

# The 5 Types Of Tears Of High-Profile People



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Crying is the way that most of us enter the world. As babies, tears mean one thing: our needs and desires. They signal life. As we grow, we start to understand tears in a different way, as symbolising happiness or sadness. Some begin to shy away from crying in front of other people, and may hide their tears in order to avoid being judged by others.

By adulthood, many have learned to shun tears and judge those who cry. The tears of high-profile people take on an even higher importance. We sympathise, empathise, pity, ridicule, mock, question or critique their tears.

In the media, this plays out all the time. We see high-profile people shed tears over their new babies, or cry tears of joy when they are acknowledged for their professional achievements. We see tears of loss over breakups, illnesses, deaths, tragedies and injustices. Our responses to these tears vary based on the way that they are framed by the media, politicians and on social media.



Michael Jordan's tears during the 2009 Basketball Hall of Fame induction ceremony sparked the internet meme "Crying Jordan." (Photo by Jim Rogash/Getty Images)

We decide which tears are legitimate. We tease Millennials for being easily #triggered despite the fact that trauma is not confined to specific generations.

We become a jury for tears; we decide if the tears are self-serving or selfless. If the tears are related to the loss of a parent, child or spouse, or over innocent children or animals, we might accept them. But when we add gender, sex, sexuality, alcohol and consent into the mix, our response to tears changes again. We become the judge and jury over public tears, especially in legal matters.

Brett Kavanaugh [cried](#) during the Senate Judiciary Committee's confirmation hearing, when he was questioned about assault claims by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. Despite these allegations, he was [confirmed](#) as a United States Supreme Court Justice.

I tried to analyse Kavanaugh's tears on multiple levels.



Brett Kavanaugh gets emotional at the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing into sexual assault allegations. Image: Getty.

During the media representation of Kavanaugh's hearing, we saw the trope of the poor, wrongly accused man having his dreams crushed by bitter feminists. Dr. Ford maintained her composure and integrity throughout her testimony despite the [bizarre](#) and often inappropriate line of questioning by a prosecutor. While she [maintained her composure](#), remaining on the verge of tears at some points, the media often infantilised her.

After Kavanaugh [cried and raged](#), I wondered about the role of his tears. Were they a performance?



**§AlexisOhanian** 776 ✓  
@alexisohanian



Replying to @alexisohanian

**Beta Brett:**

- + Played the "father card"
- + Cried & screamed
- + Insulted everyone's intelligence with lies about the definitions of phrases anyone with Google could debunk
- + Argued hysterically with sitting Senators, even going so far as to threaten them

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Replying to @alexisohanian

If you're going to be a Supreme Court Justice -- a job that requires maintaining sober judgement -- it shouldn't matter what questions you have to answer in your job interview, you keep it together.

I look forward to the cartoon @damonheraldsun puts on the front page about it.

I wanted to understand more about this, so I read about the tears of high-profile people and viewed an inordinate amount of unflattering crying photos. From this, I identified five categories of their tears:

1. 'I am amazing' tears over athletic, artistic or professional [achievements](#).
2. 'You are amazing' tears over family members, friends or partners.
3. 'I am hurting' tears over loss and grief, [breakdowns](#) or breakups. Also referred to as 'I can't even' tears when the person crying is a millennial or hipster.
4. 'I'm a survivor' tears over being assaulted, abused, shamed or discriminated against.
5. 'I'm a perpetrator' tears about being called out over abuse, assault or other bad behaviours, often due to a loss of status. These tears can also involve anger, condescension, gaslighting and lies.

All five of the types of tears on my list seem to fascinate people.

There is a lot of jealousy and obsession about Tears 1 and 2, around achievements, relationships and children.

The trauma involved in Tears 3, 4 and 5 also tend to draw in wide audiences.



Then-presidential nominee Senator Barack Obama cried while speaking about his grandmother, who died of cancer, during a rally in 2008. Image: Getty.



Kevin Rudd sheds a tear at a press conference after he was deposed as prime minister. Image: Getty.

I also noticed that race and gender impact heavily on the analysis and [judgement](#) of the person crying.

As the world watched Kavanaugh and Dr. Ford testify, there was disagreement over who was the survivor and who was the perpetrator; whose emotions were legitimate and whose were fake. In the United States, people were drawn into intense [debates](#) about the allegations.

Ultimately, Kavanaugh [apologised for his tears](#), but not for his inappropriate behaviour, including the alleged assault and the drinking to excess. If we think about this in terms of gender, Kavanaugh's alleged behaviours were considered forgivable, even [acceptable](#), while Dr. Ford's disclosure itself was turned into a [spectacle](#).

When we look at the tears of high-profile people, it is worth remembering that even the guilty can weep and look like victims. Even, or especially, those who are guilty can turn allegations into what seem like injustices.

It's time to stop being so simplistic about tears. Tears don't just come in binaries: happy or sad, innocent or guilty, victim or criminal. Just as children have to learn, emotions are far more complex than that.