IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT YOU FEEL THE WAY YOU DO

EAT FOR Life®

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samantha Gilbert, FNC, CHNP, CNC is a Nutritional Therapy Counselor specializing in nutritional therapy for depression, anxiety, OCD, ADHD, and autism.

Sami spent most of her life battling severe depression, anxiety, OCD, and body image dysmorphia. Since finding her own path to wholeness, she now Eats for Life and is dedicated to helping others find this same healing path.

Since 2008, she's helped thousands of clients including couples and children from 23 countries heal their mind and body through nutrition therapy and lifestyle medicine.

She is also the creator of the Eat for Life Podcast, a show that investigates the root causes of some of modern society's most pervasive conditions, available on all podcast platforms.

This book is for those who are struggling with depression, anxiety, OCD, ADHD, or an eating disorer. Please know healing is always possible. You are not alone. You matter and your life has immense value.

You can find Sami at https://eatfor.life

I've known a lot of people with mental health challenges. Some of them have passed on or continue to live in darkness to this day. Like me, all of them have fought tooth and nail to maintain some semblance of happiness.

Of course, no one wants to struggle with things like depression, anxiety, AD(H)D, OCD, or an eating disorder. Of the folks I've talked to over the years, all agree that physical pain is much easier to tolerate than the emotional stuff. "I'll take a broken leg any day of the week so long as I don't ever have to feel this way again" they say. I couldn't agree more.

These are all terms, not conditions, but for people that suffer from their suffocating grips, the world treats them as though they've done something wrong and that they can snap out of it at any time. Mind over matter they say. Fake it till you make. You can chose your thoughts.

Not so fast.

What if there's something else going on here? Some other biochemical component mainstream medicine doesn't know about?

I'm here to tell you there is and that we are all capable of healing.

And I should know because the information I'm about to share with you literally saved my life and eliminated my life long struggle with depression and many other chronic ailments for good.

You see, the world has it all backwards when it comes to mental health disorders and how to treat them, so you need to know that what you are feeling is not your fault, and you've done nothing wrong. I know the stigma is hard to erase, but I also know that if I can overcome it, so can you.

What I'm about to share is based on over four decades of evidence-based research and clinical practice, but it's not out there in the mainstream because big pharma doesn't want you to know that nutrients (from food and supplements) can save your life.

Yes, nutrients such as zinc and vitamin B6 can completely change your internal biochemical landscape and correct whatever imbalance is causing you to be depressed, anxious, obsessive compulsive, overwhelmed, panicked, addicted to food, drugs or alcohol, angry, perfectionistic, unable to sleep, sensitive to certain foods, chemicals, and supplements, fatigued, have painful or lack of menstruation, infertile, spacey, prone to chronic infections, and suffer from arthritis, asthma, and allergies.

And that's just the short list!

In this book you'll also learn about the conditions that have a direct link to depression, anxiety, AD(H)D, OCD, and eating disorders. This also includes bipolar disorder, behavior disorders, autism, Asperger syndrome, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, autoimmune diseases, and cancer.

I'm often asked how I got to where I am today. Sure, it took hard work, dedication, training, and lots of research, but it also took massive amounts of faith because my story was not a pretty one.

I know God is watching over me because there were so many times in my life when I could've very easily checked out.

In fact, the first time I tried to check out was when I was 8 years old. Since I pretty much came into this world depressed, those short years I had been on this planet weren't so good to me.

So one day while playing with my dad's super cool jump rope, I got it in my head that I would climb up the elm tree in front of our house and take the plunge. I can still remember sitting on the main branch, looking down at those lacquered wooden handles, then making a noose out of the white woven cord.

Fortunately, I was interrupted by my mother.

Years later that tree was removed, but unlike the permanent removal of its roots that were ruining our cement sidewalk, my internal roots of sadness and despair just kept growing. And the only way I could try and suppress those roots was with sugar infused, serotonin and dopamine spiking, forget about my feelings, comfort me in the moment, food.

It was at this very early age that my super dysfunctional, jacked up relationship with food and my body was born.

Knowing what I now know about epigenetics, it all makes sense, but back then, as a small child, I couldn't understand what was happening. I just wanted to feel better and eating always did the trick, for a while anyway.

EPIGENETICS

Epigenetics is the science of how genes perform over the course of a lifetime, and whether these changes can be passed down to future generations.

Epi- means "to be over, outside of, or around", so the literal translation is "above genetics". In other words, the epi genome doesn't change your DNA; it decides how some genes are expressed in your body.

Think of your genome (DNA) as the hardware and the epigenome as the software. To put this another way, the genome does all the work; the epigenome gives the directions.

You have billions of cells in your body and they each contain the exact blueprint of your genetic code. Just because they have the DNA doesn't mean they know what to do with it; they need outside instruction from carbon and hydrogen compounds called methyl groups.

Methyl groups control the genome by binding to a gene and telling it to express itself or not. Methyl groups bind differently to a genome in a skin cell versus a liver cell and so on. This is one of the ways the liver cell knows it's a liver cell.

Epigenetics is also controlled by histones, which are basically protein spools that DNA winds itself around. Histones can change how tightly or loosely the DNA is wound around them. If they're more loosely wound the genes can express more and if they're tightly wound they express less.

Methyl groups are like a switch and histones are like a knob.

Every cell in your body has a distinct histone and methylation pattern, and this is what gives every cell its marching orders. If the methylation pattern is imbalanced, deficiencies ensue.

Your DNA remains the same, but epigenetic tags do change through out your life as they decide which genes get expressed and which ones don't. Epigenetic cells are not permanent and change over the course of your life; they can be hereditary, and also change over time, especially when your body is going through a lot of changes such as in puberty, menopause, and pregnancy.

The epigenome changes suddenly through out our entire lives based on a lot of environmental factors like what we eat, breathe, smoke, drink, how stressed out we are, and how others treat us, on a daily basis.

A bad diet can lead to methyl groups binding to the wrong place and making mistakes; with those bad instructions cells become abnormal and turn into disease. This is when we start to see things like diabetes, cancer, and autoimmune syndromes.

We now know that certain types of cancers are caused by misplaced epigenetic tags, and that epigenetic insults are passed down from generation to generation. The same holds true for things like premature greying of the hair and baldness.

Epigenetics does not change the DNA sequence, but rather it turns off the bad genes and turns on the good ones. The really cool thing is that this can create a gene imprint that can be passed on from generation to generation. This is why a nourishing, real food diet is essential if couples want to produce healthy, thriving children.

Obesity, heart disease, cancer, mood disorders, autism, infertility, autoimmune diseases and much more are at an all time high. Our great grandparents didn't experience the same insults because they weren't subjected to the vast amount of environmental and emotional toxins we deal with today.

The more stress, processed foods, and other environmental toxins we're exposed to, the weaker and more disease prone our offspring become.

Boggles the mind.

Enter what I call The Big 5 Hurting Our World: depression and anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), eating disorders, AD(H)D, and autism.

The Big 5 are all linked to these key imbalances:

Undermethylation	Overmethylation
Pyrrole Disorder	Copper Toxicity
Zinc Deficiency	Gut Inflammation

If this all seems Greek to you, don't worry, I'm here to help you make sense of it all.

Let's start with undermethylation.

UNDERMETHYLATION

Undermethylation (also called histadelia) is an epigenetic condition that occurs when too few methyl molecules are available to add to enzymes, hormones, and neurotransmitters. Undermethylation is not the same condition as histamine intolerance or Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS).

Undermethylation is a problem because lack of methyl groups (a carbon group with three hydrogen atoms) to support neurotransmitter activity creates depressed levels of serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine.

Suboptimal levels of these important neurotransmitters cause depression, perfectionism, obsessive-compulsive and ritualistic behaviors, addictive tendencies, high-achievement and competition, and seasonal allergies.

Undermethylators tend to respond well to serotonin-enhancing substances such as Prozac, Zoloft, St. John's Wort, and SAMe. Because methyl is a protective substance, these individuals are more at risk to develop certain types of cancers.

Until recently, schizophrenia was seen in our overmethylation population, but we are now seeing quite a few undermethylation cases.

According to my personal physician, Dr. Albert Mensah of Mensah Medical, one possible cause could be the liberal use of folic acid before, during, and after pregnancy. Folic acid decreases the presence of methyl in our DNA. This can be of great benefit to overmethylated individuals, but can create significant challenges for those who are undermethylated.

Because folic acid is a common component of prenatal vitamins, and because we have no way of knowing the methyl biotype of a fetus while in utero, prolonged use of prenatal vitamins could actually be preselecting undermethylated children for increased risk of developing schizophrenic symptoms at some point in their lives. Please note research is currently under way on this clinical trend we are seeing.

I often see high achieving, type A individuals with strong perfectionistic tendencies to be undermethylated. They are calm on the outside with lots of inner tension and often, severe depression. Undermethylation is also an underlying component of autism.

Undermethylators have a genetic tendency to be very low in calcium, magnesium, methionine, and vitamin B6, with excessive levels of folic acid. This condition can be safely corrected and balanced with dietary and nutrient therapy, as well as lifestyle modifications.

To see if you might be impacted by this, **click here to take my free, five-minute life assessment**.

Click here to check out my Low Folate Healing Guide with more detailed information and research about undermethylation, as well as delicious recipes and food lists.

GENETIC TESTING FLAWS

Despite popular belief, undermethylation cannot be determined via the widely misunderstood MTHFR genetic test, which is neither an accurate assessment nor an appropriate guide for true methylation disorders. This does not mean genetic testing cannot be helpful in addition to diagnostic testing in certain areas such as autism and Multiple Sclerosis. However, in the area of mental health, it is strikingly inconsistent and dubious at best.

The reason overall methylation status is most important, and cannot be determined via genetic testing alone, is because there are single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) variations that can cause both over and undermethylation. Genetic testing cannot determine which SNP's are dominant, and this is why reliance on these tests for treatment purposes often yields devastating outcomes. The most common being the use of methylfolate. **Click here to learn more about SNP's**.

People who are truly undermethylated do not do well on methylated folate after two to three months because folate strips methyl at the level of DNA, meaning the nucleus of the cell, which is where all your instructions are made. As I shared previously, methyl is a protective substance and this is why people report worsening of symptoms.

Consuming large amounts of methylfolate, especially if given alone, will result in neurotransmitter changes. Most frequently seen are elevated levels of glutamate and shunted serotonin synthesis. This is the reason why so many people taking methylfolate tend to have adverse reactions.

There are a lot of mistakes being made in the "treatment" of genetic mutations which may or may not be expressive, and may or may not be interacting with other mutations and with other imbalances in your body. Lots of clients come to me with serious side effects from methylfolate supplementation, which is why we must address the entire pathway, not just one enzyme. **Click here to read more about methylfolate**.

OVERMETHYLATION

Overmethylation (also called histapenia) is an epigenetic condition that occurs when too many methyl molecules are available to add to enzymes, hormones, and neurotransmitters.

Overmethylation is a problem because too many methyl groups (a carbon group with three hydrogen atoms) creates excessive levels of the important neurotransmitters serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, which leads to hyperexcitability in the brain.

This causes high anxiety, rumination, heavy body hair, musical and artistic abilities, an inability to sit still, food and chemical sensitivities, paranoia, and sleeping problems.

Overmethylators do not respond well to serotonin-enhancing substances such as Prozac, Zoloft, St. John's Wort, and SAMe, which can make them suicidal. Bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are often seen in overmethylated individuals.

Individuals with high empathy for others, food and chemical sensitivities, and an adverse reaction to antidepressant medications may be overmethylated. Verbosity is also a hallmark of this condition.

Overmethylators have a genetic tendency to be very low in folic acid and vitamin B6, in addition to other important nutrients. This condition can be safely corrected and balanced with dietary and nutrient therapy, as well as lifestyle modifications.

Click here to check out my High Folate Healing Guide with more detailed information and research about overmethylation, as well as delicious recipes and food lists.

PYRROLE DISORDER

Pyrrole disorder (also called pyroluria) is a mood and stress disorder. It is often a heritable condition in the Irish, English, Welsh and Scandinavian people groups (especially those with light features: blonde or red hair, blue or green eyes, fair skin).

Pyrroles have little or no function in the body and are excreted continuously in the urine. However, for a pyroluric individual, nutrient deficiencies occur because these molecules have an affinity for zinc and vitamin B6, and latch onto and excrete them in the urine before the body is able to absorb them.

Another feature of pyroluria is a deficiency of arachidonic acid (AA) (a polyunsaturated omega 6 essential fatty acid), which is a critical component of brain function as well as normal growth and development.

Pyroluria is problematic because of severely depressed zinc and vitamin B6 levels. Zinc and vitamin B6 are critical for a healthy immune system, neurotransmitter balance, as well as maintaining intellectual function, mood, and memory to name a few.

Suboptimal levels of these important nutrients result in high irritability and temper, poor stress control, memory and concentration problems, severe mood swings, explosive anger and rage, criminal behavior, behavioral issues, anxiety, and depression.

Individuals with severe mood swings, high sensitivity, hyperactivity, an inability to tolerate stress, morning nausea, and night owl tendencies may have Pyrrole disorder.

Any gender of any age can have this condition and it is regularly behind the terrible twos seen in children, as well as fiery redhead jokes. It is often hereditary, but can also be brought on by chronic stress or a traumatic event.

This condition can be safely corrected and balanced with dietary and nutrient therapy, as well as lifestyle modifications.

Click here to check out my Pyroluria Healing Guide with more detailed information and research, as well as delicious recipes and food lists.

COPPER TOXICITY

Copper overload (also called toxicity), often hereditary, is an inability to eliminate excess copper effectively. It is not the same as Wilson's Disease, a rare genetic disorder.

Copper toxicity profoundly affects every system in the body, especially the reproductive, nervous, and glandular systems. It also has a devastating effect on mental health because it lowers dopamine (a neurotransmitter that controls the brain's pleasure and reward centers) and increases norepinephrine (another neurotransmitter that also functions as a stress hormone) in the brain.

Imbalances in these important neurotransmitters are related to anxiety and panic disorders, depression (especially postpartum), bipolar disorder, ADHD, autism, violent behavior, and paranoid schizophrenia.

I often see females with high anxiety, chronic fatigue, severe PMS, and depression to be overloaded in copper due to the relationship between copper and estrogen. However, any gender of any age can have this condition and it is an intrinsic part of autism.

Copper rises with estrogen and is an essential component of blood vessel formation during pregnancy. Women who have had more than one child are at greater risk of developing copper overload.

Certain subtypes of breast cancer are estrogen-sensitive, making copper toxic females more at risk.

Click here to check out my Low Copper Healing Guide with more detailed information and research, as well as delicious recipes and food lists.

ZINC DEFICIENCY

Zinc is an essential trace mineral that helps stimulate the activity of over 300 different enzymes. It enhances resistance to stress as well as helps to maintain intellectual function, memory, and mood levels. Zinc plays a key role in cell development and gene expression, and when deficient, the result is a wide variety of mental and physical health challenges.

Zinc deficiency is by far the most frequently observed chemical imbalance in mental health because zinc is needed to make neurotransmitters. A neurotransmitter imbalance can cause a variety of symptoms such as anxiety, depression, paranoia, and anorexia.

The proper balance of serotonin, norepinephrine, GABA, and dopamine is essential to a happy, healthy life. Zinc is also a critical factor in pre and postnatal development because zinc deficiency can be passed from parent to child.

This significantly affects not only growth, development, and immune function, but your child's ability to think, feel, and act, which can lead to behavioral disorders, ADHD, autism, and schizophrenia.

Zinc deficiency in parents before conception can cause miscarriage, fetal growth restrictions, learning disabilities, mental health challenges, and can even influence gender. This is because it takes more zinc to create a male than a female. While there is no way to determine gender, I almost always see zinc deficiency in couples that miscarry males and only produce girls.

I often see zinc deficiency in women and adolescent girls with strong sensitivities, frequent infections, anorexia, poor memory and concentration, depression, anxiety, poor immune function, suicidal tendencies, and pale skin. The male reproductive system is also impacted by this condition (the prostate gland has one of the highest concentrations of zinc) and it is often hereditary.

Click here to check out my High Zinc Healing Guide with more detailed information and research, as well as delicious recipes and food lists.

GUT INFLAMMATION

The gut is closely connected to the brain, which is why a closer look at what's happening in your gut is a critical factor in healing and recovery, especially if you suffer from any of The Big 5.

Every supplement, food, beverage, stressor, and physical and emotional trauma affects gut bacteria. Research continues to reveal, as it has for the last few decades, the crucial role a healthy gut plays in combating a wide range of diseases, from diabetes and obesity to autism, cancer, and chronic fatigue syndrome.

In my work, there are several underlying factors I always consider when a healthy intestinal microbiota (gut flora) and gut barrier are compromised. They are: epigenetics, infections, nutrient deficiencies and overloads, diet, environment, stress, and medications.

Epigenetics tells us that food has a powerful gene regulating effect, making genes very sensitive to nutrition. This is why breastfed babies have stronger immune systems, greater bonding ability, fewer allergies, and greater resistance to chronic diseases. In other words, mother's milk contains a nutritional powerhouse of nutrients and probiotics designed to supply infants with the necessary tools to thrive.

Most of the children I work with (and adults!) are picky eaters and struggle with food sensitivities because of gut inflammation and abnormal intestinal permeability (otherwise known as leaky gut), which is triggered by yeast and bacterial overgrowth.

When yeast and bacteria are out of control, they can cause hyperactivity, temper control problems, inability to tolerate stress, anger and rage, brain fog, fatigue, strong cravings for sugar and high carb foods, constipation, diarrhea, inability to digest food properly, insomnia, weight loss and gain, food and chemical sensitivities, skin problems, and hormonal imbalances.

Most of my clients suffer from a severe amount of oxidative stress (which is basically an imbalance between free radicals and antioxidants in your body), especially autistic individuals. Antioxidants build up our immune systems and help ward off invaders. Further problems with methylation, copper toxicity, zinc deficiency, pyroluria, elevated metals, and enzymes not functioning properly are all triggered by gut inflammation and environmental insults that have devastating effects.

Biochemical imbalances are far more sensitized in autism than any other condition. The GI tract needs to be healed so issues like malabsorption and yeast and bacterial overgrowth can be prevented from creating neuroinflammation.

There are a ton of anti-candida and bacterial overgrowth diets and protocols out there, but until the root cause is healed, these types of infections tend to come back.

What I have learned after healing myself and being in clinical practice since 2008, is that nutrient deficiencies and overloads must also be addressed in order for the gut to heal properly.

Click here for all my free resources on healing gut inflammation.

Where to go from here

I'm guessing you found me because you're sick and tired of struggling with protocols that don't work and leave you feeling hungry, tired, depressed, and more anxious than ever, with the same issues you had before you started.

When I was going through my healing journey, many of the things I tried only partially worked, or lead me into greater depths of despair.

Perhaps you feel you've done something wrong because none of your efforts seem to work. I'm here to tell you that you haven't done anything wrong, you've just been given the wrong information.

The important question I encourage you to ask yourself is "Who am I biochemically and what nutrients do I need to thrive?"

This is a powerful question that goes far beyond popular diets such as SCD, GAPS, AIP, low FODMAP, low histamine, and keto, to name a few.

I'm not implying these diets are bad or wrong. In fact, they can be very helpful.

Rather, I want to impress upon you that quick fixes don't work. Chasing symptoms based off an article you read on the internet by someone that doesn't understand you biochemically, won't work (and often makes symptoms worse).

We need to look at root causes so you don't have to deal with these issues again later. This process requires looking at your entire story from birth to present, consuming real food and supplements that are appropriate for your unique chemistry, looking at stress and your environment, as well as movement and sleep.

Many people call this functional approach lifestyle medicine. I like to think of it as a new paradigm of thinking in the realm of clinical intervention, which is important for the future of healthcare.

One on One Support

Custom Tailored Plan

- Comprehensive dietary and nutrient therapy plan based on your unique story and biochemistry.

Transformational Coaching

- Monthly appointments to track your progress.
- How to eat based on your unique chemistry, lifestyle modification, accountability, and support.

Email Support

- If you get stuck or frustrated and need guidance, I'm here to help you though it.

Access to Content Library

- Including my cookbooks (that contain recipes, meal planners, and food lists), ebooks, and support guides.

Program Extras

- Special discounts on labs and supplements.

LET'S TALK

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For more resources and information about working with me one to one, head on over to EatFor.Life.

"Having worked with many nutritionists in the past, Samantha proves to be the most dedicated, knowledgeable practitioner we have ever worked with. Her knowledge base and clarity of thought and understanding in the areas of nutrition and epigenetics take her above and beyond. She is an amazing compliment to the medical work that we do in micromolecular medicine and we view her as indispensable. If you can work with Sami, you should work with Sami."
-Albert Mensah, MD, BCIP Mensah Medical