

Can you trust a leader who cries?

Based on an article by Olivia Lang

American dream

Celebrating the Republican – and his own – victory, the incoming speaker of the US House of Representatives John Boehner's voice choked with emotion. "I spent my whole life chasing the American dream. I put myself through school ... working every rotten job there was and every night shift I could find," he sobbed, "later running a small business. And when I saw how out of touch Washington had become with the core values of this great nation, I 25." A loyal crowd cheered and chanted as Mr Boehner, chin wobbling and welling up again, finished his speech.



Pre-programmed

For the audience, it was probably not the first time they had seen a few tears escape down the face of a political figure. Most modern-day US presidents or candidates have succumbed to their emotions on occasion. Former presidents George Bush – both junior and senior, Bill and Hillary Clinton, even Barack Obama, have all been caught weeping at some point. The list goes on. Bob Hawke, the popular former Australian prime minister, became famous for crying during his time in office. Despite his tough-guy image, he cried while talking about his daughter's drug addiction, and his infidelity in marriage. 26 former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher – known as the Iron Lady – welled up when she left Downing Street in 1990. But why do they do it?

Most psychologists agree that it is now seen as far more acceptable to cry in public than it was several decades ago. Moreover, says Judi James, a behavioural expert, many politicians believe it will increase their support by making people warm to them, which – at a basic level – it does. "Crying has a profound effect on someone. It's something that babies do to get nurture and attention and love, and we are almost pre-programmed to have an empathetic response to crying," she says.

Tearful

But, she continues, then the intellectual part of your brain kicks in and, for many of us, that includes suspiciousness – especially if the person is perceived to want something. For the British, she believes former Prime Minister Tony Blair began a new trend in politics, when he blinked back tears after the death of Princess Diana. "Because we were all tearful over Diana's death, it was seen as 27. But the act soon lost its effect as the British began to get more wary of Mr Blair's sentimental displays. He would begin to do the 'blinking back the tears' as a political gesture, and that was when people began to doubt it. It began to look rather contrived," she said. "In the past, countries have been mesmerised by charismatic leaders. But, at least in Britain's case, things have changed, as we are used to programmes like the X-factor where everyone cries to get our votes. As a nation we have become emotionally dulled," she says.

Lucy Beresford, a psychotherapist, says the problem is that while what we are looking for in a politician has evolved over time, there is still an inherent contradiction in our requirements. "The thing is we want our politicians to be very strong figures and therefore we don't like the sense that they will fall apart," she says. "But at the same time we want our politicians to be 28."

Faking it

In Mr Boehner's case, Lucy Beresford believes the crying was genuine because it was congruent with his words — he was 29. And when it appears less real, that is probably because it *is*, she says, because as humans we tend to pick up intuitively whether it rings true or not. "We can tell when politicians are faking it. We don't necessarily know how we tell but we pick up signals such as facial twitches or hand gestures to the face," she says.

Judi James says that the most obvious difference is that politicians may shed a tear, but their 30. "Genuine tears make us desperate to hide our faces. The whole of the lower face crumples. This is where people go wrong," she says.

No politician wants to be caught out pretending, but shedding real tears can also 31. When Spanish foreign minister Miguel Angel Moratinos cried after losing his post, it prompted the media to comment that he "he had no guts even when leaving". And when Hillary Clinton cried during her presidential campaign, the event was seized on by critics as "proof that she was not tough enough" to make it in the top job.

But, undoubtedly, at the right time and in the right place, tears can soften our hearts and make often distant-looking politicians appear real. As a famous French novelist once said: "The secret of success is 32. Once you can fake that, you've got it made."

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Tekst 7 Can you trust a leader who cries?

Kies bij iedere open plek in de tekst het juiste antwoord uit de gegeven mogelijkheden.

1p 25

- A decided to run for office
- B doubted my capacities
- C hesitated to take action
- D suspected a conspiracy
- E wanted to quit working

1p 26

- A Consequently,
- B Even
- C For
- D Yet

1p 27

- A an exaggerated reaction
- B a personal weakness
- C a shared emotion
- D a studied performance

1p 28

- A human
- B intelligent
- C photogenic
- D tough

1p 29

- A pretending to be emotional
- B remembering emotional parts of his life
- C rendering the lines he had learnt by heart
- D saying what was expected of him

1p 30

- A actions support what they say
- B body language fails to match up
- C posture looks natural
- D words sound indifferent

1p 31

- A be an act
- B have its drawbacks
- C look unconvincing
- D work wonders

1p 32

- A determination
- B persuasiveness
- C sincerity

Bronvermelding

Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.