

House md

Season 6 episode 12

Remorse

This episode concerns issues of relationships, including hurting and harming others, feeling remorse, saying sorry and making amends

Synopsis

Valerie is a management consultant who becomes ill after arguing about a mistake at work and accusing a colleague of being drunk after he vomits in front of his boss. Dr House is not interested in the case until Dr Foreman mentions that Valerie is good looking but her husband is neither good looking nor rich. He sends his team off to do tests while receiving a call from a person called Wibberley, but does not answer the call.

The team meet Valerie and are all charmed by her except for Dr 13. Dr Wilson meanwhile finds House asleep in his office and House admits he doesn't want to go home while Wibberley is chasing him asking to meet. House tells Wilson that as part of his therapy he was told to write a letter of apology to someone he hurt. He hurt Wibberley by switching his exam paper with Wibberley's when he was at med school. He was testing a theory that the professor of the course they were taking was biased against him. Dr Wilson wonders acidly why House picked Lorenzo Wibberley to apologise to when he and Dr Cuddy have also suffered at House's hands. House ignores this but shouts after Wilson 'we said we'd never go to sleep angry!'

In Valerie's room her colleague is waiting for her. He has been fired and accuses her of poisoning him. He also says he had an affair with Valerie, but she counters, saying that he has had a mental breakdown. Valerie tells her husband that it was all lies, but 13 is not so sure.

House talks to the team from Dr Cuddy's office where he is hiding from Wilson who is trying to engineer a meeting with Wibberley. House occupies himself by doctoring two of Cuddy's photos, including one with her and a lemur and one with her boyfriend, Lucas, whose head House replaces with a chimp's. The team all believe Valerie's version of events and that the colleague is a 'crazy drunk weirdo' but 13 disagrees and says there is something 'off' about Valerie. She argues with Dr Foreman and House says that they are arguing over their unresolved issues (Dr Foreman fired 13 when she was his girlfriend and they have now broken up).

Wibberley finds House in Cuddy's office after all and they go for lunch. Wibberley tells House that he thought it was nice that he wrote the letter and that he doesn't have to feel bad. House asks after his career and is stunned to be told that Wibberley never graduated and never became a doctor. He failed on a single credit on the paper that House switched. Wibberley says he now bags groceries.

13 tests a private theory by looking at Valerie's brain activity while she discusses the things she loves and hates. The tests show that Valerie is incapable of feeling emotion. She can understand the

concepts but she does not experience them, she has no conscience, which makes her a psychopath. Dr House is interested in this and confronts Valerie, saying that psychopathy means that a person cannot have a conscience, is promiscuous, manipulative, lies pathologically and so on. Valerie admits that she gave her colleague some pills which made him vomit and that she had an affair with him. She isn't sorry about it. She did it to steal his best ideas. She also admits she married her husband for his trust fund.

House gives some advice on treatment and Foreman suggests that 13 was out of line for flouting their authority, saying that she should be 'punished'. House says Foreman should punish her and when Foreman demurs says that Foreman fired her to safeguard his own career and not for any grand ideas that he was too in love with her for them to work well together. House says it's Foreman's problem and he must take responsibility for it.

Dr Cuddy takes House to task over the photos. She says that he cut up the only copy of a photo her father took of her on the last trip they took together, to Ecuador. She has no other copy and is really upset about it. House thinks then says he could spend all day apologising but would 'rather expiate my sins with good clean work'.

House seeks out Wilson who is helping in the clinic. The patient speaks Spanish of which Wilson has only a smattering although House is fluent. House argues that Wibberley has an agenda. Wilson says 'if you feel guilty then you should do something to help. You are responsible'. House argues that he can only be held accountable for the *foreseeable* consequences: a bad grade or a sleepless night or worse case, a re-test. He could not have been expected to know what else might happen. Dr Wilson says that if there is any karma in the situation, Wibberley is probably happier than House. House says that if that is the case there is no harm done. House decides to go and find out and incidentally diagnoses Wilson's patient's underlying use of drugs.

House visits Wibberley at home to see how happy he is. He suggests that Wibberley is not burdened with a doctor's long hours or cares, that he has a beautiful garden, which he, House, does not have. But then Wibberley says he is moving from his 'paradise'. He has to pay his father's medical bills and cannot afford the mortgage.

Valerie threatens 13 and says she will get her licence revoked and sue her if she gives her husband Bill any inkling that she has cheated on him. 13 turns Valerie's arm over and the arm breaks, leading to Valerie demanding that 13 be thrown off her case, but House backs 13 when he sees tests which reveal Valerie's brittle bones. House takes 13 and Foreman to task for fighting about irrelevant issues.

13 asks Bill to find out about Valerie's 'landscaping class'. She knows that he will find out that Valerie did not go to the class because that was when she was meeting her lover. House goes to talk to Valerie and suggests that the majority of people are born with consciences but psychopaths do not have a conscience, they have pure self-interest as a motivator. She accuses him of being like her and that he does not really have a conscience.

Bill finds out that Valerie did not go to the landscaping class. She invents some more lies to excuse it. She demands that Dr Cuddy remove 13. Dr Cuddy stands up to Valerie but says she wants 13 to stay away from Valerie because she should not have to put up with Valerie's behaviour. Next thing,

however, 13 learns that allegations of sexual harassment have been made against her. She is upset and she and Foreman have an argument about it. During this, Foreman says he is sorry for firing her, that his motives were selfish and he made a mess of everything. Valerie becomes critically ill.

Wilson finds House writing a cheque to cover Wibberley's mortgage for a few months. Wilson is intrigued: 'of all the people to go the extra mile for, - why this guy?' Wilson surmises that it is easier to be munificent towards someone you don't know than apologise and be kind to someone you have a relationship with. 'It's much easier to assuage your guilt by throwing money at a stranger than to make amends by apologising to someone you actually care about'.

13 learns from Valerie's sister, Sarah, that she was not always psychopathic. She was caring and protective but then she changed. She tells House and this enables them to diagnose Valerie with Wilson's disease. Bill says sadly to 13 that he was happy before he found out about Valerie and although it wasn't real it was enough.

House gives Wibberley the money but then Wibberley confesses that he made the whole story up. He did become a doctor but lost his licence when he had a gambling problem and overbilled patients. He told House the story because he thought he would be the same uncaring selfish person he had been in med school. House tells Wibberley to keep the money but he doesn't want to take it but House shouts at him to keep it. However in the end House takes the money back.

Bill tries to be nice to Valerie but she pushes him away. 13 notices that this means that Valerie has changed and the treatment is working, changing her ability to feel wrong. Valerie starts to feel emotional pain about the way she has behaved.

13 finds Foreman writing up a discharge summary. Foreman complains that he can't read Taub's writing, so 13 sits down and reads it to him. They sit companionably together helping each other work.

House goes to Cuddy's office, presumably to apologise, but sees her cuddled up with Lucas. Then he goes back out in the snow to Wibberley's house and posts the cheque through the door.

Some excerpts to watch:

- The various meetings between Wibberley and House
- House cuts up Cuddy's photos
- Foreman and 13 rowing/ sitting together at the end
- Valerie's scenes with 13, including when she recovers

Some questions

- What do you think this episode says about having a conscience?
- What do you think about House's view that you can only expect to be sorry for 'foreseeable' hurt when you do something?

- What do you make of Wibberley's made-up story? What do you think he was trying to achieve?
- Did your feelings change about Valerie during the episode? If so, in what way?
- What did this episode say about being sorry and apologising, and making amends or restitution to a hurt person?
- What does this episode suggest about the way to 'expiate sins'?

Some scripture passages to use if you want to:

- Psalm 51
- Psalm 38
- Luke 19.8-9
- Ephesians 4.25-32