



Foreword

I initially considered writing a book about resilience for personal reasons. At the beginning of 2020 my fiftieth birthday lurked ominously around the corner. Meanwhile *Sunday Night*, the public affairs program I hosted for Channel 7, had just been cancelled and I'd begun to worry my future with 7 – the station that had been like a home to me for twenty-five years – might also be in doubt. On top of that my firstborn child was not only getting ready to leave the nest, he was getting ready to leave the country! As these cracks began to appear in my world

I became anxious, melancholy and unsettled and, for the first time in my life, I had trouble sleeping.

Having spent decades reporting from the front line of news in Australia and around the world, I knew my worries could easily be filed under ‘first-world problems’. I also knew, however, that millions of other women faced personal crises of one kind or another as they careened headlong into the often confounding crossroads of middle age. I thought a book about ways to cope with personal upheaval might be of help.

Then the coronavirus pandemic hit and everything changed. Suddenly all of humanity – men, women and children alike – was feeling deeply uneasy and uncertain. Infection and death rates quickly soared; millions lost their jobs when businesses closed and entire countries were locked down. Economies sputtered, people were separated from loved ones and friends, and the nation’s mental health took a corresponding dive.

And yet . . . life went on. Sure enough I *did* lose my job at Channel 7, I *did* turn fifty and my son *did* eventually move to America to study. Against the depressing backdrop of a one-in-one-hundred-year global crisis these developments didn’t seem so bad after all.

Like everybody else, I tuned in to the news each day during 2020 with a sense of dread. I’d digest the statistics,

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absorb the health messaging and wonder how on earth society was going to come through the other side of the COVID crisis. I listened as people in government, the medical field and the mental health space explained that we were in uncharted waters, that there was no guidebook or policy blueprint when it came to a worldwide killer virus. While that was largely true, it occurred to me there *were* people we could turn to for wisdom in times like these. They were all around us. I'd even met plenty of them.

Over a quarter of a century in the news business, I've been privileged to interview thousands of people from all walks of life, including many who have survived calamity, suffered unspeakable trauma or lost everything they owned. Some were victims of crime or circumstance, others had their lives upended by twists of fate. However, one thing they almost always shared – and which constantly amazed me – was the strength and endurance of the human spirit. Some of these people have had a lasting impact on me and changed my outlook on life. You'll hear from them in the following pages.

In the years since I started work on this book, the world has felt more out of control than when I began. At the time of writing, the pandemic had killed 6.2 million people, and only now is it finally showing signs of tailing off. The dark cloud of war has descended over Eastern Europe with

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while closer to home deadly record floods in Queensland and New South Wales have been a reminder that climate change poses a serious threat to our way of life.

As natural as it is to feel apprehensive about the future, engaging again with these remarkable women and men has buoyed me during the most turbulent time I can remember. As difficult as their journeys have been, I'm grateful for their candour, their courage and their wisdom. I have learned a lot from them. I hope you will, too.