

Universal Act of Emotion

Category: Crying

written by Monica Gomez | July 11, 2017

Throughout most of my life, I regarded crying as a sign of weakness. Just as men often don't like to cry, I saw crying as a symbol of sensitivity and fragility. Whenever I found myself needing a good cry, I would lock myself in my room and let it all out—let out the pain, let out the suffering, let out the anger. I would cry so much that it felt as if a gallon of water was pouring out of me, as if weight was physically being lifted off of my shoulders. I thought that the only reason I should cry was out of anger or pain.

But I have since learned that sometimes I need to cry just to cry—and that that's okay.

This past semester, I was part of a program called OMA (Opening Minds through Art) at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. I volunteered at an assisted-living center, where I had the privilege to work with elders who are suffering from various stages of dementia. This weekly program includes creating abstract art pieces with the elders, while getting to know them and keeping them company.

I noticed that one of the residents always looked as if he was crying. Whether it was involuntary or not, he taught me that this act of emotion was okay. This man does not know it, but he helped me realize that I could cry just to cry—for myself, if I want to. Crying is nothing to be ashamed about. People cry for many different reasons: from sadness, from sorrow, from joy or happiness. It is a universal act of emotion that is able to connect those who may not even speak the same language, or—as was my experience—the same state of mind.

Eventually, I was crying on a biweekly basis, sometimes even three times a week. I've come to understand that while crying is not for everyone, it is right for me. This program helped me to realize something that I needed to do for myself: to cry.

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