

news

On course to tackle domestic abuse

The organiser of a domestic abuse awareness course for men claims it has been successful in changing their behaviour towards their partners.

Former probation officer and author Pat Craven runs the Men's Freedom programme, a two-day course on which men discuss aspects of domestic abuse without disclosing their own personal details.

She claims that 60 per cent of attendants successfully change their behaviour and beliefs about women, and stop abusing their partners.

Initially apprehensive about

attending the course, but willing to try it for the sake of his partner, Dominic, 29, said: "I actually found it more enjoyable than I thought – it was surprisingly good fun."

Men who go on the course are asked to read Craven's book, *Living With The Dominator*, before attending the weekend. During the two days and under Craven's strict teaching approach the men discuss different personas of the dominator.

The headworker, for example, uses emotional abuse. The jailer isolates his partner from family and friends and the sexual

controller is unfaithful to his partner.

Alan, 58, a retired civil servant who attended the programme and who admits to

"I wasn't a dad – I was a bit of a monster."

mentally abusing his wife for 41 years, said: "I read the book first and I could identify a lot of what I was doing in terms of what the dominator does. This made me feel bad and for the first time I wasn't in control

anymore and I didn't have a clue how to change things around."

The men attend the course with their partners. On arrival they are split into two groups, the men on one side and the women on the other.

"I found this quite hard because my partner was always looking at me, and sometimes when things were said I knew it was relevant to us, and I felt quite uncomfortable," said Dominic. "But the course helped me to step back and think more. I'm much more aware now."

The elimination of discussion of any personal circumstances is to prevent any bonding and also to ensure that men who attend the course are able to learn without feeling persecuted or judged.

Daryl, 38, attended with his wife of three years because his behaviour towards her had become abusive. "I was shouting, hitting things and there were a couple of occasions where there was lots of pushing," he said. "I went on the programme to show that I can change."

"It's so easy to go on. I had this image of going in there and all these people are going to look at me and judge me and think my wife had black eyes every day but it never got to that. It's very relaxed and it's been invaluable, it really has."

Men who book on to the course come from a variety of backgrounds and social classes, ranging from the unemployed to doctors and pilots. "I feel like a kid who's been back at school and taught the basics again about how to react to things better," said Daryl. "Before the programme, I wasn't a dad – I was a bit of a monster. I now have a new perspective on life and that person I was before, I'm never going back to."

KELLY MATTISON

Search is on for women of century

Liverpool Cathedral is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its Lady Chapel by searching for the women who have had the greatest social impact in the last century.

Twenty-three women are commemorated on the stained glass windows of the Lady Chapel, installed in 1910.

They include Agnes Jones, the first trained nursing superintendent of Liverpool Workhouse Infirmary, who introduced the concept of trained nurses caring for sick paupers, prison reformer Elizabeth Fry and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, one of the most prominent poets of the Victorian era.

The Anglican cathedral's Walking Through Windows arts programme celebrating women's achievements has nearly sold out. Now it wants to widen the debate by asking members of the public to nominate significant women via its Facebook page.

"Remember that all the women featured on the windows were pushing on the boundaries of society at a time when women didn't even have the right to vote," said the cathedral's media manager, Stuart Haynes. "Their work has set the foundation for many of the benefits we have today such as healthcare, community and voluntary sector, social services and modern literature."

"So who do you think is worthy of joining these women? We are looking for women who have inspired and transformed lives in the areas of social care, health, business, literature, art, politics, education, regeneration, voluntary sector, equality and other areas of social reform."

KEVIN GOPAL

The stained glass window of the Lady Chapel in Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral commemorates women who have had a great social impact in the last century

