



By Chartreuse

'Reach for a better feeling thought' [Esther Hicks](#)

Feel-better films are especially for you if you're at the bottom of the emotional scale or ladder. Where joy at the top seems impossibly far away and you are somewhere between despair at ground level and pessimism around half way up.

'Feel-good' goes over your head and just makes you feel worse. However, a little movement upwards is possible once you're ready to reach for it.

The right kind of film can ease, comfort or even anger you upwards but if you're in a delicate state emotionally you want to make the right choice of what you invite into your experience.

You may be choosing a film to help someone close to you, and that may feel even more crucial. So I'm sharing the secret with you of the most important guidelines that I use when reviewing, selecting and grading feel-better films, as well as songs, books, poems or pictures.

Of course, you may not want to do extensive research, including reading about how the story ends before you watch it, so if you'd like updates sent to you of the latest feel-better films and other feel-better ideas then your wish [here](#) is my command.

First and foremost:



1. The story has a happy ending

It needs to finish on a positive note. This extends

to the closing credits music. The last thing you see and hear needs to leave you on an up note.



2. No characters we come to care about die

Some films deal with recovery from grief but the bereavement happens at the beginning or even before the story starts. We empathise with the main character but haven't had enough time to become emotionally involved with the person they lose so we don't experience the loss ourselves. For example, *Forrest Gump* is a generally feel-good film but there is a death of at least one loved character.



3. The main character starts off in a crisis

A 'feel-better film' is about a person's journey out of loss so this needs to be established near the start of the story. It can be of career, health, relationship, location, view of themselves or something else that de-stabilises them.

Let's use *Forrest Gump* again. He starts life with a learning and a physical disability as well as an absent father.



4. The main character finds their way forward

Some stories are about a descending spiral of catastrophe. They might even be humorous but are not going to make a despairing viewer hopeful of change for the better in their own circumstances.

The main character makes internal changes and discovers or is given the tools to progress rather than being rescued by a romantic relationship. No one expects the boy *Forrest* to have a normal life. Yet by pursuing activities he loves he attracts rich personal, career and family fulfilment.



5. The story inspires you

After you watched it or read about it the film gave you a possible light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel feeling

for yourself. There was something in the story that could use to cope with, bear or even improve your own situation. You felt that if the main character could do it then so can you.



6. It makes you feel better about your life

Does it make you appreciate one or more things that are going well for you? The things you do have that the main character does not, or loses. If it makes you say, 'It's all right for them!' it's missed its mark. If it makes you say, 'Well, at least I have...' then it makes the grade.



7. The film is well made

The art of good film creation is to lull the audience into suspending disbelief, to feel as though the story is real; it is happening before their eyes, it involves them utterly.

A clichéd script, poorly acted with the lowest of production values will keep you firmly in your current reality. We are looking instead for characters we care about in situations we can believe, imagine and emotionally take part in for the time we are in front of the screen and even afterwards. *Forrest Gump* received a host of awards from the film industry. Not everyone loved it but it is generally agreed to be good production.



8. The tone is mostly light

If the bulk of the story is about how bad things can get, then even a brief upturn at the end may not be enough to have a feel-better effect.

Forrest Gump, for example, contains a scene of violent death that could be disturbing and finishes on a somewhat lonely note.

Cleverly produced films can take a serious subject and explore it without weighing down the audience, playing ain't-it-awful or preaching. *Happy Feet* makes us aware of the ecological impact of certain fishing methods without finger wagging or burdening a generation of children with existential guilt. Instead it uses fantasy, music and penguin appeal to slip the message under the radar while we are enjoying a family story and personal quest.



9. It includes some gentle humour

Some drama films can be exceptionally helpful but they do need a lightness of touch so that the viewer doesn't become oppressed by getting caught up in the hero's crisis. On the other hand, if the story is close to home you don't want to feel that your predicament is being taken lightly or

made fun of.

Satire or dark humour can validate the severity of your situation but keep you there emotionally.

Fast-paced hilarity or a pervasive gleeful, carefree atmosphere can feel so far removed from someone experiencing sadness, discouragement or doubt that it leaves them feeling isolated.

Depression, emotional exhaustion can make your senses more sensitive than usual so long bouts of intense action-packed slapstick humour with flashing lights and loud noise can be overwhelming.



10. It is subtle and flows naturally

It does not make you feel emotionally manipulated. If you spot a schmaltzy script and acting or button-pressing use of music you're likely going to shut down. Reviews on sites like Rotten Tomatoes should contain alerts. However, a feel-better film should lift

your mood in a way that feels natural and that the story and the behaviour of the characters is believable.



11. It takes you up the emotional ladder

It only has to be by the smallest amount. Does it make you feel slightly less despairing?

If you've been hurt by someone else's actions does it help you to see that there might be more behind what they did than malice?

Does it offer a different perspective to your situation?

If you were feeling powerless before you watched the film, did seeing the character's situation made you angry? (That is movement up the emotional scale, believe it or not.)

Do you feel less blameful of yourself or a tiny bit more appreciative of who you are or what you do have going for you?

Does it make you feel the world is a better place than you thought, that there are good people in it and good things happen to them?

If you can answer 'yes' to any of these questions then over all, you've found a 'feel-better' film.

If you find one that isn't listed on Heypressto, please [drop me a line](#). Or if you find a film that you'd like reviewed.

New films are being constantly added on Heypressto.com and my column in Health & Happiness Magazine. The books '50 Feel-better Songs from Film and TV' and '50 Feel-better Films' will be launched in the coming months and I'll send you news of them as well as new feel-better apps and ideas. [Just ask now](#).

With thanks to [Teodor the Cat](#) and his talented creator Denis Sazhin.

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