

New books by Lisa Forrest, Phillip Kerr and more



The push and pull of competing voices in her head plagued Lisa Forrest for three decades and took the joy out of everything in her life. Picture: Andy Baker

-
- By VARIOUS WRITERS
 - 3:00PM OCTOBER 16, 2020
 - 9 COMMENTS

NON-FICTION

Tina Allen

Glide: Taking the Panic Out of Modern Living

By Lisa Forrest

Allen & Unwin, 260pp, \$29.99

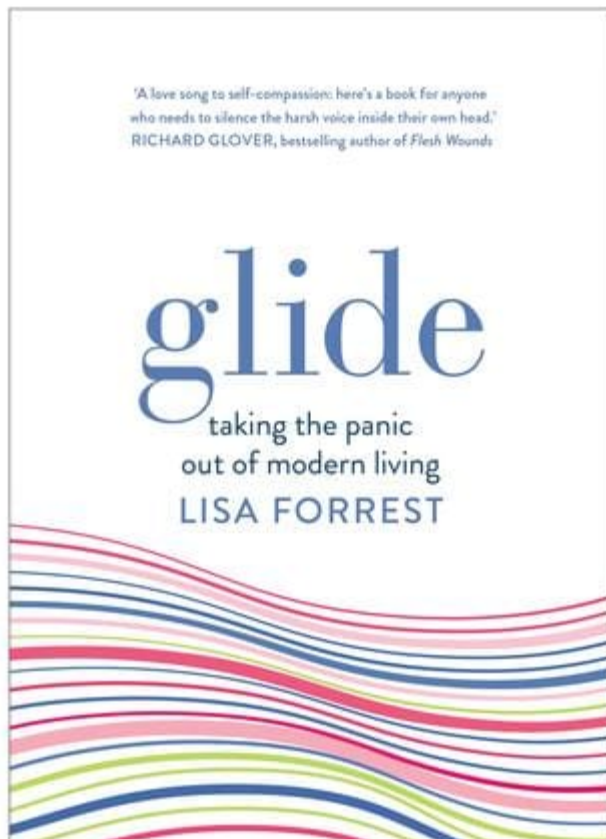
We all have thousands of thoughts passing through our heads each day. But what if these thoughts morph into voices, telling us what we can and cannot do?

As a teenager, author and former Olympic swimmer, Lisa Forrest became aware of two competing voices inside her head. She even gave them names.

The fun, courageous “Ms Have a Go” needed to compete on a daily basis with the goading, critical voice she dubbed “Ms Never Enough”.

The push and pull of these voices plagued Forrest for the following three decades and took the joy out of everything in her life, including motherhood and marriage to “a good man who understood her”.

Finally, in her late 40s, Forrest found a way to control these voices using a combination of mindfulness and self-compassion.



In her third nonfiction book, *Glide: Taking the Panic out of Modern Living*, Forrest blends her own experiences with the latest research into the use of mindfulness to overcome illness, burnout and the mental health challenges of the 21st century.

By 14, Forrest had already won a silver medal in a Commonwealth Games. She recalls her coach writing the following sports psychology motto of the day on the blackboard: When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

This favourite motto became the whip which Forrest used to beat herself and she regularly trained herself to illness.

A particularly stressful period of her racing career was the controversial Moscow Olympic Games, held in 1980 during the Cold War, which she documented in a book entitled *Boycott*.

Being elected at only 16 as captain of the women’s swimming team for these Olympics should have delighted Forrest.

But instead, she wished she could have done more to prevent the isolation, deprivation and body shaming experienced by members of the female swimming team.

Forrest retired as an elite sportswoman three years after the Moscow games, but her uneasy relationship with both swimming and food remained. She no longer swam because decades of negative self-talk had turned swimming into “sheer drudgery”.

Forrest does not believe that “hardening up” is the best way to coach young people in sport or any activity. She asks, “Is there any love in tough love?”

A story that Forrest tells in *Glide*, and as a motivational speaker, is her first encounter with the “can-do kindness” of the volunteers from the Dee Why Ladies Amateur Swimming Club during a swimming trial when she was eight years old.

As waves washed over the sides of the rockpool at Dee Why, a tearful Forrest froze at the start of the 25m freestyle, so a volunteer jumped in and encouraged her towards the finish line.

Forrest dedicated this book to these ladies whose compassionate approach is “best practice” today but really, she says, is “common sense”.

The breakthrough for Forrest in discovering the art of self-compassion was a five-day, silent retreat where she learned to still her thoughts and return to her breath with intention. These days she can control intense emotions, be steady and not engage with the “chatter” in her head.

Glide will appeal to anyone who wants to overcome feelings of not being good enough, no matter what they achieve. Fans of Forrest, the former Olympian, will also enjoy *Glide*, which reads more like a memoir than the genre of personal development.

Forrest discusses her middle-class upbringing on the northern beaches of Sydney and her difficult transition from athlete and household name to journalist and sports broadcaster – because the Australian public still viewed her as Lisa “Smiley” Forest, the swimmer.

She recounts a healing moment along the way to her recovery when she viewed a painting by Henri Matisse at the MONA Gallery in Hobart, featuring paper cut-out swimmers, which broke her absence of six years from the pool.

Glide can at times feel like a bumpy ride. The reader is tossed between the present and painful moments of her swimming career, as we accompany Forrest on her cathartic journey. One of the memories that Forrest relives several times is the

evening in Moscow when she slips off the blocks of a backstroke race, because of a mishap in failing to prepare the launch pads.

Forrest no longer criticises herself for the minor mishaps in her life, which formerly would have sent “Ms Never Enough” into a frenzy. She now helps others to find peace from the eternal quest to be good enough and other life challenges in her role as a mindfulness-based stress reduction coach.

During a recent online interview for Dymocks Booksellers, a smiling Forrest said that she hoped *Glide* was an antidote for our times. She stated that we all need to: “believe in kindness, believe in joy and that there is something on the other side of this challenge”.

Tina Allen is a medical writer and medical scientist.