

# Living with the Dominator

A book about the Freedom Programme

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For more information about the  
Freedom Programme visit the website:

**[www.freedomprogramme.co.uk](http://www.freedomprogramme.co.uk)**

# 1

## AN INTRODUCTION

I have decided to write this book for all the people who for whatever reason have not been able to attend a Freedom Programme, or the training, but have asked for more information about it. It is basically a summary of the information given in the handouts and some that I give verbally. The book is not to be used to facilitate the Freedom Programme, but to provide information to individual readers.

The other aspect of the programme that I cannot give you is the camaraderie, friendship and fun that we get from attending a programme with a group of other people. So if you are a woman and it is possible for you to do so, please be inspired by this book to seek out a Freedom Programme near you. They are all free and run by wonderful welcoming women at venues across the U.K. A list of venues is provided with this book and this is updated regularly on my web site.

If you are a man who would like to change your behaviour, you too are most welcome to attend a programme near you. You can check the list of venues or look for updates on my web site. The men's programmes that I endorse are also run in a welcoming, friendly atmosphere and the men who have graduated say they enjoyed the experience.

I will begin by offering a short history of the programme. Between 1986 and 1996 I worked as a Probation Officer. During that time I worked with hundreds of violent men. For some of that time I was a parole officer. Some of these men had committed murder and were released into the community under a provision known then as 'Life Licence'. Most of the murderers I met were men who had killed their female partners or former partners. I also acted as chairwoman to the management committee of the local women's Refuge and worked in the Refuge itself during that decade.

During those years I believed I had some understanding about domestic violence. I now know how wrong I was! In 1996 I went to work on the Probation Service Programme for male perpetrators of violence against women. For two years I sat with groups of men who had assaulted, raped and even killed women. I listened to these men

and I began to realise several things. To my horror I recognised that I had unwittingly colluded with every abusive man I had ever met.

I also began to understand that no one else who worked in my field seemed to have the information that I was getting from working with these men. The third thing I learned was that there is a very common misapprehension that a woman who has been abused has some understanding of what has happened to her. This is simply not true. When a woman is being subjected to abuse she feels that she is in the middle of a very confusing mess and that it must be somehow her fault.

These revelations had a profound effect on me. It was like being possessed! I was a fifty-year-old supposedly experienced Probation Officer. I now realised that I had been living in a world of illusion. I became determined to get this information to other professionals and most of all, to all the women who are experiencing domestic abuse.

I ran my first Freedom Programme for women in 1999. It was basically a copy of the perpetrators' programme. I ran it for women who were on probation for committing offences that I could now see were a result of being subjected to abuse. I needed crèche facilities so I teamed up with a Social Services family centre and opened the programmes to any woman who wished to attend.

In 2002 I left the Probation Service to become a self-employed trainer. When I left I gave a sigh of relief at not having to work with abusive men any more. Wrong! Within weeks I received a request from a District Judge to provide a Freedom Programme for men. Soon I was back in the business of working with men.

I am writing this in 2007 and the men's programmes have been a great success. I judge that about sixty percent of the men who complete the programmes are changed. I also have reports from their female partners or former partners and from Social Workers and Health Professionals. The ideal situation is that the woman attends the Freedom Programme for women while the man is on the men's programme. If Social Services refer a man I will not accept him unless his partner has completed the Freedom Programme for women. I then invite her to observe the men's programme. This gives the women the knowledge they need to protect themselves and their children even if he does not change his behaviour. Recently two couples who have completed the programme have been reunited with their children.

During the last few years I have moved away from the concept of calling the men who attend my programmes ‘perpetrators’. Instead I now present information to any man who is interested. I call them ‘students’ and give them a certificate of completion. This allows the programmes to be used in schools and to be part of a broader learning experience such as an open college network.

Initially I ran the men’s programmes over twelve weeks. Some men did not complete the whole programme. This was often due to work commitments. Now I run them over two days, usually over a weekend. This has a visibly greater impact. I watch them changing. Most of them complete the whole programme. They are not allowed to discuss their personal circumstances. This means I do not waste time challenging victim blaming or minimisation. It also means that if a man is a genuine victim he can attend. Gay men can also feel comfortable. Male professionals such as Social Workers or Probation Officers can also join the men’s weekend and use it as awareness raising training.

At the time of writing I provide training for facilitators and run weekend men’s programmes. I also sell licenses to experienced facilitators so they too can train others to facilitate the programme. I am also in partnership with Certain Curtain Theatre Company and we put on conferences, which include performances of their wonderful play ‘Lady in Red’.

All the information in this book comes from the thousands of men and women with whom I have worked since 1996.



## 2

# THE DOMINATOR

*In Britain 112 women a year are killed by a male partner or former partner. (Home Office 2007)*

*In Britain 22 men a year are killed by a female partner or former partner. (Home Office 2007)*

The majority of women who kill their partners have been subjected to prolonged and severe violence.

From the available statistics it is clear that in the majority of cases the perpetrators of domestic abuse are men and the majority of victims are women. The next question to ask is, why do they do this? When we women are on the receiving end of violence and abuse we often ask ourselves this question. We also try to answer it.

Perpetrators tell us and we believe, that the violence was caused by drink, stress, unemployment, overwork, low self-esteem or insecurity. Many of the professionals we meet also accept these explanations. The reality is that these are all excuses. They may have been drunk when they hit us but they didn't usually hit anyone else. Being insecure doesn't make people violent. Why should it?

The real reason for their violence and abuse is the desire to keep women under control. They do not need to use violence every day. Some abusive men never need to use it at all, because they can control us by using other tactics. They will usually use violence when they believe the other tactics are failing.

Some women can also use many of the controlling and abusive tactics of the **Dominator**. The difference is that in the case of abusive men they are more likely to use violence when they believe the tactics of control are failing. As a result, a woman is murdered every three days.

Some of the tactics used to achieve power and control are depicted now in the analysis of the **Dominator**. In this chapter we will have a brief look at some of these tactics and will return later to examine them all in greater detail.

**The Dominator** was inspired by the Duluth Domestic Violence Intervention Project in Minnesota. He is one man but I describe him as changing into the other characters to use different kinds of controlling behaviour. He can change from one character to another with lightning speed. Often, when I show him to women on the programme they say, “You must have met my husband!” I joke that I believe that all abusive men are abducted when they are six months old and taken to a school in the mountains where they all learn to do and say exactly the same thing! One of the first people I trained to run the Freedom Programme was a specialist Domestic Violence Police Officer. When she started her programme her group was comprised of women whose abusers had been arrested and charged by her. She had also accompanied the women to court and knew their histories. One of the women looked at her picture of **the Dominator** and then compared it to everyone else’s **Dominator**. She said that it was so like her partner that she initially believed each one had been done for an individual man from their police records and case histories.

### **The Bully**

He uses **intimidation** to control his partner by: shouting, glaring, sulking, driving too fast and firing questions at her without giving her a chance to answer. As a result, she believes he is angry and tries to placate him. The men on my Programme have told me that **the Bully** is *not* angry. He is cool, calm and collected and completely in control of his emotions. What does he have to be angry about?

### **The Headworker**

He uses **emotional abuse** to control his partner by telling her she is stupid, ugly, and incompetent. He is unfaithful and he puts her down in front of others, usually using humour. As a result she loses all self-confidence.

### **The Jailer**

He **isolates** his partner by sulking when her friends visit. He refuses to look after the children when she has arranged to go out or go to work. He charms friends and family so they do not believe her. He moves her to remote places. As a result women are completely isolated.

# THE DOMINATOR IS HIS NAME CONTROLLING WOMEN IS HIS GAME



## THE SEXUAL CONTROLLER

- Rapes you.
- Won't accept no for an answer.
- Keeps you pregnant OR
- Rejects your advances.



## KING OF THE CASTLE

- Treats you as a servant/slave.
- Says women are for sex, cooking and housework.
- Expects sex on demand.
- Controls all the money.



## THE BADFATHER

- Says you are a bad mother.
- Turns the children against you.
- Uses access to harass you.
- Threatens to take the children away.
- Persuades you to have 'his' baby, and then refuses to help you care for it.



## The Dominator



## THE BULLY

- Glares.
- Shouts.
- Smashes things.
- Sulks.



## THE JAILER

- Stops you from working and seeing friends.
- Tells you what to wear.
- Keeps you in the house.
- Seduces your friends/family.



## THE LIAR

- Denies any abuse.
- Says it was 'only' a slap.
- Blames drink, drugs, stress, over-work, you, unemployment etc.



## THE PERSUADER

- Threatens to hurt or kill you or the children.
- Cries.
- Says he loves you.
- Threatens to kill himself.
- Threatens to report you to Social Services, DSS etc.



## THE HEADWORKER

- Puts you down.
- Tells you you're too fat, too thin, ugly, stupid, useless etc.

## The Liar

He makes the abuse seem *less* than it was by using the ‘only’ word. For example, it was ‘only a slap’. When the ‘only’ word is used the listener does not really hear the rest of the sentence. He also *denies* there was any abuse or he *blames* the victim. Many men come to the programme asking me to help them to deal with this horrible woman who forces them to be violent. **The Liar** also uses a bewildering array of *excuses*. He blames drink, drugs, overwork and unemployment. He blames loss of temper, low self-esteem and insecurity. As a result his victim and many other professionals believe him.



## The Badfather

He **uses the children** to control his partner. He turns them against their mother. If she leaves him he uses the courts to harass her for access. He denies paternity and tells her she is a bad mother. As a result women can have their children removed. He can seriously damage their ability to parent effectively.

## The King of the Castle

He controls his partner by **treating her like a servant** and expecting her to do all the dirty, menial jobs. He controls the money and makes all the major decisions. As a result, women can come to believe they are second-class citizens. The men on the first programme I ran used to say that women are for ‘CFCs’. Cooking, fucking and cleaning. Since then I have also heard ‘WIFE’. Washing, ironing, fucking etc.

## The Sexual Controller

He uses **sex** to control his partner. He refuses sex, demands sex, and rapes her. As a result women feel dirty and used and unable to stand up to him.

## The Persuader

This persona comes into play if his partner has left the relationship or reported him to the police. He uses **coercion or threats** to persuade or frighten her into resuming the relationship. He wheedles his way back into the relationship by threatening suicide, crying and saying he has nowhere to go. He threatens to hurt the pets. As a result women have him back and drop charges.

These tactics can also be used in same sex relationships. Therefore the **Dominator** can be an abusive gay woman or an abusive gay man.

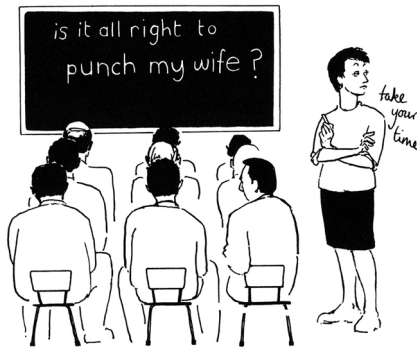
## Why does the Dominator want to control women?

The behaviour of the Dominator is based upon his beliefs. This applies to everyone. All our actions are motivated by our beliefs. They are the engines which drive our behaviour. We often do not actually know what we believe. If we think about our beliefs at all we see them as facts. The Dominator holds hundreds of beliefs which allow him to abuse us. Many of them contradict each other. This is known as '*cognitive dissonance*'.



**The Dominator** gets these beliefs from whichever society he lives in. He is not a deviant but a product of his society. He is universal as all abusive men share his beliefs and use his tactics. The origins of his beliefs and the social reinforcements may differ between societies but his beliefs remain fundamentally the same.

In this book we will be mainly looking at the ways British culture and history have influenced the beliefs of **the Dominator** and all who live alongside him. However, if you come from a different culture you can use the same approach to make parallel observations about the ways in which your culture influences abusive men.



Women also live in the same society as **the Dominator**. We are therefore subject to the same conditioning. We may also hold many of the beliefs of the Dominator without being aware of it.

During the course of this book I will list the tactics and beliefs of each aspect of **the Dominator**. I will add which beliefs we women may share. I have gained this information from the hundreds of women survivors and male perpetrators I have worked with over the last nine years. Every anecdote I use comes from several men or women. I have not recounted any information, which comes from only one person.

We come to a very important point. Many women like men and want to have relationships with them. If we believe that all men are bastards we may stay with the one we have got. We may also hold the belief that the behaviour of the **Dominator** is normal. Many of us have sons and would like to help them to grow into non-abusive men. Therefore, before we continue with our exploration into **the Dominator** we will now meet a non-abusive man. **He is Mr. Right.**

# NOT A SAINT THAT WE ARE SEEING JUST A DECENT HUMAN BEING



**THE LOVER**

- Shows you physical affection without assuming it will lead to sex.
- Accepts your right to say no to sex.
- Shares responsibility for contraception etc.



**THE PARTNER**

- Does his share of the housework.
- Shares financial responsibility.
- Treats you as an equal.



The Friend



**THE FRIEND**

- Talks to you.
- Listens to you.
- Is a companion.
- Has a sense of humour.
- Is cheerful.



**THE LIBERATOR**

- Welcomes your friends and family.
- Encourages you to have outside interests.
- Encourages you to develop your skills at work or at college..



**THE GOODFATHER**

- Is a responsible parent.
- Is an equal parent.
- Supports your dealings with the children.



**THE TRUTHTELLER**

- Accepts responsibility.
- Admits to being wrong.



**THE NEGOTIATOR**

- Takes responsibility for his own well-being and happiness.
- Behaves like a reasonable human being.



**THE CONFIDENCE BOOSTER**

- Says you look good.
- Values your opinions.
- Supports your ambitions.
- Says you are competent.
- Values you.

**Mr. Right** is an example of a non-abusive human being. However, the characteristics of **Mr. Right** could be attributed to either sex. **Mr. Right** is a blueprint for a reasonable friend or partner or parent.

In this book I devote a chapter to each aspect of **the Dominator**. I will finish each chapter with a study of the non – abusive counterpart of that character. I will present a picture of an aspect of **‘Mr. Right’** who is a non - abusive man. For example, if I devote a chapter to **the ‘Bully’**, I will finish with **‘The Friend’**.

This is the end of the sample chapters