

“Rage rooms are a sign of the times... but should anger really be celebrated?”

Illustration  Petra Eriksson

These dinner plates are going to get it. I fling them in the air, swinging my bat in a broad arc, and the explosion is musical, a starburst of shards in all directions. An adorable ceramic frog croaks his last as I take his head off with a hammer. Rap pumps from the speakers, Eminem and Nicki Minaj urging me to uncage my inner beast.

Then the moment I've been waiting for. Propping a computer monitor on the pallets in the centre of the room, I start whaling on it with a sledgehammer. The screen crumples, reveals its circuitry, then splinters to smithereens. "That's for the endless updates, storage issues and crashing before I'd saved changes," I think, surveying the electronic dust.

Anger feels like our dominant emotion these days. That's hardly surprising, given the toddlers in charge of our politics, our boring jobs and the glowing screens in our pockets that remind us everyone we know is at a pool party right now.

Rage rooms are a weird sign of these angry times. Empty but for a selection of weaponry and smashable objects, they're a safe place in which anyone can Hulk-out to their heart's content. They're popping up around the world, from Hong Kong to Tenerife. I was conflicted about coming to Wreck Room, the first in London, though. Should anger really be celebrated?

I'm particularly disturbed by the places that encourage people to throw axes at a picture of their ex. And the idea

that some of these places have become popular date-night destinations. Who thinks rage is the way to get someone in the mood? I'd prefer flowers.

Wreck Room director Joyce Peters enlightens me with her take on the bigger picture. "We're told to be nice and polite, not to break things," she says, smiling. "But destruction is a necessary part of our world." She tells me most visitors to Wreck Room are women. Some come for therapeutic reasons as physicalising feelings reduces the disconnection between our thoughts and bodies.

This gives me a new way of thinking about anger, which I've always considered a toxic, male emotion. Being violent with people is wrong but anger is a natural response to injustice, and literally letting rip can be good for our health.

It's also unbelievably fun to break things; something I remember from childhood. Perhaps rage rooms are misleadingly named. Should we call them "Feel the Rush of Freedom, and Exhilarating Sensation of Your Own Strength" spaces? Less snappy, but far more accurate, and you can't make an omelette without breaking some eggs (with a sledgehammer).

I've been grinning since I left the Perspex-fronted room in which I unleashed merry hell, feeling better about situations I didn't realise I was angry about. I guess sometimes you've got to let things out to let them go. wreckroom.co.uk



*Our columnist
Rhik Samadder reconnects
mind and body with
a big helping of anger
and destruction*

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the column

