



Rage control

Feeling angry at work? You are not alone – we are getting angrier every year, reports *Ryan Swift*

The most famous rage incident in Hong Kong last year was “bus uncle.” The video clip of a middle-aged man yelling obscenities during a bus drive when a young man asked the older man to lower his voice as he carried on a cell phone conversation was a huge hit. The six-minute video clip, captured by accounting student Jon Fong Wing Hang, was broadcast on YouTube’s website and received over three hundred thousand hits. “I face pressure, you face pressure” became a catchphrase in Hong Kong.

“Bus uncle” is not the only person in Hong Kong who is angry. Richard Gee, a former accountant with Ernst & Young and now a counsellor with ReSource: The Counselling Centre Ltd., says managing anger is a growing concern in society in general and in the workplace.

“It’s important to recognize your anger. It’s a normal human emotion but it’s socially unacceptable,” he says. Gee maintains that by recognizing anger rather than suppressing it, people can partly defuse the anger they feel in just minutes.

The stresses of today's workplace can push employees over the edge. We are changing jobs more often and a growing number of us live alone, which weakens our social support.

Technology has brought us mobile phones and email, requiring a faster response to peoples' demands. We spend more time in the office and less time with our friends and family, and we exercise less. These are factors that prevent us managing our anger.

Releasing your inner Rocky

One method of dealing with anger in China has been the introduction of catharsis rooms, where people release their anger by screaming, shouting and even punching, reported the *South China Morning Post*. These rooms have been introduced in universities, schools, prisons and women's centres. One catharsis club in Chongqing lets women don boxing gloves and punch rubber dummies. Another club in Nanjing lets its customers punch and kick a man wearing protective padding. According to the owner, most of the customers are women.

Gee points to physical exercise as a great way to deal with anger.

"We have to remember that we are physical beings and... we need exercise." He says. "Being fit and getting exercise helps work out the emotion involved. Just being at a desk all day can be a stress factor." Gee advocates a healthy body as a way towards a healthy mind.

Stress relief is another important way to deal with anger, according to Gee, who suggests taking a break every hour and looking at the weather for a few minutes, then reconnecting to work. Or taking a minute to write down your feelings in a logbook. This can help people understand their anger and try to deal with it.

Gee says those who are angry at work at least half the time have a serious problem. He notes that some accountancy firms now have programmes to help stressed-out and angry workers. "Sometimes, just talking through a problem for five minutes can be all you need. If the company has these resources, use them."

Forecasting storms

Workplace signs of bottled up anger include absenteeism, tardiness, erratic work patterns, decreased productivity, increased errors and inability to concentrate. On a personal level, symptoms may include losing your temper over minor incidents, fatigue, feelings of anxiety, sleep deprivation, mood swings, headaches and weight gain or loss.

Gee says that when an employee avoids talking about a particular issue or won't stop loudly complaining about it, the employee has an anger issue.

Angry people demand fairness, appreciation and agreement on their terms. We all want this, but anger makes us demand them: we become disappointed when we don't get what we want which then turns to greater anger.

Not all anger is misplaced. It can often be a healthy and natural response to a difficult situation. When you properly channel your anger, it can energize and motivate you.

If you feel you would benefit from counselling, contact ReSource: The Counselling Centre Ltd.; tel: 2523-8979, email: enq@resourcecounselling.org, website: www.resourcecounselling.org. ReSource is a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, and is a registered charity partly funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club and Community Chest.

U.K. upset

In the U.K., *The Sunday Times* magazine surveyed Britons on anger at work:

- **64%** of Britons have had office rage.
- Up to **60%** of all absences from work are caused by stress.
- The U.K. has the second-worst road rage in the world, after South Africa.
- **71%** of Internet users admit to having suffered net rage.
- **50%** have reacted to computer problems by hitting their computer, hurling parts of it around, screaming or abusing colleagues.
- More than one-third of the U.K. population is losing sleep from anxiety.
- One in **7** adults have sought medical treatment for stress.

Resources

Self-help books available on www.amazon.com:

- *Anger Management for Dummies* by W. Doyle Gentry, Ph.D.
- *Anger Management: 6 Critical Steps to a Calmer Life* by Peter J. Favaro.
- *The Anger Trap: Free Yourself from the Frustrations that Sabotage Your Life* by Les Carter.

