

STRENGTH,  
*Sparkle*  
 & SUNRISE!  
 Samantha  
*Armytage*

She's one of our most recognised television stars, yet Samantha Armytage has an authenticity and a natural ability to connect with breakfast viewers each and every week. *Imogen A. Rose* sat down with Sam to chat about her "ultimate job" and making the most of life!

Samantha Armytage is one of the most significant women within the Australian media landscape. Since graduating from Charles Sturt University with a Communications Degree, the 41-year-old has enjoyed a fast-paced rise to the top. She's a woman of substantial ability, but most importantly, a woman who wants to make a positive difference.

In 2013, Sam joined *Sunrise* stalwart, David "Kochie" Koch, as co-host of the nation's number 1 Breakfast program, succeeding long-serving co-host, Melissa Doyle, and securing one of the most sought-after jobs in Australian television.

A change of hosts generally carries a degree of risk, but Sam has that special something. Upon meeting her, one finds an inner and outer strength and sparkle. She walks and talks with a confidence borne of professionalism and experience. She also radiates a glow, borne of an inner light.

She has brought a dynamic vitality to her role, a definite charm, and intelligence. She has also retained an authenticity and originality which has resonated with viewers.

Sam began her career with WIN Television in Canberra before working in the Canberra Press Gallery, becoming the Chief Political Correspondent for *Sky News*.

She has been with the Seven Network for some 15 years, including almost 7 years alongside Andrew O'Keefe as co-host of *Weekend Sunrise*.

In many ways the move from *Weekend Sunrise* to *Sunrise* might be seen as a natural progression, however, Sam was genuinely surprised to be asked to fill the role of co-host. She takes nothing for granted and remembers thinking "Really?!". She quickly embraced the opportunity with dedication and passion. Indeed, she remains enthusiastic describing her role as "the ultimate job!".

For Sam, the most enjoyable part of her job is meeting viewers, meeting "the real people". She is much more interested in the average Australian than the latest celebrity.

In terms of challenges, she notes that we live in a very "online" and "reactive" world which requires her, and Kochie, to form opinions very quickly. Sam

says "this presents enormous challenges because you're thinking on your feet. It's very easy to slip-up".

Despite this pressure, she maintains it's important to remain true to oneself.

"I am who I am, I say what I say. I'm not there to be beige", Sam establishes.

Furthermore, she has made her mark as an equal at the desk. It's one thing to be granted a superb opportunity and another to ensure that you level the playing field with an accomplished, high-performing co-host like Kochie. What's more she has done so in her own way - a striking balance of femininity, wit and strength.

She and Kochie work together in expert partnership. They may not always agree with one another, but their relationship is one of respect - personal and professional.

She remarks that the "considerable age gap" and that the pair are at "completely different stages in life" makes her "extra proud of the fact that we get on!".

Despite her credentials, Sam has frequently had to endure an almost obsessional focus on tripe. It's an unfortunate reflection of a world that, at times, still views women and men, through very different lenses.

She acknowledges, "I'm not going to pretend that it's been all fabulous and fairy floss. I've had my moments and I'll ring Mum in tears". However, her nature is such that disparagement fundamentally fuels her determination.

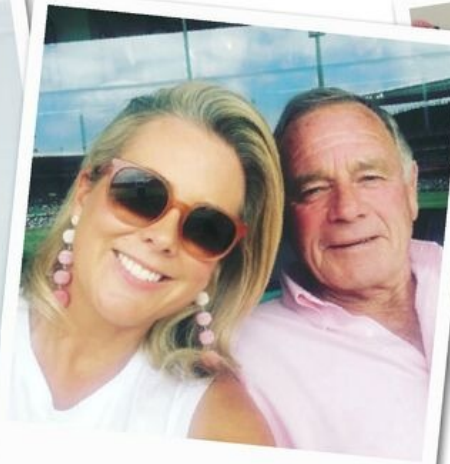
Furthermore, she uses her experiences to mentor girls at school.

"When someone's bullying you, picking on you, being mean to you or singling you out, it's usually because they're jealous", Sam says.

She emphasises the need to be "happy in yourself".

Sam's highly successful book, *Shine*, is a terrific example of her ability to utilise her experiences to encourage others to get the most out of their lives.





She suddenly found herself in "this huge job, with a voice" where "people were listening to me, asking me for advice" and seeing her as a "role model". This was not something she ever expected. However, it inspired her to write *Shine*, in something of a "big sister" way.

She says, "There's a lot of girls out there who've been through the same things as me, breaking-up with boyfriends, worrying about their weight, having a career, having it all."

"It's tricky to navigate, so I think you just share what you can and hope somebody reads it".

Within a matter of weeks, *Shine* hit the best-seller list as readers connected with its positive, thoughtful message. The book is reflective of Sam who has a benevolent spirit and a desire to support other women.

She says there is the need for "resilience", to be "calm and in control" constantly reminding readers that life is about choices.

"You have a choice how you live every day", Sam affirms.

Sam is very much a woman in control of her own life. Like many, she struggles with finding that elusive state of "balance". However, she has a more important sense of balance – one of priorities and perspective.

Thus, she values her job but it's not what defines her. Sam explains, "if it all ended tomorrow I'd be fine and I think that is where you need to be because if your life is television and your identity is wrapped up too much in what you do for a living – it's very dangerous and a bit sad".

This sense of psychological equilibrium is evident in the fact that though ambitious, she is not ruthless, though interested in her appearance, she would rather be strong and healthy than tired and too thin, and though hopeful of romantic fulfilment, she believes that you must be "the person who makes your own life complete".

Essentially, Sam is conscious of the important things in life. She treasures family, friends, good health, honesty and loyalty. She has a great sense of fun and loves "being a bit immature".

She also believes it's important for women to be strong and feminine saying, "It's really important to me that we retain our femininity".

Sam is encouraged by the current women's movement noting that "for years I've been in this masculine A-type world and I've really tried hard to keep a feminine voice, not turn into a man, behave like a man – like I saw a lot of women do in my career in the early days".

It's an issue that is important to her though she recognises the place of men and cautions against reverting to any state of gender imbalance.

Sam has demonstrated frankness and patience regarding the interest in her personal life. This includes her hopes of marriage and motherhood though she concedes she does not know if it is her "path".

She says, "I didn't find a husband at 21 and that's okay".

She is not confined or controlled by opinions or expectations. This is no easy feat as so often in life one is weighed down – consciously or

subconsciously - by expectations (often only perceived expectations) of where one should be, of whom one should be. It can be dangerously and wastefully debilitating.

This sense of security, strength of character and resolve to embrace her path is an inspiration to many. It's a confidence and optimism that she believes stems largely from her upbringing and her parents, adding that she's been "pretty busy for the last twenty odd years".

She says of her future, "I don't know what's to come and that's exciting".

She remains deeply connected to her family, nature, and country heritage. Sam grew up at Bolero Station in Adaminaby, where it is thought Banjo Paterson found inspiration for *The Man from Snowy River*.

She describes an "idyllic childhood" and returns to the country "for peace and sanctuary".

Sam has a younger sister and brother. She says, "We were very lucky. It was very simple but it was beautiful and safe".

It's the simple things with which she finds great joy.

"There is nothing that makes me happier than picking a bunch of flowers out of my own garden and putting them in a vase", she smiles.

Interestingly, her current happy state "was not the plan at all!".

"At school, this was not at all what I had dreamed of, and there's still some things to add – but they'll come", she insists.

She is incredibly focused and capable with a palpable, calm diligence that one suspects enables her to seize the moment when the right opportunity arrives.

One of Sam's most inspiring qualities is that she is aware of the power of the individual. She doesn't pretend to be perfect, or have all the answers, but she does engage her gifts and encourages others to do the same. She doesn't whinge or make excuses – despite the fact it has become increasingly difficult to retain a private life. She simply gets on with her job, and indeed, her life. It's an

attitude that has served her well and a reminder that life really is what you make of it – and sometimes it works out even better than the plan!

*"I am who I am, I say what I say. I'm not there to be beige"*

#### ABOUT /

#### Imogen A. Rose

Imogen A. Rose is a writer based in Brisbane. She is a Director of Rose Media.

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