

Rage rooms: can smashing stuff up really help to relieve anger and stress?

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

- a. People have many different ways of dealing with stress. Some are positive, some are negative and some are neutral. Make a list of ways to deal with stress. Then compare with a partner.

Positive	Negative	Neutral

2 Key words

- a. Choose the correct word or expression to match each definition. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

1. to successfully deal with something difficult

- a. gateway b. lash out c. cope

2. a medical approach that treats the whole person, not just individual symptoms

- a. holistic b. pent-up c. ventures

3. the state of being quite bad and unacceptable

- a. catharsis b. woeful c. outlet

4. having the opposite effect to the one that was intended

- a. counterproductive b. douse c. catharsis

5. a time when problems become so difficult that people can't deal with them anymore

- a. cognitive b. breaking point c. articulate

6. having a useful, helpful or beneficial effect

- a. constructive b. navigating c. lash out

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7. something that helps people get or achieve something, the first step in a process
 - a. cope
 - b. holistic
 - c. gateway
8. expressing a feeling, especially anger or frustration, in a loud or strong way
 - a. qualms
 - b. venting
 - c. fuel
9. trained to behave in a specific way in a specific situation
 - a. conditioned
 - b. cognitive
 - c. ventures
10. a way of expressing strong feelings or ideas
 - a. pent-up
 - b. outlet
 - c. breaking point
11. to express or explain your thoughts and feelings in a clear and careful way
 - a. breaking point
 - b. holistic
 - c. articulate
12. finding the right way to deal with a complicated or difficult situation
 - a. navigating
 - b. venting
 - c. douse
13. the process of releasing strong feelings to provide relief from anger or pain
 - a. woeful
 - b. catharsis
 - c. navigating
14. having difficult feelings that cannot be expressed or relieved
 - a. constructive
 - b. gateway
 - c. pent-up
15. feelings of doubt, uncertainty or worry
 - a. fuel
 - b. qualms
 - c. woeful
16. related to the brain and its mental processes
 - a. conditioned
 - b. gateway
 - c. cognitive
17. business projects or opportunities, often with risk involved
 - a. ventures
 - b. holistic
 - c. constructive

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18. to suddenly act out, physically or verbally, in an angry way

- a. lash out b. conditioned c. qualms

19. to increase something or make it stronger

- a. articulate b. fuel c. holistic

20. to stop something from increasing or becoming stronger

- a. counterproductive b. outlet c. douse

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. Remember to change the verb forms if necessary.

1. A university degree can be a(n) _____ to new opportunities.
2. Meditation and yoga are a form of _____ for some people.
3. The professor offered kind but _____ feedback on the students' essays.
4. The situation in my country is _____ – many people are suffering.
5. My friend spent all day _____ about her job and relationship problems.
6. The idea to start her own business was _____ by the frustration with her current office job.
7. The speaker was very _____, which surprised us due to his young age and limited education.
8. I find it really helps to _____ to a friend when I'm frustrated at work.
9. I can _____ with work stress quite well, but my kids can really drive me crazy!
10. Thinking about your work problems at home is _____.
You take away the time you could use to decompress.

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c. Write ten sentences using the other ten words from task a.

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Venues promoting destruction as stress relief are appearing around the UK but experts – and our correspondent – are unsure

Nicola Davis

29 November, 2025

- 1 If you find it hard to count to 10 when anger bubbles up, a new trend offers a more hands-on approach. Rage rooms are cropping up across the UK, allowing clients to smash old TVs, plates and furniture.
- 2 Such pay-to-destroy ventures are thought to have originated in Japan in 2008, but have since gone global. In the UK alone venues can be found in locations from Birmingham to Brighton, with many promoting destruction as a stress-relieving experience.
- 3 According to a rage room in south-east London “each smash is a cathartic release, a burst of pure, primal joy”.
- 4 “We are at capacity – we were looking for another venue because we can’t keep up with demand,” said Amelia Smewing, who set up the business with her husband after exploring ways to help their son cope with PTSD.
- 5 Rob Clark, an operations director at another location, said the popularity of its Rage Room was growing year on year, with customers ranging from younger people looking for a unique experience, to groups of women celebrating break-ups, and people using the space as a “healthy outlet” for stress or mental health challenges.
- 6 Clark said many customers were navigating tough personal challenges. “The feedback we get is consistently good – the Rage Room gives them a safe, constructive way to release pent-up anger and frustration, and it’s making a genuine difference to their mental wellbeing,” he said, adding several youth care homes regularly bring their teenagers, while a handful of therapists actively refer clients when traditional talking therapy is not enough.
- 7 Lucy Bee, the founder of another UK rage room, said her venue also hosted visits from schools and children’s homes. But people also just come for fun. “It’s so against how we’re conditioned to behave,” she said. “It is so naughty.”

- 8 Like other venues, Bee said, the typical “rager” is female. “We’re talking early 40s, woman, a couple of kids, good job,” she said.
- 9 Bee added that having trained as a holistic therapist she found many women experience guilt and shame over feeling angry.
- 10 “A lot of women ... are at breaking point, permanently teetering, living in survival mode. And this gives them a way to just let it out,” Bee said, adding that for some people who were struggling the experience could act as a gateway towards seeking further help.
- 11 Despite having a happy home life, I get frustrated over house repairs, woeful train services, and the state of the nation. So I put on a protective outfit, pull down my visor and enter one of Bee’s rage rooms.
- 12 Within seconds I am turning wine bottles into explosions of glass, laughing in surprise at myself. But I don’t enjoy the noise and am thinking more about the mess than experiencing a release.
- 13 Experts, too, have qualms.
- 14 In 2024, Dr Sophie Kjærvik, now at the Norwegian Center for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies in Oslo, co-authored a review into what activities fuel or douse rage. She said the evidence suggested “venting” was actually counterproductive.
- 15 “You’re activating your body in a way that your brain can interpret as that you’re getting more angry,” she said. “We found that doing meditation and mindfulness and muscle relaxation activities are way more productive ways of dealing with anger.” Kjærvik said cognitive behavioural therapy was also very efficient.
- 16 Dr Ryan Martin, a dean at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and an author of several books on anger, said people who relied on catharsis stayed angrier for longer, and were more likely to lash out aggressively after the fact. “I think the problem is it feels good, so people assume it’s good for them,” he said. “But at the same time, other things that we know might feel good when we’re emotional, like drinking, overeating, ... aren’t necessarily good for us either.”

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- 17 Prof Brad Bushman of Ohio State University, who co-authored the review with Kjærvik, also raised concerns. "When people feed their anger in these rage rooms, they're just practising how to behave more aggressively," he said.
- 18 Smewing emphasised that rage rooms were a conditioned environment. "Just because they've smashed up the air fryer at the rage room doesn't mean they're going to go home and smash up the air fryer in their kitchen," she said.
- 19 Suzy Reading, a chartered member of the British Psychological Society and author of the book *How to be Selfish*, said it was not that anger should not be expressed, but that there were many ways to do this, including writing and breathing exercises. Reading also said while rage rooms may offer an outlet for stress they cost money and did not provide insights into the causes of such feelings.
- 20 "If there isn't an understanding of what caused it, then we just go back into our home lives and our work lives and our communities, and nothing changes," she said. "And for a lot of women, [the cause is] going to be unmet needs."
- 21 Reading said it could be important to move through some of the feelings of anger in order to have effective conversations. "We want to regulate our nervous system so that we can articulate well," she said.

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Glossary

PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, a mental health condition related to a very bad experience in the past

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3 Comprehension check

a. Decide if the statements are True, False or Not mentioned according to the information in the article. Correct the false statements.

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Rage rooms become popular in the UK immediately after they opened in Japan. | True / False / Not mentioned |
| 2. Amelia Smewing and her husband started their rage room business as a way to make money. | True / False / Not mentioned |
| 3. Rob Clark says that rage rooms offer his customers a meaningful way to make an impact on their mental health. | True / False / Not mentioned |
| 4. Lucy Bee says that most of her rage room customers are single men in their 20s. | True / False / Not mentioned |
| 5. The author is definitely not going to visit a rage room again. | True / False / Not mentioned |
| 6. Dr Sophie Kjærvik believes that venting can be a very productive activity. | True / False / Not mentioned |
| 7. Kjærvik explains that relaxing, calm activities are a helpful way to deal with anger. | True / False / Not mentioned |
| 8. Dr Ryan Martin says that all activities that make you feel good are very good for you. | True / False / Not mentioned |
| 9. Prof Brad Bushman says that rage rooms give people the space to become angrier and more aggressive. | True / False / Not mentioned |
| 10. Suzy Reading says that rage rooms help people understand the true causes of their anger. | True / False / Not mentioned |

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4 Key language

a. Read the sentences below. What do the underlined verbs mean in context? How can these verbs create a visual image in the reader's mind?

1. If you find it hard to count to 10 when anger bubbles up, a new trend offers a more hands-on approach.

2. Rage rooms are cropping up across the UK, allowing clients to smash old TVs, plates and furniture.

b. Write two sentences of your own using the verbs above.

1. bubble up:

2. crop up:

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. Do you think rage rooms are popular in your country or culture? Why or why not?
2. Would you ever consider using a rage room to deal with anger? Why or why not?
3. Which aspect of this article surprised you the most?
4. Which of the experts do you find the most convincing?

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6 In your own words

- a. Imagine that you want to create a stress-relieving business for your community. It can be a rage room, a relaxation space or any idea of your own. Prepare a business plan. Include the following information:
- Which activities are offered at this business?
 - What is the venue like?
 - What items do you need for the business?
 - How much will you charge for the services?
 - Who do you think your typical customer will be?
 - What do you think the experts in the article would say about your business? Would they think it's a healthy way for people to deal with anger?
- b. Share your business plan with your class. Ask for constructive feedback or advice.