

Warning: [\(00:00\)](#)

This podcast series will share personal moments of connection and deeply felt experiences. If anything you hear has a triggering effect, please reach out to someone who can help keep you safe. Or remember you can phone lifeline at any time on 13, 11, 14.

Ross: [\(00:19\)](#)

Basically I've said to people that anything's, if anything's ever been blown up, flattened or destroyed, I've probably seen and done it. Um, so I can vary. It can be from motor vehicle accidents, it can be from house fires, it could be chemical spills, it could be from storm and Tempest and um, weird things, horses stuck in dams and in septic tanks with cows in them and all that sort of, so a wide variety of jobs. And um that's part of the, part of the Fire brigade that I missed these days is the jobs and the variation of the jobs we went to. And the, and the sense of getting things done.

Beverley: [\(00:51\)](#)

Welcome to lifelines, holding onto hope, a podcast in which people who've considered suicide explain how they found joy in life again. As a firefighter Ross Beckley had to deal with some horrific situations. Anything from car accidents to house fires and it took its toll on his mental health. Today, he and his partner, Ronnie use his experience to help others. And Ross's realized he no longer needs to wear a badge to save lives.

Ross: [\(01:19\)](#)

Everyone loves a firefighter. I mean the police cop it good some days and bad, some other days, paramedics or you know, you wouldn't do what I did because you know, dealing with the stuff that they have to. Basically if we go to an incident with, you know, whoever's there first, but the paramedics always got a wide through the stuff and the police are there to do investigations. The fireies can tend to stick back a little bit unless you're on rescue station. Um, you might be doing that, but generally we're on the outside offering the other services protection while they do their job. Um, but you know, most, most fireies say I wouldn't be an ambo for quids, I wouldn't be a coppa for quids. I joined in 93 and by 1995 I was a deputy captain, which is pretty unusual in the system. Um, you know, I was also an instructor.

Ross: [\(02:05\)](#)

I had the opportunity to become an instructor with the fire brigade. So teaching retained recruits had to deal with fires in compartments such as we know bedrooms and houses and as well as breathing apparatus. So looking after their lungs with the right gear. At times it's incredibly rewarding. The camaraderie in, in all services, there's a bit of rivalry between police, fire and ambos, but there's a, there's a, there's a healthy rivalry amongst all services to

get the job done. But when it comes to a bad job, everyone just gets in. It's sent down by the triple O operators so your stations then activated. So you go tear the call sheet off, we're in the truck and off you go. Generally, as a an officer, you'd be processing, um, what's on the paper and often it's more than what's on the paper or not as bad as what's on the paper, but you're putting things into process, um, while you're traveling down the road, with yourself and your crew and your driver. So the people in the back get breathing apparatus ready and the driver, I'll be looking for hydrants and all that sort of stuff. So there's a fair bit of processing on the road and this is all done fairly quickly on the road as well. Got to make split decision. The station I was attached to in the early days was one of the top three in the state out of the fire brigade for fatalities. Um, we had a lot of serious motor vehicle accidents in the area, so we were high up in the stats for attending fatalities, which was quite unusual.

Ross: [\(03:33\)](#)

We had a job that we went to a uh, an automatic fire alarm at a hospital, not a big deal. We used to go there all the time, but when were at the hospital they said, as I said earlier, we were processing, it's just an automatic fire alarm. We've got to do that, we've got to reset it. And whilst we're there, then someone ran in and said a man's been crushed under a truck down at a work site, just down the road. The next minute you have gone from an IFR automatic fire alarm to this guy that's been absolutely destroyed by truck. You're going I wasn't expecting, I didn't even have time to process it. I was going well that was different and not the visual and the graphic of that is something I live with every day, but, and you cant erase it, I wish I could.

Ross: [\(04:20\)](#)

Well by the time I got to 30 fatalities, that's when I started sort of having problems because I wasn't processing those fatalities. So there's a lot of high speed motor vehicle accidents as well as a lot of, uh, fire, you know, death by fire, people in burning buildings. So there's a lot of things that I've seen and done that I don't particularly want to remember. Professionally, me dealing with those sort of events would be putting a mask on, so that people wouldn't really know what I was thinking and feeling. Cause I had to, and it was probably detrimental to my, my own wellbeing that I had to lead by example with people. Um, and not show that I was cracking and showing that what I'm witnessing is disturbing. And that was the problem. That was the culture of the time that you wouldn't show any cracks, you know, it was the harden up butter cup, have a cup of concrete attitude. That the service put on you as well as it was, it was perceived as being a sign of weakness. I mean part of it's got to be there. Part of it's got to be that you've got to push through things in that result. It's, it's a, it's a difficult thing to try and sort of have in concept and in the culture, but not have it. If you know what mind is like to say someone, you've got to, you know, shut down, turn off, just do the job, smile there with a

stone face, don't do anything. Um, and you don't want anyone to, you know, I want people to be like little daisies there and going that so sad. You've got to have some sort of toughen aspect of it to do what you've got to do. But in the same token, it's like you've got to, you've got to switch on and you got to switch off. That's the big thing. And most people don't. You know, when you get issues like PTSD, you switched on all the time and how do you switch it back off. So you've got, you know, you go to work and you've got to be professional, you've got to be stone faced, get the job done, push through it, write the report, then you go home and your partner's going to want a hug and a cuddle. And can you play with the kids and can you mow the lawns and that's the last thing you want to do because you switched on still.

Ross: [\(06:17\)](#)

And the other aspect of it is if you go out and people say, Oh what do you do for job? Not knowing who you are. And you say, well I'm a police, police officer, fire officer, ambulance officer. People are going, Oh that must be an amazing job. Or usually get usually get the question, geez you must say some bad stuff. And it's like people are fishing for you to tell them war stories, but then they don't realize that how they're activating you. And you think, I don't want to be rude, so I'll tell you a story. But then you walk away from there going, you know, I'm sort of not in that mood I was when I walked in the door half an hour earlier

Ronnie: [\(06:56\)](#)

For the first responder it isn't just an income. I mean it becomes part of their life. It becomes part of their identity. And everyone presumes that, Oh, it must be lovely to have a fireman or a paramedic or a cop for as a partner. And you go, there's so many negatives to it. So they get, you know, unexpected call outs. You might've prepared you might planned a party or a special birthday and yeah, nine times out of 10, there'll be the call and off they go. And that, and that's okay for them because they're busy. But the partner's kind of left with all that organizing and all the explaining. And people may be upset or offended that, you know, they weren't there. Um, so that's a lot of extra pressure. And so some of this tension at times between who's more important, your job or your family.

Ross: [\(07:47\)](#)

So my other officer at the fire station and I decided we'd have a family sort of day just to bond the families to get together and have a bit of fun, you know, soccer match, running races, um, and all that sort of things. And we'd gone to a local park to have a barbecue. We got there and two girls within the group went to the, to the Creek to have a look at the Creek at Wyong, and came screaming over the top of the Hill. They'd found a deceased. So it really rattled us because I distinctly looking at my other officer mate going "I can't believe

this, This is crazy. We can't even have a day off without death being around us."

Ronnie: [\(08:23\)](#)

In the early days of being with, with Ross I was really, really lucky compared to other partners. Cause I actually spent a year going out with them taking photos. And so I did get to understand the adrenaline rush of the pager going off. Um, and the excitement and the camaraderie that happens during and after incidents. I could see all that. The other part of what I got to see was, um, how, how they all communicate with one another and that they are all okay. And it wasn't often talked about that they might not be okay.

Ross: [\(08:55\)](#)

In 2009 after, uh, a really nasty incident involving three deceased in a motor vehicle accident, followed five weeks later by two deceased in a motor vehicle accident. That's when I started having sleep problems. Uh, I was reliving a lot of the stuff that I'd seen and done in the last, in those days, uh, 10 years, um, reliving those in nightmares, waking up in cold sweats. I'm having flashbacks during the day. Um, often most nights I wouldn't slept really well. It was broken sleep. So that's when I started having problems and I thought I was just alone I didn't think it was anyone else would have the same problems that I was having

Ross: [\(09:35\)](#)

Part of my release from the fire brigade and the work I was seeing and doing, I got into photography as it was sort of an escapism that I was photographing bands, musicians, which is the industry we got in to. But my love was outside with abandoned buildings and cars. Um, but the trouble that I started to have was every time I was taking a photograph of the music, you've got to have an image of a deceased in the lens of my camera, to the point of I had to put my camera down and couldn't concentrate and had to deal with what the image that brought up to me and my camera and trying to process it. But at the times in the music industry, it's hard. You're only there for a short period of time to get the photos, so it's hard to, to process the image you've had in your lens and then continue taking photographs of something totally not related to what you're trying to deal with. It was a really difficult time. To the point I haven't picked the camera up now for five or six years.

Ronnie: [\(10:27\)](#)

Triggers can come out of nowhere. Um, and triggers were not something I was particularly familiar with in the early days of him starting to show weird behaviours.

Ross: [\(10:39\)](#)

My partner Veronique, or Ronnie as we call her, she was the person that that sort of pushed me in to start seeking help because she said my behaviour is not right. I was sort of, um appeasing her by going along to see, to see someone. Thinking I was handling things all right and it wasn't me with a problem, it was the rest of the world. So she pushed me and took me along, dragged me screaming and kicking to a psychologist and he tried to work through things but because I didn't really click with him, it wasn't really helpful and it was basically me just ticking a box by saying to Ronnie well have seen a psychologist so I must be getting better, I'm doing the right thing, which I wasn't at the time.

Ronnie: ([11:19](#))

There was a lot of emotional stuff going on at his station. The captain that was there suddenly left and basically left the station to run themselves, which meant Ross and one of the other guys were in charge. Not something they were prepared for. There'd been no handover. Yeah over, over a couple of years, Ross became more and more angry and I think most first, most partners who have a first respond, a first responder with PTSD in their life. There's a similar pattern with all of them that the person closest to them will cop it. Whatever that frustration is because they don't understand what's going on in themselves and they have to lay blame somewhere. Um, it was always Ross leaving me. I was really determined that I would somehow get him the right help. By this stage I thought this is definitely post traumatic stress disorder and in the times that he left, which was anywhere between 24 hours and a month, I'd read and talk to colleagues and go on to online forums and then most of the messages I got back was, it's your relationship.

Ross: ([12:30](#))

If you're triggered by something, you're had a bad day at work and you don't cut it off and you come home and it's dragged over when you get home because of the expectations placed upon you by your family. It's massive. If you can't switch it off. And that was the problem that I had, that I was always, always triggered all the time. Driving home, you know, from driving here to the shops would normally take me two or three minutes to get milk and bread. But I'd, because I avoided certain roads and certain streets it might take me half an hour. And people don't realize that. People don't realize what do you go that way because I don't want to go past where that house fire was or that car accident was. Um, and it's the way, that's the things that people don't understand how it impacts your own life, you know, or you don't buy certain, I've got friends of mine that won't buy certain vehicles because they've seen them destroyed in accidents. And it's like then how do you take that home to your wife who says, or your husband that says I really want to buy a brand new ranger because they're awesome and you go, no. So you just cut off that sort of stuff. And I said earlier that the chicken industries wouldn't be making

a profit from me at all. Cause I just don't eat that sort of stuff.

Ross: ([13:41](#))

But the hardest part is to be, ought to be switching off. What happened with me is I didn't have that escape. I didn't have that photography. I didn't have that, um, hobby outside the fire brigade. So it was basically the fire brigade was my life. But it was also, it basically took my life away. I at times was, was trying to orchestrate my own, um, death by suicide, by orchestrating a situation at a house fire maybe on the freeway and then I'd be looked upon as a hero and not a, not a, um, person has taken their life to suicide. It sounds strange, but um, that's what was in my head at the time.

Ronnie: ([14:26](#))

But I actually got to the point where I'll just sit there crying and going, well I can't do anything. Because in, in that frame of mind, he wasn't rational. And so even when he would say something irrational and I would try and be very calm and do my social worky or girly thing, whatever it is, and try and talk it out, he would say that piece of paper there is black. And I could say that piece of paper is actually white. And he'd get angry because in his mind it was black. That that's kind of what it was like. And the more that I would try to, to push the rational side of things, the more irrational he would become.

Ross: ([15:11](#))

So again, Ronnie and I had had a big argument. I was leaving, I was done. So I went to Lightning Ridge. It took me 16 hours. I left time home on the central coast and drove for hours. You know, I was driving up the freeway and I thought I'll just drive to Cessnock. Then at Cessnock, I'll just drive to Armidale, I'll just drive to Tamworth. I'll just drive and spent 16 hours zigzagging all the way towards Lightning Ridge. Um, and when I got to Lightning Ridge, I sat there, Oh I'm at Lightning Ridge. Now what? And I was in, I was in the mind space that that was it, you know, I was going to take my life, I just couldn't do this anymore.

Warning: ([15:51](#))

Through connecting with others, we can hold on to hope. To speak to a crisis supporter, please call 13, 11, 14, twenty four hours, seven days a week.

Ross: ([16:05](#))

And fortunately, um, a friend of mine phoned me,

Ross: ([16:11](#))

um, the conversation, the conversation I had with him at the time, my phone had rung and it, and he, and I've always had a code that if either either was ring each other, we answer the phone. There's not many people in my, Not

many people in my life I have that code with, but he and I are like that. So he rang up and said, what are you doing? I still to this day don't know whether he had spoken to Ronnie, he wouldn't tell me, but he phoned me up and, and said, what are you doing? I said I'm at Lightning Ridge. What are you doing there? Oh, don't need to worry about it. And he goes, what are you doing at Lightning Ridge? I said, ah, I've just had enough. He said, what do you mean you've had enough? And he kept prodding me and pushing me and said, you're not contemplating taking your life, or you know, topping yourself were his words. I know I'm not supposed to say that, but those were his words. I said, yeah, I'm actually. He goes, no your bloody not. And he said, I'll ring you back in five minutes. Um, one of my mates is up there and you can go and have a cup of tea with him. I said, and because he gave me that reassurance that was the, Okay no worries. And because I respected him for the person that he is. So I sat there and waited for the phone call within exactly five minutes to the dot, again, like that brochure, tick. There was a phone call and he'd arranged it within five minutes.

Ross: [\(17:29\)](#)

He did, you know, the classic textbook suicide prevention interaction handbook. He did it to a T without, and he's never had that training at all. But he just said, you know, he reassured me that, you know, I was valued in his life. Tick, um, that he was concerned about me. Tick and then do not go anywhere, he'll find out if a friend of his was in Lightning Ridge at the time and I can go and have a cup of coffee with him. Tick. He did it all. He did the classic diversion therapy and I didn't even realize

Beverley: [\(18:00\)](#)

Ross took two weeks holiday, then returned to work. Desperate to help Ronnie, who's a social welfare worker, continued trying to find him proper support. Finally she got lucky

Ronnie: [\(18:12\)](#)

And a friend suggested a, um, a female doctor because I was looking by coincidence for a new doctor who happened to be a female, whose husband happened to be a PTSD expert in New Zealand with army and police. And he came out of semi retirement to see Ross and they treated us like a team. And so we made the agreement that I was able to tell her whatever had been going on. And Ross gave her permission then to pass that onto her husband. Like how lucky could we be to find a team like that. And to this day, Ross will say they saved his life. They saved our relationship. Um, yeah, incredible. And it was a team effort that actually made it successful. And that didn't mean that instantly things were fine. They weren't, it still took a few more years and it'll never be perfect. Ross has post traumatic stress disorder. I personally don't believe it's cured. I believe it's managed and can be managed really, really

well. And 99% of the time he does that.

Ross: [\(19:18\)](#)

It's really hard. There's people that say they know about PTSD. But to actually understand PTSD in emergency services or the military is a big thing. But yeah, they saved my life and he's first words to me when I saw him in his psychology role, um, was I don't need to know what you've seen and done, I've done it myself. So I thought, Oh really? Now I can't sort of manipulate it because in my favour, because he knows what I've seen and done, he gets it. Which is the big, which is a big thing, someone getting it. Um, and some of the, the techniques that he taught me was just invaluable to the point of that I've passed them onto many people because of his insight into what happens, what goes through with repeated exposure to trauma. And you know, in a first responder you can't be out on the, on the roadway as assisting, you know, someone who's his wife or husband's been tragically killed and lose it yourself. You can't. You just got to stick to her going it's OK they've just taken them to hospital, he'll be fine. Or she'll be fine, which is a big, which is to take that on board personally to know that actually lying to someone is another aspect.

Ross: [\(20:25\)](#)

All this time I was still working, so I was focused on the fire brigade role. Focused on my Instructor, I was that that guy, if someone asks you want to go to Sydney to work with? Yep. Do you want to go hit? Yep. Do you want to go to the fire station on your day off because this, yep. I was that guy. So I continued do the work despite my psych, my good psychologists we'll call him, telling me, you need to give this up. This is going to kill you. Um, and he was to, and to the point of, he was pretty, he was pretty matter of fact with it, he wasn't glossing it over. If you continue to do this, you will die.

Beverley: [\(21:03\)](#)

Ross always felt that when he did leave the fire brigade, it had to be on his own terms. And in 2013 after spending 21 hours nonstop fighting the Red October fires, he realized it was time to save himself.

Ronnie: [\(21:18\)](#)

I didn't believe him. I mean, he was at a major, major fire and he rang me up and he said, I'm done. I said, Oh, you finished like shift? No, I'm done. I've just decided that's it. I'm not doing anymore. Then I'm going to cry. Well, I didn't believe him. Because to me that would've been too good to be true. There was no sadness in that for me whatsoever because I knew it hurt him so much and him staying there was just making him worse. Um, yeah. Then he came home and he said, no, I really am. I'm serious, I'm going no your not, I don't believe it. I had been disappointed so many times. I've, you know, two and a half,

three, four years, however long it was by that stage. Um, but yeah, when it finally sunk in, it was like, it was the biggest sense of relief.

Ross: [\(22:11\)](#)

So in 2013 I put my hand up for help and that's when I decided I'd had enough. So I decided to go on workers comp for three months and do some Naval gazing. Was this the right decision for, for me as in Ross? Was it right decision financially? Was it all that making sure it's the right decision as well as realizing that I can't return again. Um, so Ronnie and I had sat down and actually she'd gone for a job interview in Newcastle and she said, if someone wanted, if you wanted someone to tell you something when you joined the fire brigade about how to look after yourself mentally and spiritually, whatever, what would it be? So she had an interview for about two hours. I had a pad and pen and sat there and wrote what I thought I should've been told about PTSD, about incidence, stress and all sorts of stuff. So when she came out of the interview, she goes, that's really cool. And she's a person that sort of makes something from, you know, make something from nothing. I had a bit of an idea, she sort of put it together and we basically put a thing together that wasn't, I wasn't taught and is basically telling people in the first responder world, don't do what I did. And avoid signs of incident stress or your own personal mental health

Beverley: [\(23:27\)](#)

Together. Ronnie and Roscoe devised Behind The Seen, a program to help all the other first responders dealing with stress.

Ronnie: [\(23:35\)](#)

Yeah. When we just ran a trial, a little session with 18 people up at Cameron park. They all loved it. And we're just sitting there going, okay, so there's something about the way that Ross frames everything in this really simple way. Um, that resonated and Behind The Seen was born.

Ross: [\(23:57\)](#)

Um, it was just a discussion with Ronnie and I, and I came up with the name Behind The Seen and Ronnie's brother who was in advertising, he said, that's a really stupid name. He goes, because people will challenge you and say behind the seen, it should be s, c, e, n, e. And I'm going no its s, e, e, n because it's what I've seen, looked at, visualized, witnessed, and he sorta got it eventually. Um, and even when we first put it up on Facebook, this is what we're gonna do. We had people going you spelled it wrong. No I haven't spelt it wrong. So there's an education process with it as well. But we put out, we put these sessions together that Ronnie thought we'd need to, how can we do this? Um, and she's a creative and I'm a creative. So we had hand out gifts of uh, a pen that looks like a syringe that we use to say that to people, take this

home. It's a reminder that we're not immunised and vaccinated to stress. We've got stress balls, because which are bouncy balls like super balls, which is to tell people that you've just gotta be able to bounce back, you've got to, to do what you do, you've got to be able to bounce back out of it. People embraced it really quickly and word spread. So then we get funding to do um, rural fire service stations on the central coast. And we just about did 90% of them all, in three months. Just going out there on the, the training nights and saying, this is a, an hour presentation about looking after yourself and um, you know, you think somethings, you know, that won't work. But it actually did, it went bang, worked really well and it continues to work really well.

Ross: [\(25:26\)](#)

Fire station, rescue station, police station, ambos. It doesn't matter where we go. Anyone that's in the red and blue light community. Our presentation's about 45 minutes where we just go through a few things, you know, basically exposing, you know, I know what you know and I know I do what you do. I avoid certain streets, I have triggers. This is all stuff that I used to do and I bet you all do it. And everyone sits there nodding their heads going, yeah that's me. That's me. That's me. Ronnie speaks on behalf of the family members who then see their first responders cracking and they're the ones that sort of can see us unraveling before anybody else. Um, so she exposes that part of it. This is what you guys and girls are doing to your partners and your family members. So it's basically just laying all the cards on the table. But doing it in not a a, um, sort of heavy way because originally when we first start the sessions, people sit there very stiff lipped and upper, you know, very standing like this with their mouth shut. But when your hand out the pen and go, this is your pen to signify your immunised and vaccinated, people just relax and go, I get this, this is going to be alright. This is not going to be death by PowerPoint or, or someone, you know, ramming something down my throat. And because because of the way it's presented, we get away with it.

Ross: [\(26:48\)](#)

Originally when I first started doing Behind The Seen, that I was telling war stories and dragging up some of my past and I spoke to my psychologist at the time, cause it's actually painful for what I'd said and done to people. Um, and he taught me another lesson, to when I'm telling my stories just to draw on different scenarios and different incidents and make it into one. You know, use a, you know, if it was a green car, make it a red car, if it was a four door car, make it a Ute. If it was a caravan, make it a pop top caravan. Just changing certain aspects of it but with the same outcome, whether it be serious incident or fatality. But that way it's not drawing on my portfolio of pictures. So that sort of helped me to get through it. So that's, the ultimate telling the story is, I find it's important for someone else. So they go, you know what, because I've heard your story that I've changed my direction and my thought processes

and I've actually gone to get help. So I think tick, I think I've done my job.

Beverley: ([27:51](#))

One of Ronnie and Ross's smartest innovations is a stress kit.

Ronnie: ([27:56](#))

Neither of us are really all that happy with the term mental illness or mental health because of the stigma. And so we're trying to come up with other words and the word that resonates with absolutely everybody is stress. You're feeling stressed or you're feeling out of sorts. You're stressed. And so one day Ross just did the bushfire dial and made it like a stress meter. So they could just leave the stress meter on the fridge. It's just, it's a chart that actually says if you're in a low stress state, this is probably what's going on with you. If you're in a medium stress state. These are some of the things that you might be feeling. And down the bottom it's actually got some suggestions for help. They've got conversation cards in them as well with all sorts of questions that just encourage people to talk about the stress levels and how different people might deal with stress in different ways. Um, for one person it might be, and go read a book, but for the other person it might be I need to go for a walk and get rid of some energy. And just getting colleagues at station level to get to know each other that little bit better. And then they might be able to pick up too if someone's not quite themselves because they'll end up talking about that sort of stuff.

Ross: ([29:07](#))

One of the things we do in our sessions is to get the participants to establish their own triple O. So write down on, we've got, you know, there's a little poster. Write two friends, two work workmates and two family members that understand you and people that you can go to when, if you have a problem. If you say I'm having a bad day, that they get it and they know what to do just by either speaking on the phone or just saying look I'll come over or how bout we do something, let's catch up, let's have a coffee or just sit on the phone and spend some time. And again, back to that suicide, um, helpers handbook and just been the ear that someone can listen. It's come and bash your ear and talk to about it. You know, that I have to offer you advice at all. They can just be there and you think, Oh, it's a cool, I had a great conversation. The best of, the best advice I can give someone that is in that dark space is, put your hand up, um, and go and get that help. You know, even it's, it's begrudgingly, look, all I did, it was, you know, when I originally went and put my hand up and was dragged along to the psychologist, it was first the first step of taking ownership of my injury and my behaviors of my situation. Um, and I find it's an integral part. You've got to take ownership of your own injury. He can't rely on others to solve it for you. You've got to take it on board of what's being said and done for you. Um, and to get to move forward, you need to, to know that

this is for you and you need to do this.

Ross: ([30:42](#))

Um, you need to call in the experts that, that understand what you go through. And people like I found that they call you out, they go, I bet you do this, You go, Oh yeah I do. I bet you don't sleep at night. Yeah I don't. I bet . And it's that, that aspect of, and you, and you've got to be honest with people. Going that's right. That's what I do. And not have that toughen up culture like we just spoke about. And just let the wall down. The best thing about help and seeking help and taking that help is if you're at the beach at Bondi and the surf life savers was sitting on the beach with their surfboards and not skidoos, cause that's snow. But they're there with their jet skis and the Westpac rescue helicopter there. And the New South Wales police and the ambulance, and everybody's here watching you having a swim and you're having a great time. But if you get in trouble, caught in a rip, they don't know you're in trouble until you put your hand up. You've got to put your hand up for them to go, Oh, that guy's in trouble. Unless they can see some, you know, they're pretty switched on the surf lifesavers, they know someone's in strife, but once that hands raised, that's a sign that there's problems going on and I need some help and you got to accept that help.

Ronnie: ([31:53](#))

But all round, there's a lot of feelings of achievement. Every time we get a message where somebody says, you saved my life. I look at that and go, I just can't believe that we're doing this. If we've saved one person's life, that's enough. And I know for a fact that we've saved more than that. And if that's happening at that level, um, you know, even the recruits that would never have thought about some of this information may never recognize that something has saved their life. But it will.

Beverley: ([32:30](#))

Thank you for listening to holding on to hope. Lifeline Australia is grateful to all our interviewees who share their stories in the hope of inspiring others. We also acknowledge all of you who provide support to people in crisis and those on their journey to recovery. If you found this podcast helpful or inspiring, please share it, rate it, write a review or subscribe wherever you download your favorite podcasts. If this story has affected you and you require crisis support, please contact lifeline on 13 11 14 you can do this at anytime or visit lifeline.org.au to access web chat every night from 7:00 PM to midnight. If it's inspired you to be a lifeline volunteer or to donate, please visit lifeline.org.au With thanks to Wahoo Creative for interviews, editing, and production, and the voice of lived experience, which is essential in the development of our work.