes, missing paintings, etc. Right after mentioning her painting “she has to work on” she sees a tarantula that’s not there and gets terrified again. This takes the focus off the painting that reminds her of her husband and kids. Once Chris starts to put a crack in her wall of defenses by talking about him and the kids, she begins to get defensive.

\_\_\_\_\_ “Don’t you have to leave?”

\_\_\_\_\_ “I thought you said you were gonna leave”

She also looks away and seems disengaged.



✎ What possible ‘causes’ are operating here? If you had to label this as a defense mechanism or Self-Defeating Attitude what would you choose and why?

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✎ \_\_\_\_\_ “Being strong, not giving up, it was just his place to hide. He pushed away the pain so hard, he disconnected himself from the person he loved the most.” – Chris. What "cause" is at play here? \_\_\_\_\_

Annie resists the possibility of love returning, she chooses safety.

Sometimes other people drag us into their hell with them, sometimes they help us see the light. It is somewhat a matter of choice what we see if we are willing to let down the defenses. Generally speaking the defenses will stay in place until it seems safe to let them go.

Defense mechanisms, Self-Defeating Attitudes and Co-Dependency Personality Traits are formed to protect the mind of the person who created them. However, many times they actually end up harming the person in the long run.

Chris sees his children as he wants them to be. This becomes literal in the movie but is a dynamic that exists in “real life” everyday.

Guilt literally kills Annie. She holds the thought’s that it is her fault her children and husband died and it creates an inner hell so intense it seems that the only way out is suicide. Once she is forgiven/joined with she is able to see her way out of hell.

✎ Ian (son) takes on the job of “saving lost souls” in heaven. He also takes on the body of Albert and trudges through hell to help him find his wife. How might this apply to the defense mechanisms of sublimation, identification, introjection and/or compensation? (Continue on the back if you need more space)

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