Samantha Yammine

PhD candidate & science communicator

Hometown: Toronto

Samantha Yammine is a motivated, early career researcher and science communicator who specializes in brain development and stem cell biology at the University of Toronto. A strong advocate for diversity in STEM fields and for science engagement, Samantha has built large followings through her social media profiles on Twitter and Instagram.

Who is your female role model in the science sector?

My desk in the lab has pictures of my family, close friends, and a few of my science role models, including the late Dr. Maryam Mirzakhani and Dr. Rita Levi-Montalcini. They both made hugely important contributions to their fields (mathematics and neuroscience, respectively), despite unjust systemic barriers in their home countries. I am also greatly inspired by Dr. Imogen Coe for her incredible commitment to making science more equitable, inclusive, and diverse.

What has been your career highlight?

One of my current projects in the lab involves validating a hypothesis about neural stem cells existing in more states than previously thought. I put together a lot of this hypothesis on my own and my supervisor, Dr. Derek van der Kooy, has been hugely supportive in letting me follow my hunch to do any and all experiments to test it. The intellectual freedom and empowerment to pursue personal curiosities has been a tremendous highlight of my academic career thus far, and is something I am incredibly grateful for. I also really appreciate the opportunities I've had to share the highlights of my research with those outside academia, both in person at local events and online through social media.

What career advice do you have for the next generation?

"Do you." It's cliché and millennial but it's important. Forget what people say you should and shouldn't do and follow what makes you happy.

Don't compare yourself to others. First of all, we are all unreliable narrators, especially when it comes to topics they're nervous about, like careers. You also don't have the same level of data on other people as you have on yourself, so there's a major sample bias and it's a bad experiment.

Do experiment with different career options. Collect that negative data to explore what you like and don't like. Pay attention to what you naturally gravitate towards and see if you can make a career out of it (even if that career doesn't exist yet). The future is flexible, so make sure you fill up the space you deserve in it.

Don't do it alone. Find people who will support you and be your champion when you need it most. Surround yourself with people who raise you up, and do the same for your friends.

Unsubscribe/Unfollow/Block/Delete anyone who doesn't make you feel like you can do anything in the world.