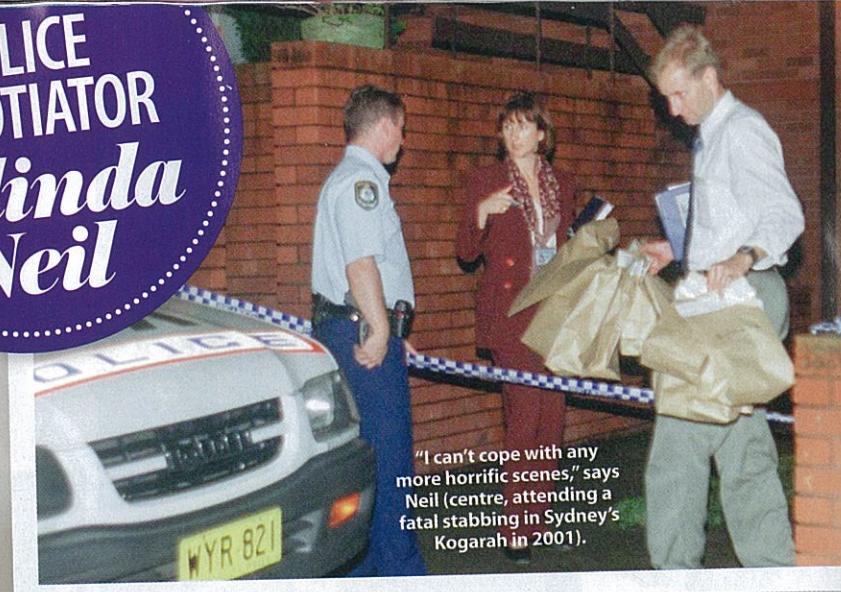


"I have been at the bottom and I have come out the other end," says Neil (at her Sydney home on June 16). "I'm not how I was but life is good."

POLICE NEGOTIATOR *Belinda Neil*



"I can't cope with any more horrific scenes," says Neil (centre, attending a fatal stabbing in Sydney's Kogarah in 2001).

Belinda Neil knows just how desperate people can become. The former police negotiator has talked some out of leaping off the Gap, Sydney's notorious suicide cliff, coaxed others off the tops of buildings and convinced kidnappers not to commit terrible acts. So in 2004, when the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that plagued her career came to a head, Neil found herself in familiar territory—albeit on the other side. "I wanted to jump off a cliff," says the Sydney mother of two, her eyes welling. "It was like a constant negotiation with myself not to do it."

Today, 10 years since that near-fateful moment in bushland south of Sydney, the veteran cop has laid bare her harrowing career and the PTSD that ended it in her memoir, *Under Siege* (Harlequin, \$29.99). "In the homicide squad I was surrounded by so much death," says Neil, 46, who became a qualified counter-terrorist negotiator in 1996. "[As a negotiator] I had the opportunity to save lives."

Even if it meant putting her own on the line. In 1997, Neil was called to talk to a man who was threatening to stab himself with a 30cm knife if police tried to arrest him for assaulting his mother. "He called for police to shoot him, then made slicing movements across his

My

Talking people back from the edge was all in a day's work—but then her own life was on the line

CHASING A RUSH

Since leaving the force, Neil has taken up abseiling (left, in the NSW Blue Mountains in January 2013), surfing, skydiving and motorcycling. "I don't have that adrenaline rush at work, and my body was used to it," she says. "I still find it very difficult to relax."

