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THE BRIDGE – DONNA THISTLETHWAITE

"I was surprised to wake up in the ER because you know to me, you jump off that bridge and you're dead, that's the only outcome I had conceived as possible." Donna Thistlethwaite.

"They told us what Donna had done I thought, Matthew's not going to have a mother. It was the first thing that went through my head." Diane Purchase, mother-in-law

"You'd think with that many people in your life, someone would have picked up something but no." Myee Kuss, sister

On a Sunday afternoon in 2012, Donna Thistlethwaite told her partner she was going out to buy groceries. Instead she drove to Brisbane's Story Bridge and tried to end her life by jumping 40 metres into the wintry waters of the Brisbane River below.

Her attempt seemed to come out-of-the-blue. It shocked family and friends and perplexed her former therapist. Even Donna herself struggled to understand her actions.

This was a popular, positive-thinking, successful career woman with a loving partner and a young son. She had no history of the mental illnesses that are commonly associated with risk of suicide.

Her world unravelled in about 10 days.

"This is about the doubts that we all carry and how sometimes they can spiral and we can end up in a place where we can make very poor decisions." Dr George Blair-West, psychiatrist

Donna was lucky enough to get a second chance at life, thanks to a confluence of 'miracles' that helped her survive.

This **Australian Story** features interviews with the paramedic and ferrymen who rescued her.

"To survive that fall, you need to be very lucky with the fall itself and then also have rescuers there immediately to pick you up." Dr Steve Rashford, Queensland Ambulance Services

"She was face down in the water and she was going down. I grabbed her and pulled her up. I was actually a little shocked because I expected her to be dead." Stuss Read, former deckhand

Donna has spent the five years since her attempt putting in place a plan to ensure she stays safe.

Originally, she told very few people of her attempt but has since discovered the healing power of sharing her story publicly.

In conjunction with suicide prevention organisations, *Australian Story* tells a cautionary tale which shows that, with the right set of circumstances and the wrong kind of thinking, suicidal thoughts can happen to just about anyone.

By sharing her story, Donna hopes that anyone feeling suicidal will see that life can be 'great' again.

"The value of Donna's story is that it's a story of living and hope. She has been there and she knows that things can get better, you can get through it." Alan Woodward, Lifeline

Suicide prevention barriers have now been installed on the bridge.

IF YOU OR ANYONE YOU KNOW NEEDS HELP:

LIFELINE 13 11 14

KIDS HELPLINE 1800 5511 800

SUICIDE CALL BACK SERVICE 1300 659 467

BEYOND BLUE 1300 224 636

HEADSPACE 1800 650 890

MENSLINE AUSTRALIA 1300 789 978

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