“Life as a House” (2001) is the story of George (Kevin Kline), a mid-age divorced man who is suddenly let go from the architecture firm where he has worked for 25 years. In the same time frame, he collapses and is hospitalized. Only much later in the film, do we find out that he has received a very serious medical diagnosis which he keeps secret from those around him. As the film’s story unfolds, we see what occurs within George and those around him as he decides to tear down a shack in which he has been living and build a new home on ocean-front property he has inherited from his father with whom he had a very conflicted relationship. He insists that his 16 year old, angry, drug-using son come to live with him so that he can rebuild a relationship with him. Several typical dysfunctional family and individual struggles unfold as the house is being slowly built, and gradually, George and others grow in unexpected ways. The interactions are a quietly fascinating look at people’s varied ways of coping and ‘reinventing’ themselves in the face of unexpected life events which present serious challenges and opportunities.

**Starring:** Kevin Kline, Kristin Scott Thomas, Hayden Christensen, Jena Malone, Mary Steenburgen  
**Directed by:** Irwin Winkler  
**Rated:** R (language, sexuality, drug use)  

**Psychological focus areas:** mid-age and adolescent re-invention in response to grief / loss; parenting adolescents; facing death and working out what kind of a legacy to leave