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The Art of Crying

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Presley-Peyton Shemelia

Presley-Peyton Shemelia is a freshman social work major from Philadelphia, PA. She does not typically share her writing with others but has enjoyed composition and found writing this piece to be one of the most challenging moments of her freshman career. When she is not doing school work, Presley-Peyton enjoys playing piano, fellowshipping with others, and spending time outdoors.

The Art of Crying

I sit alone, curled up in a crooked lump with my back pushed against the icy whitewashed wall. I try to become invisible and cease to exist, but everything in my body is telling me that I am still here. Still breathing. My hands shake like my gentle grandfather who had Parkinson's and my heart pounds faster than it did the day I received my first kiss. My lungs struggle to force oxygen into my body without making the slightest noise that would give my emotions away. *The first tear begins to form.*

Desperately, I try to squeeze my eyes shut in an attempt to suppress the ocean that is about to demolish its barriers. I know that when the first tear falls the struggle will be over, but I do not surrender because I am not convinced I can live with this grief. I do not want to admit that he is gone. My body starts to rock back and forth, imitating a mother soothing her distressed child. I tell myself I will not give in, I will not accept today, and I will not allow myself to feel the weight of tears. I know the barriers are beginning to crack because my eyelids sense moisture. This dampness exhilarates my body putting all my senses on high alert. Suddenly I am aware of the rough carpet my feet have been drilled into and the crumpled pile of laundry full of blacks and grays that sits under me. I hear the buzzing of air circulating in the room and can barely sense the vibration of the fan sitting across from me. I smell the familiar scent of my quiet place which always reminds me of a field of wild flowers.

A new discovery commands the attention of my senses as I feel a cool droplet begin to pave its course down my cheek and past my crooked nose. I can feel it reach the end of my chin and watch the tear land on my green Eagles shirt, green having always been my grandfather's favorite color. Then another droplet begins to form and my crimson red cheeks are astonished by the cold sensation overcoming my heated face. I give in and let the tears fall one by one as I take in the dreaded moisture I have been fighting. Each tear that falls strips away another piece of my hard façade I held together for so long. I feel the relieving sense of no longer pushing back the overwhelming waters and I begin to doubt my anxieties wondering why I was so scared to feel the soothing sensation of tears and the relief that letting go brings.

The tears thoroughly soak through my tattered shirt as I feel my body calming down. My lungs begin to take in proper amounts of oxygen and my heart rate slows to a steady thump. My throat no longer burns from gasping for air and the shaking in my hands subside. I begin wiping off the water that has now engulfed my face but quickly give up as it just begins to cover my arms. My feet extend from their cramped position and my back straightens itself out. A calm washes over me and I sit in silence until the last tear escapes and no more fall. I hesitantly rise to my feet and am faced with my image in the mirror.

I look different than when I first entered the room. My emotions are no longer hidden under a perfectly contoured face and my crimson red cheeks are now a soft cherry color. My eyes are still moist, but the deep sorrow that made them appear near black has been replaced with a mahogany brown that seems to invite others in. My hair is no longer in its tight braid, but it envelops my face, telling the story of surrender. I finally realize that crying stripped away the hardened persona I tried to put on and revealed the helpless girl in need of a friend who no longer wants to bear the weight of sorrow alone. As I begin the process of washing off my tears and pulling my hair back into an orderly braid my mind wonders. I think of others who will experience the renewal crying brings and wonder what color their soaked shirts will be or what their tear stained faces will reveal to them.