



LEGAL HIGHS

## Feeling the fury, Emma Freud heads to the rage room

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**A**s I write this article, the smell of thick smoke is still present in my childhood home, which was ravaged by a fire a few days ago. An electrical fault sparked an inferno in my bedroom while I was watching *Love Island* (obvs) and 60 firemen spent eight hours dealing with the blaze it created. So I guess my mood this week could be described as rage, which was ideal for the rage room I had planned to visit for this column.

The first rage room opened in Japan in 2008 and they run like this: you're taken to a windowless room, kitted out in protective clothing including a helmet with a clear face guard, given a baseball bat, axe or crowbar, taken into a room full of landfill-destined electronic equipment, toasters, vases, crockery, empty wine bottles, maybe an old TV or a dead car, and given 20 minutes to smash the remaining life out of them. It costs about £30 and the UK has half a dozen or so, although the US has many hundreds (insert scared face emoji).

The theory is that anger is an emotion we don't manage well, and we're rarely in a safe enough space to explore it. We aren't born with the wisdom to boundary our primal rage, but it is part of who we are and it is a skill that can be learnt. While you are raging, you get a natural high that kicks in during the act of destruction. Your brain shunts blood away from the gut and towards your limbs to assist the physical exertion, your heart rate, blood pressure and respiration increase, your body temperature rises, your skin flushes, your mind is sharpened and your adrenal glands pump your body with adrenaline and cortisol.



When you take the emotional pain or murderous intent away from the activity of raging, it makes the rage room a bit like taking poppers while doing something your mother told you a thousand times not to do. Thrilling *plus* naughty, without consequences.

So unexpectedly it turned out to be exactly the right week for me to take on this assignment; I've rarely needed to address my anger more. I planned to picture the bastard wire and the hapless nail that somehow made fiery contact under my bedroom floorboards and consequently destroyed half of my childhood home, every item of clothing I own, a lifetime of notes, letters and memories, and many of my most precious possessions, and to beat the living daylights out of them both.

As it turned out, ironically, I had so many meetings raging away with insurance brokers, loss adjusters, restoration experts and scaffolders, I couldn't even honour my appointment with the baseball bat. But I hope to see you there in a week or two - and please forgive the exceptionally manic glint in my eye.