

## **Movie: Midsommar (2019)**

### **Synopsis:**

*Midsommar* is a folk horror film about a group of friends who travel to Sweden to join a Swedish commune, the Hårga for a 9-day festival that happens every 90 years. The main character, Dani, receives news about a traumatic event where her sister, who suffers from bipolar disorder, kills her parents and herself by filling their home with carbon monoxide. Over the 9 days Dani starts noticing a bizarre array of events and strange customs that this festival consists of. At the end of the 9 days her friends seem to go missing and the only two left from her friend group are her and her boyfriend. At the end, Dani is coerced into taking psychedelic drugs and participates in a maypole dancing competition, where she wins and is crowned May Queen. Once Dani is crowned May Queen the true meaning behind the festival is revealed and the movie ends with Dani seeing what has become of her friend group.

### **How it relates to Psychiatry:**

Throughout the movie we see Dani struggle with her anxiety disorder that is brought on by her personal life stressors and the events seen in the festival. Dani constantly sees her sister, Terri, in the crowd of the Hårga, which then follows an episode of worry and excessive anxiety. Terri symbolizes the trigger for Dani's anxiety and is a warning for the panic attacks and somatic symptoms of having generalized anxiety disorder. Dani uses a mixture of sleeping pills, psychedelics, constant dependency on her boyfriend, and benzodiazepines to keep her anxiety at bay.

The deeper meaning behind the Hårga and *Midsommar* is to describe the state of anxiety. The constant battle of anxiety can consume your life, and, in this case, it has done that for Dani. The use of drugs, the trauma she is dealing with from her sister, and lastly the Hårga causes her to be paralyzed figuratively and literally. This is seen at the end of the film where Dani becomes May Queen and the Hårga use a variety of drugs to paralyze her body while she watches her friends and loved ones being burned in a sacrificial ceremony.

The DSM-V diagnostic Criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder:

- Excessive anxiety and worry (apprehensive expectation), occurring more days than not for at least 6 months, about a number of events or activities (such as work or school performance)
- The anxiety is associated with three (or more) of the following six symptoms (With at least some symptoms having been present for more days than not for the past 6 months).
  - o Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
  - o Being easily fatigued
  - o Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
  - o Irritability
  - o Muscle Tension
  - o Sleep Disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless, unsatisfying sleep)