

Dismantle Your Stress  
from the Inside Out

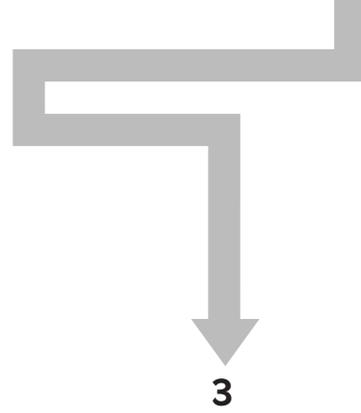
# Overcoming Overwhelm

A Personalized  
Approach for

- Better Health
- Greater Resilience
- Peace of Mind

DR. SAMANTHA BRODY

BOOK EXCERPT



## IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

**YOU ARE THE ONLY** existing you—the only you there has ever been and the only you there will ever be. Your feelings are unique. Your beliefs are unique. Your body is unique. Your experience of each moment of each day is different from that of every single other person on this planet. All of the things you see, hear, touch, taste, and smell are filtered through that unique experience. Every decision you make is impacted by that unique experience.

So when it comes to your own health and well-being, think about it like this: Your values, feelings, beliefs, body, and experiences are unique. Your stresses, responsibilities, and goals are unique. Shouldn't your diet, lifestyle, medical care, and approach to stress and overwhelm be unique?

Yes, they should.

### Find Your Sweet Spot

There is a sweet spot where our choices line up with our values and health goals. When we are in our sweet spot, we wake up feeling the best that we can possibly feel physically, mentally, and emotionally. We feel confident about our choices. We have the energy we need to take care of ourselves and to be there for the people we love.

How we get to our sweet spot is different for each of us, but I can assure you that it

doesn't involve piling more and more self-care tasks onto your to-do list. Continuing to pile things on, especially when you're overwhelmed to begin with, just leads to more overwhelm. Instead, the key to finding your sweet spot is identifying a balance between what is ideal for your health and well-being and what you can reasonably pull off.

As you work through this book, you'll be identifying the things you can do to decrease your stress load that will have the biggest impact on your life with the least amount of effort. And the things you choose to focus on will necessarily differ from what others focus on.

### Follow Your Shifting Priorities

If there is one thing that is an utter certainty in life, it is that things change. And change impacts your priorities. Being fluid with your choices is one of the most important things you can do to dismantle your overwhelm. This might mean reassessing your values (we'll dive into your values in step 1) or shifting gears if one approach to feeling better doesn't work.

My patient Dayna was an avid athlete. She worked out a few hours a day and participated in at least four half-Ironman triathlons a year. Her fitness and diet were a priority and she happily built her life around them.

Then Dayna fell in love with Adam. He ate pretty healthfully, but did love to bake. He also worked out regularly, but working out wasn't the main focus of his life. Over time Dayna started cutting back on her workouts and took a break from racing to spend more time with Adam. They moved in together, and she adored their evenings spent curled up on the couch, watching documentaries or reading.

But there was a problem, she explained through tears at an office visit. Her energy was waning. She was drinking more. Sugar had crept into her diet. She had gained weight and it was making her uncomfortable in her own body. She told me she felt guilty every night as she sat on the couch and every time she ate dessert with Adam. She was starting to feel down, and this feeling was impacting her relationship.

We went through her situation point by point, and Dayna acknowledged that in truth she was really enjoying her "new" life and lifestyle. I pointed out that she wasn't overweight by any stretch of the imagination. She was still exercising, just not as much. She was most likely tired not because she had changed her diet but because she was staying up too late with Adam. It was clear to me that the problem wasn't the choices Dayna was making. The problem was that she was feeling guilty and judging herself for her choices. The biggest change she needed to make was to stop giving herself such a hard time.

I sent Dayna away to reassess her core values and how she wanted to feel (using the exercises in step 1). When she came back a week later, we adjusted her wellness plan to line up with her new priorities. She decided she would make sure to get into bed by 10 p.m., but wouldn't give herself a hard time if there were an occasional special night of binge-watching a new TV series. She would save desserts for

the weekends. She would track her steps to make sure that she was moving enough even if she wasn't going to the gym that day. She also decided to get back to doing triathlons, but shorter-distance versions.

When she came in for her semiannual check-in six months later, she was healthy and content. She had made several changes in light of the fact that things had shifted in her life. She was sitting firmly in her sweet spot and looking forward to continuing to adjust, as she had just gotten a big promotion at work. We set an appointment for her to come in to reassess her plan a few months into her new position.

### **Embrace Your Unconventional Life**

Typically, when we think about unconventional living, we think about the type of people who sell all of their stuff and move to a yurt in Montana, or spend their summers at nudist colonies. I'm not judging these choices, but this isn't necessarily what living an unconventional life means.

Living an unconventional life is about doing things your way. It's about disregarding what people think you should be doing, and about following your own heart to live in integrity with who you are. An unconventional life reflects the miraculous fact that there is only one you.

The clearer you can be about the cultural paradigms that you follow, and which parts line up with your own values and goals, the easier it will be to make choices that are right for you. And if your cultural paradigm holds that you prioritize your husband's preferences about the way you look, that it's irresponsible to take time off from work for extra travel (even if your boss doesn't mind), or that you take care of your aging parents even if you despise them, and you choose to stick with

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that paradigm, no problem! You're a grown-up. It's your choice. Just be honest with yourself about what you want for your life and what you are and are not willing to change, based on your values—not the values of those around you.

If your prior choices have pulled you far from what you really value—either because you've been swept away by others' expectations

or because you haven't really spent the time to discover who you truly want to be—it doesn't mean that you have to upend your life to overcome overwhelm. It means slowly and surely making different choices that will ultimately allow you to feel settled, easeful, and good about your life on a regular basis.

Doesn't that sound delicious?



**DR. SAMANTHA BRODY** is a naturopathic physician and acupuncturist and founder of Evergreen Natural Health Center in Portland, Oregon. Licensed as a primary care provider with extensive training and experience in both complementary and Western medicine, she has worked with over 30,000 patients and clients in the past 20 years. Her mission is to empower people to address the stress in their lives and help them to make changes that are in alignment with their personal health goals and values. She holds a doctoral degree in naturopathic medicine and a master's degree in oriental medicine from the National University of Natural Medicine. Learn more at [drsamantha.com](http://drsamantha.com).

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