

## **Sawbones 289: Hydrotherapy**

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**Clint:** Sawbones is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music plays]

**Justin:** Hello everybody, and welcome to Sawbones, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your co-host, Justin McElroy.

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Sydnee:** And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Audience:** [cheers louder]

**Sydnee:** Thank you. [laughs]

**Justin:** I turned my chair around, 'cause I thought we'd connect more, and you'd cheer for me louder.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Didn't work out that time. Uh, hi everyone. Hello, and welcome to Atlanta.

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Sydnee:** Unless you already live here, then y'know...

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Justin:** We have spent a lot of time here in Atlanta, and Georgia, of course. This is our third, I think, show here?

**Sydnee:** I believe that's... yes.

**Justin:** Just here specifically at the Cobb, and...

**Sydnee:** We love coming to Atlanta, not just because it is one of the few direct flights we can get from West Virginia...

**Justin:** That's huge. That's huge, though.

**Sydnee:** But that's—I mean, that's big. But we also just love coming here. It's the home of the CDC, so I mean...

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Sydnee:** Big fan. Big fan.

**Justin:** And I'm just gonna go ahead and say it – the best aquarium in the country.

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Sydnee:** That is very true.

**Justin:** Sorry. Sorry. Now they're making it bigger, which is great, 'cause I mean, it's already the best, so... sorry about every other aquarium. Just give up and stop trying. Were you going somewhere with this, or...

**Sydnee:** No. I—I didn't—you were talking about the aquarium getting bigger. I didn't know where... yeah, that's not...

**Justin:** Yeah, I don't know what they're gonna put there.

**Sydnee:** We're not talking about fish.

**Justin:** I tried to get Sydnee to talk to me about what she thought was gonna go there, and she said probably fish.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** She said it'd be weird for them to put land stuff there. And I tried to engage her about what the relative size of the fish that will go there would be...

**Sydnee:** Sharks, is what they're saying.

**Justin:** Yeah. Are you the aquarium?

**Sydnee:** The people are saying sharks.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** I hope it's sharks too, person. There. I hope it is sharks as well. They're rad.

**Sydnee:** They're capitalizing on the baby sharks, y'know.

**Justin:** Yeah, we'll have some baby sharks in there.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Justin:** But we've done all your sight seeings at this point.

**Sydnee:** Yes. We, uh... whenever we go somewhere on the road, we like to try to do a topic that is somehow relevant to the area where we are, and it gets harder when we keep coming back to the same place to find new, interesting things to talk about. So I reached out to a friend of mine who's

from Atlanta, and I was like, "Hey, Caroline, you got any thoughts?" And she had some ideas. Her parents actually gave her some ideas, which is where our topic came from this time.

But I'm not... I was a little nervous, 'cause Caroline also suggested that my 18-month-old and my five-year-old, who are not allowed to drink soda, would very much like the World of Coke. And we did... [laughs] We did that today, and it was super cool. We liked it.

**Justin:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** But it's really hard to take your kids to what Charlie kept calling 'a soda park,' and then say, "But you can't drink that."

**Justin:** You can't have that.

**Sydnee:** It's just for mommy and daddy.

**Justin:** Yeah. On the plus side, my 18-month-old is now addicted to a Honduran grape soda.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] And I was like—I didn't want to be that person while you're out going, "Does this have caffeine?"

**Justin:** "Scuse me..."

**Sydnee:** "Is that one... never mind."

**Justin:** "Excuse me. Does the Japanese Fanta with the cucumber in it have caffeine?"

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** It was great, though. It was great. We love Coke.

**Justin:** It was great. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** But that's not what we're gonna talk—we already did that show here.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** We're gonna talk about hydrotherapy. Which, it's weird we've never talked about this before, 'cause it's like, a huge chunk of medicine for a long time was like, "I don't know, water?" But it's especially relevant because of Warm Springs, Georgia, which is not too far away. Uh, which was a big... I was gonna say hot spot, and that feels like a...

**Justin:** I love that. That's so good. Very punny.

**Sydnee:** I don't know about that. Uh, which was a popular attraction if you needed to take the waters for healing purposes. For medicinal purposes. So popular, of course, that FDR was a fan. And we'll get to that. But I wanted to start with the beginnings of why did we start thinking that like, a bath... which is great. Don't get me wrong. I'm gonna preface with that. I looove baths. I looove hot tubs. But why did we think that they were good for medicine?

And that probably starts with the fact that humans figured out, I would assume pretty early, that water was important.

**Justin:** To drink to live.

**Sydnee:** Like, for living purposes. [laughs] We know that. And it's—I love reading articles about this stuff, 'cause everybody's like, "We know that, because humans tended to cluster around rivers and lakes and oceans to build their towns." And it's like, well, also, we had to drink it to live.

**Justin:** Right. We know that because there are still humans, so we pieced this together. Water good.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** So we... [laughs] We figured that out pretty early on, that water was important. And because it was so important, it began to take on this kind of like, mystical, like, supernatural, super important quality that obviously became connected with life itself. And so, you can see where that would be a natural root for it to become a medicine of sorts.

In Mesopotamia, the doctor was called 'azu,' which translates to, roughly, the water connoisseur.

**Justin:** Oooh!

**Sydnee:** Which is kind of cool. [laughs]

**Justin:** You think, uhh, water... somebody being a water connoisseur is a cool...

**Sydnee:** Well...

**Justin:** Kind of a cool thing?

**Sydnee:** I mean, nobody calls me a connoisseur of anything.

**Justin:** That's not true. You're a connoisseur of soup.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** If I need advice on what soup to have, or like, what soups is best, I go to you, hands down, every time.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Um, Hippocrates was the first one...

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I'm just not gonna comment on that.

**Justin:** Yeah, you kind of... everybody I think in the room kind of thought you would name something that I know about.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh.

**Justin:** I think that's what we were all kind of waiting for.

**Sydnee:** Oh.

**Justin:** No, no, no, no, no. Don't do it now. The ship has sailed. Please go on with your lecture, Dr. McElroy.

**Sydnee:** Cereal.

**Justin:** Well, that's a gimme, Sydnee.

**Sydnee:** I mean, but I think everybody knows that, right?

**Justin:** Yeah, I did a podcast about it. Doesn't count if I already did a podcast about it, Syd.

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Sydnee:** Even before, though...

**Justin:** Yeah, that's fair.

**Sydnee:** Always. Even from when we were younger. I always knew you knew everything about cereal.

**Justin:** Well thank you, Sydnee, I appreciate that.

**Sydnee:** I don't know what Hippocrates knew about cereal, but I know that he loved water. And... [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And he wrote extensively about the... all of the uses for water. Like, you can get in it.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** You can get in it. You can put it in you.

**Sydnee:** You can put it in you. You can dump it on you. You can wipe it on you. You can wrap yourself in rags soaked in it.

**Justin:** Put it in a bucket above a door jam. That's an afternoon of hilarity for you and your friends.

**Sydnee:** He wrote a book, uh... one of his works was called On Airs, Waters, and Places. [laughs] Which I just love as a connection. Like, "What are you gonna title this?"

"I don't know. I wrote about... some air, and I wrote about some water... and then some places."

**Justin:** Sounds like the title of an Enya album.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] So he talks a lot there about, what is water good for? And some of it seems really obvious. Like, they knew that water, like, washed stuff off, because you can see that. So that was easy. And so, the thought was, well, it's really good for washing off impurities or toxins, or whatever the thought was. Whatever's making you sick, we could just douse you in water, and maybe we can go away, and that kind of makes sense. Especially for cleaning wounds. We figured that out pretty early, like, that cut looks pretty dirty. Wash it. [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Then it's clean. Excellent.



**Sydnee:** Which is pretty good for medicine. Uh, but he took it a step further... I mean, at that point. We're at any point sometimes. But he took it a step further, and he said, there are different temperatures of water, of course, and they can be used for different purposes. So really hot water would be good for like, your muscles or your joints. You would want to sit in a tub of super-hot water if your muscles were sore. Which, again, none of this sounds like... oh, okay, yeah. That sounds nice.

Um, if the problem was your stomach, if you have some constipation, or some indigestion, or anything like that, then you want to sit in a tub of warm water. Don't go for the hot, that's too much. Then you want to sit with the warm. If you have a fever or some kind of inflammation, you could sit in a tub of cool water. And then there was like, the cold water plunge, which was reserved for like, if you just need a little pep in your step.

**Justin:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Y'know? Like some vim and vigor. And it was very specific, like, you gotta be—don't let kids do this. It will make them—they'll have too much energy.

**Justin:** [laughs] It's—don't let your kids get in cold water, don't take them to World of Coke. Those are the two things.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Uh, and there was—and beyond this, and so, it was kind of like a nerve tonic or something to stimulate you. A cold water plunge. But beyond the temperature changes, they also... Hippocrates wrote about all different kinds of baths that you could take. So you could take, like, a whole body bath, which would just be like a bath. Y'know.

**Justin:** We call that a bath these days.

**Sydnee:** We call that a bath.

**Justin:** It's troubling that they had to come up with a name for that. A separate name for that kind of bath.

**Sydnee:** It's just like, a bath. Uh, or you could take like, a foot bath. You could probably figure that one out. Or like a sitz bath, which is not because you just sits in it, which is how I always... [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Would explain it to like, patients. Like, you want to take a sitz bath. You just sits in it. [laughs] It's like a bath. It's for the... down... down there.

**Justin:** Okay, but why is it called sitz, then?

**Sydnee:** It's like, named for somebody.

**Justin:** So you're telling me that the person that came up with sitting in the bath was not stoked, like, "Ohhh, I got the name! Ohhh, wait 'til you hear it! This is so good! I been sitting in this bath for two days! God, I hope this works! This is gonna be so funny if this works!"

**Sydnee:** Not really, it's just like a... I mean, I guess—y'know what's funny is like, a whole body... a whole bath, like a bath, is also kind of a sitz bath.

[pause]

**Justin:** Yeah, Syd, I guess.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Like the Venn diagram of sitz bath is like, inside... y'know?

**Justin:** You're basically talking about depth, right?

**Sydnee:** Every... well, no. Every sitz bath—no, every whole whole bath...

**Justin:** Every bath...

**Sydnee:** Is a sitz bath.

**Justin:** Is a sitz bath.

**Sydnee:** Anyway.

**Justin:** What about a sitz—

**Sydnee:** Not every sitz bath is a whole bath. You could also have the compressive bath, which is when you like... you've gotta soak towels in the water, too, and wrap them around whatever parts of your body you happen to be concerned about. And then you can also sit in the tub, but like, you've gotta have compression is part of it.

And then, there was something called a foment, which really just meant like, a medicinal bath, which all of them were, but it was just another word for if you used really warm waters on a specific part of the body that was like, wounded or had like, something that... an abscess that needed to open and drain. That could be called a foment.

Or, this could also be like, warmed lotions.

**Justin:** Hm. Nice.

**Sydnee:** We don't really do that anymore.

**Justin:** Sounds nice.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Yeah, I mean, that all sounds really—I mean, you can imagine why this was easy to like, sell people on. Like, yeah, okay. I'll take a bath.

**Justin:** Well, at this point in time, we were so dumb about medicine, like... just having something we knew didn't actively kill us made it medicinal in a sense.

**Sydnee:** And the general idea is, bathing was part of the Hippocratic regimen for balancing your humors.

**Justin:** Mmm.

**Sydnee:** So you have four humors. You don't, but we thought you did for a long time. [laughs] And you gotta keep them all balanced in order to maintain health. And along with like... I mean, most of the Hippocratic stuff was just like, eat a good diet, get plenty of exercise, get a good night's sleep, and bathe regularly.

**Justin:** Hm. Good rules to live by.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And you'll keep your humors in balance. Um, but it was also good for when you were sick, and it was recommended for... everything. If you have a nosebleed, we got a bath for that. If you have a fever, we got a bath for that. If you have a... one of the indications was 'worn out body.'

**Justin:** I hear that.

**Sydnee:** We got a bath.

**Justin:** Agreed. Agreed.

**Sydnee:** Um, but you had to be careful. Just like with any medicine, there were side effects. So if you have a fever, and you take a warm bath, you're gonna make it worse. Uh, you can actually induce something like constipation or indigestion if you take a cold bath. So you have to be careful. Baths are very powerful. [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Do you ever get worried about people like, editing these out for clips on Facebook or something like that? Like, "Prominent physician, Sydnee McElroy, says that taking a bath can give you constipation"

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** And it's just that quote.

**Sydnee:** Please don't do that. [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Hopefully somebody would Google more than that. Like, "When did she say... oh, she does a medical history podcast."

**Justin:** Yeah, that sounds like 2019. That sounds about right. Sounds like how people would do it.

**Sydnee:** Well, that's fair. Nobody's gonna do shit.

**Justin:** Hold on, that doesn't sound right! I'm going to look into it more, to find out the truth of it! Yeah, that sounds right. I have judgment. I'm gonna use it. Uuunlikelyyyy.

**Sydnee:** And these were all different—by the way, like, I'm talking about hydrotherapy, which was just like, water. Water is therapy. For medicinal purposes. But then there was like, specifically balneotherapy, which was bathing for medical purposes. And there was like, different... depending on what kind of water you use, like, you could call it, uh, thalassotherapy if it was from sea water.

**Justin:** Hmm.

**Sydnee:** Taking a bath in the ocean, you could just call it that. You're just in the ocean. And there were all—these were all different, too. Like, Hippocrates wrote about... now, if you're in, y'know, a river, here's what that's good for. And if it's fresh water as opposed to if you're in sea water, that's different. And if the water comes up from, y'know, a natural spring, that was a whole other medicinal value as well.

**Justin:** Okay. I don't believe it. I don't buy any of it.

**Sydnee:** No, no, I'm just saying, this was...

**Justin:** I think they were showing off, because they were so excited to find one thing that wasn't openly poisonous. Like, just all kinds of different cool ways to take baths. Like...

**Sydnee:** Well, and when they got into the specific, like, the... when they started talking about thermal springs, natural springs, water rising from the earth, that it's nice and has minerals and feels good. When they started to get into that stuff, that's where our old buddy Pliny the Elder really shines.

**Justin:** Yes!

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Sydnee:** In this story, because everybody was recommending, like, y'know, for this specific illness, you might want to go check out one of these springs. And he was like, "Well, listen. I'm gonna write this book called Natural History in which I document all things on earth that exist. All. All plants, all animals, all rocks, all rivers, all things. I'm gonna write about, and I'm gonna include in there a list of every spring I know about, and what it's good for, or what it's bad for."

And so, you could go to book two, chapter 106, called 'The Wonders of Fountains and Rivers,' and he has just listed all these... and it's so specific, 'cause he's like, "Now, this one has frogs. That's bad."

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "Don't go to the one that has frogs. This one's really good for wounds. This one isn't, but it tastes like wine all year round."

**Justin:** Why did we even make Yelp after this? We have all we need. We have Pliny's guide to springs.

**Sydnee:** That's really what it was! [laughs] He had one—he was like, "Now, there are three over here that will inevitably produce death... but without pain."

**Justin:** Oh, that's nice to know. That's convenient.

**Sydnee:** And then there was another one that he said, "Now, this one, if you bathe in this one, you will utter wonderful oracles. But it will also shorten your life."

**Justin:** Okay. Okay. I wish you—

**Sydnee:** Read to the end.

**Justin:** Wish—yeah, put that up front next time, Pliny.

**Sydnee:** So, that's like... you would think like, that chapter would—it would be outside of natural—like, everybody would be like, "Did you see the list of springs?"

**Justin:** "That was wild, wasn't it?"

**Sydnee:** "Has anybody else like, heard of this?"

**Justin:** "Did you see that weird old man made a whole list of all the different springs that can kill you? And now he's selling it to people. For real."

**Sydnee:** Uh, so, throughout the ancient world, and I mean, I've focused a lot on Greece and Rome. And the Romans were famous for their baths. I don't think it is shocking. We've talked a lot about the Roman baths. And also, they were kind of dirty. Like, 'cause there was all the dead skin floating in 'em, and people would eat in 'em... anyway. [laughs] So they were kind of dirty. But uh...

**Justin:** That's why people started peeling grapes, 'cause they're like, "Ugh. No thank you. I'm not eating the outside of this grape."

**Sydnee:** [laughing] I don't think they were also floating in the bath.

**Justin:** Come on...

**Sydnee:** I mean, I wasn't there.

**Justin:** Imagine how opulent that would look, if you just saw a bunch of purple boys comin' your way. Tell me you wouldn't be stoked.

**Audience:** [laughing]

**Justin:** "Hephestus, pass the carrots on down this way." Bloop bloop. Just float a bunch down there. Here they come! Swim out to get 'em!

[theme music plays]

**Justin:** Hey, all. Sorry to interrupt the show with a crass commercial messages. But in this case, I think you're gonna be extremely happy with this particular billing department, because we got two really great sponsors. Unlike usual, when we only have two really great sponsors.

This first ad is for Away. That's how professionals do it, right? That's the first thing to say. This is an ad for... I'm selling... [laughs] This next ad is about Away. Uh, if you travel much, or occasionally... if you travel at all, you want the very best luggage available. If you want something that was crafted by people who really care about this stuff and really think about travel, think about making it easier, this is, uh... I'd like to introduce you to Away.

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They're made from a German poly-carbonate that make them really tough. They have four 360 degree spinner wheels, makes them easy to navigate, and there's a TSA-approved combination lock. This is really good luggage. And I think it's, uh, very impressively priced, too, in my humble opinion.

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Without further any ado, let's get back to the show.

**Sydnee:** Now, so, really, throughout a lot of the ancient world, it was very common. Like, baths were an important part of not just for medicinal uses,

for relaxation and leisure, and for like, doing business and commerce. And y'know, the baths were a big part of your life.

And then, the middle ages happened.

**Justin:** Uh oh.

**Sydnee:** And long story short, everybody just stopped bathing. And the whole hydrotherapy idea was kind of lost for a while.

**Justin:** That's the middle ages, folks – the age we got nasty.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** Everything not only stopped, it went backwards for a little bit. They were like, "Ehh, we'll pick it back up later."

**Sydnee:** That's really... as I was looking through this, I was like, I can't find a lot for hydrotherapy in the middle ages. Like, what happened? 'Cause there are all these texts written about it. Like, this is what baths are good for, and the different baths and all this, and then like, nobody's doing it. And it's 'cause nobody was taking a bath. For years at a time sometimes, people weren't bathing. So...

**Justin:** The middle ages was like humanity's spring break. Where like, we're just gonna... we're just gonna take off for a little while. We're not gonna put too much pressure on ourselves. We'll come back to it in a few centuries.

**Sydnee:** And eventually—

**Justin:** Start trying to move things forward again.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] And eventually, we did. Eventually in the renaissance, people started to kind of uncover some of these other... these old texts, and like, read about bathing, and there begin to be some ideas that like, ehh, maybe we should... maybe we should bathe?

**Justin:** Did you read this? Look at this. On this... [blows] On this dusty old book. It says we're nasty? That's weird.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** There was a book... [laughs] De thermis published by Bocci...

**Justin:** I prefer De lunchbox. [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughs and cheers]

**Sydnee:** [pause] I know you so well that I didn't know that was coming, but I knew that was coming.

**Justin:** Yeah. So that's two things you're a connoisseur of.

**Sydnee:** You? [laughs]

**Justin:** Me. [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughing]

**Sydnee:** I'm a connoisseur of Justin McElroys, and I can tell you... this one's the best.

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Justin:** One of us is a very competent reporter in Vancouver, though.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Justin:** He's a good egg.

**Sydnee:** So, it contained 78 different conditions that might benefit from baths, which was like a great way of bringing baths back into fashion, 'cause

it's like, hey, nobody's bathing, but did you know if you have any one of these 78 illnesses, a bath might help you out?

Uh, and then that also introduced, like... beyond just bathing, like, we should also have drinking cures, which means, drink water. Which is—I mean, that's never bad advice. Um, but this book, this specific like, view of it took it a step further and was like, "Now, listen, though... for all of these drinking and bathing cures, you need to do it for 15 days straight, once a year, and you have to pair it with a quiet, orderly life and pleasant surroundings with good food and wine and maximum of comfort."

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Sydnee:** Which like, yeah, great if you can get it. I mean, yeah.

**Justin:** Yeah, that sounds excellent. For sure.

**Sydnee:** I don't know who was like, "No, I won't... mmm. I don't want any of that." And so, as this interest sprung up in bathing, and a lot of this was also like... it wasn't okay to be naked, even with yourself for a while? [laughs] Y'know, from like a moral standpoint. Then we were all like, "Oh, it's good to be naked again! We're okay with the nudity once again!"

And as people got more comfortable with like, "I can be nude and bathe. Um, it's fine. And maybe it's medicinal. That's cool too. And I like the way I smell a little more now." Then you started seeing some like, bathing centers spring up around Europe, and like, you could go and... and it was like, prescribed by a doctor. Like, hit the bathing center. Take a bath. [laughs] Relax. Enjoy yourself. But take a bath.

But it was all very serious. It was like a very, um...

**Justin:** Don't just flippantly take a bath.

**Sydnee:** Well, it was a very like, scientific approach to it. Like, this is very important. This is something we have neglected, and we're gonna welcome back into our medical practice, is bathing. And this... 'cause this kind of

changes as we move into the 1800s when things really take off, because like, just taking a bath isn't very sexy.

But then, if you can pair taking a bath with like, "We'll go to the baths, and it will be a luxurious spa-like experience, where like, we hang out in the mineral waters, and we get like, massages, and like, inhale, like, y'know, water vapor that is scented, and there are herbal things, and then we'll have like, dances also, and good food, and good drinks."

So like, you start to see that in the 1800s, it starts to move past this like, purely, it's for medical purposes, and into like, fun times.

**Justin:** Ahhh yeah.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** I got you now.

**Sydnee:** And it's funny, because if you look at like, the people who were like, spearheading this movement, the first guy who kind of started the... what we think about as like, the modern hydrotherapy movement, which really started in the 1800s, uh, Vincent Priessnitz... his perspective was not this. His idea was, what we can do is, throw people in a really cold bath, and it's gonna put their body into something called a crisis.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] And this is good.

**Justin:** Not a good start. Yeah. Oh, it's a good crisis.

**Sydnee:** It's a good crisis.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** Because the water is gonna get down in all those little cracks and crevasses all over your body, where all the secret dirt's hiding.

**Justin:** Okay.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** All the secret impurities.

**Justin:** It's a crisis for dirt.

**Sydnee:** It's a crisis for all the—yeah. Not just dirt, but like, all those secret things that we don't know what they're named yet. They're germs. But we're gonna get the water down in there, and then it's all gonna come bubbling out. He thought as pus, was the plan.

**Justin:** Ew.

**Sydnee:** And then, once we have produced this crisis, then you are clean. You are cleansed. You're clean. And so, that was the initial like... that's what he tried to introduce. And his ideas were based on his own experiences. He saw, when he was younger, this wounded deer in the woods that kept going to this... this is the story. I don't know. That kept going to this pond, and like, dipping its little wounded hoof or leg or whatever into the pond. And it got better. The deer got better. The deer lives in this story.

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Sydnee:** Don't worry. [laughs] And he saw that, and so, when he was a little older, he got run over by a cart, 'cause that kind of thing...

**Justin:** Wait, the deer?

**Sydnee:** No! The human. Vincent.

**Justin:** Okay. I didn't see that coming.

**Sydnee:** That's the kind of thing that happened in the 1800s, is sometimes you got run over by a cart. [laughs]

**Justin:** Right. Cart accidents.

**Sydnee:** And then, he had a bunch of ribs crushed, and the doctors were like, "That will never heal." And he was like, "No, I saw this deer."

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** "You don't understand."

**Sydnee:** So, he soaked bandages in water and just kept wrapping his chest with these bandages soaked in water... and he got better. And he was like, "I'm opening a clinic."

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And he opened this clinic to do his water crisis on people. [laughs]

**Justin:** Ugh.

**Sydnee:** And it was so popular. But it was not—I mean, it wasn't... this was not the luxurious spa-like thing yet. This was like, here are my clinics, you come, you get in the cold water, uh, you drink water, you do exercise, you eat beef jerky, and you'll get better.

**Justin:** Nice. Sounds bracing.

**Sydnee:** I know.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Is that like, what... like, P90X, or...

**Justin:** That's what P90X is. That's it. That's what P90X is. Mystery solved.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] But like, so, this was the—this is what he created. And at this point, he was like, the first hydropathist. There was this whole movement of like, “We are hydropathists. We practice hydrotherapy. Come get in our cold baths and eat beef jerky, and you'll be strong again.”

**Justin:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And his protégé, Sebastian Neep, was like... “I love it. This is so cool. I love everything you're doing. Except... let's make it fun.” [laughs] And this was probably—it's noted repeatedly, like, he had no medical background, by the way.

**Justin:** Nice.

**Sydnee:** This guy had no medical training. He was not a doctor.

**Justin:** Of course.

**Sydnee:** He didn't go to any kind of whatever was passing for medical school at the moment. He didn't do that. He was just like, “I love the water thing. But let's make it more like massages, and herby... y'know, just kind of like a chill time. And let's forget about all the jogging, and the beef jerky is not going over so well. Let's forget about that.”

And it was this movement of... this was the hydrotherapy that made its way to the US. I mean, this made sense. Because like, this was the tradition that was happening in Europe that went from like, this cold water plunge, to these wonderful hot bath massage experiences. And especially if you could find one around a thermal spring, because then you already—you have these natural spring waters. You don't have to create a bath, you just go build a whole resort around it and create a luxury experience.

And that's where we see, as it moved into the US, especially by the 1850s, the concept of taking the waters. Which was very much something that like, the elite mainly were doing. If you had the money, you would go to one of



these mineral springs, one of these spas, and you would get like, mud wraps, and massages, and I mean, it was all a very luxury experience.

Which was sort of based in medicine? Because doctors were still prescribing this. Doctors were still saying, "Listen, there is a mineral spring out there for every disease on earth. We just don't know which one matches whatever you have. And we also don't really know what you have yet. But..."

**Justin:** [laughs] But...

**Sydnee:** "If you just go around and get in springs..."

**Justin:** One of them is gonna do it.

**Sydnee:** "You'll find one." [laughs]

**Justin:** Yeah, you'll find the right spring for you.

**Sydnee:** And if you had the money and the time, I guess, and you have to... like, you have to get a boat if you were gonna leave.

**Justin:** Sorry, what?

**Sydnee:** But anyway. [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** You mean transport?

**Sydnee:** If you could... transport.

**Justin:** Okay, got it. Yeah, there's lots of things you have to think—child care. Somebody has to watch the dogs. Like, why are we planning this for them?

**Sydnee:** Well, I'm just thinking about... the logistics. But anyway, you could travel around until you found the thermal spring of your dreams that would cure the disease that nobody could diagnose. Or did, or got wrong.

**Justin:** Was the idea—was it kind of that, uh, appeal to ancient wisdom thing of like, we know people used to do this a very long time ago, so it must be... good.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Yes. These are the treatments of the ancients. Hippocrates wrote about these treatments.

**Justin:** These very real... so confusing when that argument happens in medicine. It's so wild. They knew *nothing*. You have to understand. If someone says something worked two thousand years ago, it doesn't. It just doesn't, categorically. You can just ignore it. They didn't know anything.

**Sydnee:** So... [laughs] As these ancient ideas took root in the US, we saw that all of these... there were over like, 200 different places in the US that were thermal spring type places that were doing this, and like, advertising. Come, please give us your money, and we'll give you a massage, and you can hang out in the mineral waters.

**Justin:** Poster design also left a lot to be desired back then. [laughing]

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Obviously, a very famous one was John Harvey Kellogg's battle creek sanatorium, where he was doing lots of other stuff we're not fans of here. No.

**Justin:** No.

**Sydnee:** There was the cereal, too, but there's...

**Justin:** The cereal part is fun. The other stuff isn't. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** But also, in Georgia, in Warm Springs, which was initially named Bullockville, which was not as attractive, I think, if you're trying to sell the springs.

**Justin:** Right. You name the town after the springs.

**Sydnee:** But it had the springs.

**Justin:** That's why we're currently doing this show in Coke City. [laughs]

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** That gotcha, huh? Got your funny bone.

**Sydnee:** That, uh... I don't know if you know, that means—that could mean something else.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I didn't know if you realized that when you said that.

**Justin:** Aw man, Coca-Cola's gonna be so upset when they find out. What a shock that will be to them.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughing] There was a guy stand—I just have to say, there was a guy standing at the doors when we were walking into the World of Coke today who was asking if we were Pepsi spies.

**Justin:** True. True story.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I just really appreciated that.

**Justin:** Yeah, I liked that. Get into the experience. I love it.

**Sydnee:** I'm not a Pepsi spy.

**Justin:** No.

**Sydnee:** I won't drink Brad's drink. That's what it used to be called.

**Justin:** It was called Brad's drink.

**Sydnee:** No Brad's drink. Uh, but obviously, Bullockville had all these warm springs, and they were just missing a great opportunity to change their name. And so, long before, obviously, the 1850s and eventually, as we move into the 1900s, and with the polio epidemic, and FDR making this location famous... long before that, there were all kinds of people going to these naturally occurring springs and enjoying them, and touting their medicinal benefit.

So like, this was already well established. There was already a big resort there, since like the 1830s. And then in the 1890s, bigger places had been built, and so, this was well established as like, we have these great mineral springs, and you should all come check them out. And so, in the 1920s, that's when FDR first came to Warm Springs, and in hopes that it would help him with... and I don't want to get into this. We have a whole episode on polio. But it's been debated, did FDR actually have polio? Did he have a polio-like illness?

Either way, he was suffering from symptoms that seemed a lot like polio, and he was hoping that the warm waters of the natural springs would help him. And he felt like he got such great results from bathing in these warm springs, that that's when we see that the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institution for Rehabilitation was eventually opened. And they, y'know, Warm Springs became famous. They changed their name in this time period, too. Which made sense.

And they became famous for having these therapeutic springs, which I guess you can still... you can't go bathe in the springs, now, but you can still go like, check out the place and look at everything.

**Justin:** Look at some springs.

**Sydnee:** Well...

**Justin:** You should get a hobby. If that's your afternoon, I think going to look at the springs, you should...

**Sydnee:** All—from all the websites I've looked at about warm springs, it looks like a lovely place, though. Like they say, it has a warm heart and warm springs.

**Justin:** That you can't get in, 'cause they poison.

**Sydnee:** No, they're not poison! I just don't think they're like, for public use.

**Justin:** The rich. You mean the idle rich can use them.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Anyway...

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** They've become a playground for the idle rich. Just say it!

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** No, I don't think that. No, I think they're still used for like, therapeutic purposes.

**Justin:** Alright, Syd. Alright.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Anyway...

**Justin:** I'll Google it later, don't worry.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Because of FDR and the Warm Springs, there was still... it took a while for this interest in hydrotherapy, and its—our hope about its benefits to kind of die out, as we move—especially after the second World War, there were so many more medical advances made and different ways of treating things that it kind of started to fall out of favor.

And it just wasn't... it was kind of like, yeah, if you want to do this thing that would be kind of fun if you got the money, and this is how... it's like a—it became more like a spa idea. Like, this is a cool, fun things to do, but we have real medicine now, so you don't have to do that for all your illnesses. Doctors weren't prescribing it.

**Justin:** But, it does like... I think it's—it makes sense. The fact that we still do it today without... most of us, at least, without illusions of its medicinal benefit. I think kind of shows you how we got to that point, right? Because we knew so little that, if something felt good and rejuvenating, like, we had to assume it was medicinal, right? Like, "Oh, that felt good. That's probably medicine, right?"

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Well, and if that—your options were that or like, can I cut you open and bleed you?

**Justin:** Right. I will take the bath, thank you.

**Sydnee:** I'll have the bath.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Or, here's this medicine that'll make you puke. Do you want that? We were very good at that. Or laxatives.

**Justin:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, the bath still wins.

**Justin:** The bath still wins. Unless it's the bath that kills you.

**Sydnee:** Unless you're really constipated, you might choose the laxative. Uh, is there... I wondered, is there evidence for this? 'Cause we've been doing it since... I mean, almost since there were humans, we've been prescribing baths. And uh, I started to look for studies.

There was one that I really enjoyed that was done about a decade ago that looked at like, the Roman baths, in Bath, in England. And were—they, supposedly, were really successful at treating lead poisoning there? And the symptoms that arose from lead poisoning. And so, they were kind of looking into these cases as to like, did they really cure people with like, bathing in these baths?

And so, what they would do is, they would come and they'd get them in the baths. You would definitely spend a lot of time in the bath. They'd give them a really good diet, and then some other like, medical treatments of the day. Like I said, kind of stuff to make you throw up. And you would stay there until you got better.

And they said that 45% were cured, and 93% improved as they were staying at the baths for their lead poisoning. Justin, can you guess why I think they probably actually got better?

**Justin:** [sighs] I'm gonna... I'm gonna throw a little bit of spaghetti at the wall. You just kind of make facial expressions, and then I'll edit it later.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

**Justin:** They were... drinking a lot of water, and they peed out the lead.

**Sydnee:** No. I should note, now, these people didn't necessarily live in Bath. They like, came from their homes where they got lead poisoning, and went to Bath, and got better.

**Justin:** The lead was at their house. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** They...

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And the—

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Sydnee:** Ding ding ding! You got it.

**Justin:** Got it.

**Sydnee:** And the authors noted that like—

**Justin:** Rest easy knowing you're the only three thousand people that will ever hear the first part.

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And the authors noted that like, y'know, they also removed them from the source of poisoning. Which is very important when one is being poisoned. Stop poisoning them.

**Justin:** That's step one.

**Sydnee:** And they might get better. Uh, so, but I don't know. We also—we went to Bath, and we drank the water, and then I got pregnant, so...

**Justin:** Sooo...



**Audience:** [laughs]

**Justin:** But! But! But! Same day, also went to Stonehenge. So you tell me. I don't know.

**Sydnee:** Uh, otherwise, there have been some small studies that have suggested that, y'know, a therapeutic bath, especially like, warm water baths. It doesn't necessarily have to be a mineral spring, it could just be a warm bath, can be helpful for things like osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis. Other conditions that can have a lot of pain, and that it can be helpful with managing the pain.

They're small studies. It's not conclusive. But I would say that when we're talking about things like pain management, that makes sense, and certainly, you're not gonna hurt anybody by telling them to take some baths. And if it decreases the need for other treatments, then y'know, it can be helpful.

But at this point, I would say that if you look at a hot tub website, I went... [laughs] I looked at a—somebody who was trying to sell me a hot tub. I looked at their website, just out of curiosity, like, are people using this to try to sell hot tubs? 'Cause you could. And it is!

There's so many websites for hot tubs where you find like, a whole section on hydrotherapy. And like, telling you that like, it increases the blood flow in your body, and it will relieve your joint stiffness, and all your aches and pains. It will ease your cold symptoms. It will assist with hypertension.

**Justin:** It won't. Right?

**Sydnee:** And it will get rid of your headaches. And I just thought it was wild that... it's a hot tub website.

**Justin:** Who's taking medical advice from a hot tub website?!

**Audience:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Listen, I'm not saying hot tubs are—

**Justin:** Consult your physician or your hot tub salesman about whether hot tub is right for you.

**Sydnee:** So... I don't know.

**Justin:** But hey, listen... if you don't want your hot tub, send it my way. Um...

**Sydnee:** You can still use water for cleaning out wounds. It's still good for that. It's good for like, irrigating things, and for burns sometimes. There are some other places for water, but um...

**Justin:** Yeah, no, water's cool. We're all agreed on that, right? Drink more of it.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, drink more water. We all need more, and you can take baths, but um... I...

**Justin:** Ehh... thanks for having us, Atlanta. We appreciate being here.

**Audience:** [cheers]

**Justin:** Uh, that's gonna do it for us. So until next time, my name is Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:** And as always, don't drill a hole in your head!

**Audience:** [cheers]

[theme music plays]

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