

**Book Journeys Author Interview - February 21, 2013**  
**Dr. Angela Lauria with Samantha Hoffman, author of *A Contented Mind***

*"Don't give up. I know that sounds glib and oversaid, but it's true, and I think we do best when we lighten up on ourselves."* ~Samantha Hoffman

Angela:

Well, hello, everybody, welcome back to Book Journeys Radio. This is Dr. Angela Lauria, founder of the Author Incubator and creator of the Difference Process for writing a book that makes a difference. And today with us on the show, we have Samantha Hoffman, a novelist, a children's book author, an inspirational speaker. She is the author of *A Contented Mind*, and normally, on Book Journeys we talk about non-fiction books, but Samantha's book – she actually has a couple of – two children's books, I think, and then two novels. Samantha's books are a little bit different, but I thought they might provide some insights, especially to people who – a lot of the authors I work with have dreams of writing multiple – in multiple genre – genres, which I think is an interesting transition that Samantha made, but, Samantha, your first book was *A Contented Mind*, right?

Samantha:

Yes, it is!

Angela:

Okay, tell us a little bit about that book, when did you write it and what's it about?

Samantha:

I wrote that in the very end of 2008. I came out of me in – flowed through me (laugh) - ... like I was possessed. It – i – it really did spring forth in a series of four weeks!

Angela:

Wow.

Samantha:

And it was much larger than – than the finished version, because, when I did it, I hardly knew what I was writing. I really didn't – I didn't know what the next sentence was gonna be, so I just let it – I let it just flow from me. And it was in so much detail, and – and then, learning the process down the road later, I realized how much i – I had to be edited down, and I actually think it's a nicer, tight book now than – than that original, original version, but the flow of it is very much as it came out of me, so – so it was at the very end of 2008, and I wrapped it up in the beginning of 2009, and proceeded to reshape my life, very much like the book itself.

Angela:

Wow! So say more about that, wha – what's the – what kind of reshaping is the book about? How does that affect you?

Samantha:

Well, in the book – yeah, in the book – I think, because I was struggling with depression, and – I think for – for – appearances' sake, y – no one would know why, we tend to look at other people and – and think, “Well, they shouldn't be depressed.”

Angela:

Mm-hmm.

Samantha:

And – but that's not – not how that really works, in a deep, core level, there's a reason. Sometimes, I know it's a medical reason, with me, it was more of a spiritual. With me, denying my true self –

Angela:

Wow.

Samantha:

– and so, I think my spirit, knowing me, it's the only way we're gonna get this woman to listen, is to – to make her write a book and then have her read it. And that's really what happened, and when I read it back, I realized I was living a life in – I was in a marriage that didn't serve me, I didn't – I wasn't – I wasn't the love of my life, i – I loved this person, but I was – I couldn't trust him!

Angela:

Mmm.

Samantha:

And what – what does that say about me, that I'm allowing this to myself, that I'm not setting the example for my kids of what – what a really great union should be, and I'm not following my dreams. I'm – I'm – and so, I think, because of reading it, and – and then, the character, she – in – in a very obscure way that no one would know, it does parallel my life, but by reading it, no one would – would know that.

Angela:

Right.

Samantha:

But the emotions are there, and her – her feelings of wanting to be hidden within herself – afraid to step out, really, but life forced her to. She – because she – she was actually a best selling author, but under a – an alias – under a name that no one would know her, but someone still found her, broke into her home, and she never felt secure, and I know that feeling, and she kind of started over. And when she did, she exposed herself to all these new

experiences that – s – scared the life out of her, but she did it. And, very much, that's what I did.

Angela:

Mmm. Wow. Well, it's interesting, we talk a lot o – on Book Journeys Radio about writing a book that makes a difference. When you started writing the *Contented*, did you – were you trying to make a difference?

Samantha:

(laughs) No!

Angela:

It doesn't sound like you were, though it sounds like you did!

Samantha:

Yeah! (laughs) I wasn't, in fact I was such a – I wanna make sure I hit the right words here – I was just inhibited, I was – with my own – “Who's gonna – who's gonna want to read my words” – all these insecure thoughts we have, and I thought, “Well, I'll just get this out, and I'm gonna put it in my safe, and one day, when I'm long gone, my children will read it and who knows what they'll do with it, but I'll be gone by then.” Me, I was that closed off inside of myself. And so, I k – I thought – then, once I read it, I thought, “Well, there's beauty here.” There's raw beauty on just what it is to be human and to be scared and to feel you have something of purpose, but not knowing if you really believe in yourself to do it, and – and I started to see the purpose. And all of a sudden, while I was editing it, halfway through, I – I stopped, and I – I looked up out the window, and I prayed, and I said, “This, right here, is what I wanna do with the rest of my life.” And as it kept unfolding, it kept unfolding, it branched out, and now, with the sequel, *Chasing Nirvana*, it really does deal with how we're – so many of us are unhappy with ourselves, we have a hard time recognizing our – our value, our – our beauty, our inner beauty, and – and that's pretty much what now is in every book I write, and my – my blog posts, it's – it's very much about the real human struggle that so many of us have, and – and I've been there. I've walked that. I'm still walking it. And – and I think I – I enjoy –

Angela:

By the way, for people listening, if you go to [bysamanthahoffman.com](http://bysamanthahoffman.com), that's b-y, like, by Samantha Hoffman –

Samantha:

Right.

Angela:

– dot com, they can see a little bit more about the book, and the sequel, and then I think there's a link to your blog there.

Samantha:

There is, and I can go straight to the blog to sanesamantha.com, s-a-n-e samantha.com, and it's ...

Angela:

sanessamantha.com ...

Samantha:

... My e-mail address years ago was insanesamantha, and then, somewhere along the line, I thought, "You know, I think I'm gonna switch that over." (laughs)

Angela:

Or maybe there's just both of you lingering inside that.

Samantha:

It is a fine line. (laughs)

Angela:

So, how did you decide – I – I'm definitely one of the – one of the emotions or feelings that you brought up with the "Who am I to write this book?"

Samantha:

Mm-hmm.

Angela:

And sort of questioning – there's so many great voices out there, so many great books out there – why – why am I going to add my voice to that mix, what do I have to say that's unique?

Samantha:

Mm-hmm.

Angela:

I know this book sort of wrote itself, this book told you it needed to be written, but I'm guessing it didn't publish itself.

Samantha:

No.

Angela:

So, how did you make the decision to go to the next step and get it edited and published?

Samantha:

Yeah, and don't think I didn't have a talk with God about that, because – (laughs)

Angela:

Okay. (laughs)

Samantha:

I laugh, you're so kind as to help me – w – in – no book has flowed quite like that one since, but – things do fall into line, or at least it did for me. I pray a lot, meditate a lot about things, and I try to really listen to my inner voice and muddle through that way, but sometimes it's with grace and sometimes it's by falling down and discovering what's there, but I – the right – certain people kinda came into my life, and I – and I ended up meeting someone who was an editor, retired, but – and – and he was talking about the – the publishing world right now, and he knew how strong I was connected with my voice. That – that's pretty much my point, is, we all have a valid, beautiful voice, don't change it. And often, as a new writer, we do, because we want so much to be heard, and we kind of don't know if we really believe in ourselves yet, and when he said – so, he was the one who encouraged me to be an indie author, to just self-publish, go that route, get your feet back, develop your f – your – your following, your base. And – and I trusted him. And then, I – I went that route, and I don't regret it. I've met so many wonderful people, so now, I – I've heard from all different kinds of published authors, and I – I look at the way I've done this, and right now, in my life, this is good, I want to take it to the next level, but I'm very happy that I started this way, because it r – required of me to believe in myself.

Angela:

And so, you decided to work with an editor that you found on your own, and you worked with – did you work – well, how did you publish your book? Who – who did you work – did you find a company, or how did you do it?

Samantha:

I – no, I did – you can, there's a lot of really great little boutique publishers you can use that – that kinda help you along the way. I'm a "jump with your feet, learn as I go" kinda gal, (sound of dog barking in the background) and – oh, that's funny, I have a dog here (laughs) – and – but – it – I studied and researched and I started up my publishing – Two Dog Press, and all of my books are under that, and I went through Lightning Source, the distributor, Ingram, and the other ones most large publishing companies use, and I also work with people independently. And you don't have to be a big company to use them and have the same quality book and the same distribution chain, as far as making it accessible, so I – I did it all myself.

Angela:

And when you worked with Lightning Source, were you – did you – did you sell books, have you sold directly, like during speaking engagements, or do you just mostly sell through online channels?

Samantha:

Y – well – I’ve done both –

Angela:

Or a combination?

Samantha:

Yeah, it – it would definitely be a combination. Anything local’s nice, ... nothing better than when the bookstore calls you up and asks for you to run more books to them, you know what I mean? (laughs) It’s just ...

Angela:

Yup, that ....

Samantha:

And – but they – it’s also available – people feel good, knowing you can get it at Barnes and Noble, online and Amazon and those things, and e-books –

Angela:

Mm-hmm.

Samantha:

– having it all available through that version, too, and so, it kind of – people come at it from, “I have it available on all those fronts,” and – and people seem to be using all of them.

Angela:

So, what is the thing about the publishing process, going through self-publishing and really starting your own publishing company and teaching yourself – what were – what were some of the biggest challenges that you faced, things maybe that you wished you knew before you started, ‘cause a lot of people are starting down this road?

Samantha:

Exposure. I – I was just speaking with a close friend of mine who also has a book and – out, and it’s exposure. I think there are so many wonderful books out there, phenomenal writers with a – a great message, that are sitting there unseen. We – we don’t know of them, and then so many that, maybe, aren’t of that – quite that – a lotta writers is a lot of junk out there, too – I don’t know, I don’t really wanna say any of it’s junk, but – but sometimes, you look and think, “How’d that book get – there, and not this one?” And you wonder.

Angela:

Mm-hmm. So, what's something that you have learned, through your process, about exposure that you didn't know at the beginning, something that you can pass on to somebody who's at the beginning of this journey?

Samantha:

How vitally important it is to – to network, to – to try to get yourself – you – I mean, I love the notion of just sitting and writing – all day, and never really leaving my home, (laughs) but you have to go to places, go to book events, start talking to the people, have lots of exposure, and online is where it's at, a lot, to – now, too, in addition to the conferences and writers' groups and things like that. You – you need to build that up, build it up, build it up, and that is almost – that has been more work than writing for me, 'cause writing, I – I just sit, and that's my love, that's my bliss, my joy, the other, that's the work I do, in my opinion.

Angela:

Mmm.

Samantha:

And it's so important, because people aren't gonna find about you. You – they – they might think you're the next greatest thing, but they just simply don't know you're there.

Angela:

Right.

Samantha:

You have to – you can't be timid.

Angela:

So, what's the most effective thing that you've done? W – what worked the best?

Samantha:

Hmm, ooh. I think – it would be a few things, but I – Twitter, I know, was all the buzz at the Book Expo in New York last year, as that's just a great place for interaction – really talking with people back and forth. I'm not that good at that. I think Facebook is a really good thing, getting it out – blogging.

Angela:

Mm-hmm.

Samantha:

Now, most writers, they have that blog, because it keeps them right there, and it gives people another sense of how they write. And so, you just kinda have to – I think those online things

would be the – I'm not as big into book signings, 'cause if they don't know you, they – they walk in and wonder, who's this person sitting here, you know? (laughs) And so, you kinda – that doesn't seem to have quite the effect as Facebook, Facebook ads. That was something I did. And they have wonderful campaigns, Facebook does, and they have it all ...

Angela:

And did you – did you – did you place ads on Facebook?

Samantha:

I did. I did that for a ...

Angela:

And how does that –

Samantha:

I noticed an increase. Again, it's that exposure, you go from being unknown to them peppering it out, to – you pick your target audience –

Angela:

Mm-hmm.

Samantha:

– and – and it appears before them, and it really doesn't get a whole lot sweeter than that, and I think that's even better than an ad in the magazine, truthfully.

Angela:

Interesting. And so, what are some of the things that you've tried – obviously, we all – life is a journey, and not – not everything we're gonna do is gonna be effective right out of the gate. So, what are some of the things you've tried that, maybe, you thought were a waste of money or a waste of time or, if you had to do it all over again, you wouldn't do that again? To save people from the mistakes you made?

Samantha:

Yeah, um – right! I'll save them a few grand. (laughs)

Angela:

Okay, go! ...

Samantha:

For me, and – and it's just for me, although I – I have someone who would say the same thing – is the publicist. I – I sunk a great deal of money into that, 'cause I, of course, believed in my book, and you're assuming everybody's gonna look at it and – and love it, and the problem is, and I have the hardest kind of book to market, fiction – women's fiction, is – but – is – they're

trying to get this one book to these people, whether it's a magazine, or – everyone wants to be on Oprah, on the OWN network on some level – well, there's – they're inundated with books. And – and it – all those – all the efforts of the publicist, and I really believe she did a lot, didn't pay off. I didn't get hardly anything from it, and then, in talking with other people, they say the same, and I think it's because they just get this – they're bombarded with so many books, and not to say that – that yours or – if you – or anybody's wouldn't be a standout, but that was – that was my biggest financial loss, was the money I hired for a publicist.

Angela:

Wow. And I think a lot of people are – really wanna get the word out about their book, and they feel like, "I'm gonna make this commitment to spend some money on this, because it'll have a payoff" –

Samantha:

Mm-hmm.

Angela:

– and so, they're not – it always feels good to be able to outsource the – the part of being an author you don't like –

Samantha:

Yeah.

Angela:

– and it's – the publicity stuff people are always looking for, like, "Who can I get to do this for me?"

Samantha:

Mm-hmm.

Angela:

I think one of the big secrets of being an author is that you really have to really come to own that promotional role yourself, 'cause no one's gonna – no one's gonna do it for you, really, ultimately, no one can do it for you.

Samantha:

Right. Right. I – I so agree, and there's really no one else who can do it better. Really.

Angela:

Right.

Samantha:

It's like, I think so many of those writers were the last ones to throw our arm in the air and say, "Look at me, look at me!" We tend to wanna just be writers. And so, it kinda goes against us, or at least some of us, I know it does me, but in the – looking back, I think I've had the best return when I sold my book, when I was the voice, when I was the one talking about it, because they get a feel for you, and either they're gonna like you or they're not, but the publicist, or at least in my case, it just – it was – my book was just one out of so many, and it just didn't have the payoff, and that's hard.

Angela:

Right.

Samantha:

Because you don't make a ton of money out of every book anyway, let alone sell a few that you invested a few thousand.

Angela:

Yeah. So, okay, those great pieces of advice, so, let's talk about outcomes. You've had your book out for a couple of years now, and I know you've had multiple books, why don't you tell me some of the – concrete outcomes of having a book? What are some things that are different in your life now after becoming an author?

Samantha:

I'm secure within myself as to my purpose, as to what – what I'm supposed to do, I think, in the beginning, I was a little wishy-washy on it, and I wasn't certain, I wasn't sure of my own skills, and my – my ability to really do this, you can wanna do it, and – but you don't know if you can. I know I can. And I think that's the biggest thing I could, in many ways, die a happy woman now. (laughs)

Angela:

Hmm. That's ...

Samantha:

Not that I want to die right now. (laughs)

Angela:

No, no, I – I get your point, yeah. ... complete.

Samantha:

...

Angela:

What about, just in terms of more, like, concrete things, are there people you've met, or speaking opportunities you've had, or book signings you've been in, what are some of the, kinda concrete outcomes of having a book?

Samantha:

The not-so-personal – everything is so spiritual and personal for me, I always kinda go to that. It would be – it would be, again, the – in having to speak about the book, in my process of how it came about, the concrete would be my career path, would be again – I – I've met so many wonderful people, and for the most part, over ninety percent of them are in ali – in alignment with where I'm coming from – personal empowerment and things like that. They keep coming in, and so – in that – and then, that networking kinda keeps expanding and expanding, the more things you do, so those would be – or at least as close as I can get to answer your question, the most concrete things is watching the unfolding and the – the meeting of these really great people, and ...

Angela:

And are there – are there certain connections you made, you've made, maybe with certain groups, or partnerships, or are there conversations you've had with people who have been affected by reading your book? Just trying to have some specific outcomes, so that people can get a sense of things that happened, maybe, that you didn't expect?

Samantha:

Y – um –

Angela:

About your book, it wouldn't have happened, you got a phone call out of the blue, you're interviewed for a radio show, I don't know, you know.

Samantha:

Yeah – trying to think – i – because of my book, I – it's – yeah, it's amazing, some of the people that – that I have met, and the knowledge I've gained, that I wouldn't have, otherwise. If I didn't have this book, I wouldn't have – after I wrote the book, I took a week, and I went to my – my first vacation, I gave myself, actually in all my forty years, but – to California, and then occurrences happened, and I met this woman – wonderful woman, and she was the creator of the Love Book series – *Love Boat* series, Love Book – *Love Boat*.

Angela:

Wow!

Samantha:

And – and just a dynamic woman. And – and she talked to me about it, and about the writing, and she's the one who then connected me with her editor, who was the one I then spoke with and who gave me the advice. And – so, it's a lot of this "connect the dots" for me.

Angela:

Right.

Samantha:

And – and I knew I was onto something, and I felt so blessed by meeting these great people.

Angela:

Yeah, I think that's a great example, because I think, without a book, it's possible you would meet – those people, but it does seem like, when you have a book, it opens up conversations and connections.

Samantha:

Mm-hmm.

Angela:

And – in a way that is often unexpected.

Samantha:

Yeah.

Angela:

... feedback. Well, in our last coupla minutes, what I wanna do is just talk about, if you – and maybe this has happened to you, but if you were talking to somebody who wanted to write their first book, but they were somehow running into obstacles, they were unable to finish it, they started it and they didn't finish, or they said they were gonna start it and they didn't finish – what's some advice, if you were talking to them, that – having gone through – having gone through what you have been through over the last four years or so, what's advice that you would give to them?

Samantha:

Don't give up. I know that sounds glib and oversaid, but it's true, and I think we do best when we lighten up on ourselves. I – I know that, when I clamp down, and I – I get almost frightened – I have to get this down, this – it has to be perfect, and I start putting these hard rules on myself, well, that shuts off my flow, my – my creative flow, and so, I'd say if it's meant to be, go do it, don't give up, but lighten up on yourself. Allow it to flow, and it usually will. You have to center yourself and – and – and believe that you can. See it done. I did that. I printed up the darned cover of my book, like a ... one, and I wrapped it around a – a different book, and I set

it in front of me, and I – I – that – that's it, finished. And that was during the editing phase. And – because that was very arduous for me, editing it.

Angela:  
Hmm.

Samantha:  
And so – see it done, believe you can do it, and then lighten up on yourself.

Angela:  
And are there places in your other books where you have had some challenges, where you've had – where Lightning has – has worked for you? Can you give us any examples of that?

Samantha:  
It – *Chasing Nirvana* came out differently, and I – the title came before the darned book! I – and I realized, in many ways, I was chasing Nirvana, where – Nirvana's inside of us, and so – and that's very much kind of what's in the book, but – subtly, but you do! You have to get in the right state of mind, I have two of my – of three, or – of five children's books in the series, five in the series, two are written – we have to be in the right state of mind to think like a ten-year-old. (laughs)

Angela:  
Mm-hmm.

Samantha:  
Write 'em like that, and so you can't be in the middle of a legal battle, and – or I can't, I should say, and do – so, go easy on yourself, and I have, some stuff has to sit and wait. And – and if it's meant to be, just trust that it will happen. And I think if we do trust it and let it go, then it does come back much easier.

Angela:  
Mmm, yeah. I think that's great. That's great feedback. Well, so, Suzanna's books that we have talked about today, two novels, and they're – the – they're a series, right?

Samantha:  
Mmm. Just two of the novels, and then the children's book series, there's two in it.

Angela:  
But the – but the two novels are – it's a sequel, or – right?

Samantha:  
Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Angela:

... Okay, *A Contented Mind* –

Samantha:

Mm-hmm.

Angela:

– is love, hope and the complicated mess of redesigning one's life, and then the sequel to that, *Chasing Nirvana*.

Samantha:

Mm-hmm.

Angela:

And then, she also has the children's book series, *Dainty Delaney* –

Samantha:

Mm-hmm.

Angela:

– and there's a couple – there's a couple of books in that series, *Dainty Delaney and the Carnival Shoes*, and *Dainty Delaney and Ol' Blue*. So, you can check those out on [bysamanthahoffman.com](http://bysamanthahoffman.com), you can probably also look up Samantha Hoffman on Amazon. So, Samantha, thank you so much for being with us on Book Journeys Radio.

Samantha:

Oh, well, thank you for having me!