

CONSPIRACY THERAPY





LOGLINE

In this half hour dramedy, a broken family of misfits strikes a pact to take over their disappeared mother's virtual-psychotherapy practice and help patients with problems in turn solving their own.



NEW MESSAGE

SYNOPSIS

The day the Covid crisis travel restrictions ended, their mom up and left—gone off the grid—*Eat, Pray, Love*. Now it's up to DARRYL (40), a stay at home dad, a domineering daughter NADIA (17), and peacekeeping undecided, ALEXUS (13), to fend for themselves.

When Nadia discovers her mom's online psychotherapy practice is still up and running, they decide to take over and keep the funds coming in, in order to pay the mortgage on their large suburban home. The problem is, no one has any answers, and they need to respond to each question within 24 hours.





CONCEPT

None of the characters wholly trust the other or communicate well. Each episode is another opportunity to reflect on their own problems and to try on hilarious and ridiculous solutions as they attempt to resolve them, in turn helping their clients and keeping money in the bank.

Someone smart once said that the best way to learn is to teach, so maybe the best path to self improvement is by fixing everyone else. That's the running theory. The show is about seeing if Darryl, Alexis, Nadia and 'us,' can figure out where we're all a little bit broken and have fun doling out oft irresponsible advice to strangers.

The story world is bigger than the family and their clients. Once a new client problem is learned, the family begins its own process of self-discovery, drawing on their relationships with people and activities to understand the issue. Not only will they pull from their familial interactions, but the world will grow to include visiting friends, over-the-fence neighbors, FaceTime with Grandpa, music teachers, math tutors, all the while sticking to the home front. This suggests a much larger world beyond the domestic activities of cooking, cleaning, crafting, gaming, studying, social media, etc. that includes school, work, gym, dating, and errands.

It's therapy. It's a conspiracy. And we're all in this together.



CHARACTERS



DARRYL— 40, stay at home dad, optimist, and a natural at anything that doesn't make money. No one would call him a man's man and he dresses the part, loves earrings and tattoo sleeves.

Darryl is trying to maintain his youth and hasn't found the sort of passion he once held for sports. He uses sports metaphors way too often and pours himself into odd new hobbies, most of which he's surprisingly good at, none of which make much money—the average price of snow globes on Etsy is only \$25. He has a big sensitive side, crying easily, and always generous and imaginative—he's the guy staging one-man plays to neighbors during quarantine. An optimist, he fails to see any of his kids' challenges, unless it's brought about by a patient question. Being on his own without his partner is a chance for him to recognize his own issues and come to terms with himself. In some ways, running his wife's business is a means of proving to himself that he was good enough for her.



NADIA— 17, darkly comic and sarcastic, fed up but hides it well, requires control and is very competitive. Has a plan, and her mom's disappearance wasn't part of it.

Nadia wants to follow her mother out of the house, soon. She's just been accepted early to a university as far away as possible and is depending on her parents to help fund it. Her mother's disappearance is a problem, especially since she's hurt that her mom didn't take her with her. She isn't a talker and keeps secrets, particularly those related to her relationships. She'd seen her mom as a role model and her father as a goof. Outwardly, she has everything under control, inwardly she doesn't know what she wants. She picked engineering because it paid well. Her typical response to conflict is to avoid it. Deep down, Nadia fears she won't measure up, not to her Instagram feed, nor to her friends and especially not to her disappeared mom. Through patient therapy, she'll gain insight into her weaknesses and ultimately become surer of herself, opening herself up to choices more in tune with her passions, something she'll come to appreciate in her dad. For now, she doesn't know how much longer she can take it.



ALEXUS— 13, the family mediator and conscience, smarter than dad and Nadia.

Alexus' easy-going nature belies a kid terrified they're the one who broke up the family. The patients are a way for Alexis to stay connected to their mom. They see their job as being to protect and defend their mom even if she's gone. Alexis doesn't realize it yet, but they have OCD tendencies, like flicking the lights on and off three times every time they enter a room to ensure nothing bad happens. Alexis is a jokester—often at their own expense—loves to pester Nadia, and cook with their dad. They'll often retreat into video games, an addiction that will need addressing, but also is a way for them to reach safely out to the broader world of online gaming friendships.

One way or another everything that is wrong with the psychotherapy clients is also wrong with the family.



STYLE

A cookie-cutter suburban neighborhood where Darryl designed his own infill and missed the memo on maintaining the street's character. Not that it's such a bad thing. But whereas everyone else's hedges are trimmed into rectangles, his looks a bit like two elephants... piggybacking? Huh... And where most of the neighbors' walls are whitewashed, he's painted a mural with Alexis.

The interior matches the exterior, with Darryl's eclectic mashup of tastes, found art, and spur of the moment decisions somehow gelling. It's why Alexis has a Jungle Book themed room they still love. And Nadia is so ready to be done with her fairy treehouse loft bed. There's so much care in the home, so much Darryl in it, that it's all the more heartbreaking they're going to lose it.

Some neighbors will be happy to see them go. Like the nosy one who hasn't trusted Darryl since his arrival and thought his one-man show should have included more clothes and suspects his wife's disappearance is... murder.



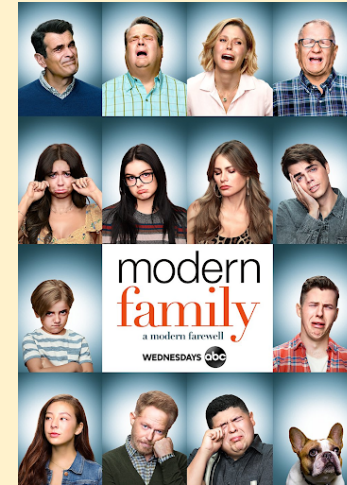
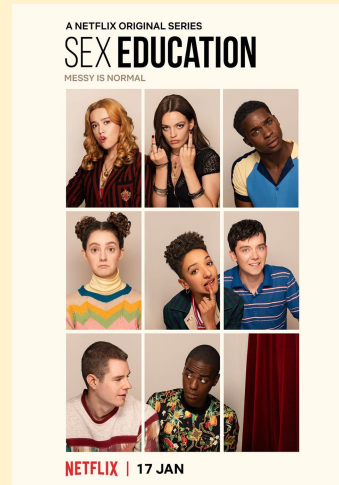
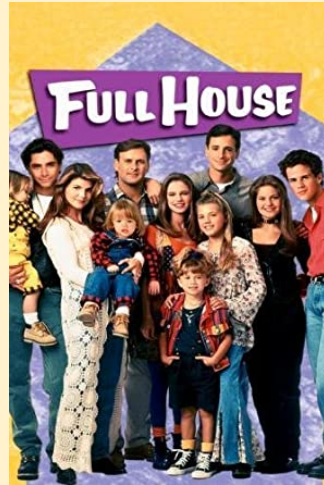


LOOKBOOK



TONE AND TEMPLATE SHOWS

Sex Education meets *Full House*. This is a show about one family's creative and crazy resourcefulness in a time of crisis.



Sex Education is a good tonal touchstone, particularly the relationship between daughter and father and the friction and embarrassment that comes when sharing private information with your parent. We use the *Full House* example, leaning into the family elements and the initial constraint of keeping the show limited to the household setting. Phil and Claire's household in *Modern Family* is comparable for tone and pacing.

TERRIFIED ON TWITTER

When a patient expresses her anxiety about social media use, Darryl becomes a nervous wreck waiting for 'likes,' compulsive about not breaking his posting streaks, and over-interprets comments and emojis.

THE MARTYR OF MINNESOTA

Through a woman who needs help setting boundaries in her relationships, Alexis realizes they never say no and needs to learn how to assert themselves. Alexis spends a day only saying no in order to learn what it takes.

FEARFUL IN FORT WORTH

To help a man with a phobia of public spaces, Nadia and Darryl are forced to reveal their fears (fear of no internet access and fear of beards) and explore what they'll have to do to confront them.

COUNTING IN COLORADO

A patient with OCD related to counting before he can walk through doors hits home when they realize Alexis has magical thinking of his own related to keeping their mom safe.

EPISODES IDEAS

DESPITE BEING A PROCEDURAL SHOW, THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERIALIZED ELEMENTS AS WE LEARN WHY THE MOM LEFT, A NOSY NEIGHBOR'S INVESTIGATION INTO FOUL PLAY, THE MOM'S RETURN, THE DISCOVERY OF HER FRAUDULENT DIPLOMA, NADIA STARTING A COMPETITIVE BUSINESS AND THE SLOW EXPANSION OF THE WORLD TO INCLUDE OTHER CHARACTERS, WHO INTRUDE ON THEIR WORLD.

RAGING IN RENO

A patient struggles with road rage and worries he's going to hurt someone. Nadia is taught to drive by her father, Alexis tries making himself angry about anything, and they all need to learn some relaxation techniques.

TOO MANY FISH IN TOLEDO

When a client vents her frustration with having way too many dating options, Darryl sets up an online dating profile to see what's the big deal. He soon finds himself the victim of a fraud and then ghosted, forcing him to acknowledge his own feelings of rejection, which helps him to understand the real issue for the client.

INSTANTLY ASHAMED IN IDAHO

The case of a humiliated teen is solved when Nadia is forced to expose the chasm between her social media image versus her actual life to help him feel better, revealing her own self esteem issues.

DOWDY IN DENVER

A mature woman doesn't feel sexy anymore and Alexis shares their own body dysmorphia and the degree to which it's holding them back. Darryl sees that it might have stemmed from his own body image issues.

PILOT SYNOPSIS

When Darryl, Nadia, and Alexis discover their mom strangely missing, Darryl thinks she's been abducted, Nadia hopes she's escaped and Alexis worries she left because of their fight. But it's still too early to be really concerned. In their search for clues, they discover a video email from 'Sleepless,' a client whose insomnia is messing with his ability to make some big life decisions. Darryl wants to help him; Nadia warns her father off. Sent this morning, they have 18 hours to respond to it.

Mom hasn't returned by dinner, and the police brush off Darryl's crazy theories, ultimately not yet seeing a reason to investigate. That night, no one can sleep. Darryl leaps up, checks in the closet, and finds an empty space on the shelf. It was for her 'getaway bag.' Money, passport, hair bands, bikini, smokes, condoms, Diva Cup, gin. Everything she needed. To escape. Nadia reminds him they need to pay the deposit on her university or she loses her spot. They do have the money, don't they? Nope, and not for the mortgage either. They've been squeaking by month to month.

No one can sleep. Drugs, exercise, counting, meditation, listening to Chris Hemsworth tuck Nadia in, more drugs, hot bath, video games, incense, tea, reading *The Shining*, reading *Go the F*ck to Sleep*, a fake sunset app, a hypnosis video, listening to Chris Hemsworth tuck Darryl in. Nothing works. The neighborhood doesn't help. Barking, raccoons, yelling, a car backfires, siren – Darryl startles: I didn't do it!

He finds Nadia back in the home office. She can't sleep either, worried about the deposit. She's answering Sleepless. And it's not out of compassion, they're going to need the money if she's ever going to have a life. Alexis accuses her of committing fraud. But what's the alternative? Darryl can't make enough playing bongos or LARPing.

Darryl wonders about giving blood. It won't cut it. But there's no need to rush. They still have 10 hours to reply. Alexis tells them, they'll need a good answer. Their mom's diploma from Reno College Online isn't just a piece of paper. A bad answer will mess up the business for their mom—or get them caught. No university and no house. Jail time. They need to do this right.

They divide the research books on the shelves amongst them. Alexis objects to get the one on sexual dysfunction. They learn about weird phobias and compulsions—fear of flowers, baths, of falling asleep—maybe that's their problem? Laughing together until Nadia finds a chapter on insomnia. But everything that's suggested as a resolution, they've already tried. They'll sleep on it. But sleep eludes them. Dawn finds Nadia doing the math. If they respond to one client a week, they can supplement their income enough to pay the bills and make the university deposit. In the final hour, when they need to reply to Sleepless, they make a pact. Darryl likes that they're helping people. Nadia likes that they're making money. Alexis hopes their mom will see the fraud and make contact. Darryl forces them to recite an oath, committing them to secrecy. But they still have to reply to Sleepless. Which is when they find Alexis already asleep.

What just happened? Should they wake him? No, they made a decision, and Alexis fell asleep. That's the solution! Sleepless' problem isn't that he has insomnia and so can't make decisions, it's because he hasn't made any decisions that he has insomnia! Darryl sends the reply and Nadia's out cold. A bleat indicates the next client has arrived in the inbox. And we exit to *Too Many Fish in Toledo* explaining her problem of too much selection in dating options to a drooling, snoring Darryl.

PRODUCERS

MORRIS RUSKIN

Following the production of Glengarry Glen Ross, Morris Ruskin founded Shoreline Entertainment. He has since produced approximately 60 films. Three of them have premiered at Sundance; six have premiered at The Toronto International Film Festival and High Life was his first film to premiere at the Berlinale. Morris' films have been oft-feted as well: The Visit was nominated for four Spirit Awards, The Signal was nominated for the Cassavetes Spirit Award and Al Pacino was nominated for an Academy Award as best supporting actor in Glengarry Glen Ross.

In 2019, Morris and the award-winning filmmaker Jordan Walker-Pearlman, launched MoJo Global Arts, a production and management company that has over fifty projects in development.

BYRON A. MARTIN

Byron A. Martin is an award-winning producer who develops independent film, television and documentary projects. To date he has produced almost 100 hours of television, filming projects in sixteen countries. He has produced projects for Disney, Sony, Universal, Turner, Bell Media, DHX and Crown Media. From THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK, LAND OF THE DEAD, RESIDENT EVIL: AFTERLIFE (3D) to AMERICAN PIE presents BETA HOUSE and AMERICAN PIE presents THE NAKED MILE, Byron has a tremendous scale and scope of production experience.

He has managed productions for some of Hollywood's leading producers, such as Jerry Bruckheimer, Sam Raimi, Raffaella De Laurentis, Laurence Mark, John Singleton, Mark Canton, Lauren Shuler Donner, Dick Wolf, Ralph Winter and Don Carmody. Most recently, Corporate Vision Magazine honoured his company with a Canadian Business Award naming it "Best Canadian Producer 2019".

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER / DIRECTOR

JIM DONOVAN

Jim's award-winning body of work flows through the eclectic worlds of music videos, commercials, narrative film, documentary and scripted television and has consistently distinguished itself on the national and international stage. Recent credits include primetime dramas such as *Flashpoint*, *MTV's Undressed*, *Instant Star*, *Heartland*, *Republic of Doyle*, *21 Thunder*, *Cracked* and *Le Clan*. His independent feature *3 Saisons* won multiple international awards including the Borsos for best Canadian Feature at the 2008 Whistler Film Festival, Best Director at the 2009 Mexico International Film Festival, and a triple nomination at the 2010 Genie Awards including Best Picture. His work on the comedy series *Naked Josh* was nominated for Best Direction in a Comedy at the 2006 Gemini Awards. In 2013 he won the Canadian Screen Award for Best Direction for *Flashpoint, A Day in the Life*.

In 2014-2015 Jim was tapped for 2 seasons as series director on the acclaimed drama *Le Clan* for SRC, now streaming on Netflix. In 2016 he directed the pilot for *21 Thunder* for CBC, also streaming on Netflix. In 2017, Jim helmed the 6-part mini-series entitled *Le Siège* for SRC produced by Attraction Images for which he received his 4th DGC Nomination for Best Director in the 2018 gala. He recently directed the true-crime television movie *Believe Me, The Abduction of Lisa McVey* for Cineflix which has received 6 nominations at this year's Canadian Screen Awards, including for best film, actress, actor and director. Recently, Jim completed a first-person documentary with producer Byron A. Martin entitled *Mancation*, gearing up for a festival tour in the coming months. Jim is currently in post-production on a new comedy series *Edgar* for Bell's Super Écran and Crave..

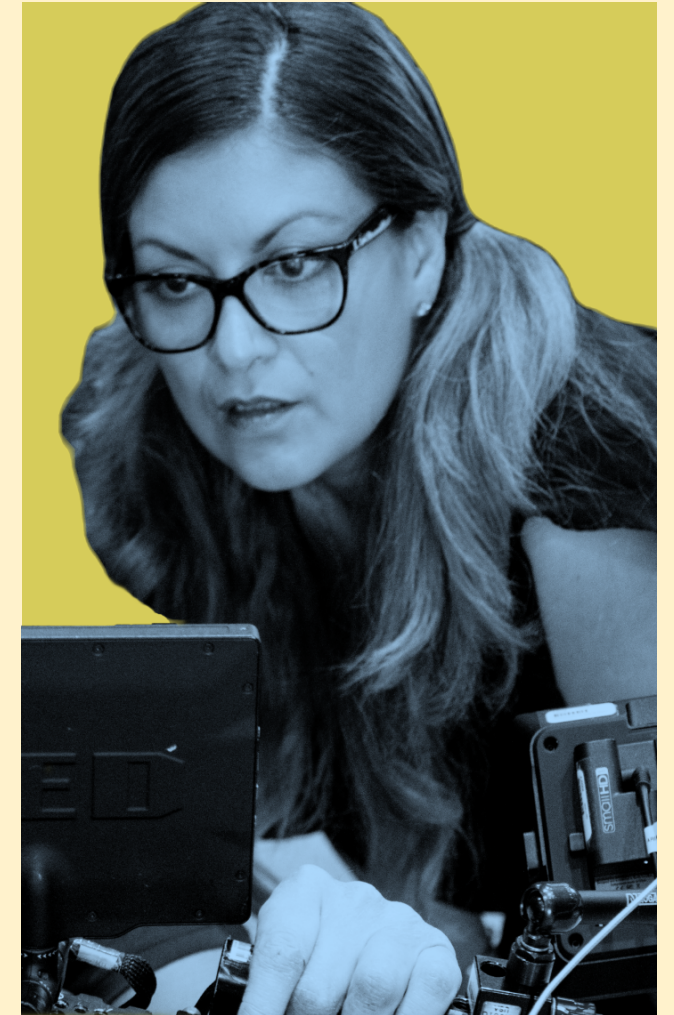


DIRECTOR

PATRICIA CHICA

Patricia is a Canadian LatinX award-winning director who has directed, produced, and/or edited over 60 hours of programming aimed at the international film and television markets, including content for Sony, Showtime, National Geographic, Discovery Channel, Oxygen, Animal Planet, Showcase, CBC, ARTV, and Bravo! Canada just to name a few. She has also been part of TIFF Filmmaker Lab, the SODEC_Lab in Cannes, the MAFIZ Lab in Malaga, and an active member of the Directors Guild of Canada, Film Fatales, Women in Film and many more

Besides her personal independent film work, Chica has also directed and/or worked as a producer on world-class primetime broadcast content for networks such as National Geographic, Showcase, Bravo!, MTV, Oxygen, ARTV, CBC, CBS, UniMás, and El Rey Network just to name a few. She is perfectly fluent in English, Spanish and French and has built a loyal social media fan base and connections in those three markets. Patricia has also been chosen among 25 creators/directors/writers to be part of the NETFLIX Diversity of Voices program and her debut dramatic feature entitled Montréal Girls has been funded by Telefilm, Sodec and the Harold Greenberg Fund and is slated for 2021.



WRITER

MICHAEL F. STEWART

That guy who always gets stuff done, meets the creative nutball who writes with a big heart.

His dozens of books, interactive media, and graphic novels have been published by Scholastic Canada, Oxford University Press, Pearson, and Rubicon Publishing. They've been named Best Books of 2017 and 2018 by Kirkus Reviews and are on the Canadian Children's Book Centre's list for Best Books for Kids and Teens. He's won the Claymore Award, The Creation of Stories: Best YA Award at the Toronto International Book Fair, the Publisher's Weekly Booklife Grand Prize, and the eOne/Canadian Film Centre TV Adaptation Lab.

Currently, Michael is writing Volume 2 of the interactive Weirdwood Manor App for Wasabi Entertainment and his next young adult novel.





Mojo Global Arts
Morris Ruskin
morris@mojo.film
+1 323 856 2741



Byron A. Martin Productions
Byron A. Martin
byron@byronmartin.com
T 416-487-7808 | T 310-734-8780
M 416-565-6992 | F 416-487-8995