

# **Student Essay on Ordinary People: Conrad's Recovery**

**Ordinary People: Conrad's Recovery by Judith Guest**

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# Essay

In the novel Conrad encounters certain events that contribute to his recovery. The first important step on Conrad's recover is his tunnel dream and when he consults Berger about it. Conrad dreams that he is trapped in a tunnel and he is suffocating with the walls closing in on him, this reflects his current life, he is trapped in a paradox where he tries to feel good yet control everything and make it look good. Trying to satisfy his feelings and making things look good for his mother is slowly suffocation him, when Conrad talks to Berger about his dream he comes to a very important conclusion, Conrad doesn't want to swim anymore but he doesn't want to quit because it will look bad. "...Then I swim for two months and quit again. Can't you see how stupid that would look" "Forget how it looks. How does it feel""(p79) This is the first instance where Conrad begins to see that feeling good is more important than looking good and this is his first step on the road to recovery. When Conrad realizes that making everything look good isn't the most important thing he allows himself to look bad in order to feel good, an example of this is the fight with Stillman. Conrad allows himself to look bad in order to feel good. Stillman, being the ass hole that he is, provokes Conrad and totally pisses him off, instead of fighting back the emotion and struggling to make things look good Conrad allows himself to feel anger, disregarding what others think he attacks Stillman. This is one of the few times that Conrad allows himself to feel emotion and it is important for his recovery because he needs to learn that it isn't bad to feel the way he did or even act on it. Reflecting what Berger told Conrad about the amount of energy it takes to keep things hidden, Conrad has been trying to keep everything hidden and looking good but he is unable to control this sudden anger and instead of wasting energy on control he allows himself to feel and allows the emotions to happen to him. Ever since the accident Conrad has been so bent up about keeping things under control that it is very important that he showed some emotions and let them happen.