

## **Plane seats and changing rooms needn't bring out our worst - 19 February, 2020**

If you don't think that other people are annoying, take a long-haul flight in economy class. You will have seats reclined against your face, legs spread into your tiny space and even a stranger's bare feet between the seats.

It's difficult not to think that we should be angry at the airlines. Maybe the problem is the companies who profit from selling seats so close together. Air travel is getting more uncomfortable: people are getting bigger, but seats are generally getting smaller and closer together. Cheaper air travel means that airlines want to make space as efficient as possible.

It's not just air travel, we push and argue in queues. We get annoyed stuck on buses behind cyclists in cities without proper bike lanes. We curse into strangers' armpits or fight with their rucksacks on overcrowded public transport. In clothes shops, there are never enough changing rooms, so shoppers try on clothes in the aisles. This leads to clothes lying around the store and fights for mirror space.

All of these problems often come from bad design and organization, with profit, private interests and cost-cutting, not people, in mind. So, it's not surprising we get angry. And some people feel this more than others. There aren't too many air rage videos from first class or fights over mirror space in designer shops. You're less likely to think other people are annoying when you don't have to be really close to them all the time.

But remaining human in these situations is important. First, because it makes life more bearable. But second, because being friendly and seeing people as real, whole people, not just competitors for space, is the best antidote to the thinking that causes these situations in the first place.

Why can a long-haul flight in economy be annoying?  
Whose fault is it?  
What is happening to people and the seats they have to sit in?  
Where else do people have problems interacting with each other?  
What sort of reactions do people have?  
What can often happen in stores?  
Where do these problems come from?  
Is it surprising that we get angry?  
Are we all affected in the same way?  
Where are you less likely to be affected by other people?  
What is important to remember?  
Why should we do this?  
How should we think of other people?