

the RAINBOW CONNECTION

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“SOME DAY THEY’LL FIND US, THE RAINBOW CONNECTION, THE LOVERS, THE DREAMERS AND ME ...”. THE AGE-OLD MAGICAL TUNE OF THAT LITTLE GREEN FROG IN OUR CHILDHOOD PROMISED A FUTURE OF ENDLESS WONDERS, ENCHANTED MEETINGS AND WISTFUL DREAMS. DECADES LATER, EMPOWERMENT GURU, JULIE RAINBOW, IS HELPING WOMEN REDISCOVER THAT CONNECTION TO DREAMS AND A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED.

It’s a cool spring start to the week, and I first spy her sitting alone, patient and quiet, at a Mooloolaba café, staring wistfully out to a slightly chaotic ocean. Sensing she is being watched, she turns and spies me striding towards her for our first introduction, Julie Rainbow’s trademark mega-watt smile lighting up her face.

The effervescent 42-year-old, born with her delightful surname, is the first to admit, the interview is likely to be her only moment’s peace that day. But it’s a testament to that little banjo-strumming frog sitting astride a log. He was onto something – Rainbow has nothing to hide.

I’m a self-confessed privacy zealot. From checking my social network privacy settings twice daily to my disdain for internet banking. And I’m not alone according to my girlfriends. Airing personal errors in judgement or mistakes to potential public condemnation literally sends me into cold sweats. So when I discover what Julie does, it is not surprising that I can barely lift my jaw off the ground to interview her as she approaches the 10-year anniversary of her ‘life-changing’ event.

Son Oliver was just two when he was admitted to hospital with meningitis that was so severe Julie was unsure her youngest child would ever come home again. Oliver’s prognosis improved, but he required constant care, so Julie handed over the family’s finances to her loving husband, including her own award-winning business. Unbeknownst to Julie, her husband had also been given a loan of \$250,000 by Julie’s parents and a further loan by her brother, among others.

It wasn’t long before Julie started receiving phone calls from debt collectors and shady business colleagues of her husband’s. His physically aggressive responses to her polite inquiries only cemented her fears. The money was all gone. To this day, Julie still does not know where it went or where her now ex-husband disappeared to after she kicked him out of the house eight years ago.

What Julie also didn’t know was that there was further struggle around the corner, as she lost her family home, car and business, ultimately having to declare bankruptcy.

“All I could ask myself was how could this happen? I’m a smart educated woman,” Julie says.

Over the next seven years, Julie, Oliver (now 12) and her 18-year-old daughter Bethanie became an even tighter unit. Julie credits her ‘extraordinary’ and beautiful childhood as her saving grace, thankfully

giving her the incredible work ethic she needed to survive. Her face visibly falls in fact when Julie explains how the bad loan given to her ex-husband became the reason why her parents had to delay their retirement until their early seventies.

But Julie’s faith never faltered, and her steady return from the brink prompted many requests for advice from friends and even business contacts on how she did it.

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“What happens to those women who fall through the cracks? Their husbands have left, they don’t have a good family support structure or self esteem, and they don’t have a network of friends. How do you function when you don’t have that?”

After much discussion with her children and subsequently their emphatic support, four months ago Julie bared her soul and story in her website Clarity Road – a project from the heart designed to help people to cope when that truck they never saw coming, lands them squarely in the face. Offering support services, workshops, mentoring and information from all aspects of life – professional, personal and emotional – without the ‘spiritual’ stumbling blocks of similar self-help sites that many women find difficult to navigate, it is a haven for many.

Love is also back in her life in the form of long-time partner Matthew, who fervently supports Julie’s dream.

So steadfast is Julie’s resolve to help women, financial incentives from interested business sponsors are never a determining factor.

“I’ve come up with a ‘circle of friends’, designed to show people and services who match our values without any financial kickback. It’s about helping women who are feeling a little lost find a better path.”

Maybe thanks to Clarity Road, someday we will all find it. The lovers. The dreamers. And Julie. ○