

Swimming with Elephants

My Unexpected Pilgrimage from Physician to Healer

Sarah Bamford Seidelmann

"A fascinating, amusing, and wise account of how someone born with a shaman's predilections, raised in a rationalist culture, finds her way back to her true self." —Martha Beck, *New York Times* bestselling author

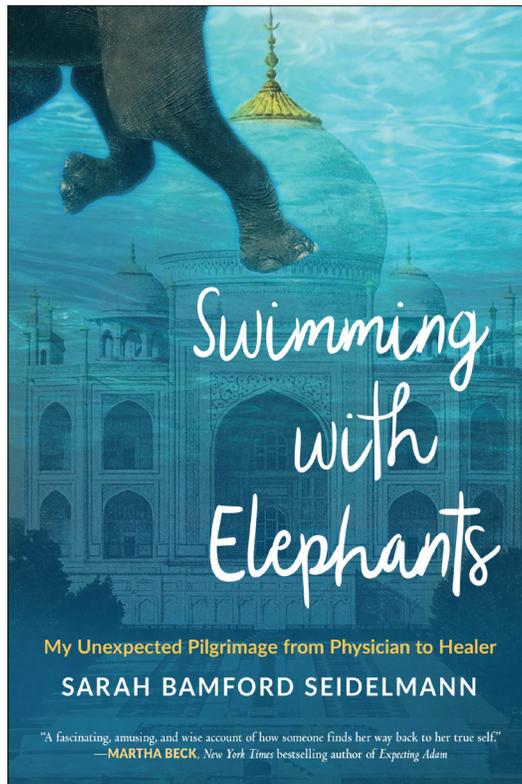
WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"This is an exceedingly vulnerable, beautifully written book and the most genuine spiritual memoir I have ever read. It is also—in many hilarious moments—laugh out loud funny." —**Maria Bamford**, Comedian and star of Netflix Original Series *Lady Dynamite*

BOOK SYNOPSIS

After two decades in the study and practice of medicine, Sarah Seidelmann took a 3-month sabbatical to search for a way to feel good again. Having witnessed human suffering early in her career and within her own family, she longed for a way to address more than just the physical needs of her patients and to live in a lighter, more conscious way.

Swimming with Elephants tells the eccentric, sometimes poignant, and occasionally hilarious experience of a working mother undergoing a bewildering vocational shift from physician to shamanic healer. During that tumultuous period of answering her call, Sarah met an elephant who would become an important spirit companion on her journey, had bones thrown for her by a shaman in South Africa, and traveled to India for an ancient Hindu pilgrimage, where she received the blessing she had been longing for. Ultimately, she discovered an entirely different way of healing, one that she had always aspired to and that enabled her to help those who are suffering.



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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Bamford Seidelmann is a fourth-generation physician turned shamanic healer and life coach, who deeply enjoys

shenanigans. She's a frequent guest blogger at Maria Shriver's site for Architects of Change and has led sold-out retreats combining surfing and shamanism in Hawaii and a sacred pachydermal pilgrimage to Thailand. She loves to help others find their own "feel good" so they can live courageously and enthusiastically.

SOCIAL MEDIA

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A FASCINATING STORY OF HOW ONE WOMAN FOUND HER TRUE CALLING BY FOLLOWING HER FEEL GOOD

The Introduction to *Swimming with Elephants*

I was gently eased into chaos by a sneaking sensation that I was no longer doing the work I was meant to do. My career in medicine, which had formerly thrilled me, began to feel like a prison. As it turned out, the door to my metaphorical jail cell had always been ajar, waiting for me to leave it and explore. Instead of wandering out, I could have chosen to re-upholster my office chair in an adorable European chintz with a pattern of dancing pugs—pugs, after all, are incredibly whimsical. Through my lifelong enthusiasm for interior design, I knew that changing a room could change your life. At some point, however, I realized that it would be dangerous for me to stay. Material shifts are useful; but only changes at the level of spirit endure.

What my soul truly craved was freedom.

I was dying—at least, the externally driven, Board-certified part of me was dying. I felt called to do something else. Precisely what that something else was, however, eluded me. I knew something was wrong, and I was filled with self-doubt.

Eventually, I left medicine to pursue a radically different path. What did I do to arrive at that path? A better question might be, what didn't I do?

I danced with sacred stones, meditated with mantras, faced my shadow, spent dozens of hours traveling to sacred realms via drumbeat to meet helpful spirits, tramped on trails while communicating with the wild, embraced a rescued mustang, lay on a tarp in the desert examined by twelve strangers, sold half of our possessions in a public sale, and had bones thrown for me by African shamans.

All of these strange activities played an important part in the messy process of finding my connection to the Divine and learning to trust its guidance. Most people, my friend Suzi teases me, would never have taken these extreme measures. Others may not long to cavort with a gazillion Hindu pilgrims on the banks of the Ganges River, but my hope is that my story inspires you, dear reader, to find your own path to freedom.

With hindsight, I recognize that my distress with others' suffering was my call to the Hero's journey. Faced with the enormity of my discomfort, I refused at first. It took me years to understand how to change my answer from "no" to "yes."

If you decide to say "yes" to your own soul's calling, I've got one question for you:

How good are you willing to let it get?

"I loved this book. Sarah takes us on an intimate tour of the Hero's journey. She's a brilliant storyteller—making sense of the baffling journey from the ordinary world into the mystical and back again. I didn't want it to end." —Mei Mei Fox, *New York Times* bestselling author

"From the lakes of Minnesota to the Ganges River in India, Sarah Seidelmann's transformative journey from MD to shamanistic healer is a refreshingly honest and very funny tale of spiritual growth." —Matt Adrian, author of *The Guide to Troubled Birds*