

# Let the tears flow and laughter ring out

**By Mark Pavilons**

I'm in a weird place lately, or perhaps it's exactly where I'm meant to be.

It's that small spot between and behind the eyes, just behind the nasal cavity. It's the place where you feel a tear coming on, and you have the choice of reeling it back in or letting it flow.

In my case, it's like I'm frequently on the verge of crying, full or partial waterworks. Often It comes unannounced, without warning.

I picture myself sitting alone at a roulette wheel. My brain has compacted every emotion into a single white ball. It's tossed in the wheel, spinning round and round. Where it ends up is anyone's guess.

It's not gambling and there are no real winners. I must deal with the particular emotion wherever the ball decides to land. Good, bad, odd, even, red, black, it's all the same.

My wife and I were great at roulette when we travelled. I would match or leverage Kim's very good gut feelings, often resulting in some decent wins. There's nothing like a stack of chips being pushed your way!

And in life ? the roulette wheel in my mind ? it's a constant gamble. We try to parlay, leverage, hedge and beat the odds. But beating the house is tough.

As I ponder things in life, my feelings are spinning, but there are more than 36 possible resting places. Each presents its own challenges ? grief, sorrow, sadness, regret, stress, disappointment, joy, frustration, and a slew of second-guesses.

Along with that knot between my eyes come sudden spurts of a strange, needy closeness, a genuine love for my family members.

I see them every day and tell them I love them, but the words are often just syllables. In my recent experiences ? almost like getting whacked by a paddle in the face ? it's an ache, a need to see their faces and hear their laughter. I've never felt this before.

Is it hormonal, due to my medication? Is it a reflective poignancy?

I've had many human aches and pains ? a hollow stomach in anticipation; cold sweats; waves of panic, and a now constant fear of death.

But this shot in the face is a new one. I don't really mind it and have become used to it now. Emotional tears contain different proteins, hormones, and even neurotransmitters that reflect the emotional experience you're having.

Crying is one way our bodies help regulate overwhelming emotions. By releasing these chemicals, tears help us literally feel calmer.

Crying may be part of the healing and it's funny that we often try to stifle it.

Unlike most animals, humans are the only species known to cry emotional tears visibly. Allowing yourself to feel and express emotion, in whatever form it takes, is often a sign that you're connected to your inner experience and can help you move through the emotion and get to the other side.

Maybe I'm actually growing, evolving and unlocking some previously hidden expanses. As my journey takes a turn, I've tried to meditate, reach deep and consider the possibilities. I've read about people travelling outside their bodies and transcending, in search

of ultimate enlightenment.

Dionne Warwick once said that crying is 'cleansing,' and there's always a reason for the tears.

I admire those types and people like the Dalai Lama for finding that sweet spot of happiness and contentment. They have many answers that are out of reach for most of us poor saps. I long to feel part of something much, much bigger than myself.

Alas, maybe in the next life.

But back to my teary-eyed car rides and quiet moments.

Maybe we were meant to let loose, open up, and show our true selves. Keeping everything bottled up can be so tiring.

Maybe our emotions, tear ducts and short breaths are meant to release that built-up tension.

We can't all find nirvana in the lotus position in our bedrooms but maybe we can travel somewhere we are all meant to be. Maybe it's over the rainbow as Dorothy believed. Perhaps it's walking on sunshine as Katrina & The Waves espoused.

Wherever we're headed, may the wind be at our backs! Sure, the course ahead may be treacherous and waves so high we're filled with fear but somehow we know the clouds will part and the seas will calm.

Funny isn't it? We've all survived many storms and we're still standing.

We've placed our bets and let the ball land where it may. We may have won and lost but we're still in the game.

When my eyes fill up, I am swamped by a feeling of despair that somehow the world won't miss me after all. Maybe there won't be anyone at the dock to welcome me after such a long voyage.

And maybe that little white ball will get bounced right off the table, hit the floor and roll under a piece of furniture, where it rests, forgotten. Or the dog eats it!

We smile when we see people in their cars laughing, or singing along with the radio. We should also open our hearts to those sulking behind the wheel, having a bad day. Maybe a smile and a wave would do them some good!

Some believe we have to laugh to keep from crying, in order to maintain control.

Those who know me see me as a jovial guy, one who's often quick with a joke or prone to laughter. I really enjoy it there's nothing quite like it.

Scientists believe that laughter, at its deepest level, is a sign of resilience, adaptability and cognition. Does that mean we're at the top of the food chain due to our ability to recite knock-knock jokes?

It is to laugh.

Laugh or cry. Do what you must.

And do it with gusto!