

# There's no escape

*"The earth swarms with people who are not worth talking to."*

– Voltaire

Getting time out from the hustle and bustle of working life is something that we all love to do and certainly need. Many of us carve out a piece of heaven to which we can retreat when we have had enough of this world. So whether it is reading a book, playing sport, going to the cinema, walking in the mountains or getting some retail therapy, we all have something which gives us time for ourselves. Such periods of rest and relaxation are all too short when compared to the time we spend at work and on things that need to be done like paying bills and sorting out domestic problems. That's why, for many of us, retirement is the only thing we look forward to when we go off to work each morning. Unfortunately with few people saving enough for their pensions and companies ripping their employees off through the removal of final salary pension schemes, even this light at the end of the tunnel is slowly being snuffed out.

I believe that when you take people out of the contrived conditions of work, where everyone puts up a façade in order to survive, you should expect to see them as they truly are. And I naively believe that once out of the office people will be polite, treat each other with respect and generally make the world a delightful place in which to exist. Unfortunately, this is far from being the case. In fact my observations suggest that the converse is true. Most people treat each other just as badly outside work as they do inside. Many are complete and utter bastards with no manners. We have rude people, arrogant people, people who want to blow other people up, brawlers, thugs, perverts, crap parents, bad drivers... the list goes on and on and on. The world has become a nasty place full of nasty people. But why?

Part of the problem lies with the world of work, which is becoming more stressful for more of us. Weekends provide little time for rest and relaxation after a long working week. People are just as frazzled on Saturday and Sunday as they are on any given weekday. Another dimension to our predicament is that we are all becoming less tolerant of those around us. In the past we were more likely to cut others some slack, but not any more. We expect instant gratification and if we don't get it we get very annoyed. We don't trust anyone because in the main they cannot be trusted. From lying politicians to corrupt public servants, from self-serving CEOs to unwilling workers, each and every one helps to engender a spirit of suspicion and mistrust that spills over into the public domain. We are also much more focused on ourselves than on the community. No one really cares for the other people around them; cities, towns and villages are becoming soulless shells full of self-centred, hollow people. The final issue is that people's behaviour is also getting much worse. With lives that are less than satisfying many turn to drink, drugs and other substances that provide them with much-needed diversion. So there you have it. All that's wrong with the world in a nutshell. So what can be done? Well, nothing really apart from creating an outlet for the long-suffering everywhere. And here it is, *Pains in Public*.

#### USING THIS BOOK

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This book is all about those people who aggravate you in the public domain. You may have already come across those people that annoy you on your journey into work (see *Pains on Trains*) and at work (see *Pains in the Office*); now it's time to witness how they make your life a misery in every other conceivable environment. Taken together this means that most of your waking hours are spent with people you would rather have exterminated than spend any time alongside. The many thousands of experienced Pain Spotters amongst the readership will know how to use this book but, for those who don't, it is designed in a way that allows you to spot some of the most annoying people you could ever hope to meet, whilst at the same time expressing your own inner feelings in an accessible way. I am writing what you are thinking. Thus, in the same way that bird spotters identify the Lesser Spotted Warbler, this book helps you to spot the Charity Chugger, the Public Polluter and the Ladette. But it goes beyond that, as it identifies how you can avoid them and seek your revenge – if you are brave enough.

Each entry includes:

- The general characteristics of the Pain (including anecdotes and stories).
- Their annoyance rating, which rates the Pain from 1 (limited annoyance) to 10 (extreme annoyance).
- Their rarity, which rates the Pain from 1 (exceptionally rare) to 10 (very common).
- Any seasonal variations, which will identify any changes in the Pain's behaviour.
- A range of avoidance/revenge strategies (with suitable escalation).

At the end of each entry I have also given you, the reader, an opportunity to record that you have spotted the Pain and add your own annoyance rating. Like any "spotting" pastime it has to be interactive, fun and have a sense of purpose to it. You might choose to swap entries with your friends and families as well as with anyone you might meet in the street or down the pub. This volume, when taken together with *Pains on Trains* and *Pains in the Office*, provides you with 150 painful people who make your life less satisfying than it could be. Who needs self-help books, as when armed with the three Pains volumes, you can just avoid the jerks, muppets and morons who make life such a drag? Move over NLP; welcome to PS.