

# A Case Study / Observation Exercise

**Subject:** Lars

**Question:** Is Lars mentally ill? If so, what treatment path should he be on?

**Task:** You will watch the film *Lars and the Real Girl* in order to determine whether Lars has a true mental illness, or if there is something else going on with Lars. (Grade explained below.)

AS YOU WATCH:

Take on the role of a therapist, who is doing a naturalistic observation of this individual in order to determine whether or not Lars is mentally ill and in need of intensive psychotherapy or medication or not.

## **STEP 1:**

As you observe your subject, take copious notes about his actions, thoughts, conversations, mannerisms and interactions with other people. Take notes about his family, friends and surroundings as well. How do other people feel about Lars and his actions? How do certain people act around him? Are they accepting and helpful? Do they think that he is crazy and lose patience with him? How does he react around certain people? Take notes of SPECIFIC events, words or actions that you will be able to refer back to when you write your conclusions to the question above.

***IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU REMAIN AN OBJECTIVE OBSERVER AS YOU ARE VIEWING HIS LIFE THROUGH THIS WINDOW OF THE MOVIE. IF YOU MAKE YOUR DETERMINATION TOO EARLY, IT WILL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO REMAIN OBJECTIVE, AND MAY LEAD TO BIASES SUCH AS CONFIRMATION BIAS.***

WHEN THE FILM IS OVER:

## **STEP 2:**

When the film is finished, state your assessment of Lars' current psychological and emotional state. Apply a specific term if you believe that Lars has a problem that is identifiable as a particular disorder.

## **STEP 3:**

Pick three key actions/statements from your observation that you feel demonstrate what you will argue was going on with Lars throughout this film.

**STEP 4:** Pick 2 disorders that you feel may be a reasonable diagnosis, but that you will eventually reject. Explain why you considered each diagnosis, and why you eventually rejected each of them.

We will then come together as a group and discuss our findings to determine what type of treatment Lars will require moving forward.

**Three grades for this assignment: Your therapist's notes, your preparatory write-up, discussion.**