

Why Cry?

A true story by Mark Fournier
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Whatever happened to men who cry? *I* cried eating my father's infamous hot chili last week, but I don't think *those* tears count. I *nearly* cried the day *after*...if you know what I mean.

I've read that crying is *good* for you, releasing pent-up emotions, it guards against ulcers and heart attacks. Oh well, I guess we *men* will just have to eat more fiber.

Not being able to cry is like lingering on the verge of a sneeze; you feel it coming, you brace yourself and then just sit there with your nose twitching.

As a child I heard that when people cried, they got "a lump in their throat" or got "all choked up," no wonder I stopped crying...I was probably afraid I'd *gag*...or perhaps I stopped because I'd never *seen* a man cry, not even on TV! (Except for Major Nelson when Jeanne screwed up a spell or something; and *he* never really cried. He just whined a lot.)

In most cultures, tears from a woman represent *sadness*, yet they're interpreted as weakness in a *man*. After all, **heroes** like John Wayne, Clint Eastwood and Arnold Schwarzenegger never cried. Can you imagine Arnold pausing after a bloody rampage to dab away tears of regret? The image of it makes me laugh...which is kind of sad. Is that why *fathers* never cry... because they want their children to see them as *heroes*? Perhaps it's *war* that renders them tearless. Many WWII vets, like my dad, came back from that horror unable to ever cry again.

Or, maybe, *women* are partly to blame. It's well known that men spend most of their lives trying to impress women, so I suspect that if they believed that women *preferred* men who could cry, night clubs and singles joints would flood with manly tears. Can you picture it: 'Hello ... my name is Ox, I am a Pisces which makes me *playful* but very *sensitive* ... so please be gentle with me ...*whimper, sniff, sniff.*'

I suppose it's possible that not crying is *hereditary*; a flaw in our DNA that can be carried and passed on by a female, but is only *manifested* in a male...like *baldness*.

My father never cried, not even when *his* father **died**. He just stood there looking empty and out of place, while everyone else openly wept. Is that what will happen to me when *he* dies? I hope not. If it *is* hereditary, maybe they will have found a cure by then. If they haven't, I guess I'll just awkwardly stand there on the verge of sneezing while I feel my head for bald spots.

I stopped crying when I was 12. This is about the time every 'normal' boy stops crying ...that is, unless his dog dies. He can cry up to the age of *16* if that happens. I guess he's out of luck if he doesn't *own* a dog. I suppose he *could* buy one and hope it dies 'in time'. *I* was fortunate; *my* dog died just two weeks *before* my 16th birthday... Only a few days later and poor ole' Scotty would have had a silent funeral. I still miss you, Scotty. I'm glad I was able to cry for you.

I don't think you're *ever* allowed to cry if your *cat* dies, unless you're a 'girl'! Girls get to cry over *anything*! I've always envied the female ability to turn sadness into tears; then simply 'tissue their nose' and go about their day. I think *my* sadness turns into allergies. Well, at least I still get to blow my nose.

I wonder why males seem to stop crying when they reach *adolescence*. Perhaps puberty has something to do with it. Maybe our prostate glands are directly connected to our tear ducts...but then every time we had sex, our eyes would water.

The next time *I* cried caught me completely by surprise. No one had died, not even a *dog*! Shortly after producing a film about child abuse, I began thinking about the heroes we had featured and the abused children they were helping. The next thing I knew, my eyes were stinging and tears began to gush. Although it felt bad, it felt *good* too. I've heard *women* describe pregnancy and labor that way (although my wife isn't one of them); only instead of nine months, it had been nine years! ...nine whole years without shedding a single tear.

Hopefully, the *next* time I feel a lump in my throat, the thought of crying will be a little easier to swallow.

One of the greatest paradoxes of which I know is the *tear*; that warm salty droplet of emotion that flows so freely down a child's soft cheek, and yet frightens most *men* throughout the remainder of their lives.

I would like to meet the guy who conceived that "no crying for men" rule. He was probably some old warlord who wanted to turn boys into soldiers, and confusing 'tears' with 'fears,' banished them forever.

Perhaps someday men will learn that the only weakness associated with crying is the *fear* to do so and that we can see far more clearly through a tear than a *gun site*... I may be overestimating its significance, but over the years I have come to believe something that I am teaching to my children: that the most *powerful* heroes of all...are those who *cry*.

~ *Post Script* ~

Many years have come and gone since I wrote this essay. We buried my father recently, and I remembered how much he liked this piece, so I read it during his funeral and placed a copy in his casket. I think he would have liked that. Then I cried enough for the *both* of us...I think he would have liked that too.