

A FRIEND, THROUGH HIS EXAMPLE, GIVES US A SENSE OF CALLING AND PURPOSE

A Sense of Purpose

A “sense of purpose” is a personal calling that provides meaning and direction in our lives, whether it stems from our faith, a strong sense of personal identity, or a commitment to the goals of a particular cause or organization. It is a deeply emotional and personal concept that serves as a driving force, influencing our lives. It gives us the feeling that our lives and actions matter and are worthwhile. It acts as a powerful motivator, encouraging us to pursue our goals with conviction and dedication.



The Film Our Friend

The 2019 film *Our Friend*, directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite, is an ode to friendship, an ode to coping with pain, and an ode to the human strength that emerges unexpectedly, sometimes surprising even those who possess it.

The film takes on a different meaning when we, as viewers, learn that it is based on real people and events, as recounted by Matt Teague in a 2015 article for *Esquire* magazine. Matt Teague, a contributing writer for the magazine, published an article that he had initially begun writing as a painful farewell to his wife, 36-year-old Nicole, who had died a few months earlier from terminal cancer. Ultimately, however, the article became a story about Dane, their friend, who abandoned his own life in New Orleans to stay with them during the final months of Nicole’s life and for a considerable period after her death, never ceasing to support his friend’s family.

Matt’s final article, which flowed effortlessly from him and eventually won an award,

was titled “The Friend: Love Is Not a Big Enough Word.” It shifted the focus of the story away from Nicole’s misfortune and toward Dane and the immense support that friendship can provide.



Nicole was diagnosed with cancer in 2012, and her doctors gave her only a few months to live. Her abdomen was as though it had been immersed in a “lake of cancer.” That was how they described it to Matt in September of that year.

The countdown had begun for Nicole, and Matt set aside all his professional obligations to give her, together with their two daughters, the most wonderful moments possible before she died. But he could not bear it alone.

Their friend Dane left his own partner and took on odd jobs to support Nicole and Matt Teague. When Nicole’s medication made her angry, caused her to lash out for no apparent reason, and led her to attack Matt verbally, Dane was there to calm things down. When Matt wanted to disappear, Dane would call Nicole’s parents and take Matt on a trip to the countryside, giving him a chance to forget his troubles and get some relief.

Dane had found a mission, a purpose in what had, until then, been a rather empty life.



There are some things in life that cannot be avoided. If cancer sets its sights firmly on you, it will come back again and again. At such times, you need people who can show you—whether you are the patient or the person closest to the patient—that the rest of your life can become “a celebration.”



The Film's Portrayal of Friendship and Purpose

As in the article, in the film, when Matt's wife, Nicole (played by Dakota Johnson), is diagnosed with terminal, incurable cancer, Matt Teague (Casey Affleck), a journalist who had previously been constantly busy with work, is confronted with unprecedented and overwhelming responsibilities. The family of Matt and Nicole, including their two young daughters, loses its balance.

[Clip 1: Telling the Children the Whole Truth.mp4](#)

However, the arrival of their best friend, Dane (Jason Segel), who clearly intends to support the couple, is what gives Dane's life meaning. His mission has a profoundly positive impact on everyone's lives.



Nicole reflects on the things she still wishes to experience before her life ends, and Matt and Dane help her fulfil all her wishes—even the most difficult one: singing in front of an audience, just like her favourite singer (see the second film clip).

Nicole apologizes to Matt for her marital infidelity while he had been away from her for professional reasons. In turn, he acknowledges that he should not have left her alone so often.

Nicole also writes letters to her two daughters, expressing everything she would want to tell them at important moments in their future lives—for example, when they fall in love, get married, or have their first child. After her death, Matt gives the letters to his two girls.

I must admit that this is the part of the film that moves me the most, along with Nicole's final outing, when, in her dying moments, she gazes at the birds in the sky while held in the arms of her husband, Matt.

[Clip 2: The End of a Life.mp4](#)

A Film About Love, Friendship, and Hope

Of course, in *Our Friend*, the plot is not as compelling as the cast itself. Although it is clearly a biographical drama, the trio of Dakota Johnson, Casey Affleck, and Jason Segel create an interesting blend of contrasting elements. Segel, as Dane, occupies the middle ground, bringing a comic personality to the role while also conveying a beautiful sense of sadness whenever the moment calls for it.

Our Friend is an understandably heartbreaking film. The tears come early and often, but

the film is not without hope, as is also evident in its fresh and uplifting musical score. Our Friend manages to be tender without becoming overly sentimental or insincere. There is a modesty in its grander intentions that makes it endearing.

