

# **FAMILY SAFETY: A TOOLKIT FOR MEN**

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# **A WINDOW ON MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

## **Worldwide**

Amnesty International and the UN currently have worldwide campaigns targeting men's violence against women and children. In wars across the globe it is women, children and old people who are by far the biggest number of victims. Rape of women and children is commonly used as a weapon of war by men.

## **Australia**

Each year, family violence costs the Australian economy more than \$8.2 billion.

## **Victoria**

Women and children are safer on the streets than in their own homes, since most abuse of them is done by someone they live with, usually a man.

Family violence is the single biggest cause of preventable injury and death for women aged between 15-45 years. It is mostly done by men.

## **What about where you live?**

How safe are the women and children in your home? And those who live in your street?



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## IS THIS YOU?

As you drive down the road of life with your family, do you sometimes look in the rearview mirror and see where you have come from and how far you have travelled. Are your reflections sometimes tinged with regret? Do you remember the shared dreams and hopes for building a future together? Have some of these been realised? And do you think of how you might have travelled differently and ended up in a different place or space, thinking of all the things you did or didn't do that made the journey rougher for those who travelled with you.

Do you remember the very way you drove yourself and others and how it has affected the happiness of everyone in your family? Do you remember whether the journey so far has been enjoyable and safe, or not? And do you note, with a sense of guilt and remorse, how many times you have scared, or even terrified, those sharing the journey with you? Perhaps you say that you were doing your best, or were just after a bit of excitement, but is that how your family sees it?

And looking back down the road, over the past few years, have things changed between you and your partner? Is there the same level of trust between you as when you first set out? Or do she and the kids feel increasingly as if they are walking on egg-shells, trying to avoid saying or doing something that will set you off? Not that it is predictable, because keeping them guessing is a way you have learnt to control them.

Do you find yourself sometimes doing and saying things that are nasty, mean, manipulative, threatening or scary? Not that you do it all the time. Generally you are a good bloke, a caring husband and a loving father to your children. You work hard and try your best. However, is it that the times you get abusive or violent are like a poison in your system?

A poison that only you can do something about, because you are causing it. Only you can take responsibility for doing something to get rid of the poison that is slowly eating away at your family –

making your children scared, destroying the love and trust between you and your partner, and perhaps making you feel ashamed when you look at yourself in the mirror.

## **You are not born abusive**

Do you think that you are born violent or abusive? No. Such behaviour is learnt and can be unlearnt ... and until you do something about it, repair the damage, fix your bad driving habits and do a roadworthy check on the vehicle of your relationship, then you will be literally driving yourself, and those who travel with you, into the ground. But you can do something about it.

The first thing is to recognize what you are doing and to take responsibility for it. This will probably be very hard in the beginning especially, because if you are like most men who become abusive at times, then you will most likely blame it on someone, or something, else. Or you will excuse your behaviour by saying that you were pissed, or really angry, or 'just lost it', but not accept that you were responsible for what you did. Or you will minimize what happened and say that it was 'just' a slap or 'only' a little push, or that she 'slipped' or walked into the doorpost.

## **A small book of hope**

This small book is like a toolkit for men who recognize themselves in the description above and want to stop behaving abusively. It is framed in hope. Hope that men who recognize that they have been using abusive behaviour at home, are encouraged to change because it offers them the greatest chance of happiness, because their wife and children will begin to feel safe again. It also offers hope to men who have known for a while that things are not going well in their relationship and have not known what to do about it.

## **Courage to change**

If you are such a man, or know such a man, then this book offers a key to find a way out the mess; by being man enough to admit that you have been a jerk and have to change. It takes courage to

change. Have a think about who would be a trusted friend who you could talk with about what you read in this book. Choose someone that you know can be honest with you. Do not choose a mate who is going to tell you what you want to hear and collude with you about blaming others or excusing your abusive behaviour. Have the courage to choose someone, male or female, who is able to be honest with you about how you behave.

It will possibly be the hardest thing that you have ever done, but it will also be the best thing you could ever do. You are creating hope for a future generation that such abusive destructive behaviour is not normal, can stop and that there is a fairer more caring and respectful way to live. Such hope creates happiness for all involved, including extended family and friends, who also suffer greatly as a result of the fall-out from men's violence against women and children. For example, grandparents often lose contact with their grandchildren as a result of the break-up or aggressive behaviour.

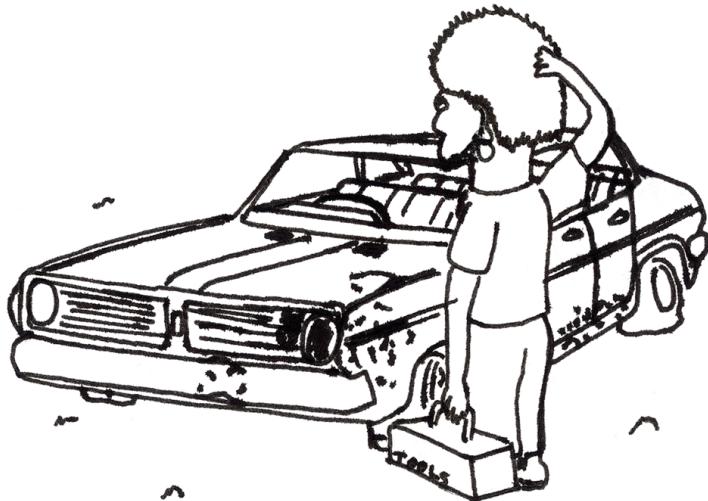
One thing that this book is not about is giving false hope to women who are in an abusive relationship. Like a toolkit that contains what is needed to fix a vehicle, it is useless unless someone starts to use it. This book requires a man to pick it up and honestly begin to assess whether, or how much of it, applies to him.

The authors have worked with more than a thousand men who have been identified by others, or by themselves, as using abuse or violence at home.

The ideas and tools presented in the book are the result of hundreds of hours facilitating behaviour change groups with men. It recognizes the need for a user friendly resource that men can use to re-inforce their learning towards change. The tools outlined here are also dealt with comprehensively in the *SHED Manual: For workers engaging in men's behaviour change to shed abusive beliefs and violence* (Laming 2005).



# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



This book is like any other owner's manual or toolkit and it contains a number of tools to fix bad habits, in order to be safer. As such, it is based on a number of beliefs or assumptions:

1. To be able to fix something we first have to understand and accept that it needs fixing.
2. That we men generally believe that we can fix our own stuff, if things are not working for us or our family.
3. Once we identify what needs fixing, we need to take responsibility to fix it.
4. We need to be ready to follow instructions about what to do, (for example, this owner's manual) and how to do it.
5. We are prepared to use the right tools to fix the problem, no matter what the cost, remembering that if we don't, the cost will be far greater.

6. The safety and well being of the others (our family) in the car, is the priority.
7. There is no such thing as a 'quick fix', real change takes time.
8. That short cuts can lead us into deeper 'shit' (this is a technical term!).
9. Those who travel this journey with us may get jack of the shitty experience long before we have done enough repair work for the vehicle of our relationship to safely carry us again.
10. Hence, our partner and children may choose to go their separate ways.
11. That our children learn bad habits, as well as good, from watching us, hearing us, and from being with us. They too can learn how to treat their friends, their classmates and their partners and children from us.
12. What our children need to hear from us is that we are sorry for the damage we have done, that we are trying to fix and maintain the vehicle (of our relationship) and that we are not making empty promises. They learn those from us, too!

This Toolkit contains men's stories of hope. It will motivate your ideas and solutions for change. Some courage is required. It is designed to be used by men, to fix the vehicle containing their relationships, so that their family's journey together, is smoother, the 'shock absorbers' work, and everyone safer.

It also contains some reminders of what happens when warning signs are ignored by men who choose to continue using abuse to control their family and threaten their safety together. We all ignore warning signs on the open road at our peril.

## **Message of hope**

It is also important for you to know that many more men have changed direction, turned the corner, swallowed their pride, seen the fear in their family, learned to listen, learned to watch themselves, checked their reactions. Many men have done this. So can you. It takes courage. So slow down before your radiator boils over ...

## **Changing despair into hope**

Because this book is a ‘toolkit’ for changing despair into hope, you can choose which tool you need to fix your behaviour. This might change from person to person and time to time. There are also instructions in the Toolkit to enable you to pick the right tool for the right job. There is no point in applying a sledgehammer, when slight adjustments with a spanner will not only fix the problem, but will most likely do less damage to other parts of the relationship! The old saying of ‘horses for courses’ is very useful here. In other words; try any number of tools and use the one that is right for the job, leaving aside the one’s that don’t fit. (Using a wrong sized spanner only serves to wear down the nut, ruin the spanner and graze the knuckles!) Similarly in human relationships it is often better to be patient, go for a walk, take some deep breaths rather than forcing an issue or not backing down in a disagreement.

Have you ever become frustrated in trying to fix something? And then, instead of looking at it from another angle, you have ‘lost it’ and perhaps even thrown what you were trying to fix against the wall or onto the floor? In such cases, it is not only you who are the loser and has to go and retrieve what it is you were trying to fix, but such behaviour can also hurt anyone who witnesses us out of control, even though you didn’t mean to upset anyone.

The trouble is that some men do learn to use such behaviour to intimidate and scare, in order to keep control. Those around them learn not to upset them, to let them have their way and not to challenge them. This applies particularly to women and children. In most cultures the name for such a person is a bully and yet

somewhat we have allowed such behaviour to go unchallenged. In our society we have subtly supported, condoned, colluded with, not condemned outright, but instead, tolerated and excused men's violent and abusive behaviour towards women and children.

The end result is that the ones who trust and love you, become scared. Your children learn to become angry (through you) and eventually, journeying with their own pain and hurt, abandon their journey with you. And when that happens, isn't it likely that you will feel hurt and let down, because you cannot, or will not, recognize the part you played in the breaking up of your family? Your mates have allowed you to believe the excuses that you created for your behaviour and now you are stuck in that way of seeing things. A way that blames others, excuses whatever you do, or denies you are responsible for the damage. In other words, you have begun to believe your own bullshit and to self-righteously defend yourself if you are challenged, even if the scared faces of your children tell it all.

## **Children are affected**

Children are likely to be badly affected by such behaviour, especially if it reminds them of when you have been frustrated or angry with their mum or them and have become abusive or violent. Whether once, or whether you have done this many times in the past. Each time worse than the last. Just 'the look' on your face, as well as the raised voice and other signs, all remind them of when you have been scary. They know they need to keep low and stay out of your way.

When Jack got home at night after work, his kids would hear the ute coming up the driveway and they would immediately run off and hide. They were afraid he would hit them. This went on for years, until Jack finally accepted that the problem at home was something that he had created. As soon as he went and talked with someone and got his act together, he began using the strategies (tools) he learned, as well as joining a men's behaviour change group. He found that his kids began to be affectionate towards him like they had been before he became violent and scary ... they began to trust him again.

## **Learning from our mistakes**

We need to learn to admit that we have made mistakes and to recognise and acknowledge that we are sorry for hurting others. For children to hear their father say ‘sorry’ for a mistake he has made, that he is asking to be forgiven and that he is human, helps them to be more confident to make mistakes themselves.

Often children who have witnessed abuse feel tightly bound up by unfair and unrealistic expectations that do not allow for their personal growth. Young people are far more likely to grow strong and mature and have abilities of strength, if they feel they can ‘risk’ being wrong or failing. These are often culturally defined along gendered lines and reflect a hypocritical double standard, that allows boys to do things, but condemns girls who want to do the same. For example, teenagers having sex. If the boy does it he is a stud, the girl does it, she is labelled a slut.

*The only real ‘mistake’ is the one that we don’t learn from.*

For a child growing up, the discovery that his or her parents are not perfect, and can admit their mistakes, can be both worrying, as well as a liberating experience. It allows the child to grow and experiment without fear, and to be themselves. It enables them to experience that the only **real** ‘mistake’ is the one that we don’t learn from.

## **Why this toolkit is necessary**

This book is like an owner’s manual or toolkit. It is a resource for men to learn new ways of ‘driving’ safely. It will also be something valuable for men to use to help other men hang on to and use when the need arises and when their behaviour jeopardizes family safety.

It is needed because many men in today’s high pressure society, and around the world, have grown up believing that controlling and abusive behaviour towards women, is okay and justified. We know it is not. This book can help you change any of your behaviour that is

abusive or controlling. Ultimately your happiness lies with your family's sense of safety and well-being; so, if for no other reason, you need to use whatever it takes, including this book, or counselling, to change your behaviour if it is abusive. If you are not abusive, but know someone who is, then this book can be a resource to help them change. Until all men stand up against abusive behaviour by some men, then women will feel unsafe and be unable to trust the men in their lives.

## **Who the toolkit is for**

This book is for anyone who senses that their behaviour is sometimes out of control, scaring his wife, or children, and an unfair use of power. The test to know whether this is the case, is to ask your family (remember they might be too scared to give an honest answer). Another way to get a clear picture, is to put yourself in their shoes and to ask:

'If I was in their place, what would I be feeling?' (It is often not what they should be feeling, if they felt safe.)

'Wouldn't I feel scared and frightened, if I was on the receiving end of my behaviour?'

## **How the toolkit is best used**

- Daily practise of an exercise or strategy.
- Keeping a personal journal to record progress in changing abusive attitudes.
- Discussion of progress towards change with a trusted friend, as your reality test.
- Some men use reminder notes on the dashboard – just a quick glance to help start the day's journey in an open and positive frame of mind.

## What are its limitations?

Like all such resources, this toolkit is limited. However, there are a couple of ways to minimize these limitations. Use what is helpful to you in staying non-abusive and leave what you have tried, but found does not help you. Again, the principle is, 'horses for courses'. Use the right tool for the right job! What might work for one man, may not be of use to another in stopping his abusive behaviour. Also, combine the use of tools suggested here, along with others that you find elsewhere. Anything that helps to reduce, or stop your abusive behaviour is valuable.



Some useful tools offered in this book:

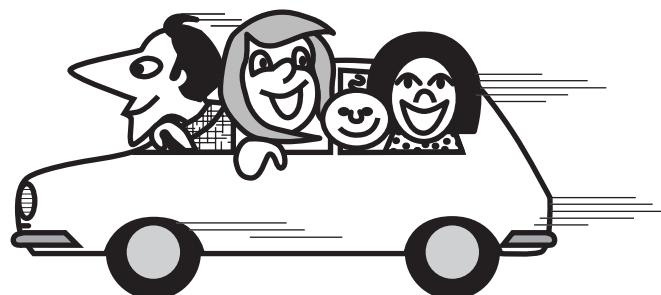
- Stories and experiences of men who have successfully changed their behaviours.
- Invitations and encouragement to try something new to create more positive relationships.
- Anecdotes and practical examples to learn from.
- Self-assessment and checklists to help keep you on track.

- Warning signs for trouble spots, before anyone gets hurt. This is more valuable than spending time regretting and trying to repair damage, after the event.
- Good maintenance to avoid break downs. By checking the oil and water regularly, you prevent smoke, steam and stress.

Nothing will ever replace talking honestly to others about your journey and struggles, about what works for you and what does not. As human beings we are designed to talk and to listen. Men are generally not so good at it. Are you? This book can provide a starting point and framework for those discussions and tools to help.

## **Taking responsibility**

Learning to use these tools also teaches us to have the courage to think about, recognise and acknowledge the part of the journey we need to change, by being able to discuss it. Once we are ready to accept the part we are responsible for, then it is possible to take the next step and do something about it.



## **Denial (We are not talking about a river in Egypt!)**

As long as we deny that there is anything wrong with the way we travel in our relationship, or that the vehicle of our relationship needs some serious work done, the damage will continue and the vehicle

will slowly (or quickly) fall apart for want of care, maintenance and attention. The steering wheel is in your hands (you do have the keys after all)!

This book can help you learn some of the skills needed to begin fixing or repairing the vehicle of your family relationship. It is up to you to put these communication skills into practice. It is bit like parking the car for a while – so that you can make the rest of your journey as a safer and happier traveller to be with.

## The enemies of good driving

There are a number of things that stop you from being a good driver who cares for their passengers. These are the enemies of good driving and create fear, uncertainty and a feeling of being at risk, and hence, they need to be stopped if you are to continue together on the journey with your family.

- **Macho pride** – where you insist on always being right and never wrong!
- **A refusal to share the driving** – you refuse to give up control, or share the family decision-making.
- **Road rage for perceived injustice** – your anger escalates into aggression and violence, and terrifies children.
- **Alcohol and other drugs** – that you choose to use, even though you know from past experience that they are likely to cloud your judgement, and lessen your patience and self-control.
- **Not learning from past mistakes** – this is often about a stubborn refusal to admit that you are wrong or have misbehaved. Most abusive men are very clever at excusing or denying or rationalising their abusive behaviour. Are you?
- **Build up of stress, tension, anger in a confined space** – choosing not to take these factors into account. You do not recognise that your tension builds up over time.

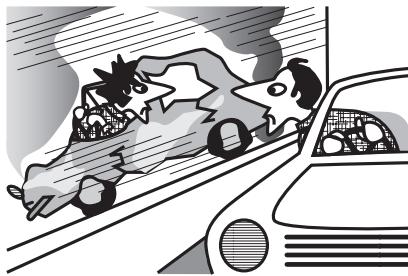
- **Being lazy about looking after the relationship** – not caring enough to ensure sufficient care and nurturing takes place. You take your family for granted or think they are lucky to have you.
- **Being self-centred about the journey together, rather than caring for your fellow-traveller** – imposing conditions of travel, where you go, for how long, how fast, who you meet, how long you stay, without allowing another choice. You insist on controlling everything, for your own convenience, without caring for others' needs and refusing to compromise.

Such poor driving leads us to unpleasant journeys for everyone concerned and often contributes to relationship breakdown.

## Common causes of relationship breakdown

1. **Ideas of entitlement:** Believing that **everything** must be focused on keeping **your** vehicle going the way **you** want it. Your thoughts are something like: '*My needs are the most important around here. Don't think that they can be ignored*'.
2. **Pride:** Believing that you have to be right. '*I can't admit that I'm wrong. I need to save face. Better that she appears the fool, than me*'.
3. **Denial:** When things go wrong, or there's a communication breakdown: '*It's not my fault, it's her's. She damn well knows what gets me going*'.
4. **Self-centredness:** '*I deserve the best and more care and attention, because my needs count most!*'.
5. **Righteousness:** '*It's my way or the highway. I've got things under control. You best follow me and don't argue. I know best*'.
6. **Defensiveness:** '*why are you looking at me like that? You're just a passenger*',
7. **Revenge:** '*You criticise me and there'll be hell to pay*'.

8. **Lack of Respect:** 'How can I respect someone who lets me treat her like this?!



So, the question to ask yourself is: '*When I look in the mirror what do I see? Do I like what I see?*'

Or, when you look in the mirror, are you ashamed of who you have become and how you behave towards your family?

If you recognise any of the above beliefs in your behaviour, then ask yourself what are you prepared to do to change them? How long before there are (more?) abandoned vehicles by the side of the road? Do you want yours to be one of them? You can make choices to prevent this happening.

## Possible journeys ahead

1. From despair to hope.
2. From controlling to shared struggle and success.
3. From aggression to caring and loving.
4. From stressed to relaxed and happy.
5. From loneliness to companionship and partnership.

## Separation

Our experience is that, at the end of the day, most men really want to be happy and safe with their family and they need help to make that happen. Most men do not like being violent or abusive. It is behaviour that they have learnt along the way and the end result is

often that they become emotionally and physically separated from their family, often permanently. That is usually enormously painful for everyone involved and has a long-lasting effect on the kids.

Often the woman has been preparing herself mentally for separation and in that sense might be two years ahead of where her partner is at. At the time of separation he is doing it hard, whereas she may have done most of her grieving two years before, when she realized that he was not prepared to change his behaviour. In general women cope with separation much better than men, because having done their grieving, they are ready to move on. They may have even left the 'garage' and comeback several times. Each time there is more and more heartache.

Remember that being alone does not necessarily mean being lonely. It is possible to feel very lonely in a family or a relationship.

### **A driving test checklist (about how you are 'driving' in your family)**

The real test of how I am driving, is to ask the question:

*'What would a woman or the kids sitting in the back seat of the vehicle say about my driving?'*

Or to ask:

*'What is it like to travel near this vehicle?'*

or

*'What are the vibes in the car, and do I feel comfortable?'*

(Don't get defensive about your driving or maintenance schedule, trust what your passengers say about how they feel when they are with you. ... and ask yourself what you need to do, so that they feel safer.) Remember, at first they may feel too anxious about answering you honestly.

Do you share the road with others generously?

Do you interact with other drivers in a cooperative way, or do you maintain a competitive stance? (For example at the traffic lights or in a line of traffic.)

Do you allow other drivers to cut into your lane or to overtake?  
Staying safe and driving in a way that increases the safety of your family requires skill. Such skills take practice and self awareness and self-control.

Do you practice the skills you need to increase the safety of your family when they are with you?

Focusing on self-awareness, diagnosis and using the toolkit to fix what is wrong, makes for a more comfortable journey for all travellers.

Question: Is there much 'travel', give and take, or flexibility in your behaviour?

What causes that travel?

Are there any loose nuts and bolts?

Are the shock-absorbers worn out?

Is there no more cushion or 'give' in the vehicle of the relationship ... metal banging on metal ... causing (and being caused by), fatigue?'

If this is the case, then it is just like a relationship where there is no more giving each other the benefit of the doubt, no more tolerance nor forgiveness, no more 'cushioning' of each other's temperaments, no more 'giveness' nor 'forgiveness'! Just brutal words that grind against each other, wearing the relationship away. Brutal behaviour that is physically and emotionally painful and damaging.

Perhaps it is time for a roadworthy, before being issued a 'pinky' (an un-roadworthy certificate).



## CHAPTER 2: ROADWORTHY CHECK



### Are you 'roadworthy'?

Time to take the proverbial good hard look at yourself. Not just a quick kick of the tyres. We know looks can be deceptive, and being honest with yourself may not be something you do very often.

As the driver of your vehicle, and sharing your journey with others, a thorough check is in order.

How else can you guarantee that it is safe for others to come along for the ride ...?

### The roadworthy assessment

**Tick the box if the situation describes you.**

#### Body

- Do you just take your body for granted, assuming everything is there for it, if you want it, that you have earnt it and that you deserve it?

- Have you ‘let yourself go’? – become a bit too sloppy, a bit rolly polly, with a verandah over the tool shed?
- Do you take others for granted? Do you treat your wife/partner’s body with respect or is she sometimes called a whore, harlot or a slut, or a lousy and useless mother when you are feeling rejected or annoyed, or you’re feeling she needs to be brought down a peg or two?
- Are you always parked in the garage – too busy with yourself. Not interested or not bothered unless it suits you, or until you need or want something. Or are you just driving or gallivanting around in your own little world?
- Is the ‘windscreen’ clear? Fogged-up? Are the side windows clear, do they even get used? Do you pay any attention to what is going on around you – or are you too busy getting to where you want to go? Not really interested in how your partner or kids are travelling?
- Do the ‘wipers’ and ‘washers’ work well so you can see through the sudden downpours and crap that we all end up going through sometimes? Do you think *how come all this shit happens to me?* Are you unable to keep a clear head in all situations?
- Do the ‘mirrors’ ever get used? Do you reflect on how well or how badly you’ve just handled some situations? Do you look back on what you have just left behind? Do you really care or do you just ‘move on’? Is it too tough for you to say sorry and if you do, to say it with any meaning anymore?
- Are there blindspots where things can come at you out of nowhere – suddenly you’re arguing about the kids, or money, or what she’s been doing/not doing or who she’s been seeing?

If you ticked any of these boxes, then read on!

**From the Owner's Manual:** Body needs paying attention inside and out. Different outlook required. Possible overhaul may be needed. Revise expectations. Seek consultation and guidance.

## Tyres

- Do you lose your grip when you need to pull up quick? Do you realize now that you are not handling situations that well? Do others become scared or defiant or hide when you don't pull up in time?
- Are you going too fast, thinking the worst of everything? That you just can't do those tight corners, unable to dodge the wobbly you've just been thrown? Racing headlong into strife?
- When the situation gets a bit slippery for you, do you slide all over the place, moody and withdrawn, or too loud and overbearing? Or become broody and resentful?

**From the Owner's Manual:** Unpredictable? Going from one extreme to another over nothing or everything? Too full of self? Too reactive? Then attention to gauges is required (see pages 27-30).

## Suspension

- How do you go in the rough patches? Do you just stay on track? Not a smooth ride for anyone. No slowing down. No holding you up.
- How do you handle the bumpy road? Do your passengers end up getting bounced all over the place because your shockers are shot? Copping the full brunt of your rage? Over every little thing someone's got to be bounced hard.
- Do you deliberately head for potholes, so they know what it's like?

**From the Owner's Manual:** Being careless? Difficult? Self-centred? If there a tendency to high frustration and intolerance, then check if correct fuel is being used (alcohol? Caffeine?) High stress

*and anxiety. A calmer approach is required urgently. Discuss your hopes for self and family. A need to be more other-centred rather than self-centred!*

### **Under the bonnet**

If you lifted the hood to see what's really going on, would you know what to look for?

- Do you start up first thing in the morning smoothly but very soon find yourself in a mad rush to get going? Everyone out of the way? 'Over-rev' madly, from the word go? Bear with a sore head, blaming others, not looking at self?
- Do you all of a sudden start revving madly or overheating? Is there a chance of you losing it (self control) completely? Unable to keep cool by slowing down or stopping if needed.
- If you started to 'cough and splutter under load' would you say anything or just pretend nothing is wrong? Just hope for the best? When the tuning is out and you are just shuddering along do feel sorry for yourself? Poor me?
- Does the dipstick tell me that nothing really changes? Things are just topped up when you realise it is all a bit low. Never bothering to get a 'fresh' change or a new and different understanding of the situation?
- Does your engine have to be stressed to the max, neglected, or thrashed, before you realise you need to stop and look after it? And if you don't stop and take responsibility for it, do you blame someone else when it breaks down?
- Or do you believe that you're the only one who can do the work on your own vehicle – that nobody, just nobody, understands (your family) like you? Nobody can help.
- Are you noisy and backfiring? Always have to get the last word in, the 'backhander'? Everyone knows you're coming and are left spinning after your tirade?

- Does the engine constantly stall under load? When there's too much going on you don't cope. It's like you just disappear or not give a stuff about anything?

***From the Owner's Manual: Does not recognize when he has reached the limits. Overestimates his own capacity to fix things. Does not recognize warning signs. Neglectful? Not listening? Not trustworthy or reliable for a long journey? Check gauges are working (see below). Overheating or Too Cool in some situations. Seek qualified help. Seek and listen to other men's stories for a better understanding of what to do.***

## **Brakes**

- Do your 'brakes' actually work these days? Have they been unreliable for a while now? Or do they only pull you up when you need to put on a good face, for your boss or in public?
- Worn to bare metal? Too much stopping and starting instead of going with the flow of the traffic? How well do you pull yourself up if something suddenly looms right in front, taking you by surprise, annoying and unwelcome? When it doesn't suit you?
- Are others aware when your brakes are not okay and avoid being around you? Are they keeping things from you (which only loosens your brakes)?
- Are the brakes 'spongy'? Are you only really safe to be with at slow speeds – only when things are going your way? ... the times when you want to keep in the good books with your partner or put on that good face ...?
- Not putting on the brakes when others feel you are travelling too fast. When they ask you to slow down, do you deliberately drive faster?
- Do the brakes lock sometimes and you skid out of control? You've put the brakes on too hard, too late and your momentum keeps you going. You know you have gone too far but you can't turn back. Needing to save face but you are past

the point of being in control. Sitting there, you take it and you take it and then you just snap. You throw your weight around, answerable to no-one.

***From the Owner's Manual: Check entire breaking system. Attitudes of Righteousness? Check all gauges, fuels and windscreens. Are there any cracks? Advise passengers. Major safety issues. Not able to anticipate others or own reactions.***

### **Lights and indicators**

- Do you signal and communicate what you are feeling, thinking, what you are doing, or where you are going?
- Should your family just assume you know, when they are getting too close for comfort, taking things a bit too far, or faster when you've had enough? Do you give them a glare or slam the car door?
- Can others see when you are about to lose it, by the look on your face, by the tone of your voice, or by the language or words you might use? Why is it, that men's swearing is often sexualised language that demeans women? (Think of the words you most often use when you swear and how they degrade women).
- Not reading or caring about other people's signals? When they're tired or harassed? A bit out of control themselves? Do you just up the ante, in order to 'win'? Using a bit of 'bluster' and intimidation?

***From the Owner's Manual: Not using signalling devices correctly or at all. Self-absorbed. Not thinking/noticing others. Not relating well. Not paying attention to detail.***

### **Interior**

What's it like to be travelling alongside or inside, with you?

- Do your partner and children sometimes feel unsafe or unwelcome in your space?

- Are they untrusting and disrespectful of you because of past driving experience?
- Are you only okay to be with in certain situations or driving conditions?
- As a passenger, when your partner is driving, are you critical and picky? Moody and stubborn when she does things differently? Not able to discuss situations?

**From the Owner's Manual:** Journeying together may be difficult. Not focusing on good times. Needing to learn to weather the storms. It requires learning to confide and trust when confused or lost.

Keep reading, because using this Toolkit in difficult situations can help guide you to making wiser choices.

Can you really afford to continue your journey, alone or with others, without spending time and effort on getting yourself 'back on track'?

To continue the journey with occasional or frequent breakdowns, losing control, not paying attention to what's really happening (in spite of the signals), being erratic or just dangerous is not fair to your partner, children or other passengers. All the passengers are stuck with an unpredictable and sometimes dangerous driver.



Getting back on track may take some time. Some wrong turns or U-turns on the way. But at least that's acknowledging poor choices, and not making excuses to give up and not change, it's all too hard! Being prepared to admit you are wrong is a sign to those you love that you are ready to take responsibility and that you care.

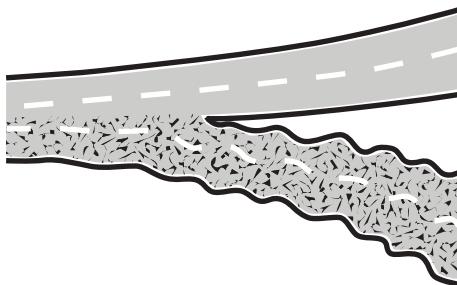
*You need to consider exactly where you have got to, so far.*

*When did you have your last physical check-up?*

*If you have been unhappy or depressed for some time now, would you mention this to your doctor?*

### **Toolkit for the journey ... look at yourself**

*Looking at yourself is an opportunity to see where the compass has been pointing for you. It's also allowing yourself to stop for a moment to reflect on how you want the rest of your journey to be. How well is the family vehicle being maintained or driven?*



*You can't change the condition of the road but at least you can make some choices about 'how' you are going to travel upon the road more safely.*

## Things to think about for the rest of the journey

- *How do you handle stress? How do you handle other people's stress?*
- *How often have you had drugs or alcohol in your system when you have 'gone off the road', or when you have been trying to resolve issues?*
- *How could you have been different, more honest and accountable, in your interactions with the people you love and with other people generally?*
- *How can you be more real about what you are feeling? How can you be more confident about expressing these feelings to those you are close to?*

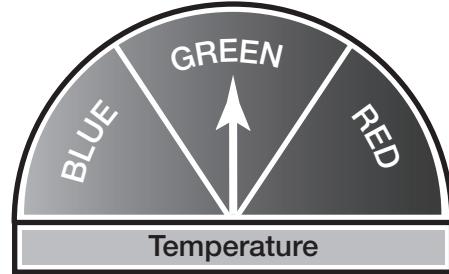
The good news is that everything about your vehicle is repairable, you can even improve it. It's not a 'write-off', not by a long shot, not while you're able to breathe, in fact!

Making better sense of your instrumentation (the things that monitor how your vehicle runs) is a good start.

No matter how 'hot under the collar' you are, or how badly the passengers are behaving, no matter the tooting and hollering going on outside, you can avoid losing control. All the information you need is on the dashboard!

Right in front of you are the three standard gauges for temperature, speed and fuel. There is the odometer which says how far you've come, but nothing about the journey, or the bingles, traffic jams, near misses, and being stuck in a ditch that time. Maybe if you had paid more attention to the gauges there might've been fewer disasters along the way.

It might be a good time to have another look in the Owner's Manual.



### Owner's manual: The gauges

The temperature (temper-at-u-re!) gauge is one that often doesn't get checked enough. It needs constant monitoring! Once you blow the radiator ... you go nowhere. Too much heat is dangerous, for everyone!

HOT:	Red Rage .....	over the top, extreme frustration.
WARM:	Green.....	'live and let live', we're all in this together.
COLD:	Blue .....	bottomed out, cold, detached, depressed.

#### Green (warm) zone

Green in the middle is good. It can fluctuate about a bit depending on what's going on outside, the Green section on the gauge is the sort of 'live and let live' zone, for you as the driver.

Others may cut you off, 'tailgate you', hold you up, or fail to let you know what they are doing when they're right in front of you. You may end up being late, not even getting started, or have sludge thrown at you, or honked at for nothing, have nowhere to park, may not even feel welcome.

But if you are in the 'Green Zone', those who are travelling with you or nearby, will feel safe and secure, sensing that you are trustworthy and reliable on this part of the journey. The weather may be lousy outside, others may be sick and unwell, there may have been a death, or a loss of something meant to last, or you might just be stuck in the traffic of daily life. But you are not overwhelmed and you

remain just a safe and patient driver, avoiding danger and making the journey as pleasant as possible. Knowing how to make the most of a bad situation.

### **Blue (cold) zone**

Being in the ‘Blue Zone’, at the bottom end of the temperature gauge, is not a good space to be in for too long, either for you or for those in your life. It saps energy and depletes hope and love.

Becoming withdrawn, depressed, self absorbed, unable to warm up, disconnected from others, not keeping pace, and finding yourself parked ‘outside’ all night, keeping your distance, locked in hurt pride or fear, sadness, and despair: all lead down a dead end track.

Get help fast to pull yourself out of the well of self-pity, that you may be drowning in.

Your coolness can be deceptive and mask your brooding and resentment. Is there someone around who can ‘read’ you and tell you when you are like that? Maybe it’s so cold and uptight, when you are around, that they can cut the air with a knife? Ask someone you trust, to give you an honest answer, … not necessarily the answer you would like to hear!

Taking it and taking it and holding it in gets you nowhere. You can freeze or overheat from feeling hurt, and then explode.

### **Red (hot) zone**

The hot Red Zone is worse than the cold Blue Zone. How much time have you been spending here, without realising it? The more time you are in the Red Zone, the worse things get for you – that’s a given. None of us are designed to live in these conditions for too long; it takes its toll eventually.

Are you constantly frustrated? Nothing being done the way you want it? Nothing getting fixed quickly enough, or well enough? Not enough time or money to do the things you expect of yourself and of her?

Do you have feelings of not being appreciated, leading to despair? Feeling totally unacknowledged or even disregarded for your efforts? Do these feelings lead to sadness and then to anger?

These angry feelings and thoughts can lead to more intense feelings urging payback or revenge. Of teaching ‘them’ a lesson, or of cutting ‘them’ off, putting ‘them’ back in their place, back behind you. We can stew about these things, which strengthens our feelings of injustice and the need to insist on our rights.

Drivers can be very loud and aggressive in this zone. Others learn to watch out – or they’ll get hurt.

You can sometimes become ‘manic’, with constant checking and doubting, jealous and suspicious when she’s not there travelling with you. Not trusting and wondering whether she’s off driving with another man. Paranoid thoughts can fill your head, exploding any rational or reasonable explanations.

Frequent anxiety and stressing to the max are also characteristics of the Red Zone. Wanting others just to keep out of your way – and if they don’t, it is their fault if something happens.

With all these wild feelings we travel with a force and a speed that won’t be stopped. You’re coming through, no matter what – cursing and swearing if you have to, using harsh, cruel words. Worse if they try and stand up to you.

Maybe you actually like being in the hot Red Zone. You get a thrill, a rush, from pulling her back into line, making her see that you’re not happy and she needs shutting up?

No matter how much you try to smooth over the bumps, the memory of the ‘accident’ is always there. The vehicle is never quite the same again, especially for those who have suffered hurt and injury. Often the most long-lasting and serious injuries are the ones that cannot be seen, just as with a battered vehicle, the panel beater can have the body looking good as new, but the chassis may have major structural damage, that needs more serious attention and work to fix it.

## Troubleshooting

*If you are in the Blue Zone and have been for a while, and can't see things changing in the future you need to get checked out. Immediately!*

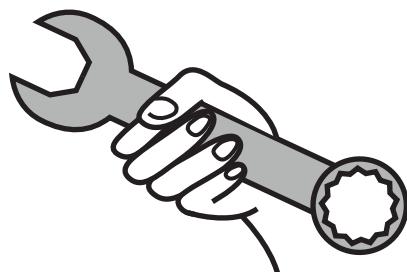


*Any time in the Red Zone is not good at all.*

*Pullover straightaway! Stop! Be ready to sit quietly until your engine cools down. Then you can pour fresh water into the system.*

When the temperature gauge on the dashboard tells you that you are in either the Blue or Red Zone, it is not you who is driving anymore. You are being consumed by dark and wild emotions that can do big time damage to your family and to your. You need to do something about it now!

Only you can change you! But sometimes you also need guidance and the right tools.



You need to talk to and to be tested by a competent mechanic. Get thoroughly checked out because some parts, or attitudes, may need overhauling.

*Learning to deal with the hard, black emotions is a struggle for all of us at first.*

Learning how not to react to those terse or demeaning words or accusations directed against you, or that odd, crazy look, is something we all have to learn to negotiate. It can be hard work but it can also have some immediate pay-offs.

*You can't choose how other people relate to you, or what they say, or do to you, but you can choose how you respond to them. You are not responsible for their behaviour, but you are responsible for your own.*

When you take responsibility for how you act and react, you find that you get more respect and so you give more in return. Your partner also gets more time in the Green Zone, because you are being honest and open about her reactions and behaviours towards you.



## **The fuel gauge**

There is a direct link between some of the ‘fuel’ you use and how much time you spend in the Blue Zone and Red Zone of the Temperature Gauge.

What you ‘fuel’ yourself with, whether you are overdoing it, or over-indulging, you make excuses for, comfort eating or drinking because you think you need it or deserve it.

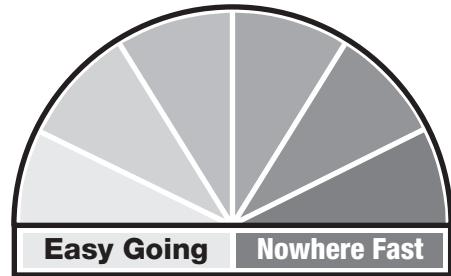
Maybe you are running too ‘lean’ by ‘fuelling-up’ on alcohol. By drowning your sorrows you become more irate, or couldn’t care less about anyone else, including (or especially), your family. It only takes ‘just one more drink’ and you are more confrontational, with more ‘Dutch’ courage, more foul-mouthed, and ‘need’ to drink more ... and so on.

Are you topping-up the fuel with other drugs (as well)? Using something to ‘mellow out’, or ‘chill out’, to become more detached, or to go high octane for a while so that you can outrun the thoughts and feelings that bombard you?

Expensive fuels these! Where does the money come from? Who goes without? Who suffers? and for how long? Just to fuel the driver, on a road to self-destruction! These fuels take a heavy toll.

These ‘fuels’ (that help to ‘fuel’ your abusive behaviour) can make your driving dangerous, even in low quantities. It can be worse at times when driving in ‘difficult terrain’, where sensitive subjects are being discussed. Make sure you are straight and sober, when dealing with emotional issues. (See Weather conditions on pages 97-99.)

We know about the right fuels; nutritious, fresh and balanced. At least one good feed every day. The less junk food the better. Moderation and regular abstinence from the not-so-good fuels. Developing dependencies on those fuel additives affects everyone around you.



### The speedometer

Going nowhere fast? Getting off on the 'rush'?

Are you one of those blokes that goes hard and expects everyone else to keep up? '*What does she do all day? She's 'only' got the kids to look after. She's not pulling her weight!*'

Do you sometimes rush around, frantic, expecting others to move out of your way, or to keep up? Are you blasting the horn? Do you have high expectations of others? What happens when they do not live up to them?

Do you sometimes slow down to a crawl? Shuffling along so that everyone is held up, nervous, waiting for you to come back on board and afraid to say anything to you that might be seen as critical? Do you realise how controlling this behaviour of yours is?

Maybe you arrive home exhausted, intolerant and frustrated, looking for things to be wrong.

How do you know when to slow down? Is it when others ask you to, or say to calm down? Maybe that's the worst thing to say to you.

Maybe you only slow down when the 'wheels drop off'.

Always being on the go, always on the move. No time to 'stop and smell the flowers' as they say. Not a good pattern of choices, for you and for your family. It seems like the merry-go-round from hell,-for your family, and for you! It is certainly not 'merry'!

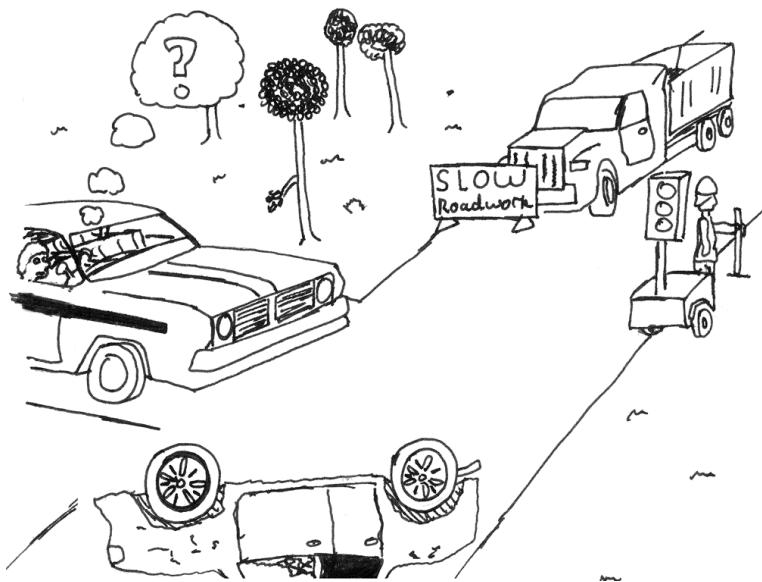
## ***Troubleshooting***

How worried would you be if you saw someone else ‘driving’ your family around the block the way you do? What advice would you give them? Think about it!

More attention to feelings, not just your own feelings, is required here. You need to be more tolerant and patient with yourself, as well as with others. Sometimes it’s important to just stop, or let others do the driving for a while. You need to learn to let go when you feel powerless or uncomfortable, and begin to trust your family. To be open and honest instead of closed and defensive and full of excuses.



## CHAPTER 3: ROADWORKS AND STORIES OF HOPE



### The road works

There is a way out of the mess you have created. You can choose to take this road or not. You can choose to use the tools, in order to stay safe and to make sure that your family is safe in your hands, or not. Long term change is possible despite the breakdowns, detours, and the shit that happens. The question is: how are you dealing with it?

What are the choices you are learning to make through reading and using the tools in this book? The choices about arriving safely, getting there despite breakdowns, or ending up in the ditch. What tools do you use for getting back on the road and travelling on, negotiating detours? (Sometimes the longest way round is the shortest way home!) 'Short cuts' may take longer and end up more costly!

## What is my position?

*Do I want to arrive at my destination together or alone?*

*Is my personal GPS (Global Positioning System) working well?*

*Does it operate on accurate information?*

*Is my GPS out of order?*

*Is it likely to lead us down a dead-end track that will need me to be either pulled out backwards or abandon the vehicle?*

All of us possess the capacity, like a Global Positioning System (GPS), to gauge or sense whether we are on the right track, whether we are in harmony with those around us and with our environment. A part of us knows when we are out of sync with others, or with ourselves. We feel uneasy, not at home with ourselves, or with others. At such times you can either choose to ignore that lingering feeling of unease, or do something about it.

The GPS is a sort of inner voice or monitor, that keeps us on track. If we listen to it and don't ignore it, or put it in the boot, it can help us to make good, safe, choices. The sort of choices that lead us to greater exploration and adventure in our life journey, whilst travelling safely with others.

On the other hand, you can deliberately choose to ignore this inner voice, this personal GPS, and act on the basis of other 'voices' that rage to us about injustice. You can become the 'play thing of circumstance', as a friend once put it, tossed around by feelings, unwilling to take responsibility and basically unsafe to be with at the end of the day (literally).

Another name for this personal GPS is conscience. That part of you that is in harmony with the universe, or that tells you when there is lack of harmony, or discord in your relationships. The GPS also monitors your honesty and tells you if you are being less than

honest with yourself and others. It also monitors your respect of others. What answer would you give to the following blunt questions?

Am I being less respectful of others than I would wish them to be of me?

Am I being less caring and considerate, more focused on my own needs?

Am I more likely to judge in my own favour, than in favour of my partner or children?

Like a singer in a choir, who is out of tune, you can choose to change, when you realize (or are told), that your singing is discordant, out of tune with others and painful to listen to! By choosing to do something about it and change, you can make beautiful music together. On the other hand, you can deny that the fault is with you and loudly claim that everyone else is out of tune! You could take the option of deciding that you are right and the person telling you, your partner, or your mate, or a counsellor and everyone else in the choir is wrong and off-key! False pride and stubbornness are often a key reason for us remaining in a mess.

Let's look at some stories of other men who have confronted their abusive attitudes and behaviour and have changed. These are men who have had journeys that have taken them from attitudes and behaviours of entitlement to fairness, aggression to understanding, deceitful dealing in their relationships to honesty, controlling to respect, and so on.

These are men's stories of hope. Hope for themselves and for their families and whilst they are unique to these particular men, at the same time they also hold out the possibility of change for other men and show that it is possible. Our families do not have to keep living with a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde combination!

It is good to read these stories and ask:

*'What can I learn from these bloke's stories that might enable me to stop driving my family round the twist?'*

The following ten stories are written around themes of problems and abusive actions that often inform and encourage men's 'mad-making' behaviour, abuse or violence.

Most men who use abuse and are violent in their relationships, have a number of abusive beliefs, rather than just one. Hence, whilst the following are examples of dominant themes connected to a particular story, they each inter-connect with other abusive beliefs.

**Abusive beliefs are based on:**

- **male entitlement**
- **revenge**
- **pride**
- **frustration**
- **anger**
- **shame**
- **guilt**
- **jealousy**
- **defensiveness**
- **sexual (dis)respect**

**Abusive Beliefs cause 'accidents', except that they are not 'accidents', but preventable human behaviour that is chosen and used for a purpose, as the following short stories indicate.**

## **Men's stories of hope**

### **1. Male entitlement (Henry and Jane)**

Henry's sense of entitlement, as a male, was very black and white. For him, everything was clear cut, with no grey areas. He was a man's man, who believed in his right to dictate what his family did, or where they went, because that was how he had been brought up. As a child he had been severely beaten on numerous occasions by his father. He recognized that this was not a way that a child should be treated, nevertheless, he defended his father on the grounds that he must have been a very naughty boy and so deserved it.

Henry believed:

- that he was entitled to make all the decisions in the family, rather than share decision-making;
- that he had a right to control finances, rather than share;
- that he was entitled to sex on (his) demand, rather than by mutual consent;
- that he had the right to control what his wife did, phone calls, friends, rather than allowing her freedom and trust.

In short, he saw everything as 'black and white'.

Henry believed he was entitled to behave like a king in his castle, rather than as an equal member of the family.

The impact on his wife Jane and on their children, was that they always wondered when they were going to put a foot wrong, or say/do something that would upset Henry. They felt like they always had to look over their shoulders, or that they were walking on egg-shells. They could see and feel that Henry's demands were unfair and irrational, but never had the courage or energy to challenge him.

When Jane threatened to leave him and take their children, Henry eventually sought help through Men's Helpline, who referred him to a local community health centre, where there was a men's behaviour change program. Through listening to other men's stories and the perspectives of the group facilitators, Henry was able to begin to see his abusive attitudes and behaviour in terms of choices he had grown up learning to make. By regularly attending the men's group program, and using the tools outlined below, he began to take responsibility for learning an alternative way of relating.

Henry began to see how his inherited and learnt sense of entitlement was unfair and unjust to his family and was fuelling his abusive behaviour. Henry worked hard at changing, though he had an occasional relapse, as with two steps forward and one step back. Henry's efforts at change were enough for Jane to remain, however they probably came too late for Henry's teenage son, Jason whose behaviour developed all the hallmarks of copying his father's and grandfather's abusive behaviour. Jason will face the consequence of this behaviour if he too chooses to abuse his girlfriends.

Tools that Henry used to change his behaviour: Nos. 1-6 in chapter 4.

## **2. Revenge (Rod and Jackie)**

Rod felt that he had been insulted by Jackie at a family barbecue, when she mentioned in passing to a close friend, that he had just lost his job. As a result he started to look for ways to get revenge. At first little things, but gradually escalating to more hurtful and destructive behaviour. What began as payback for one perceived hurt, developed into ongoing belittling, humiliation and blame, done out of revenge. It became a regular way of behaving towards Jackie.

### **'Jekyll and Hyde'**

Jackie was utterly bewildered by Rod's 'Jekyll and Hyde' behaviour, turning from being a lovely, caring husband, into someone who looked for any opportunity to exact revenge, far out of proportion to anything that she had said or done unintentionally. Living with Rod became a hell, and survival and sanity were day to day challenges.

Finally, it was Rod's older brother who was able to convince him that he needed to do something about his behaviour, before he lost his family. He gave Rod the number of a local counsellor who then referred him to the men's program for assessment. From having a 'mirror' held up to him and being invited to stand in Jackie's shoes, to get a sense of what it felt like to be on the receiving end of his nasty behaviour, he was able to take responsibility.

Rod was challenged by other men in the group program to stop trying to elicit sympathy for his feeling hurt and to begin to change those bits of his behaviour that were controlling and abusive. He was able to use the tools proposed below, especially getting a sense from the 'Seven Flies on the Wall' of his underlying denial and excusing of his abusive behaviour. He rationalised his behaviour on the grounds that he thought Jackie had humiliated him at the barbecue. By using the tools in chapter 4, Rod was able to compare how he was and how he wanted to be, especially in his relationships. He began taking responsibility for what he had done and for changing his behaviour. In doing this, Rod found 'Tuning in the radio' (Tool No. 7 on page 74), very helpful as a daily exercise that enabled him to stay on track, and become the person he wanted to be, for himself and for his family.

Tools that Rod used to change his behaviour: Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 10 in chapter 4.

### **3. Pride (Lou and Noreen)**

Lou loved his boys and did all he could to provide for them and their mother, Noreen. Lou, however had grown up with an awful legacy that had left him both emotionally scarred and depressed. As a child Lou had grown up in the country and been made to work from the age of seven. He was often left on his own in the bush from dawn to dusk and expected to cut firewood. If it was not done by the time he was picked up in the evening he was beaten. This isolated and isolating existence shaped a grown man who was on the one hand shy and retiring and on the other, physically imposing, even scary.

Lou's childhood experiences had meant that he was illiterate, unable to read or write anything but a few words. He was only able to keep his foreman's position by using clever tricks that never betrayed his inability to read. However, as Lou's boys grew and began to attend primary school, and to learn to read and write, Lou sorely felt his lack of education.

### **Emotionally illiterate**

Lou was proud of what he had made of his life, but unable to communicate his deeper feelings to his wife, Noreen. He longed to share more with her, about what he felt – his love and longing, as well as his hurt and pain. But he had never been taught the words.

Lou was emotionally illiterate, unable to find words that described what he felt. At the same time, for his sons he was very scary, because of his huge stature and his booming voice.

Noreen insisted that he seek counselling, after an incident where Lou became enraged and threatened the boys with a beating.

The breakthrough for Lou came when he put aside his pride and contacted his GP who referred him to the local community health centre's men's behaviour change program.

Lou attended that program for about 18 months. After a while, Lou was encouraged to try and learn reading and writing along with his sons. This was very difficult, but Lou's attempts to connect with his sons on the same level, meant that they were empowered and became more expressive, without the fear of being yelled at.

For the family however, it was too late. Lou's attempts at change did not come soon enough for Noreen. She had had enough, after almost ten years of battling Lou's moody stubbornness and frustration at being stuck in jobs that did not interest him, even though highly paid.

Lou's pride, learnt from an early age, as a way to survive, ended up exacting a hefty price in adulthood.

Once, in a group, he expressed that he really wished that he had listened to the policeman eighteen months earlier, who had strongly suggested that he attend the men's behaviour change group to learn alternative, non intimidating ways of expressing his feelings and relating with his family.

Nevertheless, Lou's efforts to take responsibility to change his frightening behaviour, gave hope that his sons would grow up with a non-controlling role model, unlike the one that he had as a child.

Tools that Lou used to change his behaviour: Nos. 4, 7, 8, and 10, in chapter 4.

#### **4. Frustration (Hank and Shirley)**

For Hank, the perception that something should have been happening that wasn't, was enough for his frustration to boil over and turn into rage. He was often felt frustrated in the early days, when the kids were young and his wife Shirley did not do what he thought she should. When this happened, Hank used to get more and more frustrated, and eventually, would begin to rant and rave and become 'verbal' and aggressive. The more he became like that, the more Shirley would get flustered and then depressed and the children become upset.

Hank was smart and articulate and used language in very hurtful ways to demean, intimidate and control Shirley, so much so that she developed a mental illness, much like her mother had done as a result of her father's ongoing abusive behaviour.

As a result of a number visits by the police, called by neighbours, Hank was sent by the court for assessment at the men's behaviour change program. Here he learnt to do something about why he became frustrated, as well as to start to be more honest about how he had been using his frustration as an excuse to be controlling with Shirley and his children.

Hank learnt to change the way he perceived things and learnt to 'switch channels' so that his frustration gauge stayed at safe levels. His family became much happier and less stressed and Shirley began to feel less depressed. Hank still gets frustrated at all sorts of things: ... other drivers, the economy, call centre operators, but generally he has changed the way he sees things. His frustration stays down and he now knows when he is beginning to use it as an excuse to be abusive and hurtful. He is able to choose to take responsibility for an alternative way of seeing things and acting.

Tools that Hank used to change his behaviour: Nos. 4, 5, 7 and 8 in chapter 4.

## **5. Anger (Brad and Vicky)**

Brad was a builder who worked long hours, drank heavily and terrorized his de facto Vicky, the mother of his three children. Vicky, who had previously been in an abusive relationship, also began to drink heavily. Brad used this as a way to belittle her, as well as a way to force her to have sex, at times in ways that she did not like. If she refused, Brad, not a big man but often a righteously nasty one, would make life even harder for her and their children. He further humiliated Vicky and convinced her that it was her doing, not his, and acted in ways that continued to further erode her self-esteem.

Brad was referred by an older work colleague who knew something of his treatment of Vicky. Though Brad initially began to make changes, to take responsibility for how he was behaving, he was not able to get over the hurdle of self-righteous justification for his behaviour and he continued to blame Vicky and her drinking to excess, for his violent behaviour.

Brad and Vicky are no longer together. Brad has moved on to another relationship, interstate. It is hoped that he learned something from the challenges other men in the group gave him. Perhaps he is still trying to blame and excuse his own behaviour, or deny what he was doing, and paint a picture that some other men would be sympathetic to. He was adept at gathering sympathy and encouraging self-justifying collusion from other men when he told his story.

Such a deep sense of justification for abusive behaviour, normally takes a lot of work to shift. Like rust on a car, that is not only on the surface, but has had time to go much deeper, it can threaten the vehicle's survivability. You can't just patch it up. Rust always makes its way back to the surface unless the underlying source has been fixed.

Brad was challenged by the evidence of Tools Nos. 5 and 8 in chapter 4.

## **6. Shame (Nick and Cathy)**

When Nick's wife Cathy began to earn more than him, he felt somehow that it was a slur on his manhood and his capacity to provide. He felt shame that he was not the main breadwinner, rather than rejoicing with Cathy, that she had a pay rise.

Nick's sense of shame began to niggle at him and he started to build resentment at what he perceived as injustice.

He thought he worked very hard. In fact, after working all week he had a second job as a relief milker on a nearby dairy farm on the weekends, to try to pay off the mortgage and make a better life for his kids.

When their marriage started to fall apart, Cathy and Nick went to see a counsellor together. They only went to one session and Cathy said that it was a waste of time, however, Nick continued and was referred to the local men's program for assessment. Almost immediately Nick began to recognize what he was doing, in acting out of resentment and playing 'poor me', and he began to make efforts to change. At various times all the tools in this book were useful for Nick in his journey of change.

Cathy, however, had moved on by this stage and was no longer interested in working at the relationship. As she put it:

*He is just like a kid and I don't need another, I have two already! and 'I am tired of the games, I have had enough.*

For her, the ten years of marriage had reached an end.

For Nick, this was devastating, nevertheless he has since moved on, learnt to take responsibility for how he behaves and responds. He is in a new relationship, with his two older children opting to live with him and his new wife and child. Cathy is also in a new relationship. She and Nick now communicate regularly and respectfully around any issues effecting their children's journeys. It was hard at first, because there had been so much hurt, but Nick knew there was no turning back.

Tools that Nick used to change his behaviour: Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 in chapter 4. According to his new wife, a business woman, Nick is now a model husband – respectful, caring and kind.

## **7. Guilt (Frank and Tracey)**

When Frank had an affair behind Tracey's back, whilst she was pregnant with their second child, he felt deep remorse and a sense of guilt and betrayal of Tracey. However, he was unable to talk with her about it. Instead he made excuses by telling himself that it would hurt her too much and that it was not fair to upset her during pregnancy.

The guilt, however, began to affect the way that Frank related or did not relate to Tracey. He began to act furtively, suspicious at things that she said, or left out. He began to question Tracey and not to trust that she was being open with him. No matter how much she protested that she had no idea what he was talking about, his distrust of her grew.

As a result, their relationship became strained and tense, eroding the trust that they had built over three years together.

Frank could not see that he was projecting his own sense of guilt onto his wife and Tracey did not know what was causing his suspicions and lack of trust. (It allowed him to keep thinking 'less of her' so that he could justify the 'other woman'.) Tracey found it very upsetting and became depressed and anxious.

Frank was asked by Tracey's doctor, whether he knew what was causing the anxiety and he disclosed that he had had an affair, but that Tracey did not know. The doctor suggested to Frank, that if he wanted to ensure that Tracey and the unborn child remained well, that he should change his behaviour. Frank never looked back.

By 'looking in the mirror' Frank was able to recognize which abusive behaviours he was using and what alternatives he could choose instead.

Tools that Frank used to change his behaviour: Nos. 1-5 in chapter 4.

### **8. Jealousy (Jack and Kylie)**

It seemed to Kylie, that ever since she had known Jack, he had been jealous about her. He was jealous of her friends, her family, her ex-boyfriends, her interests and then, when the children came along, jealous of her attention to them. It seemed sometimes that Jack's life was full of jealousy for anyone else she paid attention to. It was as if he was so insecure in himself that he had to have all her attention and that he tried to build his own sense of meaning and self-esteem by controlling her and everything in her life.

Kylie felt more and more that Jack dictated what she did and who she saw. As a result she became increasingly depressed.

He would often challenge her about why she had smiled at someone or said hello, or who had rung her or where she had been. Usually it was completely irrational.

When Jack began to stalk Kylie and monitor her phone calls, she applied for an Intervention Order from the local court and Jack sought help to change.

He learnt to see that his jealousy was not based on anything but his fear and that he had absolutely no right to control Kylie's life.

He began to see things from her perspective and to respect her and her right to live as she wished. The tension eased and their communication improved.

Tools that Jack used to change his behaviour: Nos. 1, 2, 5, 8 and 10 in chapter 4.

## **9. Defensiveness (Dave and Sharon)**

Dave had never been very confident as a child and had early on learnt from those around him that attack is the best form of defence.

Sharon had been with Dave for thirty years. Their four children had grown up and left home and now it was only the two of them again. Sharon had always known that Dave used defensiveness as a form of protection, as a way to cope with what he perceived to be threat, but now she had grown tired of it, impatient and less tolerant. Dave could not see the problem, when challenged, and put Sharon's intolerance down to 'change of life'. He did not own that he was responsible for it at all.

Finally, Sharon threatened to leave him if he did not go and seek help. After a few false starts, in which Sharon did leave for a short while, he finally did go for an assessment and attended a group for a few months, never looking back and feeling (and acting) like a new man.

Tools that Dave used to change his behaviour: Nos. 1-10 in chapter 4.

## **10. Sexual (dis)respect (Sam and Alice)**

Sam had grown up with the usual double standards of male socialization, learnt behind the bike shed at the rural school he attended. He had learnt that if you were a boy and 'scored' then it was like another notch on your belt as a stud. Girls who engaged in sexual behaviour with a number of boys, however, were called sluts.

Such socialization laid the foundation for a variety of ways in which Sam grew up to regard and use sexual disrespect as the norm in his relating. Indeed, when he and Alice became ‘an item’ it seemed that she was the perfect submissive sexual partner for him. She always tried to satisfy him, because that is what she grewup believing was her role.

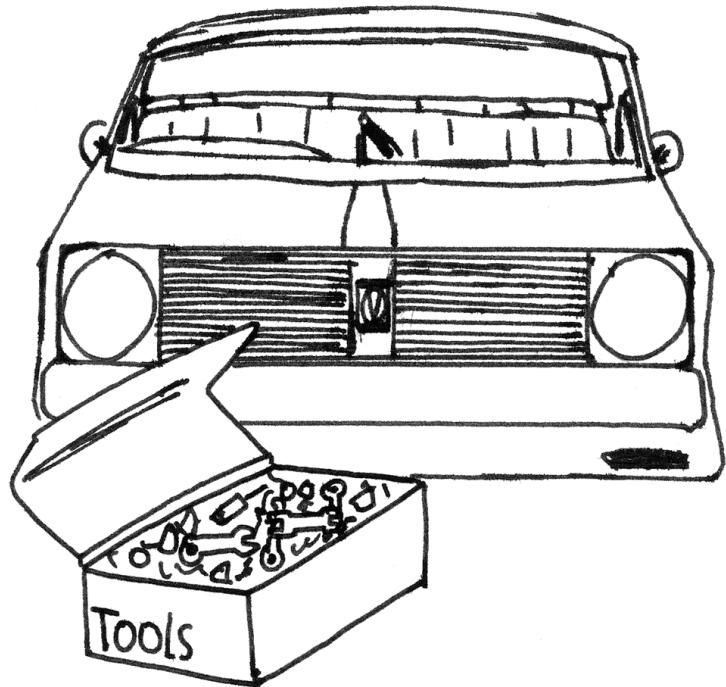
At the same time Alice never made demands of Sam, or expressed her sexual needs, especially after the one time that she tried to ask him to slow down and take more time to arouse her too, he had humiliated her and called her a whore. When Sam ended up being referred to the men’s program, as a result of alcohol related violence at the local football ground, he was assessed and began a group program. As a result of the assessment process he began to see how he had grown up making certain choices, and that he could now learn alternative, better ones. Life for Alice and Sam became much happier, and the future for their children began to look rosier.

Tools that Sam used to change his behaviour: Nos. 1-5 and 10 in chapter 4.

Maybe it is time to get out the toolkit! Do a self-assessment and check out and try some of the tools in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 4: TOOLKIT



### Top ten tools: For fixing and preventing abusive behaviour

1. Compass: Character Sketch
2. Diagnostics: Finding Angles
3. Laddering: Discovering what is Important to Me
4. Continuum for Self-Assessment: Honest Appraisal
5. Abusive Behaviour Checklist: Identifying Specifics
6. The Experience Cycle: Anticipations of Hope
7. Tuning in the Radio: Choosing a Station to Live by
8. Seven Flies on the Wall: Logging the Destruction
9. ABC Technique: Deciding What Not to Do.
10. The Feedback Loop: Listening to Your Partner

## Introduction

This chapter is about exercises or ‘tools’ for men to use to fix their behaviour.

When we were growing up, the tools our dads had to fix things were often far more limited than those available today. The number and availability of tools has increased enormously and within it, the capacity to fix things. Today, men have at their finger tips, tools and strategies, resources and options to help them solve and deal with the most puzzling and complex of issues that arise. It is no longer good enough to claim that what was good enough for my parents, is good enough for me.

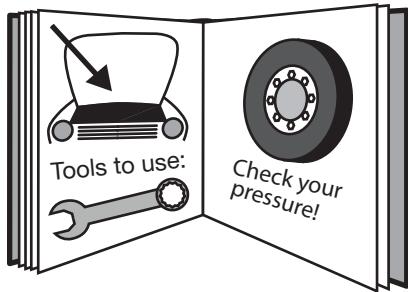
For example, men often use as a reason for disciplining their children harshly and physically, that it was the way their parents did things and they were good parents ... and to change would be disloyal to them.

Wouldn’t it be better to ask, *If my parents had known then, what we know now, about the effects of violence on children, would they have changed?* The answer is probably, yes.

So, let’s have a look at some of the tools you can learn to use, as a way to diagnose why the vehicle of your relationship is not travelling well.

Once you have had a good look, and made a diagnosis, the next thing is to find the right tool for the job – one that enables you to deal with the cause of the problem and prevent it happening again. (e.g. If you use the wrong oil for the engine, it will affect its performance, and similarly if we drink too much it will affect our behaviour).

## Principles for using the tools



- **Look and listen**, with all your senses, for difficulties and areas of concern in your relationship with your family.
- **Be sensitive to input from others**, since it is easy to hear things that agree with your view of the world and your relationship, but difficult to hear things that challenge that view.

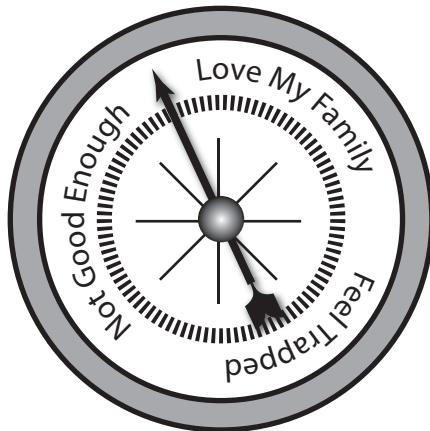
Real friends are those who are ready to tell us the truth about ourselves and how we behave, not just tell us what we want to hear. Can your friends tell you the truth about your behaviour, without any fear? Do you have the courage to challenge other men about their abusive behaviour?

- **Be honest and open about admitting responsibility** if the vehicle of your relationship is breaking down. One of the hardest things to do is admit that we have been responsible for the breakdown, but until we do, nothing will be fixed and our relationship (like our car in similar circumstances), will be damaged beyond repair. The other passengers in the car will already have begun looking for an alternative vehicle, one that works and is safe and comfortable for them, (wouldn't you, if you were in their shoes?).
- **Ask how you might change in order to make things better.** This requires an openness to change and adapt and a willingness to put any sense of hurt pride aside, to use whatever it takes to fix the motor.

- **Use the right tool for the right job.** No matter how good a tool is, it may not be the right one for the job at hand. A tool that worked for me in the past, may no longer be the right one for the job now and it is important to seek advice about what tool to use, in order to fix the problem.
- **Modify tools according to what is most helpful for the best result.** A tool is useless if it does not do the job and if there is something that is partly effective, then customize it to your needs. That is what all great inventors do. If you are going to overcome the cause of the breakdown in your relationship, you need to do it too.
- **Seek expert help.** If the problem is too much for you to fix on your own, then take it to a qualified mechanic, someone who knows about this stuff and can help you fix it. Have a look at the list of contacts at the back of the book.
- **Take responsibility – be a man.** You can't change others but you can take responsibility to change yourself.

## Top ten tools: For fixing and preventing abusive behaviour

### 1. Compass: Character Sketch



The character sketch is a simple way for you to describe who you are, in your own words, to yourself. Like a compass, it gives an indication of the direction in which you are heading and where you have come from. To use another image, it is a bit like looking in a mirror. Ask yourself: *Is what I see, the person I want to remember myself as in 10 years time?*

The **character sketch** is done by following these guidelines:

- Write or dictate a character sketch of 'Jack Smith' (your name), just as if he were the principal character in a play.
- Write it as it might be written by a friend who knows him very intimately and very sympathetically, perhaps better than anyone ever could know him.
- Make sure that you write it in the third person. For example, start out by saying, 'Jack Smith' is ...

Write your character sketch in your own way, ignoring grammar, punctuation and spelling. Write as much, or as little, as you like, for at least fifteen minutes.

Your character sketch does not have to contain any particular information, and you need not share it with anyone, if you choose not to. Although it is better for your ‘diagnostic’ process if you do share what you have written with someone you trust.

The very writing of the character sketch can often help you to get a better sense of yourself and of the possibilities of seeing and doing things differently. It is a good way to anticipate and prevent problems, as well as fixing ones already there.

The following is an example of what ‘Jack’ said about himself in his character sketch:

*Jack is someone who has never felt good about himself. Even as a kid he would get pushed around. He loves his family and wants to change but he finds it hard. He doesn't think it is all his fault. He works hard and does his best to provide. He feels trapped because whatever he does, he feels that it is never good enough for his wife. He gets upset and feels misjudged.*

**See Worksheet 1 on page 111.**

Using this character sketch, move on to the second tool.

## 2. Diagnostics: Finding Angles



When fixing a vehicle, a mechanic often uses diagnostics to measure performance and find what is out of balance or needs tuning. This diagnostic tool follows on from the character sketch and helps you to **find angles** about what is happening in your life. Once the character sketch is written, the next step is to draw out the central themes, or meanings of your life. This is done by putting the following question to yourself:

1. “*What are the things that have most meaning for me in my character sketch?*”

Underline these things (perspectives) in your character sketch and write them below under the heading ‘obtained angle’.

Next ask yourself the following question about the first thing you named, underlined and wrote: (e.g. Never felt good about himself.) See in the example below.

2. “*What is someone like, who is not like this?*”

This is where you identify the characteristics of someone who contrasts with what you have already written and identified. The main thing is to identify the meaning it has for you. (**Note:** **There are no wrong answers, only different ways of seeing**

**things.)** The answer you give to this question becomes the 'contrasting angle' (e.g. Feels at home with himself. See example below).

This process is repeated for all the perspectives you identify in your character sketch, and the obtained and contrasting angles are noted in the table below.

*Note:* It may be that you are only able to identify two or three perspectives from your character sketch, whilst someone else can name many, or vice versa. That does not matter. What is important however, is that what you write clearly spells out the meaning for you.

**See Worksheet 2 on page 112.**

Following is an example of the perspectives obtained from 'Jack's' character sketch:

<b>Obtained Angle</b>	<b>Contrasting Angle</b>
<i>Never felt good about himself</i>	<i>Feels at home with himself</i>
<i>Pushed around</i>	<i>Stands up for himself</i>
<i>Loves his family</i>	<i>Doesn't care</i>
<i>Works hard</i>	<i>Lazy</i>
<i>Wants to change</i>	<i>Stuck in his ways</i>
<i>Feels trapped</i>	<i>Hopes things will change</i>
<i>Gets upset</i>	<i>Stays calm</i>
<i>Feels misjudged</i>	<i>Feels understood</i>

The key point in the example, is to find out what is most important to Jack, right now. This might not be what was most important to him yesterday, or what will be tomorrow, but rather, it is about how he sees things right now. In other words, the meaning he makes of life, can change from day to day.

Similarly, for yourself, try and identify what has most meaning for you, right now and how that influences your relationships.

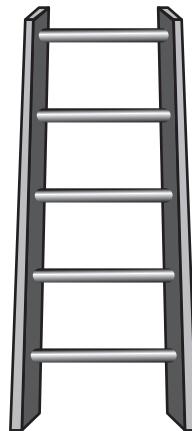
Once you have identified your perspectives and have obtained the contrasting angles, the next step is to look at your list of perspectives, which you have recorded above, and choose the one which has most meaning for you right now.

For example, out of the perspectives above ‘Jack’ might choose:

***‘Feels trapped – hopes things will change’.***

The construct you identify is used in the next stage, the laddering exercise.

### **3. Laddering: Discovering what is Important to You**



Laddering refers to using a virtual ladder to explore the deeper meaning and value a person puts on the way they make sense of life (their personal way of seeing things, especially relationships).

Using a laddering exercise can enable you to identify your core values, beliefs and perspectives. In other words, laddering helps you to see clearer the basic things that you use to make sense of your life and how you live, including your relationships. It will be useful to go through this exercise with a trusted friend who you can talk with easily. It is helpful to remember the following, so as not to become too anxious on this journey of discovery:

1. Laddering is just a name for one type of interviewing (where you can even interview yourself!).
2. The laddering exercise is structured to keep you focused on a theme.
3. The focus is on identifying and clarifying core concepts that make sense to you and that might help you understand why you choose to live the way you do.

4. Laddering may enable you to see, perhaps for the first time, how different parts of your life are interrelated, why some things are important to you, others not, and why you behave in certain ways.

### **Laddering: How to**

In using the laddering tool, the first step is to take the most meaningful perspective that you have identified in the last exercise (e.g. *Feels trapped*). Next decide which of the two angles (Obtained or Contrasting) you would prefer to use to describe yourself, by getting your companion to ask you: ...

*“Which would you prefer to be?”* ... when you have chosen, get them to ask:

*“Why is this important to you?”*

... note the response down on the laddering sheet, or on a separate piece of paper, (reflective listening).

*Note:* The laddering sheet (below), is filled out from the bottom of the page upwards, in the direction of the arrows below.

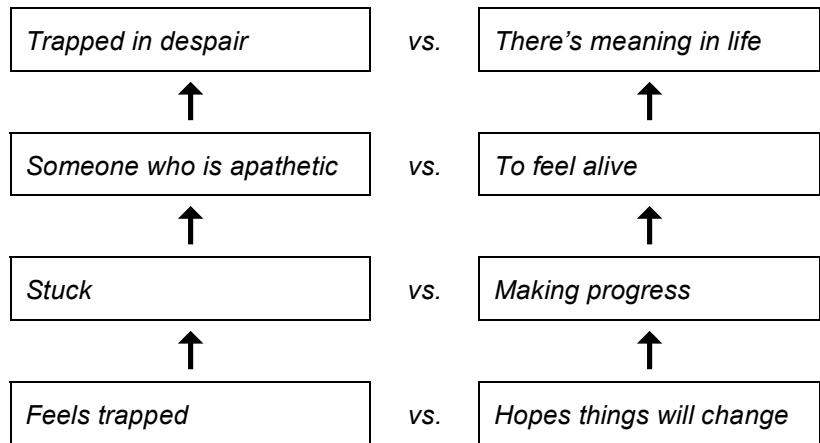
Next, let them ask you *“What is someone like, who is not like that?”*

... note down the answer and let them ask you further:

*“So, in terms of these two which would your prefer?”*

... and so on, until you begin to repeat yourself.

Here is an example of laddering based on the most meaningful perspective obtained from ‘Jack’s example above, ‘*Feels trapped – hopes things will change*’.



The laddering exercise uses your exact words, to reflect your meaning, this also involves you in exploring possibilities.

Some further points to remember when you use this tool.

- You need to be sensitive to hearing the meanings behind the words used and try to clarify what you are trying to express.
- Laddering involves trying to listen openly, being non-judgemental, non-critical, and being open to different ways of seeing things.
- It is about gaining a better understanding of how you construe the relationships you have, including any abusive behaviour, and asking “Why?”.
- Laddering is about asking why something is important to you, even if it might seem unimportant to the rest of the world. So the question asked is “Why is it important to **you** to be ... rather than ...?”
- In the use of this tool, sensitivity and encouragement are required, because often you are reflecting on aspects of your way of understanding the world that you have never thought of before. This can be very scary.

- If you begin to feel uneasy about where the exploring questions are leading, then take a break from the tool for a while.
- Sometimes it is important to explore how your unease might enable you to move towards changing your abusive behaviour. It is important to think about why you feel uneasy or uncomfortable and write some ideas down. They may help you.

The following questions may be useful in using the laddering tool to explore the values behind your behaviour. This is in order to better understand that it is not just your surface behaviour that needs changing but also the attitudes and values behind it. (A bit like a car that needs some body work, but until the rust underneath is fixed, it will never be properly repaired.)

Ask yourself:

1. *What are the basic values or beliefs indicated at the top of my ladder?*
2. *In what ways do I demonstrate these values in the situations described at the bottom of my ladder?*
3. *What are the possible choices or alternative behaviours implied by my personal perspective angles?*
4. *Did I have any hesitation in choosing my preference to one of the angles rather than the other? Why?*
5. *Can I imagine ways in which both angles might be integrated or brought together?*
6. *How do I think, someone might live who has made the contrasting angles choices?*
7. *How can the non-preferred angles be seen positively?*

8. *In regard to the angles that I prefer and choose in my ladder, of the people you know, who would criticise my choices, and who would support them?*

#### **A note of caution**

A basic principle of using laddering, is only to use it when you are fairly sure that you can make use of the result. In other words, you need a sense of motivation to use the information elicited, in a way that enables you to choose more constructive alternatives in your life.

Be aware that a person using this tool, might find that what they now realise about themselves, produces anxiety, fear, anger, hurt, or aggression which they do not have the personal resources to cope with. In which case make sure to use this tool whilst with someone you trust perhaps a counsellor.

**Warning!** Do not use this note of caution as an excuse not to change abusive attitudes!

Specifically, regarding abusive behaviour, the following Tool Number 4, is a quick way of assessing where you are at right now. Do you have the courage to check yourself out honestly in this assessment?

**See Worksheet 3 on page 113.**

#### **4. Continuum for Self-Assessment: Honest Appraisal**

Along each line mark where you think your behaviour with your family lies.

<b>Power and Control</b>	<b>Equality</b>
Coercion and threats	x-----x Fair negotiation
Intimidating	x-----x Non-threatening
Economic abuse	x-----x Economic partnership
Emotional abuse	x-----x Emotional support
Male privilege	x-----x Shared responsibility
Isolation	x-----x Trust and support
Using children to hurt	x-----x Responsible parenting
Minimising and blaming	x-----x Honesty and accountability
Physical force	x-----x Protection and comfort
Sexual abuse	x-----x Respect and consideration
Alcohol/drug abuse	x-----x Sobriety

If you are up for a challenge, you may want to invite your partner or older children to rate you along the same scale, as long as they can do it safely. In other words, you will not retaliate in some way.

If you are not prepared to hear about how they perceive your behaviour on the same continuums, then that itself says something about your insecurity and need to maintain power and control in the family. Perhaps this self-assessment challenges you to go beyond your denial about the effects of your behaviour on those you love and who love you.

Learning to self diagnose is one of the most important skills you can have. It means that you have to make sure that you are prepared to accept complete responsibility for your behaviour and can no longer blame those travelling with you and their habits .

**NOTE TO SELF:** *Identifying who I want to be along the journey, helps me to keep moving on track, and in the right direction.*

The Continuum of Self-Assessment (tool 4), provides an immediate diagnosis to help you address your driving attitudes as you begin to continue the next part of your journey.

**See Worksheet 4 on page 114.**

Look at how you might start to look at your gauges, to not only read your inner turmoil, but also to give you better ideas or clues about how to manage your feelings.

Your dashboard might include a number of gauges, with needles indicating where you are at, and moving when you change (e.g. from calm to anger)... As one dial registers change, it effects how the others read, e.g. a move towards jealousy would increase the likelihood of registering anger, hurt or revenge.

<input type="checkbox"/> Calm and safety .....	Anger
<input type="checkbox"/> Trust .....	Jealousy
<input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance .....	Hurt
<input type="checkbox"/> That's life .....	Perceived injustice
<input type="checkbox"/> Openness .....	Defensiveness
<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledgement .....	Guilt
<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed .....	Anxiety
<input type="checkbox"/> Courage .....	Fear
<input type="checkbox"/> Letting go .....	Revenge
<input type="checkbox"/> Staying cool .....	Frustration
<input type="checkbox"/> Respectfulness .....	Righteousness
<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing .....	Sense of entitlement
<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to others .....	Disregarding others
<input type="checkbox"/> Honest with feelings .....	Closed to others
<input type="checkbox"/> Energetic .....	Tiredness, fatigue
<input type="checkbox"/> In control .....	Depression
<input type="checkbox"/> Hope .....	Despair
<input type="checkbox"/> Resilience .....	Inability to bounce back
<input type="checkbox"/> Trusting .....	Paranoid
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-esteem .....	Self loathing

These gauges only begin to work well if you work on open and honest communication with your partner. For specific behaviours the following tool (Number 5) gives a more comprehensive picture through the Abusive Behaviour Checklist.

If you want a more comprehensive assessment, then the Abusive Behaviour Checklist, tool 5, is useful.

## **5. Abusive Behaviour Checklist: Identifying Dangerous Behaviour**

An assessment of your behaviour by you or by your partner (circle one).

How much have you used the any of the following behaviours?

**1 = Never    2 = Rarely    3 = Occasionally    4 = Frequently    5 = Constantly**

### **Abusive behaviours**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **1. Coercion and threats**

Made and/or carried out threats to do something to hurt your partner	1	2	3	4	5
Threatened to leave, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare or other authorities	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner drop legal charges	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner do illegal things	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

#### **2. Anger or intimidation**

Made her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures	1	2	3	4	5
Destroyed her property	1	2	3	4	5
Screamed or yelled	1	2	3	4	5
Drove recklessly (road rage)	1	2	3	4	5
Physically abused pets as a warning to her	1	2	3	4	5
Stalked partner (phoned/followed)	1	2	3	4	5
Displayed weapons to intimidate her	1	2	3	4	5
Punched walls, doors, slammed fist on table, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

<b>3. Economic abuse</b>					
Prevented partner from getting or keeping a job	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner ask for money or accepted an allowance	1	2	3	4	5
Took partner's money	1	2	3	4	5
Did not let family members know about or have access to family income	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4. Emotional abuse</b>					
Used put-downs and humiliated partner	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner feel bad about herself	1	2	3	4	5
Called partner names	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner think she's crazy	1	2	3	4	5
Played mind-games	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner feel guilty (e.g. about kids)	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>5. Gender and social privilege</b>					
Treated partner like a servant	1	2	3	4	5
Made all the big decisions	1	2	3	4	5
Acted like the owner and boss of your partner	1	2	3	4	5
Assumed 'authority' from being the man	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>6. Isolation</b>					
Controlled what partner did, who she saw and talked to, what she read, where she went	1	2	3	4	5
Limited partner's outside involvement and friends	1	2	3	4	5
Used jealousy or envy to justify actions	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7. Using children</b>					
Made partner feel guilty about the children	1	2	3	4	5
Used the children to relay hurtful messages	1	2	3	4	5
Used access visits to harass partner	1	2	3	4	5
Threatened to take the children away	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>8. Minimising, denying and blaming</b>					
Made light of abuse and did not take partner's concerns about it seriously	1	2	3	4	5
Said the abuse didn't really happen	1	2	3	4	5
Shifted responsibility for his abusive behaviour away from himself saying partner caused it, blamed her	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

**9. Physical abuse**

Pushed, grabbed, tripped or shoved partner	1	2	3	4	5
Slapped, hit or punched partner	1	2	3	4	5
Held partner and slapped her	1	2	3	4	5
Kicked partner	1	2	3	4	5
Threw partner around	1	2	3	4	5
Choked or strangled partner	1	2	3	4	5
Used a knife, gun or other weapon against partner	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

**10. Sexual abuse**

Demanded sex from partner	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner watch porn	1	2	3	4	5
Pressured partner to have sex in a way they did not want	1	2	3	4	5
Physically forced partner to have sex	1	2	3	4	5
Physically attacked partner's sexual parts	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

**11. Alcohol or other drugs**

Indicated frequency of alcohol use	1	2	3	4	5
Indicated frequency of other drug use	1	2	3	4	5
Indicated level of concern about the level of alcohol or other drug use by him	1	2	3	4	5

Has this behaviour pattern changed recently? If so, how has it changed?

This checklist is useful in assessing abusive beliefs and behaviour that men use to maintain control over their families, and that they need to change. Do you apply a double standard when judging other's behaviour?

**NOTE TO SELF**

*How tolerant am I really?*

*Would I accept the same level of tolerance from others, if at all?*

*How do I deal with my mistakes and those of others? We are all sharing the road and sometimes large parts of the journey with these others.*

*Do I always have to be, or feel I have to be, in charge?*

*How would I, and how do I want to, describe the journey at the end?*

*As a man, how do I measure up? What makes me a good role model to my children?*

*What is my attitude towards others on their own journeys?*

One of the ways that we can choose to change our abusive habits, is to anticipate situations and circumstances where we know from past experience, that we are likely to become abusive, and prepare ways to stop.

If our anticipation predicts that, on the basis of our personal experience, we are likely to become abusive, in a similar situation, we can choose not to, instead, preparing ourselves to act in an alternative, safer, way.

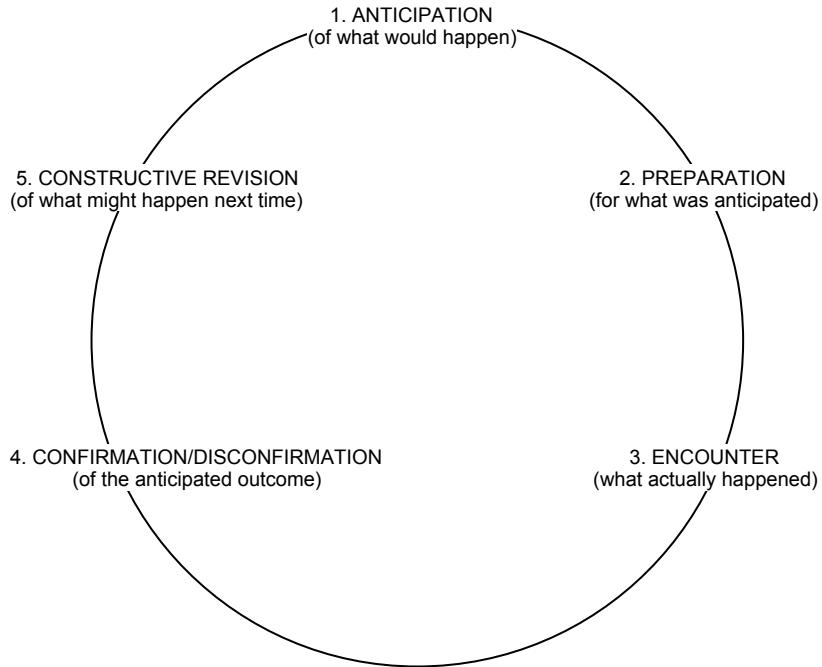
**See Worksheet 5 on page 115.**

## **6. The Experience Cycle: Anticipations of Hope**

The Experience Cycle, shows how you learn from experience. Your anticipations can lead to hope, rather than to despair, for your family and for yourself.

1. Starting with step one: (Anticipation) of what may happen, based on your past experience.
2. You then go to step two in the (Preparation) and get ready for what you anticipate.
3. Then in step three: (Encounter) you note your experience of what actually happened,
4. In step four: (Confirmation/Disconfirmation) You ask, was your anticipation born out or not.

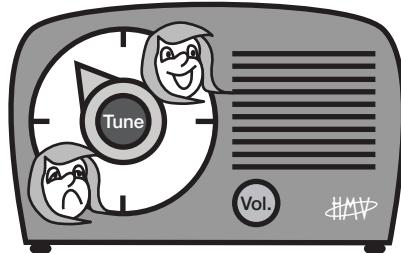
5. On that basis, step five: (Constructive Revision) you learn from the experience about how you might prepare (better) for next time. In other words you learn from experience!



(Adapted from: Oades and Viney 2000:66)

**See Worksheet 6 on page 118.**

## 7. Tuning in the Radio: Choosing a Good Station to Live By



'Tuning into the Radio', is about using our experience to deliberately choose an alternative 'wavelength' to live by, because we honestly recognize that the 'station' we have been tuned into is self-centred and brings grief.

It is a bit like the old saying 'we become what we eat'. Perhaps we also 'become what we hear'! If the 'radio station' we tune into is full of self-pity, justification and excuses for abusive behaviour, then we will become more and more like that. Equally, if we choose a radio station that plays a different, constructive, tune, then we are more likely to become like that. Give it a try, following the instructions below!

### **Instructions:**

1. Take your previously written character sketch (Tool 1).
2. Identify three or four of your most meaningful perspectives and write them on the left, *stressed, frustrated, abusive, jealous, intimidating, hurt, lonely, trapped*. Alternatively, think of the first three things your partner would say, that you still need to change in your behaviour.
3. Ask yourself, 'How would I describe someone different to this?'
4. Write the answer on the right, for each of the three and ask yourself whether they are 'doable' for you.

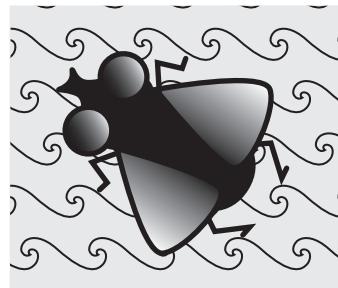
5. Next, you need to ‘fine tune’ what actually living that different role, might be like for you. (two voices in the head, two radio stations playing different tunes ... *Which do I listen to? Am I getting a good reception, or is there ‘static’ from the old station I used to listen to, on the left hand side?*).
6. Next, pick a name for your new (right hand column), role ('Frank') ... and then send your old self (Joe) off on a holiday for two weeks, by going out the door and coming back as 'Frank'.
7. Remember that only you and your friend know that you are now 'Frank'.
8. Write the central elements or perspectives of your new role on a small piece of paper and carry it with you to regularly remind yourself during the day that you are now 'Frank', living the qualities and beliefs that you wrote on the right hand side.
9. As 'Frank', note the reactions of people you relate to during the week and whether there is any difference in how they see you, react to you and to your new behaviour.
10. If you then apply the Experience Cycle (Tool 6 on page 72), you can prepare yourself on the basis of your anticipation. By playing the role of 'Frank' there are very positive and constructive outcomes that were not there when you behaved as Joe. In addition, you can further modify the new role according to constructive revision from experience and so on.

(Adapted from: Fransella 1995:97-102)

In Tool Number 8, ‘Seven Flies on the Wall’, your analysis of a specific abusive situation can be used to help identify the abusive attitudes and beliefs that subtly inform and promote your abusive behaviour. In addition, the analysis pinpoints the denial, blaming and excusing that underlies most men’s abuse of women and children.

**See Worksheet 7 on page 119.**

## 8. Seven Flies on the Wall: Logging the Destruction



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. ACTIONS: Describe what happened, what you did to your partner – the look on your face, tone of voice, actions.
2. INTENTIONS AND BELIEFS: What was your intention? What did you believe should happen?
3. FEELINGS: What were your feelings before the incident, during it and afterwards?
4. MINIMISING, DENYING, EXCUSING AND BLAMING: In what way did you justify, excuse, minimise or deny your actions, or try to blame her?
5. AFFECTS: What were the affects of your action?  
On you? \_\_\_\_\_  
On her? \_\_\_\_\_  
On others? (children?) \_\_\_\_\_
6. PAST VIOLENCE: How did your past abuse and violence affect this situation?

7.  NON-CONTROLLING ALTERNATIVES: What might you have done differently? What would you do next time?

(Adapted from: Pence and Paymar 1993:36)

Tool Number 9, the ABC Technique, is yet another way to choose how and why you choose what you do and how it is related to advantages and disadvantages as you see them. (Sometimes we act on these, without being really aware of them.)

**See Worksheet 8 on page 120.**

## 9. ABC Technique: Deciding What Not to Do



Actual state (the problem)		Desired state (what we want)	
A1		A2	
B1	The disadvantages of A1	B2	The advantages of A2
C1	The advantages of A1	C2	The disadvantages of A2

(The problem is then re-defined from C1, as the ‘actual state’ and so on.) (Tschudi 1977)

To illustrate the use of this tool, the ABC Technique, let’s take one of the obtained constructs that Jack had in his Character Sketch (See Tool 1 on page 57, the second last one, ‘*gets upset*’.

If you start with ‘*gets upset*’ as the ‘actual state’ or problem, you might have an ABC technique that looks something like this:

The actual state (problem)	Desired state (ideal)
A1 ... that Jack gets upset.	A2 that Jack stays calm
B1 kids get scared, wife leaves, he drinks, loses his job, is charged with assault.	B2 his family feels safe and happy
C1 Jack has his way, he controls what his family do, meals, driving, money, sex, jobs, everything, ... others walk around on egg-shells, makes him feel powerful.	C2 he sees himself as weak and thinks others do too

This might lead to the problem being re-defined as C1 above, with Jack's controlling behaviour causing his family to walk on egg-shells. The next version of the ABC Technique might look like this:

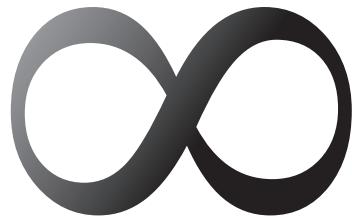
The actual state (problem)	Desired state (ideal)
A1 Jack's controlling behaviour causing his family to walk on egg-shells.	A2 that Jack behaves fairly
B1 everyone is tense and strung out and unhappy.	B2 his family feels appreciated and protected
C1 Jack gets his way in everything and learns that bullying 'works'.	C2 Jack has to share the hard stuff as well as the good stuff and loses his privileges

And so on ...

The next, tool, the Feedback Loop, is about encouraging feedback from those close to us, especially our partners and family. Even though what they have to say may be hard for us to hear, it is probably the best gauge of whether we are changing, or how much further we still have to go, before those we love feel truly safe to be with us, in all weather, not just when the sun is shining and the road ahead is clear.

**See Worksheet 9 on page 121.**

## 10. The Feedback Loop: Listening to Your Partner



It is generally a good indicator of your honesty and commitment to change, that you are ready to hear from your partner,, her criticism, as well as support and challenge. Sometimes, that will be hurtful. It is OK to feel hurt and discouraged. This is not the same as playing 'the victim' or saying '*Poor me, no-one understands me and everyone is against me!*'

Challenge: Ask your partner which parts of this book mean something to her and why. Be prepared to listen and accept what she says. Your reaction to what she tells you will be an indicator for her, about how much she is able to trust you in your commitment to changing your abusive behaviour.

The single most telling indicator of whether a man is serious about changing his abusive behaviour, is whether he is willing to hear and act on feedback from his partner, about what he says and does, or whether he remains in denial.

**See Worksheet 10 on page 122.**

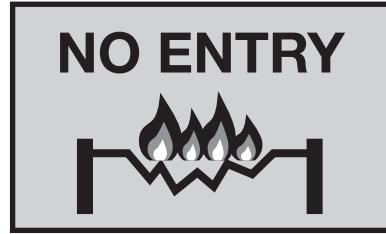
## CHAPTER 5: THE ROADMAP



This chapter is about learning *how* to read the roadmap. It takes into account that you are going to maintain a high level of 'roadworthiness' at all times. A commitment to remaining in the green zone no matter what, for the rest of the life of the vehicle.

Reading the roadmap is about making sense of the road signs, weather conditions and other people's driving behaviour.

## Signs



Are any of these signs still showing in your thoughts about the journey ahead with your family? For some of you they may be happening now. Some of you may still be adding fuel to the fire. Some partners stop believing the 'sorry', 'I promise I am going to change'. For some men, their cars even end up parked in front of the courthouse because their driving got that bad.

Some men are slow at reading the signs about how they 'display' their anger and frustration to other drivers (our partners and children). They have no understanding of how it affects people, and that it affects people differently.

Over a long period of time you may have stopped noticing your warning signs. You may have become critical of other's driving, sometimes quietly brooding over it, allowing it to build up.

This is about learning to put up NO ENTRY signs for yourself. Not going down the same old road anymore with your actions and reactions. Instead of ignoring your own warning signs it is time to monitor warning signs from others, the things that trigger you. This requires astute driving skills: watching, listening, talking, discussing. Checking out the signs that you feel your body reacting to: a sudden rise in to the red zone, tension in parts of your body.

Real change means totally changing direction. It means 'owning' your bad driving, not making excuses and not blaming everyone else.

This may mean facing your shame. Change means coping it on the chin sometimes when it gets thrown in your face or when you're really feeling tested. For some of you there will have been so much damage done to your partner or children that they may hate and despise you. Trust may be hard to win back. Put yourself in their shoes.

Learn not to put up the 'Road Closed' signs to avoid your feelings of guilt and embarrassment, or to avoid listening to the pain, anguish and a felt betrayal of the love – your love for those who mean most to you.

Real change means learning to listen, to listen attentively. Just as we like others caring for us, inquiring after us, interested in us, missing us, they require the same from us if we are to journey together and read (each other's) signs well.

## DETOUR AHEAD

Some loved ones may have already put up blockades or a 'Detour' sign to keep you away, even while some are still living with you. What a way to have to live a journey.

They may have had enough of travelling with a man who is often grumpy, usually demanding that he gets his way, and sometimes scary.

They may be afraid of getting hurt and stressed about not knowing when you might next become abusive. They feel like they are always walking on egg-shells or looking over their shoulder, afraid that they might say (or not say) something that will upset you and

that you will blame them for anything that happens. When people can't express themselves to those they love, then something becomes damaged within the relationship.

If you had been travelling for a while like that, would you want to continue on the journey with that person? Be honest with yourself. Would you want to be the one who has to live with you? Or do you think: *they should be prepared to put up with me like this because they're the ones who cause the problem anyway?* (See *The Mirror* in Chapter 1, page 15.)

When a bridge is closed it might mean that it'll never be re-built! They may have had enough of the excuses that you have used to justify your abuse and loss of control (of self, of the vehicle).

For some it is now going to be an awfully long way around while you try and do the repairs. This can be expensive and time consuming. It might mean meandering bumpy roads, and being watched the whole time, under pressure. (Mind your building resentment – that's another sign to look for).

And while you're in the process of changing, you are probably going to be scrutinized closely (like a speed or red light camera) the whole time. No rest stops on this part of the journey, no taking it easy. The rewards will be worth it, but may be a long time coming. (No getting away with 'Are we *there yet?*' or the 'hangdog' looks while you're restricted to the back seat.)

To become the better 'driver' for the rest of your journey ( we never know when our 'odometer' has clicked over for the last time!) means learning from your life, (see Tool 6: The Experience Cycle). It means unlearning some of the ways that you have always reacted, or over-reacted, ways that you probably learnt in childhood, copied from your father or mother; sometimes not as bad, sometimes worse.

Or maybe you are one of those people who learned to get their way by 'spitting the dummy', throwing the 'tarty' as a child. Always getting away with it, one way or another.

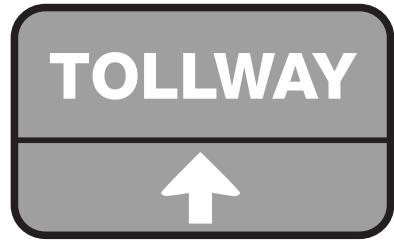
Fortunately, you can choose to learn from the past and change what is not good for the future. There is hope of change.

Instead of just barging through the barriers, calling it bullshit or nonsense, or choosing to ignore the sudden narrowing of the road, even when there is so much oncoming traffic, perhaps you need to just slow right down and take a few deep breaths. Just as on the road you can choose how you drive and how you respond to other drivers, in the same way you can choose to 'drive to conditions' in your relationships. If you choose to drive at speed on wet slippery roads, then you are choosing the very real possibility that you will crash. We often call these, 'accidents', when they are really the result of behaviour (driving fast, driving blind drunk or stoned) that you could have chosen not to do and that you could have anticipated might result in the crash.

In your relationship, you can anticipate pretty accurately the result of your chosen behaviour – behaviour learnt from childhood – and when your family 'crashes' as a result of your stubborn refusal to change, then it is not an 'accident'.

No more getting away with raising the fist, flailing the arms about and becoming threatening, or abusing your family, shouting them down.

Similarly, learning not to keep going round and round, stuck on the roundabout, endlessly re-visiting old wounds or digging up old dirt, is a choice. Do you want to keep travelling together, do you want to keep hurting your family by things you say and do? Hopefully you still have a choice! But maybe it is too late to win back their trust in you. A trust that they once had. Maybe you have once too often indulged yourself, charging through life like you are the one in charge, liking the 'rush' you get in the Red Zone when you are cutting loose on the freeway, with your 'get out of my way' attitude. They may have grown weary and tired of feeling scared, and found courage to change their journey, to take the detour that leads away from you.



And when you've had your fun on the freeway (of life!), that takes a toll and is not 'free' at all, but profoundly costly for families, you end up sitting in the 'garage' stewing over *the traffic and the idiots on the road! Why can't other people just get it right?!*

Sometimes you may have used her 'bad driving' as an excuse to take control of the wheel. We know that women who are in abusive or controlling relationships find 'unhealthy' ways of trying to survive, cope and deal with their partner's behaviour. They find ways to anticipate, counter or avoid their partner's reactions (so that sometimes you feel you're being managed or manipulated). They learn this out of fear. Mostly this just ends up making the situation worse for the women themselves – and a roundabout for the whole family to be stuck on.

Men who have used demeaning humour or sensitive issues of their partners to put them down, may have difficulty convincing them that 'the past is past'. When men have chosen to make nasty comments, or jokes, or slurs, or innuendos, it is very hard for their partners to begin to believe that they might be treated respectfully again, as an equal on the journey ...

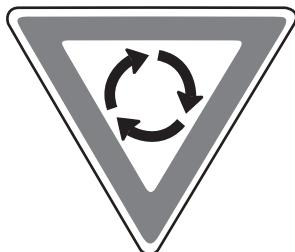
A grey rectangular sign with rounded corners, containing the text "CHANGED TRAFFIC CONDITIONS" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

Equality means not constantly checking out where she's heading off to, or sneaking down a side street to cut right out in front of her because you don't trust her. Or maybe this behaviour is more about yourself, in reality. Maybe some double standards operating here.

*I can learn from my past mistakes, using my experience of what I have done and its effects on others, as a guide of where not to go.*

It is important to anticipate and see a 'Wrong Way Go Back' sign, long before you get to it, before you get on the endless roundabout, or that one way street again or find yourself in the (alcoholic) fog again, unsure of your bearings.

Clearly slowing down and paying attention to others is essential during this time as you familiarize yourself in your new role, allowing others the time to see that you are seeing things differently.



You can exit the roundabout using The Experience Cycle (Tool 6, page 72), to deal with expectations and anticipations, from your past experience. For example: A familiar relationship is like a bush track in the winter, that we travel on regularly. We know where the deep potholes are (that can break or bog us down to the axle!) and we know the best ways to avoid them. We know how to navigate the track in a way that is safe and comfortable for all. We also know from experience, that if we drive fast or drink and drive, we are more likely to damage the vehicle or to get stuck, because it has happened to us before. We also know that we scare anyone in the

passenger seat who is at the mercy of our driving and unable to escape without jeopardy and in total fear of speaking out (so much for freedom of speech).

*I can learn to anticipate the future – avoiding the potholes, knowing the best way through the rough patches.*



You do not have to use the same old excuses to get yourself off the hook or out of a tight situation, such as thinking or saying '*It's someone else's fault, I just lost control*'.

There are signs everywhere. Time to open your eyes, look up, slow down, read the signs and change old 'driving' habits. Are you driven by habits and unable to change, or can you be response-able? Able to choose and respond sensibly? Dare we say, maturely?

Are you learning how to handle what comes up about the kids, the old boyfriends, the phone bills, her parents? Or, are you locked stubbornly into a (self) destructive way of driving the relationship?

## DO NOT OVERTAKE

Are you learning that there may be limited access to others because of damage, collisions, outbursts of road rage? No longer the unlimited freedom you have had in the past? There used to be no parking restrictions in the marriage but now there may be 'One Hour Parking Only', or 'Authorized Access Only'! Or are you back on 'P' plates, back on 'probation' following a drink-drive incident, where you chose to take risks with your family and now you and they are paying the price?

This is about you learning to relinquish control. Get used to it, learn from it and then maybe you can learn to be a driver who has earned his family's trust, again. You won't be trusted (or trustworthy) until you follow the signs. Until you learn it's more than just 'GIVEWAY'.

What or who has helped you in the past? Were you always like this? All the time? What do you need to do

to help you in steering a straight and true course?

How do you become more aware of how you are really travelling ... and be more ready and able to listen to feedback that is negative? – see *Seven Flies on the Wall* (Tool 8 page 76).

How you travel on the journey and the quality of your navigating is about making safe choices.

In navigating your way through the territory of abusive beliefs are there any 'safety zones' where such beliefs do not prevail? Even though your mates might want to give you excuses for your past behaviour and put the blame on others.

The hardest 'speed hump' to get over in learning to drive safely with your family, is to stop excusing yourself and blaming others.

Do you think You will not take responsibility for how YOU drive, as long as you are pointing at others and blaming them and excusing your own mistakes? Your real mates will be the ones who have the guts to tell you the truth about yourself and any of your behaviour that is abusive, rather than button their lip and sit quiet, or support you in your abusive behaviour.

Will those same mates still be around in ten or twenty years time? Will they still be there when you are a lonely old man because of how you have treated your family? No.

You can make decisions today to behave in a way that in ten or twenty years time your partner and children still love and respect you, because you are loving, respectful and caring, rather than domineering, self-centred and abusive.

## A checklist for how to read the roadmap

- What are the stars or the landmarks that guide you in being safe for your family to be with?
- What navigation aids do you use?
- Do you have a GPS to track your thoughts and emotions?
- Are you able to ask for directions when lost, confused or overwhelmed.
- Do you have a speed alert beeper on the cruise control, to alert you to slow down and travel safely?

Learning to read the signs, learning to communicate openly, using the tools provided, are the real components of your own personal GPS (global positioning system). These will all help you stay in the Green Zone. But, have you got an alarm for when you are in the Red Zone, especially for when you are caught in traffic? For not allowing initial resentment to become bitterness, annoyance to build to rage, lack of appreciation to become revenge or retaliation? You can use the tools: Seven Flies on the Wall, The Experience Cycle, ABC Technique, to give a better sense of where you are and where you want to be.

Sometime change is too difficult to do on our own and we need help. If that is the case for you, then contact your nearest community health centre or one of the call numbers at the back of this booklet.

Each of us, as men, can also challenge other men to be non-abusive and not be 'domestic bullies'. We have a responsibility to do so. If we stay silent in the face of other men's abuse, then we are colluding with the abusers of women and children.

#### **Questions to ask yourself.**

*Do I want my children to learn bad behaviour from me?*

*Would I want my daughter to end up with a driver like myself, or worse, because she doesn't know any better?*

*Do I use my status as a male, as the 'Mr Know All', as the provider, as the older and (self-proclaimed) 'wiser' to expect and demand 'Right of Way'?*

*Do I demand that she meet my 'servicing needs' as my right of entitlement, as a male?*

*Do I use manipulative games, coercion or guilt trips to get my way?*

Saying ‘my needs come first’, is one road you can no longer go down. That, and the other underhanded driving habits you use to get your way or come out in front, or to make sure she understands her place, in regard to have her service your needs.

The society in which we live, supports, encourages or subtly condones men’s control and abuse of women, in all sorts of ways. So, the challenge for all men, is to ask ourselves *Am I man enough to recognize my part in that process and to begin to challenge abuse or violence whenever I encounter it, to fix my behaviour and to challenge other male road users to do the same?*

## **The direction from here**

The road map gives us a good indication of where we have been, as well as where we are heading.

Some of the ‘map reading’ is starting to learn about the other directions that people have come from before they began travelling along with you in your life. If your partner’s own journey has been ‘bumpy’ or seriously messed with before she got to you she may have put (false) hope in you to lead the way. Or maybe you just thought you knew best (*I am the man after all, and she’s never really done anything with herself*).

Listening, Inquiring, Understanding, Acknowledging, Affirming: all important and mandatory driving skills for the journey ahead.

*Partner: ‘He keeps thinking I am ‘broken down’ and he wants to ‘fix it’. All I want him to do is just listen.’*

Learning not to go down the same old path, the same old way every time – with a quip or joke, a shrug, a grunt, a look, or a blast from the horn. This is about identifying a different route, before it’s too late (always checking the gauges), so that everyone arrives safely – or in better spirits at least, through the stormy weather, the real accidents, the bad luck.

Learning to dump the notions of payback or punishment and retribution.

And again, if you're not sure of the way, you need the confidence and honesty to STOP and ask for directions.



The road out there is a *shared space*. To be a trusted and respected driver you must respect and be tolerant of those who share this space with you. Males often tend to presume a right to take up more room, on the road, or on the footpath (and to make more noise than other road users!).

We all make mistakes when we drive.

Tolerance and care for others who share this space, who are confused, lost, struggling with their own 'overheating' engines, requires a keen eye for what's ahead, and what may be coming up from behind. Always allowing time for evasive (safe re-) action.

Signs won't show up clearly on your map, but they are usually there. You'll always need to be prepared for new ones – even along the same old way. Roads can suddenly become inaccessible, other drivers may be in traffic chaos. We all need to watch for the signs. But there are mistakes that we continue to make because we can, or believe we can.

## Choices

- Instead of staying with bad habits such as: Learned ways of driving (like '*king of the road*'); Failing to indicate until too late, sulking or broodiness), that you do all the time you can learn to become **considerate** and . and patient, to hang back if necessary (what's the rush anyway?).
- Instead of ignoring the signs saying 'Wrong way', 'Go Back', **Stop, look, listen** (to what your family tells you). You can choose to take heed of the signs around you and so, make others safer.
- Instead of trying to see how much you can get away with, you can learn to be fairer about life together and **sharing the load**, not just the things you like to do.
- Instead of saying '*stuff 'em, stuff the bloody lot of 'em*' when you are unhappy at home, you can learn to **negotiate** in a way that everyone is happy (including you), rather than staying locked into a position of pride and ultimate loneliness.

Partner: *Every time I ask him to have a night off the grog he gets shitty and moody with me. Then he has a go at me about something else to avoid the issue.*

- Instead of going right out of control so that everyone gets out of your way, you can stop being intimidating and learn to **be kind and friendly** (without gritting your teeth!).
- Instead of totally ignoring danger zones – when you are drinking, or when she is drinking or when you are tired, upset, frustrated, you can train yourself to speak and **act safely**. In a way that you and your children will be proud of, in the cold light of dawn – the time when things that are important are clearest!

- Instead of ignoring stop signs – when everyone else is scared or intimidated by your outbursts, complaints or demands, you can **swallow your pride** and stop.
- Instead of ignoring traffic hazards – when everyone else is also fragile and worried, you can **go more carefully**, being as sensitive to those around you as you would want them to be to you!
- Instead of ignoring bumpy conditions – and the rough road ahead, whilst yelling at everyone else to keep up and stop complaining, you can learn to **put yourself in their shoes** and ask yourself what does it feel like to be on the receiving end of my behaviour?

The challenge for you is **not to become complacent**, to make sure the windows are always clear and visible and *used*, keep an eye out well ahead for all warning signs, particularly when dealing with familiar and difficult issues.

Life can be so unpredictable at times – you never know what's coming on someone else's blindside. It might even be you!



## Deep depression

Experience tells us that many men who are abusive in their family, are themselves often very unhappy or depressed. Depression is a clear sign that things are not going well at home and can result from a loss of intimacy, respect and affection and be accompanied by a loss of direction, low self-esteem and grieving.

## **Coming to grief**

Grief and a sense of loss might take many forms. It may be that you are grieving that there is no longer love in your relationship. You might be grieving about a lost sense of yourself as a good person, because you know that some of your behaviour is shameful and you don't like looking in the mirror (see page 15). Your behaviour might also have led to you being avoided by friends or family and you are lonely. You grieve the loss of friends. There is a way out of the hopelessness and despair, but you must choose it.

## **Alcohol and drugs**

Many men (and women) use alcohol or other drugs to cope with the feelings of loneliness, isolation, grief and low self-esteem. Many men become gradually angrier and angrier, until they explode ... or become sad and depressed, by turning the anger inward. If your depression has been around for a long time, then decisive action is needed. Help needs to be sought from someone who can help you get out of the darkness. Medication might help for some time, but the underlying causes of the depression need to be dealt with. (see the Blue Zone page 29).

## **Another checklist**

Have you:

1. Scared or scarred your family by your drinking behaviour?
2. Driven in a way that scared others, or used 'road rage'?
3. Felt foolish or embarrassed in public and blamed the ones you love?
4. Been scared to be on your own and not coping?
5. Become jealous of others, including your kids and the attention they get?

- Turned into Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, so that your family is kept guessing?

If you know someone in that space, or are experiencing similar things yourself, then get some help (see the list of agencies and resources at the back, page 108).

If you are stuck down a well, in the darkness, unable to climb out of your depression and despair, feeling lost and alone, feeling sorry for yourself and angry at the world that goes on, without seeming to care, then you need help from someone who is not in the well with you. A good counsellor will stay at the top of the well and help you climb your way up into the sunshine again.

Weather conditions?



## Fog over road

Sometimes, because of the alcohol or drugs you've put in your system, you find yourself in 'fog', where things seem confused and all over the place and arguments and fights are likely. You're getting into deep trouble. Trouble you recognize from previous times and from which you need to remove yourself before you get completely off track and bogged down.. Stuck in a way that will require outside help to get you out.

## **Thick fog**

She's pulling up stuff from the past now, stuff that you'd rather forget, but she does it again. She says that you're like your father, or like all other men, that you shouldn't be allowed near the children, (as the court has ordered?). You are confused and have a tendency to not want to slow down, but not knowing what's coming up ahead.

What you can do is just stop, pull over and take 'Time Out'. All fog eventually lifts enough for us to see a clear way out. A way out that is safe for everyone. Patience instead of allowing (choosing) frustration to build. (Using the old counting to ten - or to one hundred if it helps.)



## **Heavy rain**

So heavy even the wipers can't clear the windscreens. Tears, torment, despair, hopelessness, unable to see through all the misery and gloom. You're even worried about losing control yourself it's so bad out there. Put your lights on, slow down, stay safe and drive carefully through. Stop if others have stalled and need a hand. Have compassion and understanding by putting yourself in their shoes. Better that than the narrow mindedness and intolerance of the past.

## **Wild winds**

You may think you're safe inside when it's blowin' a gale. Bits and pieces coming from all over the place. Limbs falling and trees across the road. Even the carport might not be safe. You might be feeling a bit self-righteous, being a bit too full of yourself.

Learning to keep, not a close(d) eye, but a mindful eye on all that they don't get blown and swept away in life's dramas.



## Other people's driving

Who else is on the road? Who is on the journey with you in such a confined space? Your wife or partner? Kids? A difficult teenager (who may not even be yours)? No time for yourself or just the two of you, to take a breather. Do you just go for a drive to get away from it all? Are you just not making the time to pop up to the top of the nearest hill and see the sunset, or sunrise, and get your bearings?

How are you with others when you are dark? Would they know just how volatile you are? Ready to explode?

Or do you hang back and take their measure, ready to race up, cut them off when they least expect it? Waiting for the moment?

There may be no warnings, your gauges are reading safe and normal but then the weather has suddenly closed in with no warning. ...

*Why does she keep blowing the money when she knows we don't have it? And the bills?. We made an agreement and she's ignored it. Spending it on the kids and rubbish. Those kids have got it too easy. They just have that 'take' attitude. Just because you make a couple of 'mistakes' now and again. ... She just spoils them. They won't know what's hit them when they're out*

*there in the real world. ... Or when she goes off driving somewhere, who could she be seeing? She's holding back – you just know it.*

Time to re-tune the radio (Tool No. 7, page 74). This ‘stinking thinking’ station you are tuned in to (above), puts you on a roundabout to destruction. Is that where you want to go? You can choose to get off!

Time to think about how you can spend more time with your children so they have an appreciation of difference. Also, time to think about what you can do so your partner will feel more appreciated. So that when she comes in she doesn’t have to start cleaning, or see a mess in the sink again, or a trailer full of work clothes. Knowing that she’s appreciated and wanted and not just ‘there’ to be used.

Your partner knows from the moment you ‘start-up’ in the morning whether it’s going to be not only a safe journey, not just riding out the rough patches, but that it’s going to be enjoyable and fun. Why else wouldn’t she want to come back if she knows this is the best place to park?

Time to think what else your partner might appreciate. You Can never rest on your laurels nor take her for granted and she needs to know that.



## **Heavy traffic**

The road is mad with total congestion, people driving all over the place, all trying to cut through, squeeze in because they've got to be 'there' before you. Maybe they do. Maybe you can just calm down and not make their frantic life any worse. Maybe let them through, to ease their journey for a moment. 'We're all in this together' as the saying goes

## **Continuing the journey and 'staying on track'**

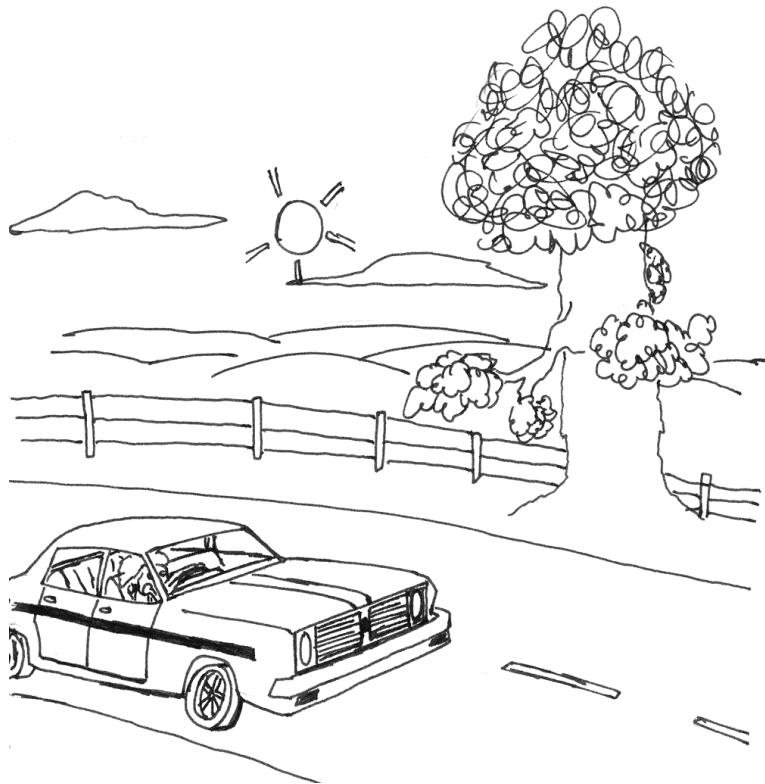
How are you 'measured' by others, yourself, in the past, present, future? Do you listen to their opinions seriously?

Who do you have to measure up to?  
Who do you actually measure up to?  
How will you know – who will give you feedback?  
How will you deal with sabotage or with feeling undermined?

Allowing yourself to be scrutinised and remain open to criticism is hard, but it also takes the pressure off. Being accountable to others allows for more open and honest interactions. More trust to be built. More real intimacy – and you can never have too much of that.



## CHAPTER 6: THE ONWARD JOURNEY



### Roadwork ahead

Lots of work to be done, both on the vehicle of the relationship and on the road to be travelled. Bad behaviour and damage by other vehicles does not mean that it is normal or good.

We can choose to fix the problem, starting with our own behaviour and attitudes to others.

We may become irritated by roadworks and the delays they cause, making us slow down. In the end, though we know that it means a safer journey for all: re-surfacing to remove the bumps; safety rails so we don't go over the edge; overtaking lanes to allow others to pass safely.

## Choose the right tool for the right job

So, if there is not a tool in this toolkit to help you fix a particular bit of your behaviour, then use your resourcefulness and inventiveness to make one that does. Our world is full of examples of how men have done just that in other areas of their lives, particularly with work problems.

If your car's shock absorbers are worn out, then it is a rough and jarring ride, particularly if you are driving on a corrugated dirt road, and dangerous to yourself and others.

Similarly, if those things that normally provide a cushion in your relationship have begun to wear out and go missing, then it is likely that communications can become abrasive and jarring. And, just as with our family car, we can choose to keep driving without shock absorbers and sooner or later the car, or us, will fall apart, so too, in our relationships we can ignore the growing signs of wear and tear, or we can take steps to do something about it.

*If you are reading this, it is likely that you have already allowed the shock absorbers in your relationship to become worn to the metal, and have not taken responsibility to do anything to fix them, at least not quickly enough. So, firstly you need to learn from your mistakes, and make sure that the same thing does not happen again.*

Remember, prevention is much better than breakdown. So, fix those things in your relationship that are wearing thin, damaged, damaging, creating fear and anxiety. Monitor yourself and others who are close to you (without being a vigilante, or a control freak).

If you are smart you'll watch and learn from others. There are always people who seem to be not only able to drive in cruise control most of the time, but also know when to 'cancel' it to manage the difficult slow or treacherous conditions outside.

Ask them, how they do it, talk to them, watch them and learn from them, so that your own children will want to learn from your driving, will admire the better driver you've become by paying attention to others.



# APPENDICES

## List of ‘road signs’ to watch for

ANXIETY AHEAD: Patience and calm, talk through the issues. Don’t ‘catastrophise’. Don’t blame or be a victim.

SPEED HUMPS: No going flat out here, need to be concerned about others just outside here. Need to pace yourself. No hurry.

WRONG WAY – GO BACK: Not just saying sorry, but backtracking to find out where the wrong turn was (again?). Making amends.

BLIND CORNERS: Being prepared for anything coming around the bend. Staying on your side of the line, slow and easy.

SLOW – CHILDREN PLAYING: They don’t see things the way we do. They don’t always understand. They are more easily scared. They copy us.

STOP: You might think you’re safe but you can’t assume they think you are. You have to show that you really are in control.

GIVEWAY: Instead of always having my way, or being in a hurry, or just slipping out in front when it suits you.

NO OVERTAKING OR PASSING: Being trusted to wait for others, even those going in different directions.

ROAD CLOSED: Absolutely need to Stop Now – going any further this way gets you nowhere. You’re not wanted here.

DETOURS: Important to recognise that something unexpected is going on and you need to try another way. Follow the directions you are shown.

ALTERNATE ROUTES: You’ve got to keep watch for these! You’ll miss them if you don’t keep an eye on your gauges.

## **List of agencies to contact for help**

List of numbers to contact for assistance and information about where professional help is available:

Mensline Australia 1300 789 978

Men's Referral Service 1800 065 973

Lifeline 131 114

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

Relationships Australia 1300 364 277

Centacare 1300 138 070

Family Services Australia 1300 365 859

Telephone Interpreting Service 131 450

NOTE: Please add to this list any contact numbers that you have found useful, and could hand on to others, if needed.

## **Reference List**

- Fransella, Fay (1995) *George Kelly*. London: Sage.
- Laming, Chris (2008) *Challenging Men's Violence against Women: A Constructivist Approach*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag.
- Laming, Chris (2005) *SHED Manual: For Workers Engaging in Men's Behaviour Change to Shed Abusive Beliefs and Violence*. Churchill: CeLTS.
- Oades, Lindsey and Viney, Linda (2000) "Experience Cycle Methodology: A New Method for Personal Construct Psychologists?", pp.160-173 in Jorn Scheer (ed.) *The Person in Society: Challenges to a Constructivist Theory*. Giessen: Psychosozial-Verlag.
- Pence, Ellen and Paymar, Michael (1993) *Education Groups for Men who Batter: The Duluth Model*. New York: Springer.
- Tschudi, Finn (1977) "Loaded and Honest Questions: A Construct Theory View of Symptoms and Therapy" in D. Bannister (ed). *New Perspectives in Personal Construct Theory*. London: Academic Press.
- Additional useful resources**
- Frances, R. ed. (1994) *Mirrors, Windows and Doors*: A self-help book for men about violence and abuse in the home. Melbourne: NTV.
- Roseby, C. ed. (2005) *Journeys in Fatherhood*: An anthology. Melbourne: NTV.

## **Postscript**

Occasionally, when we go shopping, we might meet a man who had sought help to change, years before, and has used the various tools outlined in this book. Many such men greet us warmly and express proudly that they have 'got their shit together'! They often have a smiling child with them and sometimes their partner. The test of real, long term behaviour change is whether they are safer.

There are also those (minority) men who avoid us when we are down the street, and I often wonder whether it is because they are still in a shameful space because they were not able to take responsibility to change.

Maybe using the tools was too confronting and too hard, and so those men remained abusive and as a result they continue to be unhappy and maintain a destructive role model for their children. Just as they learnt abuse from someone, so will their children continue to learn it from them, and they too will grow up thinking that abuse and violence in families is normal. It is not!

So, at the end of the day, you can choose whether you continue down the road of abuse, doing more and more damage to your family and to yourself, or whether you take the road of change.

Change is not an easy road to take, it may be unfamiliar and painful, but use this book and the contact list (see page 108) and they will enable you to take responsibility to learn new ways of being safe and happy as a family. It takes courage, but it is worth it. Just ask your children and their mother! (If you were in their shoes, what would you say? ... think back to your own childhood!)

## **Contacts for authors**

If you have any comments, feedback or suggestions for the authors, regarding *Family Safety: A Toolkit for Men*, please contact them at the addresses below.

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# Worksheets

## Worksheet 1 – Compass: Character Sketch

The **character sketch** is done by following these guidelines:

- Write or dictate a character sketch of ‘Jack Smith’ (your name), just as if he were the principal character in a play.
- Write it as it might be written by a friend who knows him very intimately and very sympathetically, perhaps better than anyone ever could know him.
- Make sure that you write it in the third person. For example, start out by saying, ‘Jack Smith’ is ...

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## **Worksheet 2 – Diagnostics: Finding Angles**

1. *"What are the things that have most meaning for me in my character sketch?"* Underline these things (perspectives) in your character sketch and write them below under the heading 'obtained angle'. Next, ask yourself the following question about the first thing you named, underlined and wrote:  
  
2. *"What is someone like, who is not like this?"* The answer you give to this question becomes the 'contrasting angle'

This process is repeated for all the perspectives you identify in your character sketch, and the obtained and contrasting angles are noted in the table below.

Obtained Angles	Contrasting Angles

## Worksheet 3 – Laddering: Discovering what is Important to Me

Following the directions on pages 62-66 fill in the ladder below, beginning in the left hand bottom corner.

The diagram shows a ladder structure with eight rungs. Each rung is a horizontal rectangle. Vertical arrows point upwards between each rung. The word "vs." is written between the first and second rungs, and between the third and fourth rungs. This pattern repeats four times, creating a ladder shape.

## **Worksheet 4 – Continuum of Self-Assessment: Honest Appraisal**

Along each line mark where you think your behaviour with your family lies.

<b>Power and Control</b>	<b>Equality</b>
Coercion and threats	x-----x Fair negotiation
Intimidating	x-----x Non-threatening
Economic abuse	x-----x Economic partnership
Emotional abuse	x-----x Emotional support
Male privilege	x-----x Shared responsibility
Isolation	x-----x Trust and support
Using children to hurt	x-----x Responsible parenting
Minimising and blaming	x-----x Honesty and accountability
Physical force	x-----x Protection and comfort
Sexual abuse	x-----x Respect and consideration
Alcohol/drug abuse	x-----x Sobriety

If you are up for a challenge, you may want to invite your partner or older children to rate you along the same scale, as long as they can do it safely. In other words, you will not retaliate in some way.

## **Worksheet 5 – Abusive Behaviour Checklist: Identifying Specifics**

An assessment of your behaviour by you or by your partner (circle one). How much have you used the any of the following behaviours?

**1 = Never    2 = Rarely    3 = Occasionally    4 = Frequently    5 = Constantly**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **1. Coercion and threats**

Made threats to do something to hurt your partner	1	2	3	4	5
Threatened to leave, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare or other authorities	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner drop legal charges	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner do illegal things	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

### **2. Anger or intimidation**

Made her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures	1	2	3	4	5
Destroyed her property	1	2	3	4	5
Screamed or yelled	1	2	3	4	5
Drove recklessly (road rage)	1	2	3	4	5
Physically abused pets as a warning to her	1	2	3	4	5
Stalked partner (phoned/followed)	1	2	3	4	5
Displayed weapons to intimidate her	1	2	3	4	5
Punched walls, doors, slammed fist on table, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

### **3. Economic abuse**

Prevented partner from getting or keeping a job	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner ask for money or an allowance	1	2	3	4	5
Took partner's money	1	2	3	4	5
Did not let family have access to shared income	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

<b>4. Emotional abuse</b>					
Used put-downs and humiliated partner	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner feel bad about herself	1	2	3	4	5
Called partner names	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner think she's crazy	1	2	3	4	5
Played mind-games	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner feel guilty (e.g. about kids)	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>5. Gender and social privilege</b>					
Treated partner like a servant	1	2	3	4	5
Made all the big decisions	1	2	3	4	5
Acted like the owner and boss of your partner	1	2	3	4	5
Assumed 'authority' from being the man	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>6. Isolation</b>					
Controlled what partner did or who she saw	1	2	3	4	5
Limited partner's outside involvement and friends	1	2	3	4	5
Used jealousy or envy to justify actions	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7. Using children</b>					
Made partner feel guilty about the children	1	2	3	4	5
Used the children to relay hurtful messages	1	2	3	4	5
Used access visits to harass partner	1	2	3	4	5
Threatened to take the children away	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>8. Minimising, denying and blaming</b>					
Made light of abuse and did not take partner's concerns about it seriously	1	2	3	4	5
Said the abuse didn't really happen	1	2	3	4	5
Shifted responsibility for his abusive behaviour away from himself saying partner caused it, blamed her	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9. Physical abuse</b>					
Pushed, grabbed, tripped or shoved partner	1	2	3	4	5
Slapped, hit, kicked, or punched partner	1	2	3	4	5
Held partner and slapped her	1	2	3	4	5
Kicked partner	1	2	3	4	5
Threw partner around	1	2	3	4	5
Choked or strangled partner	1	2	3	4	5
Used a knife, gun or other weapon against partner	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

**10. Sexual abuse**

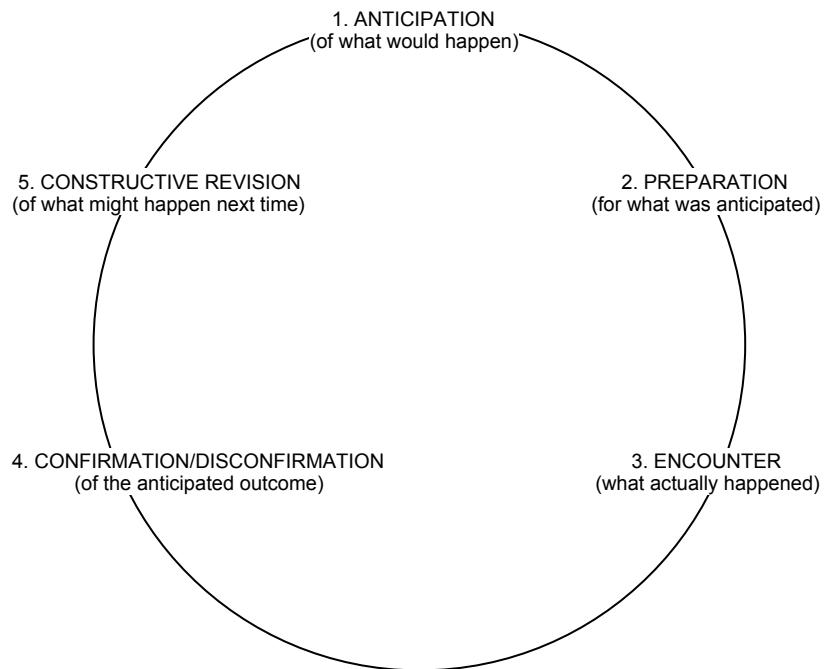
Demanded sex from partner	1	2	3	4	5
Made partner watch porn	1	2	3	4	5
Pressured partner for sex in a way she didn't want	1	2	3	4	5
Physically forced partner to have sex	1	2	3	4	5
Physically attacked partner's sexual parts	1	2	3	4	5
Other	1	2	3	4	5

**11. Alcohol or other drugs**

Indicated frequency of alcohol use	1	2	3	4	5
Indicated frequency of other drug use	1	2	3	4	5
Indicated level of concern about the level of alcohol or other drug use by him	1	2	3	4	5

## **Worksheet 6 – The Experience Cycle: Anticipations of Hope**

1. Starting with step one: (Anticipation) of what may happen, based on your past experience.
2. You then go to step two in the (Preparation) and get ready for what you anticipate.
3. Then in step three: (Encounter) you note your experience of what actually happened,
4. In step four: (Confirmation/Disconfirmation) You ask, was your anticipation born out or not,
5. On that basis, step five: (Constructive Revision) you learn from the experience about how you might prepare (better) for next time. In other words you learn from experience!



## **Worksheet 7 – Tuning in the Radio: Choosing a Station to Live By**

Identify three or four of your most meaningful perspectives from Tool 1, the Character Sketch, and write them in the left hand column. Alternatively, think of the first three things your partner would say, that you still need to change in your behaviour.

1. Ask yourself, 'How would I describe someone different to this?'
2. Write the answer in the right hand column, for each of the three and ask yourself whether they are 'doable' for you.

<b>Old, abusive behaviours</b>	<b>New, respectful behaviours</b>

## **Worksheet 8 – Seven Flies on the Wall: Logging the destruction**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1.  **ACTIONS:** Describe what happened, what you did to your partner – the look on your face, tone of voice, actions.
2.  **INTENTIONS AND BELIEFS:** What was your intention? What did you believe should happen?
3.  **FEELINGS:** What were your feelings before the incident, during it and afterwards?
4.  **MINIMISING, DENYING, EXCUSING AND BLAMING:** In what way did you justify, excuse, minimise or deny your actions, or try to blame her?
5.  **AFFECTS:** What were the affects of your action?  
On you? \_\_\_\_\_  
On her? \_\_\_\_\_  
On others? (children?) \_\_\_\_\_
6.  **PAST VIOLENCE:** How did your past abuse and violence affect this situation?
7.  **NON-CONTROLLING ALTERNATIVES:** What might you have done differently? What would you do next time?

(Adapted from: Pence and Paymar 1993:36)

Please use as much paper as you need, to respond.

## **Worksheet 9 – The ABC Technique: Deciding What Not to Do**

<b>Actual state (the problem)</b>		<b>Desired state (what we want)</b>	
A1		A2	
B1	The disadvantages of A1	B2	The advantages of A2
C1	The advantages of A1	C2	The disadvantages of A2

(The problem is then re-defined from C1, as the 'actual state' and so on.)

## **Worksheet 10 – The Feedback Loop: Listening to Your Partner**

Note the instructions for Tool Number 10 on page 80.

List the abusive behaviours that you know you need to change. When you have done that, show it to your partner and ask her how much progress she thinks you are making towards changing your behaviour.

Make a note of her answers and the date. Come back to it after a month and ask again. Continue to have these self reviews every so often.

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