

Coroner's Serinda Swan on the Importance of Portraying Jenny's Struggles On Screen

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Jenny Cooper is a woman trying to pick up the pieces of her life, and keep it together enough to move on in her job as Toronto's new coroner. And really, who among us can't relate to that? Aren't we all just constantly trying to keep it together and make it through the day? For Jenny, it's proving to be much harder than anticipated though, especially since she recently discovered that her husband left behind all kinds of money issues for her to deal with. In last week's premiere episode of *Coroner*, airing Mondays at 9 p.m. ET on CBC, Jenny could be seen dealing with those issues, as well as her problems with anxiety, as she listened to self help tapes and took a prescribed medication. By showing this side to Jenny, as well as her ongoing sessions with a therapist, *Coroner* is depicting a struggle faced by

many, and in the process helping to end the stigma around mental health.

“Mental health is an ongoing battle and is something most people struggle with in one capacity or another. The problem is that it’s so stigmatized and people just hear ‘oh, you’re crazy!’ No, hold on,” Jenny’s portrayer Serinda Swan recently told *The TV Junkies*. She says that similar to a lot of people, trauma brings a lot of Jenny’s problems to the surface. “With the death of her husband, it starts coming out in very bizarre ways like by seeing a dog, or having to rely on Ativan and go see a therapist.”

For Swan, one of the most important parts to Jenny’s story is that “you see her struggle.” With the stigma that still exists around mental health, depictions of the various forms it can take in the media are important now more than ever. By showing a representation of and acknowledging things like Jenny’s anxiety, *Coroner* helps further conversations and make the subject much less taboo.



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Swan previewed a moment in an upcoming episode that particularly drives this point home. “There’s about a minute and a half panic attack in one episode that’s raw, uncut and awesome to watch. It’s what it is, and you see her pick up the phone and talk to her colleagues while pretending she’s

fine." It's those exact kind of moments that Swan believes many viewers will be able to relate to and is proud of the show for depicting. "We all have that heartbreaking moment where you say you're fine, but you're actually absolutely smashed as a human being."

Allowing audiences to see this side of its main character also means that the *Coroner* viewers are in on some special information says Swan. In watching all the struggles Jenny goes through, "you start to feel what these emotions are," and that Jenny "shows as much as she hides." Swan says that's something that only the audience is privy to. "They get to see all of her, whereas at work, they only see a part of her or her son only sees a part of her." But the audience? Swan says they're the only ones who "see who she really is."

Time and again we've seen the huge power that media holds, and Jenny's battle with anxiety is just one way that *Coroner* seems to be wielding its power for good. Far too often, portrayals of mental illness lean towards stigmatizing, or viewing the person as "other." Or we see a character's struggles with mental health issues trivialized on screen. It's refreshing to see *Coroner* take a realistic approach to Jenny's problems and confront them head on, in the process, opening lines of dialogue for audiences to have and stigmas to be broken.



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What are your thoughts on *Coroner* so far? Add them below!

Coroner airs Mondays at 9 p.m. ET on CBC and is available on [CBC Gem](#).



[by](#)

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