



THE

FATIGUE

SUPER

CONFERENCE

### **Recovery story: Solving the jigsaw of recovery**

Guest: Samantha Quemby

**Alex:** Welcome to the Fatigue Super Conference, and I think this is going to be a really important recovery story. I'm talking with Samantha Quemby who is one of the psychology practitioners at the Optimum Health Clinic. And we're going to be obviously talking about Sam's recovery journey and the different things that have helped and supported that. But as we've been doing for this series of recovery stories for the conference, we're taking specific themes or specific kind of core principles within the Optimum Health Clinic approach and using these stories to kind of highlight how those themes have been important.

And for this interview we're going to talk about some of the different jigsaw pieces that were important for Sam's recovery journey. And people that don't know about Optimum Health Clinic, one of the key ways that we see fatigue, meaning chronic fatigue, ME, fibromyalgia, Lyme disease, adrenal fatigue, the whole kind of question of conditions is that there is rarely, if ever, one specific piece which needs to be addressed for someone then to make a full recovery.

It is like a jigsaw and the kind of recognition and definition of those different pieces is really important. Putting those pieces together in the right sequence and the right way is really important. And sometimes you can have the right things at the right time and they can be either not helpful or even detrimental. We're so passionate about this idea of jigsaw pieces that actually the Optimum Health Clinic logo, which is also the logo for this conference is jigsaw pieces coming together. That's how central this idea is to the way that we look at things. So, welcome Sam. Thank you so much for being willing to share your story.

**Samantha:** Hi Alex. Thanks for having me. It's nice to be here.

**Alex:** So, let's just start with when you first started to get symptoms back in, I think when you were first diagnosed back in 2007. So, just say a little bit about what kind of the circumstances were and what your life was like at that point.

**Samantha:** Yeah, absolutely. So, I had been living in London for about four or five months and I was working for a PR agency, so it was very full-on, very stressful, long hours, like no one left on time. Like you didn't want to be the first one to get up and leave. It was that sort of environment. I wasn't getting paid very much and obviously London is not a place you want to be living on a small wage. So, I kind of had a lot of financial stress. I didn't really love what I was doing so I wasn't very happy, and there was a lot of stress because the job wasn't really what I thought it was going to be and I felt a bit lost about kind of career paths in future. And also probably some emotional stressors from kind of a previous sort of relationship that was still sort of lingering.

**Samantha:** So, there was quite a lot going on. And I remember just, I think it was kind of round November time and just not being too well. And obviously flu is often around in the winter and I thought, okay, I've just got the flu. I felt really awful. After a week it's still no better. After two weeks still the same. I couldn't get out of bed. Really weak. Just not good but nothing shifting.

**Samantha:** And it got to kind of the third nearly fourth week and myself and my parents were like, "This isn't flu. This isn't normal." And I somehow managed to get myself back home because I wasn't registered with the GP in London. So I went back home to my kind of regular GP as my parents lived and then I was kind of diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome or ME. And I remember at the time feeling a sense of relief because although this was the first time my body had kind of, I guess completely crashed to the point of just being bed-ridden.

**Samantha:** For quite a few years previously I had to not always felt particularly well. I didn't feel like I was functioning at a kind of optimum level. And really that started from sort of teenage years at school where I used to get very tired and often have to kind of sleep after school. Often a bit run down, like my glands would feel funny, to feel achy, but then nothing would materialize. And at the time nothing was extreme enough to really be identified as anything. I played sport, I played in all the sports, sport at a high levels. I was studying a lot. So, I put those around me, the tiredness just downs to the fact that I had a very, very active nonstop life. And at university used to feel quite tired, but again, the university lifestyle, drinking, partying, all that, you put it down to, I just put it down to the fact that well, that's just because I'm maybe not living as well as I could do.

**Samantha:** So, but I had over the years been going for blood tests, always coming back normal and doctors being like, "Oh good news, nothing's wrong." But it was always that feeling of, well I think there is, I think something is wrong. And I'm sure many people listening will probably relate to the fact that

as much as you don't, it sounds strange to say you want a diagnosis. You do, because you know that your body's not quite right. Unless you know what it is, you can't do anything about it. But the GP was quite honest with me and just said, "This is what you've got. I can give you antidepressants or I can give you a sick note. That's all I can do for you."

**Alex:** It's a little bit like out of the frying pan into the fire. Right? But it's like you finally after years of as you said, I think a lot of people will resonate with this. A lot of people, even if there's a kind of tipping point, like you were kind of describing that you got some kind of bug that was kind of a bit of a final straw that broke the camel's back. They were barriers. We talk about a boatload analogy where there's different kinds of modes on a boat. That you kind of know that something wasn't right, so at least you get the clarity.

**Alex:** But it's quite terrifying to get a diagnosis which actually of which the products of which is, is really no more clarity and if anything I guess was it, was it that then its own source of anxiety that I have this thing but there's no path? Or was there a sense of at least hope initially?

**Samantha:** I think a bit of both. I think it was great to have that diagnosis. I think, okay, right, well now I know what it is. But obviously you're used to going to the doctor and having a clear path of, well, this is what's wrong. This is what we can do. So I did kind of suddenly feel very sort of just left out in the cold, so to speak, because I wasn't depressed. Okay. Yeah. I would sometimes feel down, but that was because I wasn't well. Like, I knew it wasn't what was causing it and I didn't just want to be written off sick for however long.

**Samantha:** So it was, yeah, I think thankfully like my parents were really great and it, and we kind of just thought, right, okay, well if we can't get any help from the traditional route, what else is out there? And that is when it was a case of a friend of a friend has done this, or a friend of a friend has done that.

**Samantha:** And I kind of started the journey of just trying lots of different holistic approaches, which was a completely new territory to me. But I think when you are sick you don't necessarily have set answers, you will try anything. Like, I became open to anything. So, I tried kinesiology because someone had got better from it. I tried bio energy healing because someone else had recovered from it. I tried Reiki, acupuncture, reflexology, like everything.

**Samantha:** But one, obviously, it was all very much focused on the physical side of things because at that point I didn't understand about the psychological impact. And I maybe saw small improvements, but nothing like

the recovery stories of other people. And each time it would be a case of why isn't this working for me? And obviously now, we're all so different that there's nothing wrong with trying things that others have tried. But it's also realizing that your body is your own body, and this is going to be a different puzzle picture and different pieces that need to be addressed with you than someone else. Hence why certain treatments don't work, obviously for everyone.

**Alex:** And I think one of the things that can be quite frustrating is that a lot of practitioners as well intentioned, as skillful, as good as they are, they will often see things through a certain lens and through a certain perspective. And so the analogy that I often use it's a bit like if you go to a butcher and say, "What should I have for dinner tonight?" It's like, I don't know what they're going to tell you to have for dinner, but I know it's going to have meat in it. So if you go to a fishmonger's, it's going to have fish in it. If you go to the kind of vegan store, it's probably not going to have to have meat and fish.

**Alex:** So there's a kind of, people see things through the lens through which they see things. And that the difficulty is a lot of practitioners, they don't see a jigsaw. They see a piece of the jigsaw and they do the best they can to fit people into that piece of the jigsaw.

**Samantha:** Yeah, absolutely. And every person I was going to, as much as they felt and they believed that yes I can work with chronic fatigue, I can help you. It was through that very narrow lens, and it kind of meant that I yo-yoed for quite a few years. I was never someone that was bed bound for years on end. I had more periods where it'd be a month or two, then I had to pick back up and I was kind of caught in this cycle, really, of I had to pick back up, but that wasn't 100%, but it was functional enough to get back into life, keep working and really sort of, I guess pushing through.

**Samantha:** Because at the time I didn't really know what else to do. It was just a case of, okay, well this hasn't worked. I don't think I really thought about just stopping work completely. My career was important to me and I just kind of tried to keep getting back on the wheel and then I'd keep getting thrown off. And it was this sort of vicious cycle, until again crashing quite badly in 2013.

**Alex:** I think you, and before that happened you did do, you did the lightning process likely presence I think.

**Samantha:** Oh, yes. Yeah.

**Alex:** You did some, just for people that are listening that are not, I'll just give a 30 seconds kind of context on it. So, the learning process being a way of seeing chronic fatigue, Amy as what we would call a maladaptive stress

response for an overstimulated nervous system but quite restricted in its perspective and its view and very much of a you need to stop doing these thoughts and then you will be well and get better. And that causes quite a lot of problems with people sometimes and it can cause an extension of achiever patterns and deepening of problems and it can help some people. It's just an example of taking a quite narrow perspective towards it. But for you, I think it did help when you did that at that point, right?

**Samantha:** Yeah. And I thank you for reminding me about that key piece. So, I'd been very reluctant to do the psychology side or look at anything. And the lightning process had been suggested to me a couple of years before I did it. But chronic fatigue, I mean is a lot of stuff around it being psychological. People had said to me I'll just be more positive. So, I was worried about going down that route and it making me feel better and then everyone thinking it was all in my head. But eventually I felt like, okay, I need to try everything.

**Samantha:** And it did work. Like I did felt an improvement, and it did make me well. Well, when I say well, I guess well enough to kind of feel like, okay, great, I'm better now. But unfortunately the way that I was taught the lightning process was yes, it was on thoughts, but it was kind of more focused around thoughts of if you didn't feel energized, like what could you be saying to yourself to feel energized? And things like that.

**Samantha:** And but though it worked short term, it didn't teach me about any of the patterns and the behaviors that I was playing out. So, I obviously felt a lot better, and went back into life and was just recreating the same stuff and living in the same way that I had done before getting ill. So, it was a steady decline and definitely I think because I had got to that point and I felt, yes, this works, I feel better. I probably ignored the signals because I didn't want to accept that my body was going downhill again. I didn't want it to have not worked. Hence why eventually I had that kind of big crash again in 2013.

**Alex:** And I think it was around that time that you came across Optimum Health Clinic, is that right?

**Samantha:** Yes, it was. So, it was actually my Mum that founds the Optimum Health Clinic, and I remember quite vividly, it was in the summer of 2013 and she sent the information through to me. And I remember looking at it with my boyfriend who's my now husband. We were just reading it and we were like, well for the first time it all made sense. So, I think a big thing for me before coming across the Optimum Health Clinic was I didn't really understand what was going on. I knew I was sick. I knew there was stuff that you could do. I knew my body wasn't working. And I used to say, I wish I

could just kind of step inside my body and see what's happening because it didn't make sense.

**Samantha:** And so for the first time I kind of, I saw my boat loads that you were talking about before, and I saw the fact that I had been running a huge, out of balance achiever pattern, always pushing, always driving. Like I identified very strongly with my career, and wanting to succeed and do well. I was a huge helper, of balance to the point of when I was sick and I lived in London, I used to drive home late, be feeling poorly, but it would be a case of, "Oh, I'll come and visit you tomorrow." Because I didn't want to put people out asking them to come to me, and always worrying what people thought.

**Samantha:** And it was a fast time, actually I realized I was an anxiety type because I used to think of anxiety as well, panic attacks. And I'd had some friends that had had anxiety the extreme. So, I never even thought about it with myself. But of course anxiety has different levels and I was a huge worrier. I worried about a lot of things and also had a lot of health anxiety, but I'd never really. None of that world had been opened up to me before coming to the clinic.

**Alex:** So you had a three out of four psychology subtypes?

**Samantha:** Yeah. And it was definitely literally trauma because who doesn't have that?

**Alex:** Right.

**Samantha:** So, I was kind of like, okay, I can see how my boats got loaded up on that side. And also kind of from the, sort of the physiological side, like my digestive issues had plagued me for years. They'd always been a big problem. So I fitted that type. And I could kind of just for the first time sort of see an understand like the maladapted stress response and understand what was kind of perpetuating the situation and what was keeping me and my body in the state that it was. And like you said, I could just see different puzzle pieces and jigsaws that had never really been shown to me because no one I looked at the whole picture. Everyone had looked at little elements. And potentially even those elements were properly looked at in the right way.

**Alex:** And so you were working at the, did you do the [inaudible 00:15:43] day program as a start where you were doing telephone sessions, or?

**Samantha:** I did the telephone sessions because I'd already done the lightening process.

**Alex:** Yeah.

**Samantha:** And we went for telephone.

**Alex:**[inaudible 00:15:51]

**Samantha:** Yeah. Yeah, so that's kind of how I started. And I also started nutrition alongside. So I was, like be able to do both because I knew that both were kind of going to be a key factor.

**Alex:**And I know that on the nutrition side, you obviously did the kind of dietary changes. But also I think working on the mitochondrial piece was really important. So maybe say a bit about kind of how that kind of came about and how that unfolded, that piece.

**Samantha:** Yeah. So obviously like you said, we started with the diet and kind of trying to fix my gut and I was put on a Paleo diet and it did help a lot. I mean, I used to think I ate healthily, but then I realized my Special K for breakfast maybe wasn't as healthy as I thought it was. So, that definitely I felt a bit more energized. I didn't have the kind of sugar crashes mid afternoon in the dips. I didn't need to kind of snack as much cause I think what I was eating was sustaining my energy better.

**Samantha:** And we did some of other testing. So, we looked at my adrenals to see if that was a possibility just to kind of rule it out. And they were actually okay. So I very much had the kind of relaxing fatigue so, and that delayed fatigue. I think that's why when in previous years doctors sort of suggested, "Well, just exercise more. That might help." And I would, but then a few days later I would crash. So. I was very much caught in that cycle. And I think, so obviously the mitochondria is a big piece that we look at the clinic because this delayed fatigue and obviously if your energy systems in your body aren't functioning right, then you're only going to get so much better with the diet and done the psychology [inaudible 00:17:35].

**Samantha:** So yeah, we looked at it, and it highlighted that basically none of it was working properly. So I had a blockage. My ATP wasn't being released properly and it wasn't being renewed and recycled, which why I would kind of crash for a few days or a week and then obviously pick back up. And that was definitely a, I'd already calmed my system quite a bit through using the psychology tools and working on patterns. Obviously the diet helped.

**Samantha:** And then, working on my mitochondria, it took a few months. I would say it was sort of either eight or nine months gradually. And obviously retesting and checking. I gradually saw improvements and saw that my energy was more sustained, I wasn't crashing as much. And I'd kind of reached that baseline that I could then start to build on. And I think that was a quite a key turning point for my kind of part of it at the clinic. And after sort of nine

months, everything was in reference range. The blockages had been cleared and my energy system was actually working the way that it should do.

**Alex:** And just for people who want to go a bit deeper into mitochondria piece. Dr. Sarah Myhill's interview, which is one of the free gifts at the conference is, which is also part of the conference, is a great one to kind of go more into the kind of context both in terms of how we provide kind of raw nutrients to the mitochondria, but also how we worked in blockages. She's been, her works in one of the pieces that's really influenced our protocol on that side.

**Alex:** So, at this point you've worked with various pieces of the jigsaw. You'd been working on the psychology piece that you've worked at calming down and out of that stress response. You'd worked on your digestion. Worked on mitochondria. What was the impact of these various pieces? The kind of collective impact?

**Samantha:** So, I kind of got to a level that I would probably say at the time, about like 85, 90%. So, I was kind of functioning back in life, feeling yes, there was still some slight puzzle pieces, but feeling dramatically different in the 18 months when I'd come to the clinic. And feeling that kind of energized and ready to be part of life and start to do some exercise and start to get back into work, because I did take some time out to kind of give my body a chance to recover at that point. And I'd obviously been doing the psychology that the practitioner program alongside my treatment at the clinic, which [inaudible 00:20:07] just furthered my knowledge of supporting myself. So I kind of, I did feel really quite well and I felt like my system was far more robust and able to kind of cope with life, I suppose.

**Alex:** Yeah. So, you'd been through a significant healing journey. You trained to become a practitioner and started working as a practitioner on the psychology side. I know that was a next piece that kind of came in around, and you had a potential diagnosis of ulcerative colitis, which tell us what happened and then we'll then we'll put it in some context.

**Samantha:** Yeah. So, probably not long after, about a year or so into my treatment at the OHC, I did go for some tests. I had some symptoms and it took a bit of time, but eventually they, I can't quite exactly what they called it, but it was a form of ulcerative colitis. So, but if you kind of Google ulcerative colitis, like, my symptoms weren't typical. They weren't kind of your average symptoms. So I was always kind of winded. But at the same time, enough of it fitted. And obviously I had still some times my energy would falter and obviously ulcerative colitis can cause fatigue. It can cause joint pain, which I did sometimes have some of. And obviously digestive issues, which mine were much better but would, they were temperamental.



**Samantha:** And so I continued to work with nutrition practitioner at the OHC alongside just to kind of look at, okay, well how can we get it into remission? Because obviously with ulcerative colitis they don't talk about a cure. It's more about how can we settle the system into a remission state so that you don't have symptoms? And we tried quite a few things that we tried fish oils. I had a stool test to make sure there wasn't anything else going on that we weren't aware of. That just came back showing loads of inflammation, which obviously again fitted the picture.

**Samantha:** But after about a year also of trying like different combinations and sometimes seeing improvement but maybe not as much my practitioner would have expected, because she had worked with other people with ulcerative colitis and got them into a mission. We kind of then sort of took a step back and thought, well if there's something else going on that's means this symptom or this issue can't calm down. Like what else could be happening in your body that's not allowing you to kind of get on top of this kind of, puzzle piece, I guess.

**Alex:** And I think this is a really good example of, and people will see from the daily case studies that we're also doing as part of the conference. That often the way that practitioners are working is you're kind of taking it, it's almost like a, there's all of these different jigsaw pieces that it could be, and there is a kind of process of elimination where either by kind of experience and protocol or by kind of testing to confirm kind of assumptions around things. And there are some things that are [inaudible 00:23:10] they could be really crucial jigsaw pieces that you go a bit deeper, and go actually that's not. And it's a kind of, it's almost like a jigsaw where the image that you're trying to match on a jigsaw keeps changing. So it's not like it's clear, oh, I need those pieces. I think it's that. Oh, actually it's not that.

**Alex:** And so the ulcerative colitis was, it was a kind of a piece that was kind of explored. And then it was kind of through that and then the reflection on that. But then, Lyme came up as being a piece. So, just to kind of summarize what we've got at this point in the story, you've done a lot of work on the psychology side. You'd kind of worked on your achiever and your helper and your anxiety and maladaptive stress response. You'd done some work on digestion, mitochondrial function, things had improved a lot. So, each of those jigsaw pieces had had an impact. But as you were saying that there was some kind of lingering joint pain, kind of inflammation type symptoms. How did the, how did the Lyme diagnosis come about?

**Samantha:** So, my practitioner had kind of raised it because I did have, so I was bitten by a tick when I was eight years old. But back then, I mean my Mum and Dad, they removed it as safely as they knew how. They took me to

the doctor when I got back from holiday who said the, there's no rash, there's no fever, she's fine. And I guess it was kind of forgotten about, especially after then getting the label of Amis chronic fatigue syndrome, which all my symptoms fitted. I never really thought about it again. And I think my practitioner has been becoming more and more exposed to Lyme and I know it is something that is becoming more mainstream and understood. And I think she just said, well, I think it's worth this covering off. Like it might not be, but because you've got, you know you've had a tick bite. Maybe that is something that's kind of there and it's causing a lot of these inflammation in the body.

**Samantha:** And so, I had an NHS test which came back negative. Which isn't a surprise because the testing isn't really that accurate. And I think my immune system, which actually is quite surprising because I was functioning fairly well considering my immune system actually was very compromised.

**Samantha:** So, we had a private test done through Armin Labs in Germany, and that came back and showed Lyme. And we also tested for some co-infections because very rarely is it just Lyme. So, all of that kind of showed up. And initially it was a bit of a shock and it did kind of hit hard because obviously I'd been working really hard and got so far and I sort of felt like, oh, now I've got something else.

**Samantha:** But it was my husband actually, that kind of reflected back to me said, but it's not something else. This has always been part of the picture. This has always been a puzzle piece. You just, you're only just uncovering it.

**Samantha:** And actually he was right. And I think for people listening, sometimes it can, well, you think how many puzzle pieces are there? But it is all part, like you were saying, you sometimes go down one route and you think it's a puzzle piece, but actually it isn't. But by going down that route, it allows you to then actually think, okay, this it isn't it. Then okay, it might be this, maybe this is the way we've got to go. And sometimes you do have to look under a few sort of rocks, so actually see what's there. And so that kind of reframed it quite well for me. And I thought actually, yeah, it's not something you haven't just got it. It was there and it's just that we've uncovered that final probably missing piece that we hadn't been aware of before.

**Alex:** And it's kind of a miracle, how well you give the fact this was part of the jigsaw that hadn't been addressed. So, I know that initially you started going down the kind of antimicrobial kind of kind of path, but that wasn't so tolerated for you. So, say a bit about that.

**Samantha:** Yes, so I started, working on, doing the herbals with my practitioner and herbals are very powerful. So, there was definitely her saying

and, and I did show some things, that when we retested everything just seemed to be getting a lot worse and we wondered whether there might be some other things, other kind of infections going on as well? Because initially we had focused, a viral co-infection had come up kind of even more high than the Lyme. So, some of our focus had been there. But I think again that was a bit of a red herring because actually as we started to do more work, we uncovered more of the Lyme, and in testing again, those things had kind of shot up. And I think it was about eight or nine months. And again, I wasn't progressing the way you would probably expect.

**Samantha:** So, it was then a case of looking at well, maybe this isn't the right route for me. And again, I think that's the key thing that you have to listen to your body because there's no one treatment for anything. And sometimes if you're trying something, it's not working, like it's okay to kind of say, well actually this maybe doesn't suit my body, but there's probably something else that does and will do.

**Alex:** And so at that point, and I should also just put some more context here at Optimum Health Clinic, we have a team of nutritional therapists using a functional medicine approach and we have a team of psychology practitioners. And what we don't do with part of the core nutrition [inaudible 00:28:41] is do, is use medical drugs such as antibiotics, and obviously antibiotics are part of the picture in certain Lyme protocols.

**Alex:** So, I know that you then went and did some work with the clinic in the U.S. working antibiotics. So say a bit about, was that a stretch in your own kind of like having been on a very kind of natural kind of path to then go right, I'm going to use a more medical intervention? Or did you feel quite open to that at the start of that process?

**Samantha:** No, I was very resistant to it because I think I had dealt with, I'd always been brought up, like my Mum would never give us antibiotics unless we really needed it. And I think we were brought up at a time where antibiotics were kind of given for everything. So, I was very aware that I didn't really want to take medications if I didn't have to. Obviously I have digestive issues and of course antibiotics aren't friendly on the gut. So I had, I was worried about that. And ideally, I think the holistic approach, it's nice, it supports your body.

**Samantha:** But I then I had to kind of, I guess my family and through talking to them came to the realization that this might be the option that actually is what we're going to get me well. And sometimes I think you have to maybe step out of your comfort zone a bit and try something. Because if it's a

difference between staying where you are getting well, I was like, okay, actually yeah, I think I do need to give this a shot and see what happens.

**Samantha:** And thankfully, the clinic in America where I'm working, like it is a very antibiotic heavy protocol. They do use herbals to treat some of the co-infections. But they also obviously support the gut as much as they can with the probiotics, the [inaudible 00:30:27] and obviously also incorporate supplements alongside and diet, lifestyle, sleep, having community support.

**Samantha:** So, there was definite kind of crossovers with what I'd leaned and the way that the Optimum Health Clinic work, which suited me I guess better. Made me feel more comfortable. But I definitely think for me personally that all the work I did at the Optimum Health Clinic meant that my body was in a good place to be able to deal with the antibiotics. And if I hadn't fixed my mitochondria, I don't think my body would have withstood it as well.

**Samantha:** And we fixed a lot of like nutrition deficiencies. Obviously the psychology side, I still brought all those tools along with me on my Lyme recovery because it is a different chronic illness. But if your body's not in a healing state, antibiotics can only do so much. They're not a magic pill. And yes, they target infection, but your body also needs to be in that state to heal and heal damage and everything. So, they were kind of a really crucial part. And I was so pleased I had them because I could support myself emotionally and kind of keep my body in a healing state, which some other people that have gone on a lime journey haven't known that, and it's been a lot harder.

**Alex:** And I know that that chapter has been challenging in some ways, even with all of those tools and resources. But say a bit about the impact of that, because in a sense it's like you'd got to a certain level, but you had these lingering symptoms. It's like you almost had to go back into the kind of, the reactions and the kind of going through that treatment protocol, which can be tough. But say a bit about what, what's then been happening as you've been coming through that.

**Samantha:** Yeah. Say as you said, yeah, it was definitely tough, physically and mentally because you suddenly feel like you're going back a stage. And I think certainly with my Lyme treatment, and I think a lot of Lyme treatment, there was that sense of you have to get a bit worse to get better. You kind of have to really pull yourself back to catapult forward. And just what I've noticed throughout is kind of the way my doctor worked is in different sort of stages. He didn't go fully on every infection straight away. And now like coming out to the other side, like a lot of my symptoms have resolved. So, my joint pain isn't really there. My cognitive function is much better. My digestive issues have cleared. So, what was ulcerative colitis actually I don't believe

was. I think it was just my body was so inflamed because of all the infectious load that I was carrying.

**Samantha:** Because none of those symptoms are there anymore. And it's definitely, it was kind of, it got a bit worse in the beginning of treatment because that was the only thing we did and then it settled. And that has been the case for, I would say eight or nine months. And yeah, I guess it's now more about the infection loads being cleared and then there's that kind of, I think anyone with, that's gone through kind of treatment or chronic illness, you're then looking at, okay, well how can I really support my body for optimum health and supporting the healing to continue? Because once your infections have cleared, there is still that element of well, depending on how long you've had the disease, what kind of damage that just needs to slowly be repaired over time? Which doesn't impact your life. But it just means that you've got to keep it getting better and better at the other side, if that makes sense.

**Alex:** Absolutely. And I think it's, without wanting to sound corny, that was why we called the Optimum Health Clinic the Optimum Health Clinic. And this idea that it's a kind of, it's not just trying to survive and live with something, it's also, it's creating the optimum and that's an ongoing process for someone that's never had a chronic illness, let alone someone that's been, whose body's been through that many years of kind of challenge and struggle.

**Alex:** I'm curious as we kind of start to kind of come to the end in terms of, I mean you've had a journey who's had a lot of pieces to that jigsaw. And given also your experience working with all the patients as a psychology practitioner as well, I guess I'm curious as to what do you think either helped you or in hindsight would have been helpful if you'd known it at certain times, helped with that navigating of finding these different jigsaw pieces? Because it could be quite an emotional roller coaster. It can be quite, you have to have a certain resilience or cultivate a certain resilience I think to be able to go on those ups and downs and the challenges. What do you think helped you or would have helped you, if you'd known it at various times?

**Samantha:** So, I think a big thing that's helped me, as you say it's very challenging. It is a roller coaster. I don't think anyone can recover from any kind of chronic illness in a straight line. And the huge thing for me was the support of family. So my parents and my husband have been invaluable. And I think for people listening, like it is really important. Even if it's just one person. Having people there that understand it as much as they can do. Chronic illness is quite complex and it's difficult for people to fully get it, especially when you maybe one day feeling okay and the next day not as good. So, having people around you that can kind of let you have your down moments, but then they bring you up and don't force you to kind of constantly

be positive all the time. Because I think the reality is it's a hard thing to do and you need to let those emotions out. You need to honor them. And then obviously you can move through and pick yourself back up.

**Samantha:** I think for me, definitely I couldn't have done it alone. There's obviously lots of information out there on different treatments and detoxing and diets and, but there's a lot of conflicting information and it can be very overwhelming and stressful if you try and do it on your own. So I, for me personally coming to the clinic and having that guidance and having people in the know, yes, there's things you can then implement yourself. But I think you need to have that steer, because otherwise I think it can be kind of stabbing in the dark, like looking for needle in a haystack, and it can take a lot longer. Because as much as you are in your body, you don't necessarily know all the, the way it functions or you can't know everything.

**Samantha:** And I think reaching out and having that practitioner support, for me was invaluable. But also being your own advocate, I think as much as people around you obviously have their expertise, you are in your body and you know. So, I think it's trusting your gut instincts. So, when my Lyme tests first came back, my Lyme levels were kind of a bit of a weak positive. But as I've looked into Lyme, I just knew I was like, this is my missing piece. This is what is going on. And so I very much was then like, I am going to uncover this and got an angle. So I think tests can show stuff, but you also know your own body. And I think it's having the confidence to kind of speak up and be an advocate as well, because I think their practitioner relationship's a two way thing. You have to kind of work together. I don't know if that answers.

**Alex:**It does. No, it absolutely does answer. And I think that's right. And I think it, in a sense, it is such an interesting balance between having support and being guided whilst also trusting your own wisdom. Right? And I think that that's something that we learn through mistakes, that sometimes we listen too much to others. Sometimes we don't listen enough. And we have to kind of find our own compass and I think find our own kind of wisdom of that.

**Alex:**And that is part of the part of the journey, right? And I know that obviously that you working as a psychology practitioner now see people kind of find, becoming captain of the ship of their own recoveries as we talk about it. But you could be too much the captain and not allow the crew to also do their work, in a sense.

**Alex:**Final question, Sam. What's life like now on the, kind of having come through, and coming through the kind of final stages of this whole kind of journey of these different kinds of facets. What, what's that meant to your

relationship with your husband and family and kind of your focus and the things that are important to you in life now?

**Samantha:** Well, that's a good question. So, I think I definitely appreciate life in a way that might sound really corny, but it's true. I think when you come through and go through a chronic illness, I think the simple things in life mean a lot more. Even just going out for dinner with my husband is something I don't take for granted because there was a time when I couldn't do that. But I think for me is very much about kind of looking to the future and just enjoying life and kind of, I think I used to look at, I'm always going to have to be careful about my body and my health and.

**Samantha:** But actually now I look at it as well, yes, I still want to do my detoxing. Yes, I still want to eat well. Yes, I still want to manage my stress. But that's because I want a good balanced life and I want my body to work as well as it could. And actually I don't see it as I'm doing that because I'm sick or someone who had a chronic illness. I think everyone should be doing it. Because I don't think anyone out there is really living in the most balanced or optimal way. So for me, it's kind of just, yeah, I think enjoying the simple things and enjoying, being able to make plans and get excited about the future. Because I have a body that I can take along with me now.

**Alex:** That's awesome. Sam, thank you so much and thank you for being so kind of willing to share so honestly of your story. I really appreciate it.

**Samantha:** No, you're welcome. It was a pleasure. Thank you.

**Alex:** Thanks, Sam.