

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

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

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

Positive	Negative

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. expressing a feeling, especially anger or frustration, in a loud or strong way
 - a. promote
 - b. venting
 - c. approach
2. real, sincere and honest or true
 - a. genuine
 - b. naughty
 - c. consistently
3. to remove or reduce unpleasant feelings or pain
 - a. insights
 - b. constructive
 - c. relieve
4. a place where people meet for an event or an activity
 - a. originated
 - b. venue
 - c. demand
5. having the opposite effect to the one that was intended
 - a. counterproductive
 - b. constructive
 - c. promote
6. in a way that does not change and continues for period of time
 - a. venting
 - b. conditioned
 - c. consistently
7. useful understanding or information about what something is really like
 - a. insights
 - b. trend
 - c. naughty

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8. a way of doing something or dealing with a person or situation
 - a. venue
 - b. approach
 - c. demand
9. happened or appeared for the first time
 - a. originated
 - b. trend
 - c. counterproductive
10. having a useful, helpful or beneficial effect
 - a. genuine
 - b. constructive
 - c. conditioned
11. to sell or advertise a product or service, to make a product or service more popular
 - a. relieve
 - b. originated
 - c. promote
12. behaving in a bad or inappropriate way, especially used for children
 - a. consistently
 - b. naughty
 - c. venue
13. the customers' need or desire for products or services
 - a. venting
 - b. approach
 - c. demand
14. trained to behave in a specific way in a specific situation
 - a. conditioned
 - b. insights
 - c. relieve
15. a thing, activity or place that's new, popular and fashionable
 - a. counterproductive
 - b. trend
 - c. genuine

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

1. I love that restaurant. The servers are friendly and the food is _____ high quality.
2. Lots of cities _____ sustainable practices, like cycling and community gardens.
3. I really like Jake. I think he's a kind, caring and _____ person.

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4. Hip-hop _____ in New York City, but it's popular in many places now.
5. I don't agree with his _____ to teaching. He spends too much time talking and not enough time listening.
6. Faye always has a cup of tea with honey. She says it _____ her sore throat after a long day at work.
7. When I am frustrated with something, I take my phone, call my friend and _____.
8. The Vienna Opera house is a spectacular _____.
9. I recommend talking to a therapist about your problems because they can offer a useful _____.
10. I value colleagues who can give me _____ criticism about my work.

c. Write five more sentences using the remaining 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

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- 1 If you find it hard to count to 10 when you're angry, a new trend offers a more hands-on approach. Rage rooms are appearing across the UK, allowing clients to smash old TVs, plates and furniture.
- 2 Such pay-to-destroy businesses originated in Japan in 2008, but are now global. In the UK alone, there are rage rooms in locations from Birmingham to Brighton. Many promote destruction as a stress-relieving experience.
- 3 "We are full – we were looking for another venue because we can't meet the demand," said Amelia Smewling, owner of rage room in south-east London. She set up the business with her husband after exploring ways to help their son with PTSD.
- 4 Rob Clark, a rage room director another location, said the popularity is growing every year. Customers include younger people looking for a unique experience, groups of women celebrating break-ups, and people using the space for stress or mental health challenges.
- 5 Clark said many customers have tough personal challenges. "The feedback we get is consistently good. The Rage Room gives them a safe, constructive way to release anger and frustration, and it's making a genuine difference to their mental wellbeing," he said. He said that several youth care homes bring their teenagers, and some therapists actively refer clients when traditional therapy is not enough.
- 6 Lucy Bee, the founder of another UK rage room said her venue also had 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."
- 7 Like other venues, Bee said, the typical "rager" is female – "early 40s, woman, a couple of kids, good job," she said.

- 8 Despite having a happy home life, I get frustrated over house repairs, bad 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.
- 9 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.
- 10 Experts, too, have concerns.
- 11 Dr Sophie Kjærviik works at the Norwegian Center for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies in Oslo. She co-authored an article about the effects of different activities on rage. She said "venting" is actually counterproductive.
- 12 "We found that doing meditation and mindfulness and muscle relaxation activities are way more productive ways of dealing with anger."
- 13 Dr Ryan Martin is a dean at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and an author of several books on anger. He said "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."
- 14 Prof Brad Bushman of Ohio State University co-authored the article with Kjærviik. He also had concerns. "When people feed their anger in these rage rooms, they're just practising how to behave more aggressively," he said.
- 15 Suzy Reading is a member of the British Psychological Society and author of the book *How to be Selfish*. She explained that there are many ways to express anger, including writing and breathing exercises. She said while rage rooms may help with stress, they cost money and do not provide insights into the causes of anger.
- 16 "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.

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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 or False according to the information in the article. Correct the false statements.

1. Japan was the first place in the world to have rage rooms. True / False
2. Amelia Smewing and her husband started their rage room business as a way to make money. True / False
3. Rob Clark says that rage rooms have a positive effect on his customers' mental health. True / False
4. Lucy Bee says that most of her rage room customers are single men in their 20s. True / False
5. Dr Sophie Kjærvik believes that venting can be a very productive activity. True / False
6. Kjærvik explains that relaxing, calm activities are a helpful way to deal with anger. True / False
7. Prof Brad Bushman says that rage rooms give people the space to become angrier and more aggressive. True / False
8. Suzy Reading says that rage rooms help people understand the true causes of their anger. True / False

4 Key language

a. Read the words in the table below. Then scan the article and find these forms in a different part of speech.

Noun	Verb
relief	1.
2.	destroy
help	3.
4.	break up
behaviour	5.
6.	relax
expression	7.
8.	understand

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b. Write sentences of your own using the words from task a.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

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 like to use a rage room to deal with anger? Why or why not?
3. Which part of this article surprised you the most?

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?

b. Share your business plan with your class. Ask for constructive feedback or advice.