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Touchy Feely

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Touchy Feely

Abstract
This is a film review of *Touchy Feely* (2013) directed by Lynn Shelton.

Keywords
Therapy

Author Notes
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Touchy Feely

Directed by Lynn Shelton

U.S. Dramatic

Touchy Feely is the story of Abby and her brother, Paul. She is a massage therapist who seems to be a free spirit. Paul is a dentist who is about as uptight as a person can be. He is controlling, dependent, and compulsive. As long as things remain the same, he can "get through" life until he dies. But neither is who he or she seems to be. It is Abby's boyfriend, Jesse, and Paul's daughter, Jenny, who set in motion the events that will change the lives of Abby and Paul, and the lives of Jesse and Jenny as well. We discover later in the film that Jenny has a serious crush on Jesse, who is her aunt's boyfriend.

When Jesse invites Abby to move in with him, she reluctantly agrees. But, in the end she is not able to do so, and from that point on she is unable to give any client a massage--she also is unable to touch or be touched by Jesse. You might think that this is a simple fear of commitment, but in fact it has more to do with unfinished business. Since Abby is unable to move in with Jesse, she moves in with her brother instead. Paul's dental practice is failing, but he seems unable to do anything about it. Jenny gets Paul to give her friend, Henry, a free cleaning. After the cleaning, Henry is cured of his TMJ and

is able to sing again and pursue his musical career. Word gets out that Paul has the healing touch and his practice picks up, as people are looking to cure their TMJ.

When a client realizes that he has not been cured—Paul never claims to have the ability to cure anyone--he angrily confronts Paul and Paul's practice begins to fail again. Both Abby and Paul are now in big trouble—neither one is able to earn a living. At this point, each takes a tablet of Ecstacy given to Abby by her hippy mentor to help her lighten up. On Ecstacy, Abby encounters an old boyfriend, her first love. And in that encounter she is able to reach out and touch his hand. Oddly, this is her healing touch, not the massage therapy she has been practicing. The touch is one of forgiveness and letting go of the past. After this, Abby is able to move in with Jesse and reenter their relationship. On Ecstacy, Paul visits Abby's hippy mentor and finds that he does not have to live life as a routine until the end. When Paul comes back to see the mentor, she kisses him--touching lips. The kiss tells Paul that he can become a different person and live a life connected to others. Paul is also able to let go of Jenny, upon whom he has become dependent, to Jenny's detriment. She can now leave home and go off to college to pursue the education she has sacrificed for her father.

But Jenny's life is also changed. She takes Jesse to hear Henry play, while her father is away and Jesse cannot find Abby. After the concert Jesse invites Jenny in and as they sit on the couch, Jenny asks Jesse if he has ever wanted to kiss someone so badly that his while body hurt. When Jesse is unwilling to kiss her, she asks him to hold her, which he does. Being held by Jesse is the touch that Jenny needs to let go of her crush and take up with Henry, who is obviously quite fond of her.

So, it is a movie about the healing power of touch, but not the touch we begin with—not the official touch. Rather, the touch that heals is the touch of love.

— William Blizek