

The National Film Board of Canada presents  
a series of six half-hour dramatic films that reflect problems and crises faced by  
many families in today's world. Starring outstanding Canadian actors.

# FAMILY CRISIS S E R I E S

- Powerful discussion-starters for programs that deal with the family
- Rich entertainment for general audiences

One Step Away  
with Keanu Reeves

A Gift for Kate  
with Martha Henry

Running Scared  
with Stephen Mendel

A Single Regret  
with Anthony Parr

The Last Right  
with Ed McNamara

Out of a Job  
with Dan Lett



National  
Film Board  
of Canada

Office  
national du film  
du Canada



# FAMILY CRISIS

## S E R I E S

*Starring outstanding Canadian actors, the films in the FAMILY CRISIS series provide gripping entertainment as half-hour dramas, and also serve as powerful discussion-starters for programs that deal with the family. Each dramatic film weaves its narrative around a crisis that is affecting a family, and shows how different family members, and the family as a whole, cope with the situation.*

*Core themes include teenage delinquency; unemployed adult children living with their parents; communication patterns within families; honesty and secrecy between spouses and within the larger family; coping with death and aged parents; the mental illness of a family member; jealousy and suspicion within the family.*

*The series runs the gamut of human emotions, from love, compassion and tenderness to guilt, fear, jealousy and rage.*



## AUDIENCES FOR THE SERIES

The dramatic exploration of problems that confront many families today makes the series of value and interest to a number of different audiences:

- Students and professionals in Counselling, Psychology, Social Work, Nursing, and Medicine
- Secondary School Education: Guidance and Family Life Studies; Moral and Religious Education (grades 10-13)
- Community support services and social agencies
- Church groups; other community groups
- Families dealing with specific issues explored in the films
- General audiences

**One Step Away** — the turmoil of juvenile delinquency

**A Gift for Kate** — dealing with mental illness

**Running Scared** — a tale of obsessive jealousy

**A Single Regret** — about a man and his illegitimate son

**The Last Right** — terminal illness and the right to choose

**Out of a Job** — loss of employment and underemployment



## THE FILMS

### One Step Away

With powerful acting by Keanu Reeves as the central character, Ron, and Diana Belshaw as his mother, this is a story of tension, compassion and coming of age.

Eighteen years old, Ron is an adolescent who seems to attract problems. A neighbor is convinced he is a brazen delinquent. His friends, involved in questionable activities, taunt him for his supposed lack of courage. When Ron reacts to this peer pressure, he ends up in court. One of his teachers cannot comprehend that Ron's sarcastic belligerence is a defence, and embarrasses Ron in front of his classmates. Unable to cope with this situation, Ron drops out of school. Ron's mother, a single parent, is having a hard time dealing with him and seems to misunderstand him. Her landlord threatens to evict her unless Ron leaves. As Ron walks a tightrope between proving himself and finding his place, disaster and heartbreak seem inevitable. In time, however, there is a turnaround.



**Director:** Robert Fortier  
**Producers:** Saverio (Sam) Grana, R. Fortier  
**Writer:** Joe Wiesenfeld  
**16 mm:** 106C 0185 090  
**VHS:** 113C 0185 090  
**Beta:** 114C 0185 090  
**28 min. 52 sec.**

### A Gift for Kate

A beautifully rendered story with sensitive acting by Martha Henry as Kate, Mark Polley as her fifteen-year-old son, Arthur, and Stephanie Morgenstern as his girlfriend, Emily.

Institutionalized for ten years for mental problems, Kate has been discharged and now lives in a seedy halfway house. The weekly visits from her son, Arthur, are one of the bright spots in her life, but he is unable to cope with the reality of his mother's condition. Embarrassed and confused, he lies to his girlfriend, Emily, telling her that his mother lives in a distant city.

Unexpectedly, Kate and Emily meet — with some very surprising results that force Arthur to deal with his feelings of shame, pride, fear and guilt. When his father tells Arthur what Kate was like in the early years of their marriage and how he feels partially responsible for her breakdown, Arthur is finally able to move towards love and compassion.



**Director:** John N. Smith  
**Producers:** S. Grana, R. Fortier  
**Writer:** Gerald Wexler  
**16 mm:** 106C 0186 002  
**VHS:** 113C 0186 002  
**Beta:** 114C 0186 002  
**27 min. 43 sec.**

# FAMILY CRISIS

## S E R I E S

### Running Scared

Starring Stephen Mendel as the main character, Paul, and Wanda Cannon as his girlfriend, Cathy, *Running Scared* is a fast-paced drama of love, intrigue and obsessive jealousy.

A professional couple, Paul and Wanda seem to have everything — youth, excellent jobs, good looks, and a beautiful home they share in the country. Terrified that Cathy will abandon him as his wife had, Paul becomes increasingly suspicious that Cathy is having an affair. Phone calls answered by Cathy, Cathy's enjoyment of life and of her friends, all add up, in his mind, to infidelity. Paul begins to spy on Cathy. He embarrasses her in front of their friends. Paul promises to reform, but when he has to leave on a business trip, his paranoia becomes heightened.

A dark windy night, a visit from Cathy's mother, the isolated country home, and Paul's obsession intermingle in this film's unusual and shocking ending.



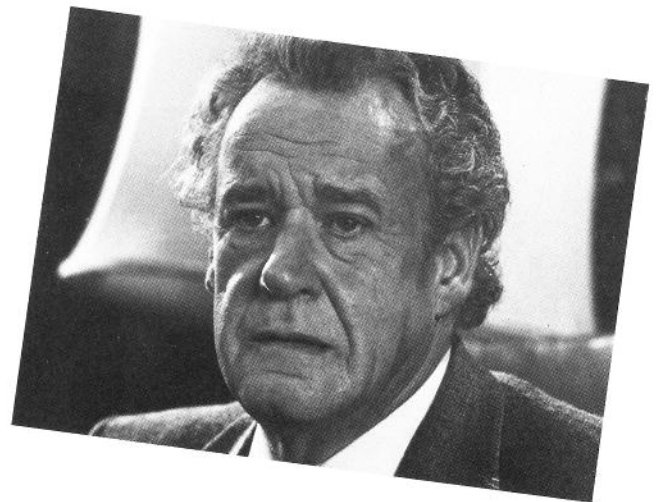
**Director:** R. Fortier  
**Producers:** S. Grana, R. Fortier  
**Writer:** R. Fortier  
**16 mm:** 106C 0185 029  
**VHS:** 113C 0185 029  
**Beta:** 114C 0185 029  
**28 min. 50 sec.**

### A Single Regret

With Anthony Parr providing a brilliant interpretation of Mr. Grant, the main character in this open-ended drama, *A Single Regret* is a powerful, intriguing film about honesty in relationships; communication between spouses and within families; morality and personal values; guilt and remorse; trust and forgiveness.

For more than twenty years, Mr. Grant — a wealthy, now middle-aged man — has lived with a disturbing secret: an illegitimate son who does not know him, born to a woman he has long stopped seeing. During these years he has struggled with his unrealizable obsession to know the child, and with his complex feelings about himself and his family. He often wanted to tell his wife and their two daughters, but could never follow through on the impulse. Now, he is determined to let them know his story and ask for their forgiveness, but still he cannot do it face to face. Instead, he decides to reveal his secret on videotape and for this reason has hired a video crew. Unexpectedly, Mrs. Grant arrives home as his confession is being taped.

This provocative drama, filmed in a “case study” format, is based on a true story.



**Director:** R. Fortier  
**Producer:** Bill Brind  
**Writer:** R. Fortier  
**16 mm:** 106C 0183 001  
**VHS:** 113C 0183 001  
**Beta:** 114C 0183 001  
**21 min. 42 sec.**

## The Last Right

Award-winning actor Ed McNamara stars as terminally ill, 79-year-old "Grandad" and Timothy Webber plays his grandson, Joe, in this powerful drama based on a true story. Sensitively, the film traces the course of Grandad's illness and its effects on those with whom he lives — Joe; Joe's wife, Vicky; their children, Tracy and Robby; and Grandad's own wife, "Grandma." As Grandad's mind starts to deteriorate, familiar patterns of family life are disrupted and replaced by turmoil.

In a moment of lucidity, Grandad asks his family to respect a decision he made many years ago: If he ever became "really sick," he would like to go quietly. The time has now come, he says. He will stop eating. The family is horrified, but his grandson eventually rallies and supports the old man's resolve.

*The Last Right* communicates the confusion and helplessness of a family confronted by the dilemma of death, and their tender emotional support of this dying man once they have acquiesced to his final wish.



**Director:** R. Fortier  
**Producers:** S. Grana, R. Fortier  
**Writer:** R. Fortier  
**16 mm:** 106C 0184 048  
**VHS:** 113C 0184 048  
**Beta:** 114C 0184 048  
**28 min. 50 sec.**

## Out of a Job

Sensitively acted, with Dan Lett in the major role of Richard, *Out of a Job* explores what happens to a 23-year-old college graduate and the effects on his family when he loses his well-paid job and is forced to move back home.

Although everyone is pulling for Richard, the cards seem stacked against him, despite his education. His confidence and self-esteem erode. His computer-whiz kid brother, with whom he has to share a room, begins to taunt him. His friends cease to understand him. Pride seems to be his greatest stumbling block, until encouragement comes from an unexpected source. Richard begins his battle to rebound from defeat and, in the process, begins to show signs of compassion and maturity and to develop new relationships with his parents and younger brother.



**Director:** R. Fortier  
**Producers:** S. Grana, R. Fortier  
**Writer:** R.B. Carney  
**16 mm:** 106C 0186 055  
**VHS:** 113C 0186 055  
**Beta:** 114C 0186 055  
**28 min. 44 sec.**



# FAMILY CRISIS

## S E R I E S

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FILM USE

#### Before the Screening

The crisis in each film is perceived and experienced differently by each of the main characters. Depending in part on age and life experience, members of the audience will respond differently and may perceive different facets of the film's issues as central.

- Group-discussion leaders and teachers may prefer to preview each film and to prepare for the diverse responses it may elicit.
- A list of general discussion questions is included below. These questions can be adapted for use with each of the films. Group leaders and teachers may wish to review these suggestions and select the ones they wish to use for a particular film and group.
- In order to enhance learning for each group/class member, try to be objective about your own responses and about the issues raised by the film.
- Recognize that each film is a springboard for discussion and may provoke strong emotional responses from different points of view.
- After a period of discussion, group members may wish to see the film again. A second screening often evokes deeper, more thoughtful responses to the complex human relationships depicted in each film.

#### After the Screening

The general questions listed below can be adapted for use with each film and selected for their relevance to a particular viewing audience. In addition, a few questions more relevant to counselling, psychology and social work are included.

1. What is the crisis or problem faced by this family? How does each main character perceive this problem, feel about it and attempt to cope with it? What is the effect of this response on other family members?
2. Are any of the situations/feelings in the film familiar to you from personal experience? How did you handle these situations/feelings?
3. What alternative behaviors/responses might each family member have tried? How would the family system be affected by each alternative?
4. How do the following factors influence each character's response to the crisis: age; sex; emotional maturity; personal goals/confusion over personal goals; level of moral awareness/maturity; social and peer pressure from outside the family, secrecy and/or the inability to communicate (within the family or with the outside world).
5. How does each person feel about her/himself? How well does each know her/himself?
6. To what extent are the characters able to handle mixed emotions towards other family members?
7. How are ideas and feelings expressed in this family? Are family members able to express clearly the needs that underlie their feelings and behavior? Are family members able to hear and respect the needs of the other members? If not, why not?
8. What kinds of emotional support are the major characters receiving? Does such emotional support seem to be helping the character? The situation?
9. In the film, whose opinion or decision seems to carry the most weight?
10. Describe this family's communication systems, both verbal and non-verbal. Are there some issues/feelings this family cannot discuss? Is there clarity and consistency in the messages given, or are there double messages?

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

11. Consider the importance of absolute truth and openness within families. Are there times when it is appropriate not to share information? If so, why?
12. If there are children in this film, how are they treated by the adults? How do the children appear to view adults? Do the adults help the children to accept and express their feelings, and to cope with the situation?
13. How does the larger society impinge on this family-in-crisis? Are there social support systems that can help this family deal with its problems? To what extent is this family able to reach out for help?

### **For counsellors, social workers, psychologists and other helping professions**

1. What can be learned from watching the body language and listening to the tone of voice of each main character?
2. How would you feel if the main character came to you with his/her story? As a professional, what approach would you take in order to help this character?
3. Suppose a second major character from this film came to you with his/her perspective. How would you work with this person? If you are involved in one-on-one counselling, would you work with both these family members?
4. What different approaches can you take to working with the whole family as a system?
5. View the film again. Pay close attention to how well each main character is able to express needs and feelings. What is the emotional range of each person? How would you help the person to name and acknowledge feelings, explore alternative ways of channelling emotional energy, and express needs clearly?
6. What belief systems seem to underlie any dysfunctional behavior you see in this film? How would you help the people in the film to see their belief systems and, if appropriate, to change them?

### **Role Playing**

These films are an excellent stimulus to role playing. Divide the viewing audience into small groups, and ask the small-group members to select characters and act out a situation presented in the film. Each group might experiment with alternative behaviors. As well, male members might play female roles and vice-versa. Include time for small-group discussion before discussing major learnings and insights in the larger group.

### **Small-Group Discussion**

Many of the questions suggested on the previous pages could be discussed in small groups. A small group format often allows individuals to feel more comfortable and freer to share personal thoughts, feelings and experiences.

### **Essays and Research Projects**

The preceding general questions can be reformulated into essay questions and projects for further research.



## **NFB Offices**

### **Atlantic Region**

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Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 1Z6  
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#### *District Offices*

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### **Quebec Region**

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### **Ontario Region**

#### *Regional Office*

Mackenzie Building  
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#### *District Offices*

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### **National Capital**

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### **Prairie Region**

#### *Regional Office*

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Film Library: (204) 949-4131

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424 - 21st Street East  
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### **Pacific Region**

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