

## At Theaters

# Disney PIXAR INSIDE OUT

Rated PG. Running time: 1 hour 34 min. Our content ratings (1-10); Violence 2; Language 1; Sex/Nudity 1

*Reader, beware, there be spoilers in the following.*

*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*

*Romans 7:15-20*

The 15<sup>th</sup> Pixar film lives up to its hype, this being an incredibly imaginative tale, perhaps as good as *Toy Story* or *WALL-E*. People of faith, familiar with the apostle Paul's look at the workings inside his soul, might compare his theological exploration with the secular view provided by the Pixar crew—directors Pete Docter and Ronaldo Del Carmen and co-writers Meg LeFauve and Josh Cooley. They have created a visual metaphor in which five emotions inside an 11 year-old girl's mind try to guide her through a difficult period when her family moves from their blissful Minnesota home to bustling San Francisco.

Presumably because Riley had such an idyllic time in her hometown (her birth is depicted as a very happy event), Joy (Amy Poehler) is the dominant of the five emotions depicted. She serves as the narrator, asking us, "Do you ever look at someone and wonder what is going on inside their head?" Through her explanations we see two sides to Riley—her outside where the family's story takes place, and what is called Headquarters inside of her mind. A blue-haired, cheery-faced sprite with skin so luminous that she seems to shimmer at times, Joy has been working with the blue Sadness (Phyllis Smith), violet Fear (Bill Hader), fiery red Anger (Lewis Black), and green Disgust (Mindy Kaling) to arrange and store memories, come up with ideas while Riley has grown from infancy to childhood, and now to pre-adolescence.

Memories of her experiences are stored in glass marble-like containers that are shunted through tubes to distant memory banks. Five "core memories" define who she is, visualized by floating islands that look like amusement parks—Islands of Honesty, Family, Hockey, Goofiness, and Hockey (she is from Minnesota!). As we soon see, these are

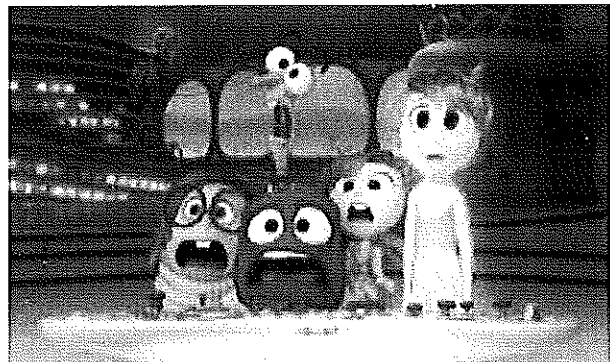


*Riley is not happy about her Mom & Dad's decision to leave Minnesota for San Francisco.*  
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all threatened as soon as she and her parents arrive at their new home well ahead of the moving van, so they must make do without furniture and such. But it's hard to make do when the local pizzeria offers broccoli pizza! (Guess which emotion reacts to this!)

Their house is old and dingy in a not very pleasant section of the city, and the thought of sleeping on the dirty floor especially arouses Disgust inside Riley. Fear exerts himself at school when one of Riley's fears is realized—the teacher calls on her to say something about herself. She is not able to make friends, and her mother's attempt to help her get over her longing for Minnesota by taking her to an arena to try out for the local girls' hockey team ends with Anger bursting forth. Riley throws down her stick and stalks out of the arena.

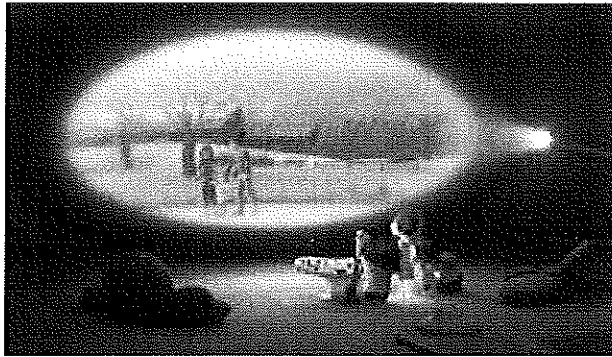
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*The outside happenings can really stir the emotions.*  
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Continued

# PIXAR INSIDE OUT



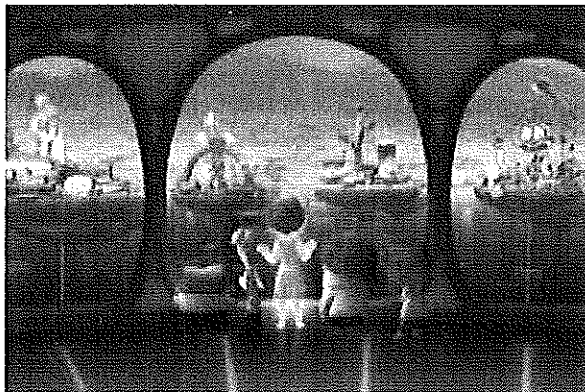
A good dream of happy days in Minnesota.  
© 2015 Pixar/Disney Studios

Her parents are unable to understand why their daughter has changed so much. Matters grow so bad that Riley contemplates running away back to Minnesota.

Inside Headquarters a crisis arises when Joy and Sadness are sucked up along with a memory sphere and transported to the memory banks, far, far away. They can see the tower where Headquarters is located, but the pair soon get lost in the maze of the memory banks.

Thus the last half of the film becomes a quest journey—and by now we realize that the story's central “character” is not Riley, but Joy, with Sadness in an important supporting role. At first Sadness feels useless because every memory she touches turns blue. At one point Joy orders her to stand in a small circle and not move out of it, thus not interfering with the rest of the crew's efforts to help Riley. With Joy and Sadness gone, the other three emotions are unable to cope with what is happening outside to Riley.

The quest story across the chasm from Headquarters is funny at times and, in one encounter, poignant. The latter con-



Riley's various “Islands of Traits” are in danger of crumbling.  
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cerns Riley's childhood make-believe friend named Bing-Bong (Richard Kind). Cast aside long ago, he is a talking elephant with a pink body and orange and red legs. He wears a jacket several sizes too small. Bing-Bong proves to be very helpful to Joy and Sadness when they fall into the abyss of the unconsciousness. Bing-Bong has a little red wagon powered by rockets in which they—well, see for yourself, if there isn't a lump in your throat. Art lovers will enjoy the humorous portion in which our questers enter the Abstract Thinking Department and take on the form of Picasso cubist paintings. (This is one of ever so many incidents aimed at adults, but which children also will enjoy at their level. I have to mention one more—the sequence in which dreams are being produced. It is a Hollywoodish director and a camera crew that film the dreams!)

Back at Headquarters the remaining team members try to help Riley but, as stated earlier, prove ineffective. On the outside Riley, determined to run away, steals money from Mom's purse so she can pay for a bus ticket. Inside, Joy and Sadness watch as the Islands of Family and Honesty begin to crumble—Goofiness, nurtured by her playful parents, has long since collapsed. While Riley walks to the bus station and takes her seat on the bus, Joy and Sadness scramble to reach Headquarters. There is an intermittent series of their chasing a “Train of Thought” which can transport them back to HQ if only—

I don't know how neurologically sound the imaginative depiction of the five chosen emotions is, but as a work of animated art *Inside Out* is superb. (In interviews the filmmakers report that they read and talked with a number of scientists.) So much happens that adults as well as children will want to watch their film again.

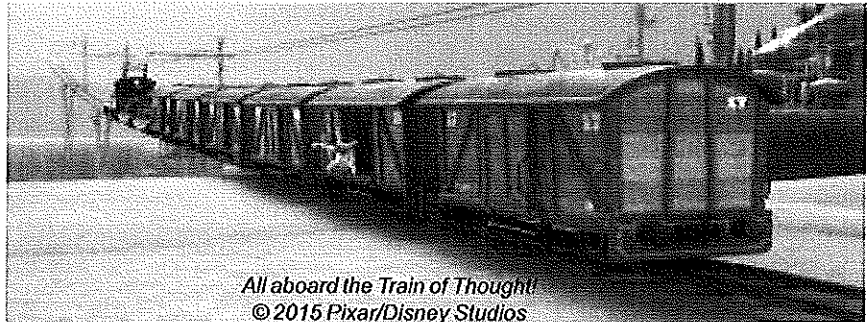
Plenty of action and suspense, but also great insights. Children will learn that even what often are regarded as negative emotions—anger and sadness especially—have positive roles to play. Even the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians (4:26), “Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...” Joy discovers that she cannot help Riley by quarantining Sadness. She too has a positive role to play. Sadness makes it possible for a person to have empathy for others, something that Riley needs badly as she runs away. She has been concerned only for her own feelings and needs, not even thinking about her father and mother's feelings that her running away would trigger. When she does realize (a moment similar to the prodigal son who “came to himself”) what she is doing, it is sadness that helps motivate her to...well, see the film.

The film teaches that the five emotions really are a team, one that requires each doing her/his part if Riley is to become a well-rounded adolescent. (There is a funny reference

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to adolescence at the end of the film!) I could well imagine the apostle Paul writing something similar as his passage in 1 Corinthians 12 about the body and its members.

"Indeed although each of us has one mind, there are different emotions. If the mind were just Anger, what havoc might Riley wreak? If the mind were just Fear, how would she ever do anything new? Were the mind just Joy, might she not settle for just the frivolous? Were the mind just Disgust, would she not dismiss everyone and everything that was different? And were she just Sadness, might she give up hope and retreat into memories of the past?"



All aboard the Train of Thought!  
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Those working with children should go to the Disney website <http://movies.disney.com/inside-out/> where there are games and questions for discussion. What a great gift this film is to adults for exploring with children their emotions and their affects on our lives!

## For Reflection/Discussion

*Note that these questions are obviously for adults, but it is hoped that from them you might find something that could be used with children, from Q. 2 to the general Q. 11.*

1. How is the film's title a good description of the locale of the story? Were you surprised that the "character" we probably see the most is Joy and not just Riley? And yet, because Joy and the team live inside Riley, it is still about her, right?
2. What is your favorite scene—and why?
3. Describe the five emotions shown in the film: Anger; Disgust; Fear; Joy; Sadness. How well do you think the artists drew them (including their colors)?
4. If you could have only one, which would it be, and why? If you could get rid of one, which would it be, and why?
5. Can you think of other emotions that were left out because including them might make the movie too complicated? What about Love? (Though N.T. love is not an emotion but a matter of choice!)
6. What do you think of the filmmakers' idea that the emotions work as a team? (What is a team, and what does it mean concerning its members?) Why do you think each is important? For example, do you believe, as some do, that we should never be angry? (To see what the apostle wrote, go to Ephesians 4:26.) Are there some things about which we should be angry—as were the Hebrew prophets concerning the oppression of the poor? How might Disgust add to Anger to make a person more effective in combatting evil? What might the other 3 emotions do so that Anger does not go too far?
7. Why do you think that Joy is shown as "in charge"? What does this show about Riley's life in Minnesota? If she had been an abused child, what emotion might have been the head of the team? In the case of a terrorist or the young man who killed the nine church members in Charleston, which emotion do you think was dominant?
8. What do you think of the concept of Riley's traits as being "islands" of Honesty, Family, and Goofiness? How do the various memories stored away contribute to the building of these islands?
9. During the attempt to rejoin the other emotions Joy and Sadness encounter Riley's childhood pretend-friend Bing-Bong. How might each of the Scripture passages connect with this incident --1 Corinthians 13:11 and Matthew 18:1-4?
10. How does Sadness help Joy and the other emotions get Riley to stop from running away? We often think of sadness as negative, but how is it important in our development? What has made you sad? When we are sad about something isn't it because we valued (or loved) what we are sad about? Wouldn't it be terrible if, after losing something, we had no feelings about the loss? And, equally important, unless we knew sadness, would we be able to comfort others also suffering a loss? Check out the Beattitude in Matthew 5:4.
11. What has this film taught you? How do you think Riley will become a better person by going through what she (and her Emotions) has experienced?
12. How is the basis or world view of the filmmakers similar to that of the Romanticists who arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? What might the Greek philosophers and their descendents the Rationalists add to the scene in Headquarters? How might a person of faith see God, as well as "conscience," fitting into the story?