

# 'Jobs, lovers, friends – MY TEMPER took them all'

Figures show women are more AGGRESSIVE than ever – responsible for a quarter of violent attacks. MICHELLE IKGULA, 26, destroyed her life and turned those she loved against her. She shares her anger-therapy diary...

December 15, 2009

I'm sitting in a cafe drinking a cappuccino, crying quietly I've just been fired – again. This is the third job I've lost in five years because I can't control my temper. But it's not just a problem at work: I've lost friends because of angry outbursts – at the last count it was about 20. As for boyfriends, I can't keep them either – my longest relationship lasted six months.

The problem is that when I feel insecure or threatened, it's like a red mist falls and my temper flares. You know that phrase "feeling your blood boil"? That's exactly what I feel is happening. I just lose control.

Three years ago I attacked my then boyfriend Jay\*. We'd had a volatile relationship. But one day, after we started rowing over nothing in particular, I just

flipped. I told him he was a pathetic excuse for a man and that he was nothing special. He then blocked me from storming out the front door I grabbed his crotch and stared at him. Jay screamed in agony as I squeezed and I couldn't stop myself hurting him. We both knew it was over.

I've had a bad temper since I was a teenager – I used to fight at school all the time. One time, I attacked a girl just because she called me fat. A teacher had to break us up and I was given detention. My parents grounded me for a week and warned I had to learn to control myself. But I couldn't – my temper controlled me, not the other way round. They think my temper is part of my personality.

Now, as I weep over another lost job, I know my temper is totally out of hand. My temper tantrums have become more violent and abusive over the years, as a result I'm sitting here alone, friendless and unemployed. I need help.

March 19, 2010

Today marked a huge turning point. I've just landed a job, working in an office doing admin duties. I really want to keep it, so I found a therapist who helps people with anger issues, using hypnotherapy. Her



Michelle knew her anger issues were destroying her life

name's Karen Mann and I went along to see her for the first time. Only my sister Susan, 23, knew I was going – having had first-hand experience of my temper, she's not convinced it'll work, but I feel it's worth a try. I have to get help or I risk being alone and unemployed forever.

I was so nervous as I went along to the Harley Street clinic in London. She started the session by asking me about my relationships with my family and friends, and then we spoke about my temper. I said that I get mad when I feel put down. I shout at my parents if they take my sister's side; at my friends when I feel they've let me down, and at my boyfriends when they don't make me feel loved. Saying it out loud made me realise there's a pattern to my outbursts.

Then Karen hypnotised me. Closing

my eyes, she asked me to take some deep breaths and then imagine sinking into a big velvet cushion. I felt so relaxed, in a kind of half-asleep state. Then Karen told me to recall a time I'd fallen out with a friend. She asked what I'd say to that person if I could step back in time and change the conversation.

I imagined an old school friend I'd told I never wanted to see again after she cancelled our trip to the cinema. I painted the scene in my head, but this time I apologised for shouting and explained why I was upset without raising my voice.

While under hypnosis, Karen also asked how I feel about myself and my looks, and how I think other people see me. I said I felt bad about my size-14 body, and that I've always felt fat and unattractive. The taunting at school over

my size has stayed with me.

Karen told me I was beautiful and that I must have more confidence. I awoke in floods of tears, but I didn't realise I'd been crying until I touched my face. I felt drained and a bit embarrassed – I never cry in front of people.

On the train home I felt light-headed and sick – but also refreshed and happier. As I sat there, I realised I'd thought I was confident when I'm actually insecure. My angry outbursts are my way of protecting myself. I've got to stop hurting the people I care about.

March 20

My first test. Mum shouted at me this morning for not cleaning up last night's dinner plates – but it wasn't my mess! A red mist descended as she asked me

## NAOMI CAMPBELL

Notoriously feisty Naomi, 40, was sent to anger-management classes in January 2007, after throwing a mobile phone at housekeeper Ana Scolavino.



## CHRIS BROWN

In a bid to show the court his remorse for attacking his then girlfriend Rihanna, 22, US singer Brown, 21, attended anger management in February 2009.



## ANGELINA JOLIE

After Angelina, 35, reportedly started throwing knives at Brad Pitt, 46, her terrified husband enrolled her in anger-management classes, called Streaming Pines, in December 2008.



to tidy up, but instead of shouting something rude, I took several deep breaths and a blanket of calm fell over my fiery temper. I quietly told her I would take care of it. I felt more in control – for the first time in years. Maybe I can crack this after all.

March 24

Today I was due to meet my cousin Cassandra for a catch up, but she was three hours late. Usually I'd have flipped, but not today. I used deep-breathing techniques to stay calm and kept busy by cleaning the house. By the time she arrived I felt so relaxed I even laughed as Cassandra cowered at the door blaming the traffic. Normally I'd have screamed at her – I really think I'm winning.

March 28

Tomorrow's my driving test and I'm so nervous about it that I didn't sleep last night. I kept thinking about how angry I'd get if I didn't pass. Whenever I feel worried I become short-tempered and it showed today when I exploded at a customer in a shop. She was taking ages to find her change to pay for a newspaper and so I shouted at her to stop wasting everyone's time. She looked terrified, like I was going to hit her. I felt I was losing control so I booked some extra therapy sessions.

This time Karen just hypnotised me and spent half an hour telling me I was beautiful inside and out, and that I could do anything I wanted to do, even fulfil my dream of becoming an actress. I came round from my trance feeling relaxed with such a deep sense of inner peace. I wanted that feeling to last forever.

March 29

I'm a total idiot, I failed my driving test today for driving too slowly – and it was the biggest test of my anger so far. When the examiner told me I'd failed, →

*My angry outbursts are my way of protecting myself*



rage consumed me. I ripped up my test sheet and was just about to throw it in his face when I heard a little voice telling me it was the wrong thing to do. I felt ashamed for losing my cool, mumbled sorry, then leapt out of the car before either of us could say another word. The whole experience was exhausting. But at least I didn't *totally* lose it.

## April 5

I'm back from my third session with Karen. I feel emotionally drained and just want my bed. I woke up from the hypnosis in floods of tears, but I have no idea why. I know Karen asked me to imagine I was speaking to my 10-year-old self to find out what was upsetting me all those years ago. I can't recall much of what was said, but I do remember seeing my young

self as very insecure and wanting to be loved.

## April 8

I've just hung up the phone on my best friend Suzy, after she told me my birthday plan to go for a meal and then clubbing was boring. I felt so insulted that I slammed the phone down on her. It's my birthday, so I think she should do what I want to do. I'm so angry I don't want to see her ever again! But I realise I'm angry because I feel rejected by Suzy. I go to bed feeling upset at her and myself.

## April 9

I couldn't sleep last night because I was so worried about losing Suzy's friendship. Usually it doesn't bother me when friendships go, but we've been pals for

five years. I rang her up to apologise for losing my temper, but made it clear she'd offended me. Suzy was shocked because she has never known me to apologise. She apologised too and it feels really good knowing I've saved a friendship!

## April 12

Today's the first time someone said they've noticed a change in me. I was telling my friend James about my failed driving test and I couldn't stop laughing. He said he couldn't believe I wasn't blaming someone else for failing and that recently I'd been much more positive. James has no idea I've been seeing Karen – so it's great to hear I'm making progress. It did hurt to realise that he expected me to blame others for my failings though, and now I wonder if everyone thinks that about me.

## April 13

After my final anger-management session with Karen today, in

*'I remember seeing my young self as very insecure'*



Michelle has transformed her life thanks to hypnotherapy

which she again concentrated on boosting my confidence. I feel incredibly refreshed and happy about myself. I've become a lot less emotional with Karen's help – perhaps it's because I feel more confident and secure in myself. I've also started to care less about what other people think of me, and I've realised the most important thing is that I can live with the decisions I make in life. Hypnotherapy has made me realise that my temper problems come from my own insecurities.

I lash out whenever someone makes me feel bad. But if I believe in myself more, I won't feel so angry when people put me down. For the first time in months I feel positive about my future.

### April 24

I joined a drama group today and have signed up to audition for some plays. I would never have found the confidence to do that before my anger-

management sessions. I feel like a different person.

### April 25

Friends and family have noticed a difference in me and I've managed to hold down my job for five months. If I start feeling angry, I leave the room and imagine myself in a tranquil place. A year ago, I'd never have been able to walk away from that situation. Having counselling has been the best thing – it's cleared my head and opened me up to new experiences.

### October 18

I'm working in a job I love, and am single and happy. Reading this diary, I feel like it was written by a different person. I hardly recognise that girl who was so full of anger. These days I'm calmer and more confident. I've even made friends with my ex Jay. I feel I'm in charge for the first time, not anger. **T**

● For information on anger management visit [Karenmann.co.uk](http://Karenmann.co.uk).