

Please Pass the Kleenex

*by Liz Gibbons*

When I am deeply touched I feel it deep on the inside. I feel it in my chest, I feel choked up, feel a lump in my throat, may have tears in my eyes, or even may have goose bumps. Yet, what moves me may leave you bored. Something that causes you to jump up and down in excitement may leave me feeling “what’s the big deal?” I find it interesting that we all react to people, events, movies, and stories so differently.

I am often emotionally touched. Perhaps no more than others, but sometimes I feel I am very easily triggered. The internet provides many avenues daily for stories or events that touch me. I may get teary after viewing a video of a heartfelt interaction between a parent and a child, or of a person overcoming great odds and doing something unexpected.

Just last week I got choked up watching a video of a usually nonverbal autistic young man give an inspiring six minute talk at his high school graduation. Often when I would take one of my sons to the airport for them to fly back home I fought back tears as we bid goodbye. I am often moved when reading a good book. It can even be an empathetic exchange with a stranger.

In Atlanta I often passed a Walmart neighborhood store between the interstate and our home and sometimes found it convenient to run in to pick up an item or two. One day I noticed a man sitting on the sidewalk near the exit door with a sign saying “Help.” Normally I do not donate, but my intuition told me he was legit. So when I left the store I handed him some money. He looked directly at me and softly and sincerely said “Thank you.” As I walked away I felt teary eyed. I believe I benefited more than he.

Music raises emotions in all of us. When I watch The Capital Fourth concert broadcast from Washington D.C. the patriotic songs have an uplifting effect as I lustily belt out the songs along with the choir and feel the desire to be active in some manner. Conversely at a Christmas Eve service the singing of the carols usually brings on tears, and I get so choked up I cannot sing.

With the combination of the acting and the music in the background, movies are designed to elicit emotion. I recall back in the early 1980s my husband and I went to a movie that starred Jack Lemmon. I cannot recall the name of that movie, but I identified so strongly with the character and how his story related to a challenge one of our sons was going through that I could not stop the avalanche of tears even after we got to our car. Fortunately my husband was very supportive and held me until I cried it out.

For me a moving experience is a deep connection with another person or object, a feeling of oneness. It is what brings joy, meaning, and deep love into my life.