

# SELF

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WORK AND LIFE

BY SELF STAFFERS

## Reel in That Social Media Rant



A long, dramatic vent feels so good in the moment, but has one ever solved your problem? Why experts say these tirades are hurting you, and what to do instead.

Ten bucks says you've had at least one major blowup this week. Your morning commute was horrific or your boss set you off, so naturally you took to Facebook or Twitter to bitch about it, watching the validating likes and comments roll in.

Whatever the specifics, experts say that ranting is on the rise -- in many ways because of social media. In fact, people tweeted the hashtags #Rant and #TwitterRant 33 percent more in 2013 than they did in 2012, a recent search from Topsy Data Services found. "But using social media to have a public tantrum triggers others to join in with more negativity, which only adds to the frustration and contributes to an inability to face your issues head-on -- and that's a skill you need to navigate your career and life," warns Margalis

Fjelstad, Ph.D., author of *Stop Caretaking the Borderline or Narcissist*. Meaning you have to learn to communicate, not foot-stomp and tantrum-throw. Most of the time venting ends up making everything worse. Here, your detox plan.

**See it for what it is:** Problem numero uno? Griping riles you up, making small annoyances seem like an even bigger deal. "When you rant, the emotional part of your brain, the amygdala, lights up and overpowers the logical side, your prefrontal cortex -- which means that your emotions take over and exaggerate the issue," says John Schinnerer, Ph.D., an anger-management expert and the author of *Guide to Self: The Beginner's Guide to Managing Emotion and Thought*. Translation? You're not in a positive mental place to solve the problem. Plus, when you do it publicly, all those affirmations throw more gas on the flame, stoking your rage fire.

**Nip it in the bud:** Next time you're asked to work late on a Friday or (insert other enraging trespass here), start with a quick self-check, which is the crucial first step in keeping it together. Take a breath, look out the window, and *calmly* say, "Chill out, girl!" New research shows that addressing yourself by your own name allows you to see things objectively, says Dara Greenwood, Ph.D., an assistant professor of psychology at Vassar College. Then you're more likely to wait an hour before taking to Facebook. "Odds are you'll get distracted and forget you even wanted to post in the first place," says Jean Twenge, Ph.D., author of *The Narcissism Epidemic*. If you can fill that time with constructive physical activity -- a workout, sex, laundry -- even better. That will burn up energy, so you'll have less to expend on griping. At work? Watch a funny clip or listen to upbeat music. Both humor and positivity help lower your emotional temperature.

**Make it productive:** Sometimes you do need to let it all out. But you also need to be smart about whom you complain to. Choose a critic who can put herself in someone else's shoes and doesn't automatically agree with everything you say. By playing devil's advocate and challenging you to think of the problem in another light, she may lead you to a smarter solution you wouldn't have thought of, Schinnerer says. You want a friend who asks questions, which helps you get past your knee-jerk reaction and sort through your feelings. Finally, keep the whole thing under 20 minutes -- any longer and you're back in Vent City, where you'll vow not to go again.

--Annie Daly

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