

SAMANTHA SKELLY

Breathwork: Antidote to Emotional Eating & Addictive Behaviors

Jason Prall:

Hello and welcome to Awaken the Healer Within. I'm your host, Jason Prall. And with me now, I have Samantha Skelly. She's an entrepreneur, international speaker, best selling author and wellness coaching expert, a leading authority on healing addiction, anxiety and mental health issues using the power of breathwork. Samantha has made it her life's mission to teach people to empower themselves through the breath so that they can thrive and increase their quality of life. After her own deeply transformational journey in 2018, Samantha launched Pause with the mission to decrease suffering and increase human consciousness through the power of breathwork and coaching. Pause trains and certifies people to become masterful breathwork facilitators and wellness coaches. Sam, thanks for joining me.

Samantha Skelly:

Such a pleasure, Jason. Thank you so much for having me.

Jason Prall:

You started with this Hungry for Happiness and I know that's something that you've sort of moved on from in a sense, but it still floats in the background I feel like at the core of what you teach and what you preach and how you help people transform their lives. Maybe take me back to how that started for you, this Hungry for Happiness. You wrote a book on it. I know you still speak on it to some degree, but how does emotional eating, how did that play in your life?

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah. I grew up as a child actress and a dancer, so basically my whole life I was either on stage or in front of the camera. At a very young age, I developed a lot... I encountered just a lot of rejection being in the entertainment industry; auditioning, getting rejected. Auditioning, getting rejected. That's so much a part of it. I had a lot of suppressed emotionality in my body that I was so unaware of. On the other side of things, being a dancer and training as hard as I did and being a ballerina, there's always this pressure to be a certain way, so there's really a lack of acceptance when it comes to your body or the way you're performing. Because in entertainment, it always like, "How can I get better? How can I be skinnier? How can I be fitter? How can I be different?"

Samantha Skelly:

I always struggled with body image issues when I was younger. When I was 18, it shifted into my relationship with food, so overeating, under eating. Gosh, I was on over 50 diets in less than four years. I then tried to help myself through becoming a fitness competitor, so I did fitness competition after fitness competition, trying to maintain that identity and trying to cover up what was really at the core, which was this worthiness wound, this feeling of not good enough, this feeling of constantly distancing myself from acceptance and constantly distancing myself from actually feeling self-love. Playing the when/then game like, "When I lose 10 pounds, then I will be whatever, I will feel this," and it's all such an illusion and stories that we create in our minds.

Samantha Skelly:

I then tried everything to overcome it, all of the mindset type of stuff. I read all the books. I listened to all the podcasts. I literally had a PhD in it, but I couldn't get over it. It's like I knew all the things, but the memories in my body, the feelings in my body were stagnant and stuck. It wasn't until I discovered breathwork I realized, "Oh my goodness, I need to feel in order to heal. I actually can't get through these emotional issues if I'm not in my body." Embodiment is the first place to start. I think for many people, the feeling of being in your body is a really scary place, especially if they dealt with a lot of trauma early on and didn't have the tools to navigate that type of hurt in their system. It's just this feeling of like, "I don't want to feel that. I don't want to do that." We spend a lot of time up in our head, which is where a lot of eating disorder behavior starts from. That was the beginning of it.

Samantha Skelly:

After I got through that and learned tools to heal myself from that, that was the birth of my first company, which was Hungry for Happiness, and it's still going 10 years later.

Jason Prall:

Yeah. What I want to know is there's strategies here that you're employing. We all do this, I feel like. I mean, food is such a tool for this and there's a lot of other tools, but we can use it to get our needs met in some way, to get some satisfaction. And undoubtedly, it works to some degree. There's some success in there or we wouldn't keep doing it, it's just not to the degree at which we're looking for. I'm curious, what do you see typically when you work with people and you talk with people, when they're seeking... what are they really looking for on the whole? I know you were looking for a deeper sense of self-worth. I would have to imagine there's other issues there too that we're all trying to fulfill and I think they can be so subtle, so sneaky sometimes.

Jason Prall:

I'll share my experience too after I hear from you, but I would love to know what are the other things that people are trying to find when they use food as a tool?

Samantha Skelly:

A felt sense of safety. "Am I okay in the world? Am I okay to be fully expressed, be who I am? Am I going to be accepted and loved for who I am, even if that's 20 pounds over or under weight?" It really is this feeling of... Going back to the trouble times, it's like if we weren't accepted into a tribe, we would be ostracized and we would die. That primal part of us is still there, but we've misplaced it and we've put it on external things, superficial things that don't matter and we are addicted to it. All of our survival instincts, our primal instincts, are going towards something that is ultimately... it doesn't matter, but we've convinced ourselves that it does.

Samantha Skelly:

The way that I approach the untanglement and healing disorder eating and body image issues isn't through mindset work or trying to positively think our way out of it or... The body positivity movement, I'm not a big fan of that because it's just a bunch of mindset work. Anyway, it doesn't start in the level of the mind, we've got to go deeper. We have to establish that felt sense of safety. We have to get into the system and actually begin to unlock a lot of visceral intelligence that's in the body. For instance, what's the difference between an intuitive no and fear no? What's the difference between an intuitive yes and

then a fearful yes? When we begin to go deeper and deeper and deeper and we begin to actually feel to heal, we can't feel better unless we become better feelers, so it's about going deeper and deeper and deeper into the body, actually having a map to go, "What is my body communicating to me?"

Samantha Skelly:

Once we do that, then it just opens up, but we can't even get there if we don't feel safe in our body. It's about titrating, like slowly, slowly, slowly opening up that window of tolerance for people to be like, "Oh, it's actually okay to feel my emotions. I am not going to disintegrate if I feel the emotion of sadness." For many people, that's a story that they run. So I'd say the first piece of that, to wrap that up, is establishing safety first in the body so that we can open up these other energies and they can actually support us.

Jason Prall:

I love that and that's because we really have to establish that safety. We had Andrew DeGregorio talking about this a little bit too, about how that finding this safety before any of these other things can come up. I think that the tricky part is the sneakiness in some of these energies or these emotions that are tucked away, that are stored, that are buried. The reason they're tricky is because oftentimes we don't find the level of safety for them to fully express and these are old stuff. I've gone through my whole life and I felt sadness and love and pain and all these emotions. And yet, they weren't felt from the thing that I experienced 12 years ago, 23 years ago, 36 years ago, so these are lingering things, a backlog of emotions that I think are stuck there that are then causing these behaviors.

Jason Prall:

There's an example that I recall very vividly as we were going this COVID lockdown. I actually put on so much weight. I actually can put on weight and take off weight pretty easily, I guess I'm fortunate in that way, but I did find that I put on probably seven or eight extra pounds. I'm like, "Whoa. Hey, what's going on here?" I recognized that when we were all locked down and we were not in communication with one another, I was craving nourishment from something and I wasn't getting it from people, I wasn't getting it from interactions. I used food as a tool, but I didn't realize that until retroactively look back and going, "Oh wow, that's what I've been doing actually." I've been eating more of this comfort food because I didn't have the comfort of community, of people and of my typical life. The stuff that I was used to doing, I didn't get to do. There was a seeking comfort and I found it in food.

Jason Prall:

Because when we were locked down and holed up in your house, there just wasn't a lot of other opportunities. I just found that to be an interesting thing that that was one of the few times I realized that I was really using food in that way to get a need met, but it was a very powerful lesson in that way. At the same time, I didn't know how to necessarily resolve it, so that was a tricky one. It was like, "Okay, I see this thing. Fortunately enough, I caught it and here's what I'm doing. How do I resolve it?" Take me into that. What do you do with the breathwork and some of the other techniques? How do we find safety in the body so we can allow these things to finally move?

Samantha Skelly:

Oh, this is so good. Food is such an interesting thing because it's socially available, it's something that we use every single day or we'll die. Other drugs aren't like that. It finds its way into our world in almost like a really sneaky way until we wake up and we're like, "Oh, whoa, I'm using this to meet this need." There's the other side of it as well. For women, and I suppose men as well, who've had a history of

sexual trauma, they will actually binge eat and use food to create a physical barrier to intimacy. This is all subconscious until they have the awareness. Whatever side of the spectrum you're on and whatever it is, the first step of that is understanding what is the emotional need? Let's first identify the emotional need because the food is just a strategy to get the need met.

Samantha Skelly:

Now, in your case and the case of sexual trauma, it's not actually doing the job. We're not actually meeting the need, but it's a false sense of safety. Yeah, it's a false needing, so really bringing forth what is the actual true need and how can I cultivate a strategy that meets that need in a sustainable way so I'm not constantly going back for another hit, but I'm building up this need slowly in my system, giving it more resource, more love so that it doesn't deplete? Because when we use food for comfort or whatever that is, it's like there's always a depletion point. There's a break off point. It's like we do it and it tells our brain, "We're comfortable. We're connected," whatever it is and it's like, "Yah." It depletes and not only is there the depletion, but then there's always the shame and the guilt that comes with that. Like, "Oh God, I should not have eaten that entire bag of Reese's Pieces," or Ben and Jerry's or whatever it is.

Samantha Skelly:

It's sort of like a double whammy. Not only are we not getting the need met and there's still a deficiency in the need, we then have this shame sandwich that gets stuck on top of it. It's really about bringing forth, number one, what is the actual need? And that for many people, is a really hard thing. You're not going to get the answer right away. You're going to sit with it. You're going to journal about it. Walk around. Think about it. Feel into it. "What is it that I'm actually wanting?" Because it's less about the action of eating and more about the intention behind it.

Jason Prall:

Right.

Samantha Skelly:

What's the intention for consumption? Honestly, the best time to do this is when we're on the verge of over eating or the verge of a binge, of stopping in the moment, "What am I actually hungry for?" It's like, "Am I hungry for connection? Am I hungry for love? Do I want to express myself in a way that I'm not allowing myself to? Do I need to cry? Do I need to rage? Is there built up anger? Is it anger towards the self? Is it anger towards another?" First identifying what the need is and then asking yourself "What is a sustainable way to meet this need that's really healthy and doesn't inflict pain on myself or others?"

Jason Prall:

I feel like that's a really challenging thing what you just said because what you're asking or what we're talking about here is actually finding the space to pause, no pun intended on your breathwork company here, but to stop and pause and actually create a little separation between this desire to go get those chips or the ice cream or the pizza or the whatever it is and actually start to feel what's here. To me, I've done this enough to where that's uncomfortable. It's still uncomfortable. I still don't like doing it because then it means I have to feel or recognize this part of me that is under met or that is under nourished or that is unseen and that can be quite uncomfortable, confusing, painful. Walk me through that because sometimes I feel like I actually don't have the resource to take the next step. How do I even start that process of getting that need met?

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah. Observation versus identification. So often, we are identified with the sensations in our body, the pain, the struggle, the suffering, whatever it is, that we can't even feel anything else because we're so in it. There's taking the observer role, like "How can I view this sensation in body from another vantage point so I have access to not only the pain, but also the liberation?" We're kind of feeling both things at the same time and this is definitely an advanced energy tool, an advanced thing. So if you can't get it right away, this literally took me years. It's so easy for me to say this, but it really did take me years to actually be able to feel this and for it to cultivate change. It's like when I have the contraction of suffering of the contraction of pain or overwhelm or stress or whatever it is in my body, using my breath to emotionally create spaciousness between my heart and the feeling. The heart's just an easy one to pinpoint. See if you can view the feeling from the heart. How does that change it?

Samantha Skelly:

So then we're moving from, "I am my pain, I'm in my pain. There's no other option. This is all that there is," into, "Okay. Let me create some spaciousness and actually sit in the seat of my heart and view this pain." It completely changes the perception of it. This is why I'm so obsessed with breathwork is because it's not about forcing ourselves to get into our hearts and move away from it, it like let's use the breath to help us get back into alignment and actually activate the energy of heart so we can have more spaciousness with that contraction that we're feeling.

Jason Prall:

I love that. That's such a simple tool because breathwork itself is this whole science. I mean, this stuff has been going thousands of years and there's a lot of amazing techniques. I think what you're talking about here is actually none of that, it's just saying, "Hold on," like there's this in and out, very slow and that itself creates enough separation for you to get some distance from this thing because I think we all can identify with truly being wrapped up in it, feeling that there's no way out. Especially if something's really alive or intense, it can feel like, "Oh my God, what am I going to do?" and that breath finally brings you back into your core, into your center and into the present. I actually had Shaman once tell me that in the present, no disease can exist. So if you're truly, wholly present, there is no disease. All disease comes from worrying about the future or concerning yourself with the past and those things, not just in the mind, but energetically in the body, etc, is really the thing that is causing disease.

Jason Prall:

I think that's such a good way to think about it when it comes to the breath because the breath is the ultimate tool of the present. There is no other better way to get into the present than the breath. I mean, it is here right now with us at all times. I'd love for you to expand upon this a little bit because we talked about food and I think it's so obvious, the food as a source or a tool to try to meet these needs, but there's a lot of other things too right? I mean, we can exercise. And probably you did that, I'm sure, with some of the things you were dealing with. We can work, we can work our tails off. I think you still do that. I still do that I know. These are all strategies and tool. I don't mean to call you out, but I...

Samantha Skelly:

No, it's like addiction jumping. It's like exercise addiction, food addiction. I definitely struggled with work addiction in my earlier career and still now I feel it come up and I'm like, "Whoa." So yeah.

Jason Prall:

That's kind of like this escape right? It's a way that we can escape these unpleasant feelings that we have about ourselves or a situation or life itself.

Samantha Skelly:

Totally.

Jason Prall:

I want to name those because I think there's a lot of other ones and perhaps you can think of some, but maybe talk about that because some of these things we're talking about are good things to praise in our society, working hard and being successful is... And it's actually not a bad thing. It's not a problem with our society, that's a good thing to be able to work hard and to provide and have success, to follow your dreams, to exercise and to get health physically and then also mentally with exercise. These are good habits we're talking about or even following perhaps a new diet or a new dietary framework, which is perhaps more healthier, but there's an energy behind it. So what's going on there and how can we think about these tools that we're using?

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah, this is so good. I love this topic so much. It's like what I shared, the intention behind consumption, like "What is my intention for having this piece of cake?" Because it's like when it comes to a piece of chocolate cake, my intention could be, "I'm feeling so much pain, I know this is going to numb it. It's going to be quick. It's going to be this. It's going to be delicious," and then you do it and then it's gone.

Jason Prall:

And that's subconscious right? That's subconscious. We're not really consciously thinking this all the time.

Samantha Skelly:

Exactly. But then on the flip side of it, the intention behind consumption is, "I had a dinner party. We're having so much fun. Oh my gosh, I love chocolate cake." It's not coming from a deficit, it's not coming from a pain body, it's coming from enjoyment and I really do believe that food can be pleasure.

Jason Prall:

I know it can.

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah, but the intention's got to be... So same thing with work. I catch myself with this so much and it all comes down again to safety. When I feel myself being like "I need to work and I need to do this," it's like it's safety. It's like, "I'm not safe if I don't do this. If I don't hit these numbers and do this thing, then I'm not safe." That for me early on in my career was super subconscious. I didn't realize I was doing it. To your point, I was getting praise left, right and center like, "Oh, you made the top 10 list and this entrepreneurs list and this women in business list." I was like, "Oh my God, yeah. This is so cool." I was riding the wave of what society thinks is acceptable and noble. But inside of myself, it was coming from this place of "I don't feel safe. I don't feel good enough," blah, blah, blah, blah, which was very much an extension of my eating disorder.

Samantha Skelly:

So then I had to get to this place where I'm like, "Oh dang, that's still active in my body even though it's praised externally, so how can I disconnect from the matrix and how can I understand what it takes to create safety in my body so I'm not looking at my business for safety?" It's interesting because I'm very careful where I receive love from now.

Jason Prall:

Tell me about that. What do you mean?

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah. So earlier on in my career, I would receive love for revenue numbers and top 10 lists and my business growing and my team building and I would receive love for all of these things. It's like it created almost like a love addiction of, "I've got to keep going because this is my source of love. And if I don't keep going, I'm not going to get this love," and that, to my brain, was like, "You're going to die if you're not loved." It's like I had to really build up the other love centers in my body and in my awareness so that I didn't care about these ones that are superficial and just like... It's like a shot of love and then it's done. It was interesting. So now, it's like really being mindful of where you receive love because that can turn into an addiction if we're not aware of that.

Jason Prall:

Totally. So you can still receive these things, it's still good to get these praise, you can still accept the praise, it's just there's something that shifted it that. It's not running your life and you're not chasing that carrot, so to speak.

Samantha Skelly:

It's the removal of the dependency.

Jason Prall:

Good one.

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah. Yeah. Because then it's like when the removal of the dependency is gone, then we can receive it without needing it. There isn't this lack energy. We don't look for it or search for it or try and get it. It's like, "If it comes, great. If not, great." Yeah.

Jason Prall:

Right. Totally. I love that. I think that's the same thing that I can think about with body image, with working out. Look, I see these people at the gym, I see these people in the yoga studios and there's this... I can feel it or I can see it that there's this sense of worth that comes from looking really, really like just impeccable. And if that's not achieved or if that's not reached, then there's something missing and there's a dependency on this look. And yet, again, the energy behind what they're doing is really creating that. And yet, the act itself is clearly a good thing. I think that's such a key distinction that you're making there; the dependency on it versus doing it as part of a healthy relationship with the activity or the thing that you're doing.

Jason Prall:

So how do you work breathwork into this because I know this is something that you teach and you've actually certified coaches and you have a whole thing? How do you use breathwork in your life, just on the regular? Whether it's a formal practice or is there little things you do throughout your day, how does that come into play?

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah. It's like I use it in a proactive and reactive way. In the morning, I tend to wake up quite a busy mind in the morning already. I take three or four minutes and use breathwork just to clear my mind, get back in alignment and just start the day fresh. And after that, I do 25. I fold at the top and I do three rounds of that. It's super quick, but it's so powerful. In the evening, I do the same thing to release the day and get into bed and be like, "Ah. Okay. We're good," so I'm not taking any stress or my day and going to bed with it, if you will. A couple times throughout the week, I'll do a 20 to 30 minute lie down. We call them meditative and integrative. An integrative breathwork session is something... three to 10 minutes, you're not going out of your conscious mind, you're just incorporating more actions and more energy into your body to have a different state change.

Samantha Skelly:

There's the meditative session, which that's when you're lying down typically with headphones. I love having a weighted blanket and you're lying down doing the breathwork and it can go anywhere from honestly 20 minutes to I've done three, four hours with the holotropic style. That's like a couple times a week. But then using it in a reactive way, like when you get an email and then, boom, your body just floods and, again, it pokes at the like, "You're not safe. You've not going to survive. This person hates you and you're going to die." It's like that. It's so not true, but it feels real.

Jason Prall:

Right. And to your body, it is real right? To your system, it is real right?

Samantha Skelly:

Yes.

Jason Prall:

The mind can understand that this isn't real and it's the same thing... I give this example over and over again, but for most people, going up and speaking on a stage, that's just going to put the body into this, this absolute panic that you are going to die. And on the list of things... biggest fears, that's generally up there with death right?

Samantha Skelly:

Yes. Yeah.

Jason Prall:

So to the body, it is a very real thing you're experiencing right?

Samantha Skelly:

Totally.

Jason Prall:

So it is an important recognition to that degree.

Samantha Skelly:

Totally. Absolutely. Yeah. I love that you made that distinction because it's like... The mind can try and justify it like, "You're not going to die. These people, they're not going to kill you. This isn't going to kill you," but it feels like. So in those moments, it's, again, creating spaciousness from the sensation, from the contraction so that we can view it from our heart space. When that happens, I'll just activate a breath pattern that I call the tri-active breath, which is all through the mouth. And sometimes I take that to be down, sometimes I take it up, but I just do that for about, gosh, 90 seconds. I get myself to a place where I'm like, "Oh, everything's actually totally okay. I am so protected. I am so safe." What the breath does is not only does it regulate your nervous system and take you from that sympathetic into the parasympathetic, it also clears your mind.

Samantha Skelly:

So if I get that email and I don't do that practice, I'm going to react from the energy that it created, which is fear and fight and all of that kind of stuff. So when we can take these little moments and steal these 90 minute... seconds from in our day to help regulate our nervous system, we clear our mind, we open our heart and we can make a much more powerful decision. Breathwork has been such a game changer for me not only recovering from an eating disorder, but really becoming a leader. I think a lot of leadership is about regulating your nervous system and not losing your shit. Breathwork is such a powerful tool that I use literally every single day, multiple times a day to help me stay aligned.

Jason Prall:

I love that. And what you're speaking about here, and I want to go deeper on this, is so many of us, I think perhaps all of us, want to change something in our life. Something's not where we want it to be, "My business isn't there. My job isn't going well. This relationship. My finances," whatever the case may be, and all of the things that we see in our world are a product of how we've continuously showed up and the things that we've done or said or believed or what have you, which isn't to say that it's anybody's fault, but it's to say that we have a responsibility in our own life and how we're showing up and how that then reflects back to us. This is really important because using breath to calm the nervous system and to find safety and to allow these emotions to be felt, I think is super, super important. And on a very, very practical real world level, getting back into neutral, getting back into our alignment and then taking action from that perspective, then creates an entirely different level of reality.

Jason Prall:

Your reality is reflected back to you in a much, much different way. I'd love for you to speak on that and how that energy is then amplified by what you see in your world.

Samantha Skelly:

This is so good. This is so good. It really is about creating the energetic lens in which we see the world and we have so much capacity, so much potential to do this. I could either make this moment absolutely magical, off the charts or I could drive myself into a state of depression based on my energetics and

based on what I'm focused on. And humans are so... we are creators, but the problem that I see in so many people is we don't realize that so we don't chose that. For me and my life of creating and envisioning this, it's like "How do I want to feel and what's the reality that I want to experience every single day?" Because feeling good takes work, feeling bad takes work too, but we're just so used... we're more used to it. It's more familiar.

Jason Prall:

We're conditioned.

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah, exactly. We're conditioned. So it's like, "How can we condition ourselves on the opposite? How can we condition ourselves that it just becomes a habit that I wake up and I tap myself into a vibration that I want in advance?" We've first got to feel it, create that energy field in our system so that our reality can reflect what we are radiating out because that's all it is. I was sick a couple weeks ago and my energy was just done. I was coming home. I was leaving Costa Rica, I was coming home and I was omitting the worst energetic field because I was just so done, I was so tired, I was so fatigued, it was just awful. I could see in my reality everything that was going wrong. Everything that could wrong, went wrong. I was observing this. I'm like, "Oh my gosh, it's me. I'm doing that. I'm creating this." Because generally, because I really do prioritize my energetic state, things tend to really flow and come together and all that kind of stuff and it never used to be like that, but I've trained myself over and over and over again, cast my vision on what I desire, what is the energetic field that I'm omitting and how can I constantly really work that?

Samantha Skelly:

What are the things that help with that? For me, it's dancing and surfing and singing and walking and exercising and hydrating and connecting and things like that really help amp up this inner energy and it's beautiful to see how things align when we are constantly choosing our alignment.

Jason Prall:

I love that because this is different than manifesting, that I think most people think of or creating a vision board. I think that's a good first step, getting clear in what you want, on really what you want, but even that can be done from an energy that's not from alignment. It's kind of a chicken and the egg. To get into our alignment probably is the best first step because then we can get clear on what we really want from that place. I love what you're saying here because you're talking about these simple habits throughout your day and these simple practices that we can bring in to bring us back into alignment when you're a little off track and this is... This will happen probably many times throughout the day that we just get a little bit off track and bring ourselves back into alignment, so there's practices to do that.

Jason Prall:

There's also deeper stuff and this is kind of what I think your transformational breathwork stuff is, which is getting to the core of really what's continuously keeping us out of alignment or throwing us out of alignment and these are the deeper traumas, these deeper conditions that we've been led to believe... You mentioned at the beginning of this interview some of these in the actor's world, just this conditioned reality that you were stuck in. That takes some unwinding, so there's deeper, long-term stuff that we can work, that we can find resource for and ultimately finally metabolize and integrate. And then there's these little things that just catch us off guard throughout the day that throw us off track, so

there's multiple opportunities here and I love that you mentioned a ton of them. I mean, exercise, connecting, hydrating, sleeping. I mean, there's just these standard wellness practices.

Jason Prall:

And if we can do that not from a place of fear and anxiety and all these things, but as a tool to get us back into ourselves, into our alignment, then that provides such a good resource for us to then act throughout the day from a better resourced aligned place. I think this is... I wish somebody would have taught me this stuff when I was younger. It doesn't necessarily mean that I would have had it figured out, but I would have at least been able to start thinking about it and looking at this from a different lens of how to change my reality. It's not through only working harder, which was essentially the big conditioned belief that I was taught that if you just work harder, then you'll get all the good stuff that you really want. Boy, that was not... It was effective as a tool, as a strategy, but it also was very maladaptive in so many ways.

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. I think when you have a little bit... So when that reality or that story is told to you at a young age and then you have a little bit of evidence for it, it's like a fright train. So unbinding that and unwinding it, I remember Andrew telling me in one of our sessions years ago, "You could work a fraction of what you do and you could have 10 times the impact." I was like, "This guy is on something."

Jason Prall:

Yeah, there's no way. Yeah.

Samantha Skelly:

There's no way, but I'm seeing that now.

Jason Prall:

And I want to speak to that too because to some degree, the part of you that said "There's no way, this guy's on something," that part was the lens through which you were viewing right?

Samantha Skelly:

That's it, yes.

Jason Prall:

And to that part, this is... it's very true. It's very correct. And to some degree, in the place that you were in, you couldn't have just stepped back. In other words, it kind of took you seeing a new perspective, accepting a new level of reality and getting into a new place, so to speak, in order for that to be true. Because if somebody is not in the correct place and they just try to employ something like that, things would fall apart because it's not totally embodied in their system.

Samantha Skelly:

That's it. That's it.

Jason Prall:

It's coming from a different place, so this really does, again, continue to point us back to getting in the body, working these aspects of ourselves, these parts that are conditioned that are a little wounded, that need some resource. This is important to work all these things in order to accept that level of reality as being possible or true.

Samantha Skelly:

100%. Andrew told me this probably five years ago and it's taken five years for me to... And I'm not there. I don't think there is a there. I feel like this work is just... there's this constant beautiful journey of deepening and opening and deepening and opening and trusting and trusting and surrendering. So in a way, it's like it's never ending, but it's like I'm now seeing the evidence of the opposite, which is really helpful to that part.

Jason Prall:

Yeah. And just to name this too, it might have taken you five years, it might take somebody else 10 years, it might take somebody else one year or three months right?

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah, that's it. That's it.

Jason Prall:

So we're all in a different place. Not to say that this is this super long journey in order to get to a somewhat reasonable state, every little piece helped in the progress along the way. I'm sure you've noticed has changed your life immensely along the path.

Samantha Skelly:

Oh, for sure.

Jason Prall:

Talk to me about this breathwork a little bit more. What kind of stuff do you teach with Pause? How does this really work? What are you hearing back from the people that you coach and the clients and these people that are employing this in their lives? What kind of breathwork is it?

Samantha Skelly:

I love this. I first found breathwork when I was overcoming my eating disorder. It was like the thing and the reason why it was because it finally for the first time I was in my body. It was a three hour breathwork class. The first breathwork class I ever did was three hours, which is insane. I do not recommend that to anyone. I really believe in taking it slow and going quite slow. We call it titration, like slowly opening up the body, and that's just from a trauma informed lens. We do a lot of our work from a trauma informed lens. I found breathwork and I was like, "Wow, this is absolutely amazing." I had no idea I could feel this. I had no idea I could connect to my heart or feel my alignment. Finally, all the things that people were saying about personal development, I actually felt it in a very real and... I touched upon the things that people were saying. And before, it was just like chatter.

Jason Prall:

Well, you're smart. You understand the things that people say and you got it, like the personal development stuff. I have no doubt that you understood them from the mental level. And yet, it seems like you're speaking about something that's a little bit deeper, a little bit more real so to speak.

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah. Yeah. I'm like, "Finally I understand all these things that I've been learning." I had no idea I did not have the felt experience. I didn't have the felt experience until this. So from that moment, this was, gosh, 10 years ago, 12 years ago, it was a long time ago. I was 20, so it was 12 years ago. I went online after the breathwork session and I was like, "What is breath...." I just Googled the crap out of it. "What is breathwork? What is this? What just happened?" all these things and then I went on a journey of taking every single facilitator training on the market at the time and they were quite limited at the time. Breathwork's just now popping. Maybe people know about it, maybe not. So then I took them all and I was like, "Wow, there's pieces of everything that I find really interesting, but I want more of a complete journey," which really integrates the facilitator. I feel when people teach something, but they're not embodied in it, it depletes the transformation for the client, so I really wanted to create an embodied trauma informed journey for people, so that's what we did.

Samantha Skelly:

About four years ago, we started creating it and now we've certified hundreds of people all over the world in this formula, but it's basically the way that we go about it is we really take into consideration not only from a trauma informed lens, but what is the outcome? Does somebody want to increase their energy or do they want to have more of a grounding experience? Because depending on the breath pattern, depending on the music, depending on the intention, depending on the mantras, depending on so many things, we could either activate the system or we could ground it. So for someone like me who runs quite hot, if... My survival system is more anxiety than depression, so for me, grounding breathwork, slower breathwork is actually a lot more beneficial for my system than just jacking my system up and getting super high. I can do that, but it's like, "What's the point?"

Samantha Skelly:

So we really look at the individual and take into consideration their survival strategy, do they run hot, do they run and collapse sometimes and what is it that they desire? Clearing the mind, opening the heart. On our app, people chose the time that they have, so if they have three minutes or five minutes or 10 minutes, and then what is the outcome that you want and then the track is designed on that. Yeah, that's my philosophy on breathwork because it is very opening. It's not like mediation, it's like meditation on steroids. It really does open up the system in such a big way. Breathwork is perfect for people who say they can't meditate. For me, meditation was really challenging. Because I run anxious, I would sit in meditation, I would sit there for 20 minutes and be like, "I don't even know if this is working. I think I feel worse." Whereas with breathwork, because it is so much more activating, it releases the mind, it opens the heart, it's like there's no doubt in your mind that something happened.

Samantha Skelly:

It really helps people who struggle with meditation. It technically is meditation in a sense, but not how we view meditation in today's world right?

Jason Prall:

Right. Yeah, it's not just sitting on a pillow in silence.

Samantha Skelly:

That's it. That's it. Yeah.

Jason Prall:

Breathwork can be very active in its process right?

Samantha Skelly:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jason Prall:

I love what you said too that... What I've noticed for me is I also run pretty hot in a different way, but I love things that tend to exaggerate that. That's my tendency is to go to that thing that I'm so familiar with, which is fast and forward and hot and hard and these type of things. That's the exact opposite of what I actually need, but what really nourishes me is these really boring breathwork classes and these practices like yin yoga, which, again, is kind of boring, and qigong, so it's interesting because the patterns that I found safety in and that I found comfort in and I'm familiar with are the opposite of really what I need. I think it's so important that what you're doing there because if I really want to get this outcome over here, then I've actually got to play with some of these other processes to slow me down, to bring my whole system down, to really slow things down. And in that, there is nourishment.

Jason Prall:

I think eventually one learns to appreciate the balancing aspect of what they're looking for. At first, it's perhaps not as enjoyable or exhilarating or nourishing or what have you, but it's actually the opposite right?

Samantha Skelly:

Yes.

Jason Prall:

Anyway, I love that you actually have that because breathwork is, I think, a little bit more nuanced than many people understand, especially as we walk into it. We feel like there's just various techniques, almost like you're going to the gym and you're working out different muscles, but this is totally different. These nuanced aspects of the breath completely shift the energy in the body. I know a little bit about this from the Ayurvedic lens and the elements and it's wild now much can shift in the energies of the body just by doing these slightly different practices.

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah. It's so interesting. As you're naming that, that was exactly my journey as well. I'm like, "I want to go fast. I want to see aliens and get high." And then it's like... My mentor at the time was like, "We've got to be slow. We've got to stabilize the system. We've got to give it the opposite energy," and it hit this survival thing of like, "No, but I've got to do this quick." The same thing that will come in with work and stuff like that, it's the same stuff. Once I realized and I saw the impact on the slower, more grounding sessions, I was like, "Oh yeah, this is my medicine that I need."

Jason Prall:

Right. How has that shifted your reality in practical ways? How has that shifted your mindset, your behaviors, your beliefs? What's really come up for you?

Samantha Skelly:

Yeah. Gosh, there's like this inner champion in my head that has quite a few distortions and it came from being a competitor and being a dancer and being an actress. That part of me only believes there's one speed, everything's important and urgent and we got to go really, really fast. What I'm really learning and what's really showing up in my reality when it comes to my business and my relationship is now actually growth can be slow and sustainable and it can be really healthy there. There's this vibration that I'm not used to, but it's so nourishing for me. I see it show up in... I have all these goals. Well, what if I took 10 years to reach them all and not to? What if I allowed... This is it. It's like, "What if I allowed the journey to feel like the destination? What if I enjoyed it and it wasn't so chaotic and fiery and fast?" I just let myself fully enjoy the process of cultivating a beautiful relationship or a multi million dollar business.

Jason Prall:

That's beautiful. There's this pacing to it, but it's beyond just the pacing itself, there's actually gift in the pacing that you're starting to really understand from an embodied perspective right?

Samantha Skelly:

Yes.

Jason Prall:

Because I mean, that's a cliché quote right, "The journey is the reward. The journey is the destination," blah, blah, blah, but that's understandable mentally. But as you're now cultivating that in your reality, it becomes so much more real, so much more meaningful and it starts to show up in a different way.

Samantha Skelly:

That's it.

Jason Prall:

I love that. Sam, well, this has been great. We've got you on a masterclass sharing some of your breathwork techniques, so I encourage everybody to check that out. But thanks so much for joining me and sharing your wisdom.

Samantha Skelly:

This has been amazing. Thank you so much for having me.

Jason Prall:

All right. Take care everyone. See you on the next one.