

Movie: *The Usual Suspects* (1995)

Synopsis

The Usual Suspects (1995) is an award-winning mystery crime thriller told in a series of flashbacks from the perspective of Roger “Verbal” Kint, a physically disabled con-artist, who is one of two survivors of an intense gun battle and explosion. While being interrogated by Special Agent Kujan about the events that lead to the ship’s explosion, Verbal indicates that he and a group of criminals were intentionally dragged into the job of destroying \$91 million worth of cocaine on the ship by Keyser Soze. Soze is a mythical criminal mastermind who was described as “...some kind of butcher...a peerless, psycho, f**ked-up butcher.” After providing a detailed account, Verbal’s bond is posted and he leaves the police station. As Special Agent Kujan is processing the information he obtained from Verbal, [Spoiler Alert] he begins to see the names and places that were mentioned in the story on the walls of the office being used for the interrogation. As Verbal is walking down the street, his physical ailments diminish and it is understood then that Verbal is the allusive Keyser Soze.

How it relates to the field of psychiatry

Keyser Soze is a character that embodies many of the traits seen in antisocial personality disorder (APD), one of the cluster B personality disorders. Soze displays behaviors that are clinically significant and illustrates a pervasive pattern. When Soze is introduced in the film, they tell a story of when his family was held hostage by members of a Hungarian gang. In the scene, Soze kills his own family and all but one of the gang members, leaving him to tell others of Soze’s actions. Soze then goes after the remaining members of the gang by killing their families and friends and destroying anything that was associated with them. Soze’s willingness to murder his own family members and then kill innocent individuals shows his ability to disregard and violate the rights of others, a prime component of the APD diagnosis. This pattern is also evident when one of Soze’s close employees “Kobayashi” informs the criminal group that they are ordered to undertake a job that Soze expects not all of them will survive. If they declined the job, Soze would kill their families and friends in the most gruesome manner.

Soze’s ability to lie and use the alias of Verbal is another example of an APD trait. Throughout the film, the character, Verbal, shows a great deal of empathy that allows people to relate and trust him. Soze uses Verbal as a way to develop relationships with Special Agent Kujan and Dean Keaton, the unnamed leader of the criminal group. Verbal expresses concern for the well-being of Dean’s girlfriend Edie Finneran, he cries over the deaths of his fellow criminal members, and he shows a great amount of fear about the situation he was placed in. Soze’s ability to use empathy to manipulate and fulfill his own needs is an accurate illustration of sociopathy. At the end of the film, Soze shows no remorse for the ones he has deceived and killed. He simply lights a cigarette and escapes from the situation he created.

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