

CHAPTER ONE

No One Calls Me Mom Anymore

“A successful woman is one who can build a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at her.”

—gender-specific paraphrase of statement made by
David Brinkley

They might be out to get you

Fifteen years is a very, very long time to endure hardship. My two daughters and I lived through some excruciating times while I was stalked, sued and slandered. I don't blame them for turning away from me. My daughters had to fend for themselves a lot while I was trying to protect our family. Becoming alienated from them has been the worst hardship of all: It shattered me.

Most days I would fall asleep at my computer after I worked a ten-hour day as a psychologist, followed by several more hours organizing evidence for my many legal matters. I don't think my daughters would have fared better if I had not defended myself. My caving would have led us down the path of homelessness and bankruptcy. Adults now, I hope Bianca and Phoebe will come to understand and forgive me for the upheaval in their young lives.

“When Empathy Fails” is more than a book about how I became estranged from my daughters. It's also about how people

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with Empathy Disorders create the kind of evil chaos that brings sorrow. In this chapter, you will learn how people with empathy disorders think and act. Since they know and consider only what is in their mind, they are self-absorbed and unable to relate to others.

Their decisions are selfish. Worse, when an empathy disorder—what I define as Empathy Dysfunction—is severe, you have a person who is unimaginably destructive to others.²⁰ We know them as narcissists and sociopaths.

The onslaught of attacks coming from all corners of my life bewildered me. I was a devoted suburban mom, working from my home office, so I could have a flexible schedule to accommodate my kids' needs. All this, and still I would never be respected as dictated in the "*Ten Commandments: Honor Thy Mother.*"

A small group of greedy and power-hungry people was out to annihilate me and bring down my simple life. The outrageous lies of one woman set the stage for years of frightening abuse and the eventual alienation of my children.

My goal in writing this book is to leave you with tools to protect yourself from dangerous people. If you find yourself with: a rotten neighbor; friends who start believing the nasty gossip spread by your ex-partner; or a nagging feeling you're being watched—pay attention. It's not because you're paranoid (unreasonably suspicious). It's because "they" really might be out to get you.

September 11, 2001

I was getting ready for work early the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, when I got a call from my husband, Howard. He'd

²⁰ In Chapter Two, "Empathy Dysfunction (EmD) In-depth," I will define and explain the characteristics of empathy and its dysfunction.

left a few minutes before, headed for an appearance in court. “Turn on the TV. There’s been a bombing in New York,” he said urgently.

“What?” I asked lamely. I was confused and stunned by his urgent and unexpected call.



“Turn on the news,” he repeated emphatically. “The Twin Towers have been hit and have collapsed.” Howard—so inept at reading the nuances of human interactions that he freezes when invited to chit-chat at a party, Howard could be—was clear and decisive in an international catastrophe. I suppose this serves him well as an attorney. “Turn on the TV,” he kept insisting. “This is important. I’ll call you back later. I want to watch the news.” Then he hung up.

I turned on the television in the family room and watched the scene in disbelief. Many of you have similar memories. I can’t say that I consciously knew then how this cataclysmic event would change me. Even as it happened, we all knew the world had been irrevocably altered, particularly for Americans. We could no longer ignore the reality of terrorism. The amped up need for safety would soon engulf us 24/7.

By Dec.13, 2001, Osama Bin Laden and his organization, Al Qaeda, had claimed responsibility for murdering an estimated 2,700 people when two airliners, hijacked by Al Qaeda, had hit the

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World Trade Center. Within minutes of the crash into New York City's Twin Towers, two additional hijacked jetliners had crashed, one at the Pentagon and one in a field in Pennsylvania.

The death toll rocketed. Americans reeled, especially on the East Coast. Those of us on the West Coast may have been the most confused. This disaster, of epic proportions, didn't affect many of us personally. The attacks on the East Coast felt as far away to us as Pearl Harbor had to mainland citizens during World War II.

Back then, we'd gone to war to retaliate for the attack on our shores. The War Effort had unified our nation: Young men had enlisted or drafted. Women, children, and older folks had kept home fires burning. How would America respond this time? How would our people unite around a terrorist attack of this magnitude?

I began to answer this question when a local radio station sought me out as a psychologist to interview about the emotional side of the 9/11 tragedy. The radio journalist asked me, "What can we, here in Portland, do to help those suffering in New York? People are scared. Children aren't sleeping. What can we do?"

I knew that question would be coming, and I'd prepared remarks. As I started to speak, I realized how inadequate my words were. "There are those who can fly to New York and help," I began. "They can use their skills in law enforcement, safety and medicine to care for the tired, sick and injured; and to help families of the deceased. The Red Cross needs volunteers. If you can't fly there, you can donate blood, supplies, or money."

The broadcaster prompted, "Besides helping out at Red Cross, what else can we do?" He obviously hadn't been satisfied with my canned response.

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children more. Even if you can’t be of direct help to those in New York, you can do things here at home to help make the world a bit better.” Still, I felt that my response had been lackluster.

The journalist must have realized something more inside me was trying to surface. “Anything else?” he pressed me impatiently.

My response came out of nowhere; confident, I said with conviction, **“Yes! There is something else. Do everything you can; then do a little bit more!”**

The interview played and replayed on the radio at the top of every news hour for a week. Commentators referred to my words as powerful, hopeful and inspiring; that had revived my hope. I needed to hear those words as much as everyone else during the months following 9/11. I would come to need them many times during the next 15 years.

A life hijacked

By Patriot Day (the annual commemoration of the 9/11 Al Qaeda attack) on Sept. 11, 2006, my life had been hijacked. Here’s what I’d survived in those five years. I’d:

1. Weathered a hostile divorce from a divorce attorney.

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2. Had licensing board complaints filed against me by the Vancouver judge handling my divorce.
3. Spent three days in the county jail after being arrested on false charges.
4. Been sued by my next door neighbors over a property dispute.
5. Survived physical injuries at the hands of neighbors—broken foot, head and face bruises/contusions, and a human bite wound.
6. Been stalked by these same people, who'd sent in false complaints about me to Code Enforcement.
7. Had one particularly piqued neighbor take more than fifty secret video clips of me, then send them to Code Enforcement.
8. Been cited for innumerable bogus infractions by Vancouver, Washington's Code Enforcement Division.
9. Been dragged into court (civil, criminal and administrative) so many times that I had no less than three or four lawyers representing me, at any one time.
10. Been forsaken by Bianca, my eldest daughter, who'd gone to live with her father.
11. Received threatening emails from an anonymous cyberstalker for a year.

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12. Endured having a wanted poster with my picture appear at the front gate of a neighboring private community, announcing to all that I was dangerous.
13. Had several false front-page stories maligning me appear in *The Columbian* newspaper, owned by one of my hostile neighbors.

This litany of abuses had begun when I'd filed for divorce shortly after 9/11. The following two years had been excruciatingly painful as I'd struggled to work as a psychologist and care for two disabled children while defending myself from Howard's mountain of costly court filings against me.

He'd refused to pay for his daughters' special health care and educational expenses, so I had. That had left me without money to pay my divorce attorney; so I'd borrowed against credit cards. He'd decided that since I wanted the divorce, I should pay for all of the children's special care and my attorney fees, too. Reasoning with Howard had, again, proven impossible.

“Mom is my hero”

I realize now that my greatest strength and my greatest vulnerability stem from motherhood. I am a mom—proud, loving and fearless in protecting my children. I'd thoroughly enjoyed the years of piano lessons, Girl Scouts, camping at the beach, and chasing bubbles and balloons in the backyard. Our summer road trips to national parks, such as Yosemite, Glacier, Yellowstone and Olympic, remain some of the fondest memories of my life.

Bianca's interest in paleontology had taken us to unexpected locations, including Canada's famous dinosaur pits in

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the badlands near Drumheller Alberta. Phoebe's prowess at sport had landed me at many a soccer tournament where I delighted her teammates by blowing the horn whenever they scored. I'd been head over heels for all of the girly stuff, too—shopping and makeup and slumber parties. It had been blissful falling asleep to the smell of popcorn and the sound of girls giggling in the family room.

Motherhood was what kept me going during the years-long barrage of attacks. It would turn out to be my Achilles' heel. I, like most mothers, knew the greatest threats to me were those leveled at my children. I would fight like a provoked mother grizzly to keep my "cubs" safe and sound. Still, I knew that using anger was not the best way to resolve problems. Mostly, my go-to approach was to use reason.

After Howard and I had separated, Phoebe came to me with a concern. She was about 12. "Mom," she said tentatively, "I want to tell you something about my dad, but I don't know if I should." (Phoebe had started referring to Howard as "my dad," instead of the usual "Dad." It was her clever child's way of distinguishing her two separate realities: Mom and Dad didn't belong to each other

anymore, but she still belonged to both of us.)

Understanding Phoebe's dilemma, I said, "I know you don't want to betray your dad and tell me something that is private. Does it feel like you are stuck between a rock and a hard place? You know, like no matter what you do it will be wrong?" Phoebe nodded her head.

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You know, like no matter what you do it will be wrong?" Phoebe nodded her head.

“Okay. Here’s what we’ll do,” I continued. “Tell me what is bothering you. If it is something that you should handle with your dad, and I shouldn’t be involved with, I’ll tell you. On the other hand, if it is an adult thing that Mom and Dad should handle, I’ll talk to Dad about it. Okay?” Again Phoebe nodded her assent.

“I just don’t know what to do when my dad phones you,” she said nervously, looking down at her feet and shifting her weight from one foot to the other. “Dad has your number on his cell phone with a code word. So you see, when he calls you, he picks up his phone and tells it to ‘Call the Bitch.’ I don’t like it, but he laughs every time he calls you.”

I found it amusing that Howard got some small delight from being disrespectful behind my back. Clearly, his empathy was so lacking that he had no idea how much his immaturity was harming his daughter.

I told Phoebe, “Of course I will talk to Dad for you. He shouldn’t say this sort of thing. Don’t worry. You’re not in trouble. I will explain to Dad that you told me because you love us both and don’t want to be caught in the middle.” Seeming relieved, and satisfied that Mom would take care of the problem, Phoebe went off to play with the dog.

Howard was virtually assaulting Phoebe each time, in her presence, he phoned me, using his denigrating phone code. I called him and calmly pointed out that his behavior was out of line—reminding him that when

Howard was virtually assaulting Phoebe each time, in her presence, he phoned me, using his denigrating phone code [‘Call the Bitch’] In the coming years, he would say and do worse things in front of his children. At least I knew that Phoebe knew I would stand up for her. I suppose that is why Phoebe used to post on Facebook, “Mom is my hero.”

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you harm the mother of your children, you harm the children who love her.

I felt rather proud of the way I'd handled it. I think he listened, but I can't be sure: In the coming years, he would say and do worse things in front of his children. At least I knew that Phoebe knew I would stand up for her. I suppose that is why Phoebe used to post on Facebook, "Mom is my hero."

The divorce dragged on from early 2002 into the spring of 2004. The legal fees grew astronomically as Howard pressured me financially with repeated unnecessary court filings. I had spent more than \$100,000 on legal fees by the time we were divorced—on what would have been our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, April 28.

I was awarded custody of the girls and half of our community property, exactly what I'd asked for originally before all of my money was used up (Howard's legal fees were paid by his father, but I had no one to back my share). Meanwhile, being a mother had become increasingly difficult as I managed teenage rebellion at home and defended my freedom at the same time.

Like it's a bad thing

My divorce attorney, Bob Yoseph, was the last person I expected to hurl a false accusation at me. That's just what he'd done in 2003 when he'd said, "What did you do to make Josie Townsend [City Prosecutor for Vancouver] so mad at you? She's furious and wants to lock you up. If she has her way, you'll never work again. And you could lose custody of your children!"

Stunned, and instantly filled with fear, I asked incredulously, "Who is she? I've never met her before." (I'd still been in shock from being arrested and made to spend three days in county jail.) I wasn't sure if Bob was serious, or if he was using his

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attorney bluster to intimidate me. Attorneys can be like that, using intimidation on their clients to achieve abject compliance.

“Who is she?” he mocked, as if I’d been kidding. He went on, saying, “She’s the head prosecutor for the City, that’s who she is. She has taken a personal interest in your case. It had been assigned to a deputy prosecutor, then Josie took it on—because it’s about you! What did you do to make her this angry?”

“I didn’t do anything,” I told Bob emphatically, getting an inkling of how things worked. I was divorcing a divorce attorney in a small town. On his turf, the world of courtrooms, judges, prosecutors and lawyers, I was playing way out of my league.

I continued my explanation though I could tell Bob was in no mood for it: “All I did was go to Howard’s office last Friday, as you’d instructed, to pick up my belongings. I’d hired a moving company and asked a friend to help me. Phoebe and a girlfriend came along, too. Howard was supposed to have the furniture and Bankers Boxes ready for me. It turned out, he’d changed his mind.

“Arriving at Howard’s old office, I’d found that he’d taken some of my stuff to his new office. I’d been confused because we’d arranged—in writing—exactly what I was to pick up that day. You even have a copy of that list in your files, Bob. I decided to drive to his new place to get my belongings. On the way, I tried calling him but got no answer. It seems he was in Seattle with his girlfriend.

“Finally, he answered his cell, just as I arrived in his office’s reception area. I asked him about the missing items, and he told me, ‘I need them. If you want them back, you’ll have to get a court order.’ Then things went bad. I was furious that Howard had lied to me once again. I spotted my stuff and told the movers to take it anyway. When Howard’s then secretary, Esther, saw this, she tried to stop me, grabbing my left wrist. That’s when it all escalated.” Now at the end of my explanation to Bob, I was exhausted.

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Apparently, Esther had felt the need to defend her absent boss. I tried to pull my arm away, but that only landed me up against a wall (with bruises to prove it). When Esther had grabbed me, I'd instantly flipped into "fight or flight" mode. With my daughter standing right behind me, I'd behaved like a protective momma grizzly might. As if hypnotized, I'd watched my right arm swing up involuntarily, my hand doubling into a fist.

I'd hit Esther in the face and watched my knuckles bend her nose as if in slow motion. Her head had bobbed back and forth like that of a bobblehead doll. At last, she'd let go of my arm and was screaming at me, "I'm going to sue you! I'm going to sue you!" I'd still been in shock when the building manager appeared and demanded that I leave." I did leave and thought it was over until the police came to my house hours later and arrested me for two misdemeanor crimes, Assault IV and Trespass. My daughters watched in tears as the Vancouver Police handcuffed me and stuffed me in the back of the cop car.

Arguing with me at that point, Bob stressed that I would never win this case as self-defense with Townsend on the warpath. He said, "She's a bulldog. And when she's this mad, she'll destroy you. You've already been in jail for three days over this.²¹ You don't want to spend another six months locked up, do you? Or lose custody of your kids?"

He was very convincing. I felt terrified as I realized my life could go up in smoke over a couple of pieces of furniture. Not wanting my children to suffer anymore, I agreed to Bob's plan.

²¹ I learned later that I was kept in jail for three days, even though I could have been released earlier, because the jail staff determined I was indigent. Even though the cops arrested me at my own house, with my name on my home office door, the Clark County officials wrote on the form that there was no way to verify that I had a home to go to.

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He and Townsend negotiated the terms of a settlement for my assault charges for a few weeks. It came to this. All charges would be dismissed if I:

- Agreed to two years in a diversion program (meaning that I would stay out of trouble for two years);
 - Signed an agreement that I was guilty of the two misdemeanors, but the charges would be dropped if I complied with all terms of the diversion agreement;
 - Paid for Esther's medical care, about \$50; the cleanup of Howard's office, about \$50; and court fees;
 - Engaged in 26 weeks of anger management treatment with forensic psychologist Frank Colistro;
 - Reported to Townsend in person each month with a record of good behavior from my psychologist.
-

Bob had been mystified by this last demand, saying it was quite strange that two misdemeanors warranted the regular attention of the City's head prosecutor. He'd said, "I don't get it, but she's quirky."

The morning I was to appear in court to have the judge sign the Diversion agreement, I put on my best suit, a light blue silk. I thought I looked pretty even though the skirt and jacket hung loosely on my body, grown thin because of my stress diet. (I'd been eating next to nothing since my jail stay.)

I wanted to look and feel my best for the demoralizing day. Phoebe had already taken the bus to school, but Bianca was working herself into an autistic meltdown (something I will explain more in *Chapter Four*). She was 17 years old, 5-feet-3 inches tall, and weighed about 185 pounds. She was sobbing uncontrollably, pleading, "Don't leave. Don't leave me."

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“I have to go, Bianca. I have very critical business to take care of,” I calmly explained. I hadn’t told the girls everything I was going through, doing my best to spare them the nasty details of the divorce and my wrongful arrest/prosecution. It probably wouldn’t have mattered if Bianca had known. She is autistic, so her empathy skills are non-existent. When the stress chemicals rush through her brain and body at times like these, she is not reasonable. “I have to leave,” I said again, trying to convince her, but Bianca was relentless.

“No!” she screamed and dropped to the kitchen floor, grabbing my legs. I was afraid to move (because in the past Bianca had become aggressive when I’d resisted her).

“Okay, Honey. I won’t go,” I lied. I saw no other choice.

“Really?” she said as she looked at me warily.

“Yes, I’ll stay. Just let me go to my office upstairs. Why don’t you go to your room and listen to some music to calm yourself down?” I was starting to panic. I had to get to court on time, or the diversion agreement would be toast. Imagine what Townsend would say if I used the excuse that my autistic teenager had been throwing a tantrum.

Bianca let go of my legs, and I walked upstairs, pretending to busy myself at my desk. I listened for sounds of Bianca returning to her bedroom. When I was sure she had, I crept back downstairs and out the back door to my car. I’d started the engine and barely backed down the driveway when Bianca ran outside looking wild with fear. She was barefoot and still in her pajamas. She flung her body on the hood of my car, pounding it with her fists while screaming, “Don’t go! Don’t Go! Don’t go!”

I stopped the engine and got out, leaving the car parked in the middle of the street. “I am so sorry, Bianca. I shouldn’t have

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lied to you. Please forgive me. I'll come back into the house with you right now."

Her body was limp, her face streaked with tears. She was distraught but couldn't explain her distress. As mothers of a disabled and/or dependent child generally are, Bianca and I were very close. Maybe she'd sensed that I was in danger. I hated that she was so frightened. A horrible guilt besieged me, because the last time I'd left her, I'd been handcuffed, then stuffed into a police car. I'd had no way to talk to her, console or explain things the three days I'd been in jail. Phoebe had stayed with a girlfriend. Bianca had been left alone in the house. Not even her father had come to comfort her.

I walked Bianca back into the house, and she calmed down somewhat. She agreed to go to bed as long as I sat with her. I made a cool, moist compress for her red and swollen eyes, then gave her a Klonopin to help her relax. (Bianca's psychiatrist had prescribed Klonopin to help when her anxieties were at a fever pitch). I held her hand and stroked her hair as she fell asleep. I softly said, "I love you, Bianca. I'm here for you. Don't be afraid my little one."

Bianca never knew that I left her again. She slept for several hours while I pulled my act together and drove to court just in time to sign the diversion document. I met Townsend for the first time. I felt incredibly alone and sorry for myself. Bob was there, but I had little faith in his ability to empathize with my misery.

Before I could catch my breath, Bob was reminding me that the judge signing my diversion agreement was a friend of Howard's secretary. It seemed Bob expected me to give permission for this ethics violation. Otherwise, my hearing would be rescheduled in another county. To avoid the delay and keep Townsend happy, Bob recommended I waive my right to have an impartial judge.

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Why not? I already had been arraigned in front of Judge Jim Rulli, also my neighbor. My divorce proceedings were being presided over by Judge Diane Woolard, my attorney's ex-wife. Why not continue the pattern of legal abuse running rampant in a small town? I agreed to the terms, signed the papers and turned to leave. I felt completely drained and so badly wanted to get out of the courthouse and back to Bianca. Bob tried to say something, but I waved him off and turned to walk down the hallway.

I heard the click of Townsend's heels as she ran down the tiled floor after me. The sound made me think of a bulldog with too-long toenails crossing a hardwood floor.

"Oh, Miss Marshack? Miss Marshack?" she called out in a syrupy-sweet voice.

I shrugged, and with a heavy sigh, turned around. I said nothing as I looked down at Townsend.

"Miss Marshack, here's my card in case you need to get hold of me," she said, smiling with delight that she had me cornered.

My temper got the better of me. I couldn't stand this woman who seemed to enjoy tormenting innocent people. Even if Townsend had known about the traumatic hours right before I'd appeared in court—when I had lied to my distraught daughter and been forced to leave her alone—she wouldn't have cared that I now had to get home to Bianca.

I was thinking about that when I took the card from her outstretched hand. I looked at her condescendingly and said, "It's Dr. Marshack, thank you!" I turned my back and walked away. I thought it was over. I would find out differently.

I have never talked with Bianca about how she felt during this difficult time; because she could get so enraged or depressed that I learned to walk on eggshells to protect her from herself. A year later she moved in with her father and we have not spoken since.

On the other hand Phoebe has a way of letting you know where you stand through her actions. One day only a few months after I'd been in court with Townsend, Phoebe and I were shopping at Urban Outfitters, a funky little boutique in northwest Portland. She'd spotted a book that she thought was just what I needed. "Mom, Mom, you gotta take a look at this book! It's perfect for you," she'd said excitedly.

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a Bitch
like It's a
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With a twinkle in her eye, Phoebe held up a small yellow book with the title, "You Say I'm a Bitch Like It's a Bad Thing." I laughed aloud, then pursed my lips in feigned disappointment, saying, "But I thought you said I am your hero?"

Phoebe laughed, too. Her eyes twinkled as she gave me a super hug. "You are my hero, Mom. And that's why you need this book." Quite a mature response from a 14-year-old young woman, wouldn't you say?

How had she known that I needed a reminder to forgive myself, especially since I never overtly explained to her the whole story behind my arrest? Because I'd been strong and protective, Howard and Townsend

thought badly of me. I had started to fall into the trap of thinking that, too.

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Stalked, sued, slandered

By Spring 2004, I was finally divorced and carrying out my Diversion requirements. The divorce was not big news in the little town of Vancouver, but my arrest for assault certainly had been. The local newspaper, *The Columbian*, ran the story on its front page (Oct. 5, 2003). The *Eugene Register-Guard* in Oregon, and the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* in Washington also carried the article.

A news editor at *The Columbian*, who is an acquaintance, told me about the news staff's discussion whether to run the story or not. He'd argued against the story, suggesting that an incident like mine was not that unusual during the stress of a divorce. My source told me later, "I can't figure out why they thought it was worth front page news, let alone news at all." He added that he didn't see why the newspaper had wanted to humiliate a good person.

As my story unfolds, you will understand why: the newspaper's owner and my neighbor Scott Campbell may have wanted to discredit me.²²

Backing up a bit, on Jan. 29, 2004, before the Diversion or divorce papers were finalized, I'd found my secretary at the time, Marta, looking distraught as I'd walked over to her desk.

²² Typically, and especially in America, the news department and the publisher of a newspaper have operated parallel with a sort of Mason-Dixon Line separating the publisher from influencing the who, how, what, when, and why of news coverage. However, today's tough climate for print media has seen some combination of the publisher and editor roles. This may have been the case with *The Columbian* publisher Scott Campbell.

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She'd said, "I got this call from your neighbor Jody Campbell this morning. She was very angry. You were in session with a client, so I told her I would let you know and that you would call her back."

I'd asked, "Angry about what?" Marta had handed me the yellow phone message note. It read, "She has had several people knocking on her door looking for you, and she doesn't appreciate it." Campbell, who lived two houses from me, is the wife of Scott Campbell.

I worked out of my home office at the time, so I wondered if a new client had mistaken the Campbell's house for mine.

I'd asked Marta, "Do you suppose any of my clients went to the wrong house? Has any client mentioned getting lost? If so, we should make sure clients get better directions, so we aren't inconveniencing the neighbors."

Marta had responded, "I haven't heard from anyone that they got lost. We send out excellent directions. Plus there is a picture of your house attached. It seems highly unlikely that anyone would have gone to the wrong house. But Jody was extremely angry. She told me that she was going to report you to Code Enforcement for running an illegal business out of your house. Then she hung up on me," Marta had said, looking frightened.

I called Jody a few times but didn't hear back from her. I went over to her house and knocked, but she never answered. Two weeks later, Vancouver Code Enforcement Officer Dan Jones showed up to investigate a complaint by Jody Campbell. After assuring me that I did indeed have a legal permit for my home office, Jones told me Campbell was claiming that my business was disrupting her home life.

In Vancouver, home occupation permits are granted to businesses, such as my professional psychology practice, only if

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they are conducted quietly and do not disturb the ambiance of the residential neighborhood. Most communities have similar ordinances. I was surprised at Jody's alarm since I had operated my practice from home for twenty years with no complaints. Why now? My practice was still low-key and inoffensive.

Jones, trying to be helpful, said, "You are in compliance, and I don't think this is a problem that you can't take care of by talking with your very influential neighbor. As long as your clients don't bother Mrs. Campbell, I am sure it will be all right." He had given me a knowing wink as he'd said, "very influential neighbor."

I assumed this was his way of encouraging me to take her threat seriously. After all, her husband published the newspaper, and the Campbells were highly regarded. For the first time, I wondered if Jody's complaint was somehow related to why *The Columbian* had put the story of my arrest front and center.

By April 2004, my neighbors were stalking me in earnest. Joseph and Julianne Leas had moved in next door in March and had immediately begun filing dozens of complaints about me with Code Enforcement. This time, I received a written notice from Officer Richard Landis, demanding that I fire my secretary or close my business immediately. It was obviously time to hire an attorney.

The story of the next two years is pretty zany and hard to follow, so I'll give you the highlights. Hang tight: They're tough to fathom.

First, it took nearly two years to get the City to back off on its threats about losing my home occupation permit. In the end, I agreed to a special permit, written specifically for my situation. The agency had needed to save face for not honoring their City codes in my case; so they'd cobbled together a standard home

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occupation permit—with a few extra provisions. (I will explain these in an *upcoming chapter*.)

Second, my neighbors, along with Officer Landis, stepped up the code enforcement complaints, which had resulted in many site inspections. Supposedly, my clients continued going to wrong houses in the neighborhood while trying to find my office.

I was cited for: illegally parking in my old gravel driveway; having too many cars at my house; housing a barking dog; trespassing; and locating my fence in the wrong place. Each time my neighbors complained, Landis conducted an investigation and filed another citation against me.

Third, Townsend decided to revoke my Diversion Agreement, stating that I had broken the law by violating City codes. Receiving the “Notice to Revoke” had sent shivers racing through me. The ink was barely dry on the agreement, and now she was planning to withdraw it! The ramifications: I would be automatically found guilty of all charges; I could be sent to jail, potentially losing my license to practice; and, worst of all, lose custody of my children! I had to act swiftly.

I filed a Land Use Petition lawsuit against the City of Vancouver: Citizens have the constitutional right to reject the validity of City Codes. My lawsuit had stopped Townsend cold: It meant that I could not be considered guilty of breaking any law until I was convicted. Nor could I be sentenced until the codes had been ruled legal and constitutional or not, as determined by the Washington Superior Court. Townsend had no grounds to undo my Diversion Agreement!

Fourth, I realized how much of a menace Townsend was. It was hard to believe that I was the only Vancouver resident being legally stalked by her. (I would eventually hear from several of Townsend’s victims.) I decided to go over her head to City

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leaders—the Mayor, City Manager, and City Council members. When I got little response from these, my elected officials, I wrote to Jim Jacks, Vancouver’s Ombudsman, or Citizen Advocate.

He was the only person to write back to me. He apologized for being unable to help me, deeming that my cases were being handled appropriately through normal government channels. Meanwhile he’d thrown me under the bus at City Hall by writing a libelous memo calling me a functional sociopath. Yet another lie—but I wouldn’t learn about all that until five years later during deposition after I sued the City of Vancouver for conspiracy—and won a settlement.

By Sept. 29, 2004, at the request of her boss, Chief City Attorney Ted Gathe, Townsend dismissed the revocation petition against me. It took longer to get the home occupation permit restored. The neighbors continued to harass me for nearly another decade. More lawsuits were to come.

The most shocking discovery came five years after I’d contacted Jacks for help with the unreasonable conduct of City employees Landis and Townsend. In August 2009, I read, for the first time, Jacks’ secret and libelous memo about me. It was what had kicked off the years-long campaign to stalk, sue and slander me.

According to the 2013 depositions of Jacks and Townsend, the two had met in early September of 2004 to investigate my complaints of being unfairly treated by Townsend and Landis. Gathe had told Townsend to show my Diversion file to Jacks, which she had never done. Instead, Townsend had verbally shared with Jacks an entirely concocted story about me.

On Sept. 7, 2004, based on Townsend’s word, Jacks had written a memo to his boss, City Manager Pat McDonnell. In turn, McDonnell had passed Jacks’ memo along to the Mayor and City Council. In it, Jacks had claimed his findings about

me were factual. In truth, it contained outrageous accusations and falsehoods. The statement that jumped off the page at me: “Ms. Marshack is a functional sociopath.”

Mark Twain once said, “A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.”

Lies, damned lies—and still more

Mark Twain once said, “A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.” Being honest is a virtue but not much help when you are a victim of secret and damaging gossip spread by people in power.

Jacks had said I was a sociopath and written that I was likely to lose my license to practice, because of the code violations. Worse still, Jacks had claimed that my trusted psychotherapist, Dr. Frank Colistro, had testified in court against me. According to Jacks, Dr. Colistro had diagnosed me as a “functional sociopath,” who “should NOT be a practicing psychologist.” (Dr. Colistro never testified in court, for or against me, and he has vehemently denied ever saying these things about me).

Jacks had sent his memo to Townsend and Landis for their endorsements before forwarding it to the City officials. Townsend had known it all to be false, but had said nothing.²³

From there, the gossip spread like wildfire. How was I supposed to get any support from my elected officials when they

²³ The terms narcissist and sociopath are actually traits of diagnosable personality disorders. They are not diagnoses per se. Neither is the term “functional sociopath” actually a diagnosis. It is a term entirely invented and perpetuated by Jim Jacks. I use the terms narcissist and sociopath primarily to describe characteristics among those who are EmD-1. However, other EmDs can demonstrate narcissism and sociopathy from time to time.

believed Jacks' observations that I had no regard for other people and felt no remorse? Why would the police believe anything I said when Jacks had written that I have explosive anger management problems? Even Clark County judges had looked at me askance because they'd believed Jacks when he'd written, "She is resentful of authority and thinks that society's laws do not apply to her." It took years for me to unravel this mess.

These lies had circulated for five years before I discovered the Jacks' memo. I found it as a result of the public records request I'd made after suing the City of Vancouver and my neighbors for all of the harassment.

... I was shocked to discover that the City had dozens of boxes of documents about me—going back as far as 2003!

When the request came through, I was shocked to discover that the City had dozens of boxes of documents about me—going back as far as 2003! As I sorted through the reams of emails and letters, the Jacks' memo popped up. It had, no doubt, been purged from the files of the City manager, mayor, City council members, Landis and Townsend. Someone had botched the cover-up, neglecting to remove Jacks' records.

Despite the memo and its damned lies, it took me five more years to settle my lawsuit against the City of Vancouver for Townsend's treachery and the collateral damage. Another surprising coup came two years later. On Aug. 15, 2015, the Disciplinary Board of the Washington State Bar Association filed a petition against Townsend for professional misconduct. After years of numerous complaints about her—mine and those of many others—Townsend was finally called out for her lies, manipulations and deplorable lack of integrity.

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Still, no criminal action was taken against her. Like so many with Empathy Dysfunction and the absence of a conscience, Townsend will more than likely move to another arena and continue to tell lies and cause untold suffering.

The years lost in this battle cannot be restored, my girls' childhood never salvaged. Writing this first chapter, though, has helped to further my healing. It is very satisfying to be introducing you, dear reader, to ways that will help you avoid, or better manage, the chaos and destruction caused when Empathy Dysfunction slips into your world.

Whether Empathy Dysfunction is the result of narcissism or autism, mental illness or brain injury, sociopathy or greed, you need to remember that, without empathy, people can cause incredible pain and suffering. They have a fervent determination to meet their needs—and their needs only.

On the darkest side of empathy disorders are those who do know how you feel but don't care: They want you to feel worse. Simon Baron-Cohen, author and professor of developmental psychopathology at the University of Cambridge in England, describes sociopaths as having “zero degrees of empathy” in his book, “The Science of Evil.”²⁴ He calls sociopaths “zero negative,” because as horrifying as it sounds, these individuals revel in your distress.

For this mom, it's personal

The events of Sept. 11, 2001 woke me up to the fact that I needed to take my life more personally (I'll explain in a moment). At first the awakening was just emotional, not personal. I knew

²⁴ Baron, Cohen, Simon. (2011). “The Science of Evil: On Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty.” New York: Basic Books.

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that something wasn't right in my world, but I didn't fully understand what it was I needed to change.

The catastrophe in New York frightened me and propelled me to take action, but it was action without a plan. Filing for divorce was my first action step. I finally had the courage to break out of a destructive marriage. But this still wasn't personal; it was an action to move away from someone, a way of life that was not safe for me. There still was no proactive plan for my life.

I got an inkling of an idea about my life of the personal when I spent three days in the county jail, following my first false arrest. The obvious is that I recognized it was not going to be so easy to divorce a divorce attorney in a legal system where he held all of the cards. I needed to learn how to stand up for myself and quickly before I lost everything. Not so obvious was the lesson I learned from a tiny pamphlet left in my jail cell by volunteers from Catholic Charities.

Desperate for something to distract me from my plight (and my migraine headache) I read the story of the suffering of Mother Mary as she watched her son Jesus carry his cross to Calvary where he would be crucified. I literally wept with Mary as she described her feelings of anguish, fear and anger. . .but held strong her resolve that the son she bore would die for something far greater for all of us.

As the years rolled by and I was sued and stalked and defamed and arrested again. . . as first one daughter left me, then the second, I learned more about the life of the personal. It is actually a source of strength.

What does Mary's story have to do with the personal? At that first "visit" to jail, I could definitely relate to a mother's suffering, but it would only occur to me later how much a mother may be called upon to sacrifice. As the years rolled by and I was sued and stalked

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and defamed and arrested again. . . as first one daughter left me, then the second, I learned more about the life of the personal. It is actually a source of strength.

Taking one's life personally means to realize how incredibly important you are. You were born to be You in every way possible. You are an amazing, one of a kind Soul and with every step you take you walk on hallowed ground. There is no way any of us can truly understand the enormity of God's plan, but to know you are loved is enough. Mother Mary knew this, which is why she could be strong for her son and all of the rest of us who weep at her feet.

In other words, the action plan for taking your life personally is to relax and know that you are an instrument of God's love for you. Throughout this book you will see me ignore this knowledge, struggle to control the outcome. . . and fail repeatedly, even though I had this lesson early on in my fight against injustice

I am still learning to take my life personally, to enjoy the beauty of life and to count even adversity as a blessing. (After all, adversities drove me to write this book).

Regardless of what I said on the radio following 9/11—and with Mother Mary's help—I think I finally understand the lesson of living the life of the personal. Because only YOU can do it. Living personally is to do everything you can as the God creation that you are . . . and then do a lot more.

That realization led me to discover the connection between empathy and Empathy Dysfunction. That's what I'm excited to share with you.

“No One Call Me Mom Anymore” Highlights

1. Wake up. No matter how nice you are, there truly are people out to get you. Stay neutral and be prepared.
2. Do all that you can to defend yourself; then do a little (or a lot) more.
3. Where's your Achilles' heel? Don't abandon your standards of morality. Be prepared to take a few hits where you are most vulnerable.
4. Stay out of court if at all possible. Once you've been identified in “the system,” you will remain a target.
5. Kids are kids. They are not your allies. They may love you, but they can't fight for you.
6. Don't lose your temper or dissolve into tears. That's how those with empathy disorders snag you.
7. Lots of people use others' misfortune to better their position and power. Don't take this personally. Instead, do what you can to shut them down.
8. Government employees are not friends. Nor are they here to serve you. Do not volunteer information about yourself to them.
9. Never open the door to the police, code enforcement officers or any other law-enforcement agency. Do not step out of your home if they