

ROADWORTHY · FREE SELF GUIDED PROGRAM · MODULE 1 OF 7

How the engine works.

Welcome to the workshop. Over seven weeks you'll learn how your brain runs under the worst pressure of your life — and how to run it better. No therapy voice, no judgement, no sides. Just the manual nobody ever handed you. This workbook is yours: write in it, argue with it, keep it in the ute. Work through one module a week — rushing defeats the reps.

The moment we all know

The argument ends. You walk away, jaw tight, having said either too much or nothing at all. And ten minutes later — right on schedule — the perfect response arrives in your head. Calm, sharp, exactly right, and completely useless now.

Every man in this program knows that moment. Here's the part nobody tells you: it isn't a character flaw, a discipline problem, or proof you're not smart enough under pressure. It's architecture. Your brain is built in a way that guarantees that moment — and once you understand how, you can start changing what happens next.

THE WHOLE PROGRAM IN ONE LINE

If you learned how cars work, you'd know how to make yours run better. Same goes for the brain. Seven weeks, seven parts of the engine, one tool a week.

What this module covers

The two systems that run you under pressure, and why one always fires first. Why a solicitor's letter can hit your body like a physical threat. Why nobody taught you any of this — and why that was never your fault. And your first tool: the simplest habit in the whole program, and the one everything else is built on.

PART ONE

The smoke alarm and the control room.

Your brain runs two systems that matter for our purposes. The first is a threat detection system — call it the smoke alarm. It's ancient, fast, and it doesn't think; it reacts. Its whole job is to spot danger and get your body ready before you've had time to consider anything: heart rate up, muscles primed, senses narrowed. It has kept humans alive for a very long time, and it fires first. Every time. In every person. No exceptions.

The second is the control room — the reasoning system. It weighs options, reads situations, chooses words, thinks about consequences. It's brilliant, and it's slow. And here's the mechanism behind that ten minutes too late moment: when the smoke alarm fires, resources shift toward survival and away from reasoning. The control room doesn't just get overruled — it genuinely gets less to work with. You are, measurably, not at full thinking capacity in the middle of conflict. Nobody is.

That's why the perfect response arrives ten minutes later: that's roughly how long it takes your body to settle and hand the keys back to the control room. The response was never missing. The driver was.

The part that matters for you

Your smoke alarm cannot tell the difference between a physical threat and a legal one. A letterhead, a changeover text, her name lighting up your phone — if your brain has linked those cues to pain, the alarm treats them like danger and fires the full cascade. Repeatedly. For months. That's what this process does to a body, and it's why you've been running hot: not because you're weak, but because your alarm has been doing its job in a situation it was never designed for.

The alarm firing isn't the problem. The alarm firing and driving the car — that's what we're here to change. You can't remove the alarm. You can train the reset. That's the whole game, and it's trainable.

Workshop exercise 1.1 — your alarm in action

Think of one recent moment the alarm fired when there was no physical danger — traffic, a checkout, a text. Write what happened in your body, and the exact point the control room went offline (the words you said, or couldn't find).

PART TWO

Your cues, and the manual nobody gave you.

Workshop exercise 1.2 – name your three cues

List the three cues that most reliably trip your alarm even though they pose no physical danger. Be specific — not “texts” but “her name on the screen after 8pm.” Naming them now is the start of taking the surprise out of them (Module 3 finishes the job).

CUE ONE

CUE TWO

CUE THREE

The missing manual

Most blokes were trained, from early, to handle the inside of their own heads two ways: control it or ignore it. Push through. She'll be right. Don't make it a thing. That training wasn't stupid — it built men who show up, carry loads and don't fold. But it came with a cost that only shows up in seasons like this one: nobody taught you to read your own dashboard.

So when the hardest process of your life arrives — one that fires the alarm daily and demands calm judgement at the same time — you're driving a machine you were never shown the manual for. The research on men's mental health finds exactly this chain: trained not to notice internal states, men struggle to name them; unable to name them, harder to manage them; harder to manage, and the load turns into short fuses, flat batteries and 2am ceilings. Not weakness. A missing manual.

This program is the manual. Seven weeks from now you'll read your own dashboard the way you read a car's — early, accurately, and without drama.

Why we measure

This is the free self guided edition, so the measuring is yours: jot down the date and how heavy the load feels out of ten. That is your before photo. Check it against yourself after Module 7. In the facilitated program we measure this properly: validated check ins before, during and after, and a plain English report of what shifted. If that version sounds like you, the waitlist at roadworthydads.com.au takes sixty seconds.

THIS WEEK'S TOOL

The dashboard word.

Once a day, name your state in one word. That's the entire tool. Steady. Flickering. Hot. Flat. Say it out loud in the ute, mutter it at the kettle, note it on your phone — doesn't matter. What matters is the rep: every time you name your state, you're building the noticing muscle that every other tool in this program depends on. Simple is the point. Do it daily.

DAY	MY WORD	WHAT WAS GOING ON (OPTIONAL, ONE LINE)
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

Rules of the tool

Any word counts — yours, not a textbook's. “Cooked” is a perfectly good dashboard word. There are no wrong answers. A week of “hot” honestly logged beats a week of “fine” on autopilot. This grid is your first week of honest data — check it against yourself at week's end.

Knowledge check – Module 1

T / F The brain's threat alarm fires before the thinking brain gets involved.

T / F Saying the wrong thing in conflict usually means a man has a character flaw.

T / F A solicitor's letter can trigger the same stress response as physical danger.

T / F The goal of this program is to stop the alarm from ever firing.

T / F Never learning to notice internal states early is a missing manual, not a personal failure.

BEFORE MODULE 2

One dashboard word a day, logged above. That's it. Next week: your warning lights — the five signals every man's engine sends before things go wrong, and how to read yours.

Psychoeducation, not clinical treatment or legal advice. If things get heavy this week: MensLine 1300 78 99 78 · Lifeline 13 11 14 · Dads in Distress 1300 853 437 · Emergency 000.