

WHITE RIBBON - WORLD CUP 2022

If you're watching this now, the chances are you're about to see a big game on TV.

So, let me start with a confession. I really dislike seeing my teams lose at football. I'm hardly alone in that. Football is tribal and arouses deep passions.

To those who don't care, these can look ugly and stupid. To those who do care, these passions are about identity and loyalty. It's been said that people swap life partners more often than they swap football teams.

England has a loyal and long suffering fan base and its enduring anthem *Football's Coming Home* is wry and self-deprecating. We kind of expect England to lose, but we can't let go of the hope that this time it will be different.

Winning gives us a nice serotonin boost; losing takes it away. That's why there are so many mood swings in fans. But mood swings can be dangerous, especially when they are combined with drink.

It's a well known fact that domestic abuse spikes after big football games finish, especially in derby matches or when England play.

In sport, there is always the next game: *we go again*, as players say. Fans put behind them the feeling of losing the last match and cheer expectantly for the next.

When violence is done to your partner or your family, these victims don't put it behind them. It creates physical injuries - and emotional injuries that usually last longer.

We are not defined by our team's losses. Our self-esteem does not depend on three points by the end of Saturday or the lottery of penalties. We are at our best when we regulate our emotions. And we are defined instead by how we care for those we live with.

So, let's enjoy the game.

But if football isn't coming home, let's make the promise that violence won't come home either.