

Abstract:

Traditionally in Britain, maintaining a stiff upper lip meant adult crying was discouraged and seen as weakness. More recently, research has studied adult crying to explore its purpose, and other research investigated what drives intrapsychic transformation, but research to explore a correlation between them is scarce.

This qualitative, small-scale study examined links between tears and internal transformation. Undertaken by a trained psychotherapist it employed heuristic inquiry specifically to explore the experience of tears in transformational moments in adults. The aims included how participants made meaning of their experiences of moments of change and tears, and to explore how tears can act as a facilitator of change.

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with four participants who identified with the experience of tears being significant during moments of transformation. Core themes that emerged were grouped into two main categories: how tears assist in moving from distress to wellbeing; and how tears enable integration of parts of self.