Empowered For



A HOLISTIC SELF-DEFENCE, SAFETY & SURVIVAL HANDBOOK FOR WOMEN

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A WOMAN WHO WALKS ALONE

We are each born with the gift of instinct. Hone in on it. Listen carefully to it. Trust implicitly in it. Always be ready to save yourself. If someone gives you a bad feeling, get away, NOW.

Don't wait for the world to change or become more fair before you do what you want to do; all we have to work with is how things are now. Make peace with it. Be brave in the face of it.

While feeling peaceful, fight fiercely for equality. Learn to kick ass. Listen to your own judgment and exercise your own common sense, because you are smart, capable, strong and powerful.

Be courageous and curious. Trust openly but attentively. Don't be afraid; be a mighty warrior. Explore the world by the power of your own two feet.

Be happy, fit and free!

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Preface

It was early 2015 and my heart felt like it was being torn in two.

On one hand, I was being offered a lot of great work in a specialised field, studying and protecting marine mega-fauna (whales, dolphins, dugongs and turtles). On the other hand, since leaving my job as a Marine Park ranger seven months earlier, my intention had been to return my focus and energy to teaching women my unique holistic self-defence, safety and survival system. A system that I knew would help save women's lives.

Each violent attack or murder of a woman that appeared on the news was like a knife through my heart. I had to face the fact that I was emotionally invested in both alternatives, and at this stage I needed to focus on one.

And so on the evening of 12 January 2015, while visiting some relatives in Tasmania, I found the answer. I was reading the autobiography, *Under Siege*, by Belinda Neil, a former NSW Police colleague and one of our Tactical Operations Unit (TOU) Negotiators. Belinda speaks of a time in 2004 where, while on sick leave with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), she came across a newspaper article about a man who was arrested for murdering his ex-girlfriend. The murdered

woman's name was Lynette and her ex-boyfriend had previously held another woman at knifepoint during a siege we'd both attended several years prior.

I was immediately transported back to that cold, wet September eve in 1996. I was an operative with the NSW Police TOU, and Belinda was one of our negotiators. We had been called to a house in Crows Nest, Sydney, where a man was holding a woman hostage as a result of a violent domestic dispute. The day had already been busy for our unit, with the arrest of a dangerous prison escapee who had committed several armed robberies and weapon-related offences. This, on the other hand, was an emergency response: here we were dealing with a psychopath who had a history of violence towards women, including attempted murder, holding a knife in each hand to an innocent woman's throat in a barricaded bedroom. Lacerations were clearly visible on her throat, arms and legs, and fresh blood was smeared on her top. The situation was not good.

I knew that if anyone could resolve this situation without any further injury or death, it would be Belinda and one of our senior negotiators, Whitey. They were very experienced and two of the best.

While fellow members of my unit formed a tactical knife-takedown team, I was tasked as the team's designated shooter should the offender need to be neutralised. It is here that my recollection of the incident differs slightly from Belinda's, a natural occurrence given our designated roles.

Belinda reports in her book that we didn't have a clear shot due to the barricaded room and window. However, I was able

to position myself for much of the incident outside in the dark and torrential rain with a clear headshot through the open window, about six metres away. My primary weapon was an H&K MP5, which is a very accurate and deadly weapon within thirty metres, and is designed for close-quarter battle. The situation was extremely tense, with the offender's paranoia and rage fuelled by drug use. The woman, Grace, who had been attempting to break-up with him after only three months together, was petrified.

My weapon's fire-select lever remained on 'instant' throughout the ordeal, with my finger alternating either on or next to the trigger, depending on the level of volatility at the time. I had no issues with taking out this guy: he had a violent history towards women and he had made his intentions clear. There were several occasions throughout the evening where things became extremely volatile and I was only a heartbeat away from pulling the trigger; however, I had one major concern. Even with a headshot, there was potential for a death reflex to result in one of the two knives that were being held tightly against Grace's throat to cause a fatal wound by severing a carotid artery. It was the great unknown and no one could give me an answer either way.

In the end, Whitey and Belinda did an amazing job: the hostage was freed and the offender taken into custody. However, I had always had an uneasy feeling about the result, for I knew the court system was pathetic and this guy would be back out to terrorise again. It was only a matter of time, and here, 19 years later, I unfortunately found out how right I was.

I couldn't stop thinking about Lynette who was murdered by the offender several years after the event of 1996. Would she

still be alive if I had pulled the trigger? Were there other women terrorised within those eight years? No doubt there were, given his history, and the unbelievable fact he was in jail for less than three years as a result of the hostage incident. Should I have pulled the trigger? Would Grace have been okay if I did? Could I have saved Lynette? My mind was in turmoil and after several hours I passed out from exhaustion.

I woke after only a few hours' sleep and wandered about the house for most of the morning in a daze. I knew there was nothing I could have done, nor was I judge, jury and executioner, but I was numb and frustrated. I had to get outside and into nature for some solace and clarity. Packing some food, water and a jacket, I walked out the front door and looked up at Kunanyi – Mt Wellington, its peak shrouded in cloud as a light drizzle fell all around me. I knew what I had to do.

Through deserted bush trails that criss-crossed the mountain and in the drizzling rain I hiked to the peak, with each footstep cementing my decision. My priorities were clear. I had to help stop the cycle of violence against women.

– ★ –

Violence against women is a global problem of great concern. One that needs to be addressed by society in a number of ways. Sadly, due to the extent of the problem, it is going to take time. This handbook and the *Empowered for Life* system addresses one aspect. It is reactive, and is in response to this issue and others, including terrorism. Although an essential element, it is by no means the complete solution. Ultimately, individually and collectively, we need to be proactive in

addressing this issue and others, to prevent them from occurring altogether. My opinion piece *Violence Against Women – a holistic approach to the problem*, written in conjunction with this handbook, outlines my thoughts and feelings on some additional ways I believe this issue can be addressed.

I would like to make it perfectly clear at the outset that I am definitely no guru, nor do I claim to have all the answers. I am also a male, offering only one perspective, albeit a very experienced and empathetic one.

What I can offer is thirty-odd years in which personal safety and survival for both others and myself has been at the forefront of my life. Extending well beyond my time as a police officer and police defensive tactics instructor, enhanced further by many years working in and protecting the environment. Watching how different species within the animal kingdom respond and deal with a threat to their or their loved ones' safety fascinates me. As a result, throughout this handbook I include several environmental examples to not only emphasise a point, but also to make it more palatable for the reader. Something I am very conscious of, given the subject matter.

This handbook and the *Empowered for Life* system is a product of my life experience dealing with threatening situations and the shared experience and knowledge of women and men who have dealt with similar. It provides a unique, holistic safety and survival resource for women, regardless of, and in addition to, any knowledge, skills or experience in combat. As you will discover, the *Empowered for Life* system has been designed as a basic '101' foundation upon which your own

self-defence system can evolve and be built on over time, as well as incorporated within any and all martial art or combat systems.

The skills taught in this handbook will help you to live your life to the fullest as peaceful warriors: happy, confident, aware and empowered.

With love,

Anthony



THE EMPOWERED MODEL

Mind (Psychological)

Our hard drive and central processing unit: stores and processes information, knowledge and experience. Enables situational awareness and conducts ongoing threat assessments through analysing information delivered from our key senses – *sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste* and *intuition*. Continually adapts to each situation and develops a *strategic* response to potential threats.

Body (Physical)

Our hardware: the physical use of key senses to monitor the environment and identify potential threats. Physically implements the chosen *strategy*, such as: alternate routes, tactical communication options and fight and/or flight responses. Adapts and utilises the surrounding environment – regardless of confines and including items found within – to gain the advantage and escape a threat.

Spirit (Emotional)

Our life force: heart and soul, commonly referred to as *Prana* or *Chi (Qi)* in yoga and martial arts. Our source of innate strength, courage and will to live – to survive! Assists us to effectively manage any emotional and psychological implications, including post incident.