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newsletter...

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Short-Fuse: Anger Management Requires Maturity and Responsibility

Russell Crowe may be suffering from "intermittent explosive disorder".

Melbourne psychologist Dr Janet Hall said the real-life gladiator appeared to fit the disorder's description in the shrinks' bible, the Diagnostic Statistics Manual (DSM4).

"Without a diagnosis of anything else such as manic depression or a borderline personality disorder, his high number of outbursts fit the symptoms," she said. Dr Hall said the DSM4 criteria for intermittent explosive disorder included:

- Several episodes of failing to resist aggressive impulses that resulted in serious assaults or destruction of property.
- Where the degree of aggression was grossly out of proportion to the provocation.
- Where rage might be followed by depressed mood and fatigue.
- Job loss, school suspension, divorce, relationship problems, jail or legal problems resulting from anger.

"This is Rusty to a T," Dr Hall said, "normal anger is when someone's rights are violated, there is some threat of loss or they feel powerless or not respected. But none of these seems to be the case here and, if anything, he has violated other people's rights." Dr Hall said that as a high achiever, Crowe might be under immense pressure but might lack the emotional intelligence or maturity to self-soothe and talk himself out of being angry. Instead, he came across as "a naughty boy having a temper tantrum". "He deludes himself that he's the centre of the universe and can get away with acting however he likes," Dr Hall said.

But medicalising Crowe's outburst should not excuse it, says Danny Blay, manager of No To Violence, the male family violence prevention association. "Men choose violent behaviour to get their own way, it's not something they can't control," Mr Blay said. "They choose safe available targets for some gain and where there are no repercussions. It would be interesting to see what Rusty's response would have been if the person behind the hotel counter had been bigger than him or wearing a police uniform."

Mr Blay said violent men often felt entitled to get their own way, whether a man over his family or someone with significant power and wealth, like a Hollywood star, over an ordinary person. "The vast majority of men who contact the Men's Referral Service only use violence towards people who are smaller or weaker than them and can't fight back," he said. "Crowe's management claimed he threw the phone against the wall, not at the concierge. But violence involves causing fear and intimidation in another person and can be perpetrated against property as well as people to achieve the same effect."

Healthwatch, Ed. Fay Burstin

1. If you're feeling angry, be aware of the physical signs of a violent episode approaching. For example, increasing heart rate, perspiration, hairs on the back of your neck standing up, clenched fists or jaw.
2. Physically remove yourself from the situation. For example, walk out of the room, house, office; if driving, pull over.
3. Calm yourself down by going for a walk (10 minutes to an hour) or exercising. Practise deep-breathing or play calming music.
4. Think about what brought on the situation and how you can resolve it when you return, without violence. Talk to someone else if you need a sounding board or write down your angry thoughts and feelings.
5. Get some help. Try counselling.
6. If you're the one being yelled at, try and stay calm by breathing deeply.
7. If you fear for your safety, leave the room or call for help.
8. Try and pacify the angry person by smiling and offering to help them or fix the problem.
9. Reassure the angry person by repeating your wish to help over and over again.
10. Don't take it personally. Angry people are rarely angry for the reason they think they are. There's usually something else going on, such as an unresolved issue from their past.

Source: No To Violence and Dr Janet Hall

Thank You

Dr Janet Hall