

Dying-of-the-light rage, slowly

By Ruth Ostrow

JUST look around at all those flaming red cheeks. No, it isn't global menopause or the tell-tale signs of a fun night. It's anger rising up in the capillaries of the world. We are living in the era of rage. There's a social epidemic afoot. Lack of patience is leading to road rage, trolley rage, hairdresser rage, phone rage, neighbour rage, elevator rage - and these are just the old ones.

In this hotted-up, super-fast world - overcrowded, over-noisy, over-pushy - new rages are born every second. There's restaurant rage, where people get enraged waiting for service. Despite my move to "chilled-out" Byron Bay, I sometimes eat dinner before I go out for dinner for fear of attempting to strangle a chatty companion or dawdling waiter.

My favourite is relaxation rage. I've noticed in yoga classes people getting territorial over yoga-mat spacing, and meditators going internally berserk after being kept too long in one position. As one told me: "The soothing voice of my teacher makes me want to get up and commit a heinous crime with a brick."

There is spatial rage as people feel hemmed in, visual-aural pollution rage, call-centre rage. Another newie is service rage. People want help but, "Hey, can you get on with it? I have soooo much to do today." We want everything NOW!

It's got so bad there's a plethora of new books out to help. In *The End of Patience*, author David Shenk writes that the pace of change is now so rapid that many of us are anxious. Like the joke says: "God grant me patience . . . but hurry!" *In Praise of Slow* was written by Carl Honore, who claims that we've reached a point where the pace of everything has just become maniacally speedy. "I was doing everything fast. I was just rushing through my life instead of living it . . ." As the driver explains to the policeman after being caught running a red light: "I'm rushing to get home before I have an accident."

The backlash is the Slow movement. Offshoots include the "slow city" movement, where emphasis is put on building park benches to allow people to linger; the "slow sex" movement, or Tantra, which musician Sting brought to prominence; and the "slow food" movement, which started in the tiny Italian village of Bra and now boasts more than 60,000 members promoting food preparation and sharing meals with family.

I fully endorse the Slow movement if it helps society regain balance - just as long as it doesn't claim any more waiters. That would make me really mad.

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