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**What to do
when
women
cry.**

**A manual
for men.**



by Rachel Green

www.rachelgreen.com

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Introduction

I was talking about giving staff feedback to a group of finance managers recently, when one of the men blurted out with anguish, "I'm okay giving feedback until someone cries. Then I'm out of there". The other guys laughed and agreed they didn't like it when a woman cried either.

It's a common scenario – especially amongst men. They come across a female work colleague, staff member or peer and she's crying. And the man squirms.

Rick Grubissa, a hospital Engineer I met recently summed it up perfectly. He stood up in a conference of Engineers and said, "I'm a bloke working with fifteen women" A collective groan went around the audience of 100 men. "I can come into work some mornings and I'll have a staff member in my office and she'll suddenly burst into tears". More sympathy from his audience. "I mean, after I've offered her a tissue what the heck do I do next? I just want out of there."

I went home that night and told my husband what had happened and sure enough, he came up with his own story about women at work who cry and how he doesn't know what to do. "I mean, am I supposed to put my arm around them or is that likely to get a harassment suit slapped on me?" he asked.

"A woman crying at work is something I just do not know how to handle. It's a bit like if a woman at work has come in with her new baby and everyone is passing it around so we can all go "ooh and aah" over it. I don't want it passed to me, I don't know what I'm meant to do with it."

Then, of course, there are the men who have partners, wives or girlfriends who cry. One husband reported coming home to find his wife sitting in the middle of the shower, crying her eyes out. "I had no idea what had happened. Nor did I know what to do. I felt terrible seeing her like that. Why anyone would sit in the middle of the shower crying unless something has gone seriously wrong beats me. But she couldn't even explain why she was crying. What's a husband to do?"

Sons, fathers and grandfathers have to deal with their women crying too. One single mother, Gloria, was telling me of the time she was wanting to talk to her 19 year old son. He had done something the day before that she had thought was wrong and was seething about it. She was determined to talk to him about it. But there never seemed a good time as he always had his friend with him. Finally, she asked if she could speak with him on her own. He insisted that his mate should stay. She got even more exasperated. Her exasperation started to well up as tears, to which her son responded, "Oh, you're not going to cry on me are you?" as he walked out slamming the door behind him.

If you're a man at work, whether the manager, boss or shop floor assistant, or you are living with a woman, and the women around you cry and you don't know what to do – then this is for you. Read on to section one to find out why women cry and go to section two to know how to react.

Rachel Green.

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