

Costs and Benefits of Change



Write in the squares below everything that occurs to you about the advantages and disadvantages of abuse versus being non-abusive, then compare your ideas with the sample of ideas other men have come up with in my groups:

Benefits of an abusive lifestyle	Costs of an abusive lifestyle
Benefits of an non-abusive lifestyle	Costs of an non-abusive lifestyle

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Benefits of an abusive lifestyle	Costs of an abusive lifestyle
<p>I have power and control. I win. I can blame others. I have no friends. I don't have to face my fears. I'm staunch.</p>	<p>People are afraid of me. People avoid me. I've mucked up three marriages. I don't like myself. I feel guilty much of the time. It hurts to see my children afraid of me. I'm not respected. My family have disowned me</p>
Benefits of a non-abusive lifestyle	Costs of a non-abusive lifestyle
<p>People will like me I'll be trusted The tension will not be as high. My children won't be scared. I will be able to be honest. I can claim my self-respect. I'll like myself. I will understand myself better. I'll break the family tradition of abuse. My kids won't grow up and become like me. More intimacy in my relationship. More sex. More fun with others.</p>	<p>I'll have to work harder to maintain relationships. I will have to keep trying. I won't always win.</p>

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Let's see how John dealt with this stage of working towards a decision to embrace a non-abusive lifestyle. Having been assessed as being appropriate to join a group, he agreed to attend a series of group sessions.

'I had envisaged mass murderers and rapists, and all sorts of really, really violent people, but most of them were exactly the same as me. Within the first session it took me about two hours to work out that I really did have a major problem because it wasn't just me thinking I didn't have a problem; there were fifteen other guys there, sitting there thinking exactly the same thing as me, you know, well there's nothing wrong with me, it's my partner that's got the problem ... within a couple of hours I knew I had the problem and realised that we all knew deep down that, if we were to get anything from the group, then we would have to drop the bullshit and stop protecting ourselves.'

It took John another few sessions to realise what was different:

'Within a couple of hours I knew I had a problem but it took me another three or four sessions before I realised that I could actually do something positive about it ... but it wasn't until being there, maybe three, four or five times, that I realised that I had actually changed ... it's been a marvellous thing for me, it really has.'

The exciting news is that John is running programmes in Australia now and sharing his experience with other men.

Questions to Ponder

- What will I need to give up if I embark on a non-violent and non-abusive lifestyle?
- Will I be respected more or less if I stand up against abuse and the old male blueprint?
- Am I ready to break with the old traditions that place men in a dominant position and work towards equal partnerships with others, or do I want to retain the benefits of men's privileged position and being on top?
- Am I ready to stand up and say no to an abusive lifestyle, or do I want to keep some abuse up my sleeve for when I might need it?

Some men move quickly into change while others need time to weigh up the costs and benefits of giving up the Old Rule Book

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before moving on. I am a firm believer in men having as much information as possible so that they can make an informed decision

and very clearly know the consequences. At the end of the day we have to live with ourselves and those around us. I have been consistently impressed by how seriously men take this decision-making process. I know that every one of them wants to have good relationships with partners, children, friends and workmates.



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