

**Movie:** Godzilla (1954; 2014)

### **Synopsis**

Shortly after the original sighting of the infamous monster Godzilla in 1954, Project Monarch, a multinational organization set to combat Godzilla was initiated. Surprisingly, after initially terrorizing the world's citizens on multiple occasions, Godzilla sightings have finally become a rarity. This story begins in 1999 and follows the protagonist Ford Brody after a tragic nuclear power plant meltdown that killed his mother and devastated his father. The tragedy was determined to be a result of an earthquake. Fast-forward 15 years and Ford is now a US Navy explosive ordinance disposal specialist who has just returned from a tour in Afghanistan. He travels back to Japan to visit his dad after he was arrested for trespassing in the quarantine zone of the destroyed nuclear reactor. After being convinced to go back into the quarantine zone, Ford and his father come across Project Monarch and discover that the power plant disaster was not due to an earthquake, but was instead the result of a massive creature that has been feeding on the nuclear radiation from the plant. The creature, designed MUTO (Massive Unidentified Terrestrial Organism) suddenly awakens and begins a destructive migration to San Francisco where it will mate with a second MUTO that has been studied by the US army for decades. While all of humanity's efforts to destroy these destructive creatures have failed, they turn to their once formidable enemy, Godzilla for help. Will Godzilla help defeat the pair of MUTOs, or will they team up, virtually ensuring Earth's destruction.

### **How it relates to the field of psychiatry**

While this adaptation of Godzilla focuses on the destruction of the MUTOs and actually shines Godzilla in a protagonistic light, for comparison sake, we will focus on Godzilla's behavior in this and prior *Kaijū* films. Godzilla's pattern of behavior provides a helpful teaching tool for Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorder chapter of the *DSM-5*. The main disorders in this section include Antisocial-Personality Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder, and Intermittent Explosive Disorder.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is associated with children who often throw "temper tantrums" towards adults or authority figures (parents, teachers, police). However, a distinguishing factor of ODD is that these children are usually not aggressive towards others, nor do they destroy property (e.g. buildings in Tokyo). Accordingly, ODD can be ruled-out.

Next in the differential diagnoses are Conduct Disorder (CD) and Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD). Given the ambiguity of the giant monster's age, both must be considered. ASPD cannot be diagnosed in an individual unless they are 18 years of age with evidence of CD prior to the age 15. These disorders are associated with the repetitive violation of laws and the basic rights of others. CD and ASPD are often present

in the classic picture of a “psycho/sociopath.” Afflicted individuals often cause destruction to upset, harm, or kill others. When not “causing death and destruction,” they may be seen as amicable. This is testament to pattern of deceitfulness and manipulation.

While CD/ASPD may be a provisional diagnosis, these disorders may also be ruled-out. Important aspects of ASPD include a lack of remorse, disregard for and violation of others’ rights. While Godzilla does cause significant death and destruction, she does not hunt down people to hurt them. Her “outbursts” are an escalation of the response initiated by others. This is evident in the Golden Gate Bridge scene (2014). Godzilla travels to San Francisco to hunt down the MUTOs. While passing under the bridge, she is encircled by the military, which then opens fire on her, prompting an outburst of significant destruction. An important aspect of this scene is that she was passing under the bridge as to not cause any problems. A destructive outburst ensues only after being fired upon with rockets and heavy artillery. The discussion as to whether Godzilla’s reaction is grossly out of proportion to the precipitating psychosocial stressors allows for the formulation of Intermittent Explosive Disorder.

Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED) is a mental disorder associated with severe, disproportional reactions to provocation, either real or perceived. As stated before, an important distinguishing factor from ASPD/CD is that people with IED are not deceitful, do not violate the rights of others (e.g. torture, harm for pleasure), and often feel remorseful after the episode. Finally, one can appreciate that patients may demonstrate multiple traits across a continuum, so Godzilla’s “primary trait” of spitting fire may also (metaphorically) prompt a discussion of pyromania.

Godzilla’s pattern of destruction is severe. However, it is always provoked (albeit severely disproportional) and she does not intentionally try to kill/harm citizens. She does not hunt them down and injure them individually or seem to enjoy harming them. Human death always seems to be collateral damage. Therefore, the exercise of diagnosing Godzilla with IED serves as a beneficial teaching tool for the better understanding of the Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders in the DSM-5.

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