

Sawbones 232: Medical Astrology

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Intro (Clint McElroy): *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 cohost, Justin McElroy!

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: Oh, Sydnee, I'm excited!

Sydnee: I'm nervous.

Justin: I'm pumped. I'm pumped.

Sydnee: We're—we're doing a timely, um, episode this week.

Justin: Yes, we are.

Sydnee: Hot topic.

Justin: Hot topic. And I—you know what? I—I get exponentially excited about an episode the more times I hear Sydnee go... "[emphatically] Ugh! Come on!"

Sydnee: I—

Justin: "[emphatically] *What?!*" and she won't tell me what it is, obviously, because she wants to keep it fresh for the ep.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] 'Cause that's the show.

Justin: That's the show. But, like... oh, boy. She's been in a tizzy.

Sydnee: As—as many of you know, and I did—if I had made a thank-you list for this topic, it would have to be continually updating, because as I was researching this up to recording it, people are continuing to tweet and—and Facebook and email, "Hey, you gotta talk about this."

Uh, so thank you to everybody who was all over it. I'm with you. I saw this tweet and I was as devastated as you may have been.

Dr. Oz sent out a tweet yesterday. Uh, and we'll get into all the specifics of it, but basically insinuating that astrology could be somehow used to help you make decisions about your health.

Justin: [disappointed] Dr. Oz!

Sydnee: Uh, so I'll get into all the specifics of that, but because of that, because Dr.—Dr. Oz is a doctor. [pauses] A medical doctor.

Justin: A cardiothoracic surgeon.

Sydnee: Yes, he is. And I have—I am not calling into—in—into question any of his qualifications.

Justin: No.

Sydnee: But he has suggested that somehow, medical astrology may actually be a scientific field, or something at least worth exploring... for your health.

Justin: Droz...

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Justin: That's my nickname for him. I'm gonna try it out.

Sydnee: Droz?

Justin: Droz.

Sydnee: So I thought it would be—it would be worthwhile to investigate a little bit the history of medical astrology, and then talk about what this looks like today.

This will be a little more—a little more modern than a lot of our—which is weird, because it's about astrology.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: So... uh, do you know anything about medical astrology, Justin?

Justin: No. Sorry. I... don't. Uh, I know that I'm pretty worked up about Dr. Oz constantly, but if you wanna take a step back and talk about medical astrology, I suppose I can indulge you.

Sydnee: Do you know—I mean, most of us are kind of familiar with astrology.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: Your zodiac sign.

Justin: Yes, Scorpio.

Sydnee: I mean, astrology is more than your zodiac sign, but, like, that's kind of the familiarity most of us have. Yes, you're a Scorpio, I'm an Aries. I am probably a little more familiar with this world because it is one that my—my mom embraced, and so I—I learned a lot about it as a kid. I think a lot of us are kind of fascinated with it when we're younger.

I used to read my horoscope, because... I like to know things about me. Everybody likes to talk about themselves! Everybody likes to know things about themselves, and that's kind of what it does. It tells you more stuff about yourself. Um—

Justin: Does it?

Sydnee: Well...

Justin: [snorts]

Sydnee: It says it does. Uh, the medical astrology specifically, which is also known as iatromathematics—

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: —which...

Justin: Sounds real.

Sydnee: ... it's like doctorly calculations.

Justin: I know about mathematics, so those are real.

Sydnee: Well, you put the word "mathematics" in there and it really sounds...

Justin: Starts to, like...

Sydnee: ...like it's somethin', right?

Justin: ...it starts to sound like somethin'.

Sydnee: Which is a—is a very ancient term for it. This is an old, old thing that we're going to talk about. Uh, back when the idea of astrology and astronomy and math and medicine all... overlapped a lot more than we would—

Justin: 'Cause we were making up all of it.

Sydnee: —because we didn't necessarily have the ability to test all of these things, or knew the difference.

Um, so in—in—generally speaking, it associates different signs of the zodiac with various parts of the body that they govern, which can inform you about, based on your sign, what kind of health conditions you may be predisposed to, or what kind of problems you might be having, if you have vague complaints.

And the—and it—and it's much more complex than that. It also connects various planets with different parts of the body, and all that works together depending on where and when you were born, and it—it's... as we get into the particulars, it is a very complex... pseudoscience.

Justin: [laughs quietly] If we—and could we just, to save me the effort and to keep this from being a three-hour-long episode—just imagine Sydnee's throwing in a lot of, like, "purportedly" and "supposedly"s.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Like, where—where applicable, okay?

Sydnee: I am—I am living in this world for the moment.

Justin: We're living—come with us. Step inside. Take a ride on the rainbow—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Yes, into the world of astrology.

Justin: —with us, into the cosmos.

Sydnee: So—

Justin: And let's pretend [wheezing] it's all very...

Sydnee: And astrology is obviously—it's even broader than what I'm talking about, because there are various kind of astrological understandings, depending on where you live in the world, your religious background, your culture. I—I am talking very much about, like, kind of the zodiac that we are—a lot of us here in the US are familiar with.

Justin: And—and it's also the scientific study of the planets—

Sydnee: No, that's—

Justin: —and the stars—

Sydnee: —no, that's astronomy.

Justin: —and the—moons—

Sydnee: That's astronomy.

Justin: —[quietly] and heavenly bodies.

Sydnee: Please—*please* make sure you know the difference. [laughs quietly]

Justin: Okay. Got it.

Sydnee: So, to give you kind of an idea what I'm talking about, I am an Aries. So what that would mean is that I am prone to problems with my head, face, brain, and eyes.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: So, medically speaking, it may be a sinus infection.

Justin: And listen, let me speak for everybody who's ever met you and just state, for the record, there is not a single problem with your face.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Justin: [clicks tongue]

Sydnee: Well, thank you, honey.

Justin: You're welcome. And I know that's how you define your self-worth, so that's important for me to try to lay that on—

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] That's—

Justin: —as often as possible.

Sydnee: Right. That's exactly—that is my biggest concern every morning.

Justin: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Uh, I do wear glasses, I will say. So I guess there is a problem with my eyes.

Justin: [simultaneously] Okay, ooh! The plot—the plot thickens! Hm, interesting.

Sydnee: Justin, you are a Scorpio.

Justin: Mm-hm?

Sydnee: So you are prone to problems with your reproductive system, your sexual organs, your bowels, and your excretory system.

Justin: So they're, like... 50/50.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Like, let me say this. They say I have problems with my downstairs, and they say I have problems with my butt. They're 50/50. I have two kids.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [wheezes] You just go ahead and run the numbers, okay? I'm—I'm going to be a discrete gentleman and just say... that's—not sayin' any more.

Sydnee: So you can—and you can look up—there are lists of how each—and it kind of just goes down the body, like, as you go through the... the zodiac signs throughout the year. Like, starting with Aries, which is in, like, March to April—you start with, like, the head, and Taurus to the throat, Gemini to the arms, Cancer to the chest, Leo to the heart—like, it keeps doing down until you get all the way to Pisces—

Justin: What about Cancer? That one seems—it's just, like, right there, right? That's just, like, a slam dunk, easy one.

Sydnee: No. Chest, breast, stomach, and your esophagus.

Justin: Hmm, okay.

Sydnee: So—but, um—but all the way down to Pisces, who are supposed to have problems with their feet and toes. [pauses] And their adipose tissue. I thought that was a strange one to throw in there.

Justin: Like from *Doctor Who*?

Sydnee: No. Well, I mean, yes, but, like, fat tissue.

Justin: Oh, right, okay.

Sydnee: Like, adipose tissue is a real thing. Adipose, the—the little friendly fat creatures—

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: —are from *Doctor Who*. [laughs]

Justin: That's so confusing, though! Can we change the name of the fat tissue, for cryin' out loud?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [through laughter] Please?

Sydnee: I—Dr. Oz might. I don't know. So a medical—a medical astrologer—

Justin: "These little guys turn from fat into sentient beings! What are we doing about this? I've brought on three guests that I've found that are really down with it."

Sydnee: [laughs] Uh, a medical astrologer would basically do your nativity chart, which—what that means is—

Justin: [snorts] It's like, we got one of those. We hang it up. Usually around the end of November.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: And we follow it every day. We take out a little, uh, piece of candy, or—

Sydnee: That's an Advent calendar.

Justin: [through laughter] Oh, okay! You can understand my confusion, though!

Sydnee: The—your nativity is a—it's like a... I mean, there's—there's, like, some—there are calculations involved in this. That's where this gets really complex, and I have had mine done before.

It has to do not just with your sun sign. That's the sign you're familiar with. That's where the sun was when you were born. In which—in which one of these positions. Um, but it also tells you your moon sign, and then it tells you where all the different planets were at the exact moment of your birth.

And then all of this together is your nativity, and that's much more complicated than just where the sun was.

So they—so a medical astrologer would do all this math and figure all this out about exactly where you—where all these planets were at the time of your birth. And the sun and the moon. And then tell you, like, whole pers—like, preventive medicine, as well as how to deal with chronic illness, as well as if you came in sick with a sore throat, what do to about that at that moment.

All of that can be gleaned, supposedly, from... your nativity chart. Does that make sense?

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: So that's kind of the basis. And like I said, this dates back to ancient times. Because, you know, I mean, the planets do.

Justin: Sure. The planets have been up there forever. Like, hundreds and hundreds of years.

Sydnee: And a lot of people—I mean, if you connect to a belief that, um, that there are many gods, and that the gods have control over the universe and the planets and the stars, and we are kind of a continuation of that, you can see where it would be easy to begin to understand us as part of the universe, and under the influence of heavenly bodies and heavenly beings, all together. You know? I mean, you can see where that belief would begin to be generated.

Um, Mesopotamians thought specifically that the movement of the planets reflected the will of the gods. And so that same will of the gods could then... affect our health and wellbeing.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: So all of that is connected. Hippocrates was a firm believer in medical astrology. And if you look, a lot of the learned... mainly men, of ancient times—I mean, just—I mean, there were women, but, like, a lot of the people we talk about were men. A lot of the learned men were, uh, well-versed in medicine, astronomy, astrology as well, and math. And all of that would be... intersecting.

Justin: [sighs]

Sydnee: Um, Galen was skeptical. I'll give him that. I'll give him that.

Justin: Galennnn.

Sydnee: Galen was the one who was like, "Ehh..."

Justin: "Eh, I don't know!"

Sydnee: "...I don't know." Pliny was on board with it. Nothing in—of course—

Justin: Oh no, [unintelligible] my mind!

Sydnee: I couldn't get any choice nugs from Pliny the Elder on this one. He just—other than, like, he definitely felt that they were all overlapping arts and sciences.

Justin: You can give it to the—the old-timey people, 'cause they didn't know how any of it worked, so I guess it's not... a worse idea than anything else. Like, "I don't know. Maybe the planets? Should we guess maybe the planets are doin' it? 'Cause, like, we have no other... recourse than that. Like, maybe it's the planets doin' it!"

Sydnee: I mean, it—

Justin: "All this—this stuff. It's just planets!"

Sydnee: —it makes—it makes no... less—no less sense than, like, the miasma theory of disease. Like, a bad smell—

Justin: It does—

Sydnee: —is going to waft into the room and give everybody the plague. Like, it doesn't—I mean, it's no less... believable.

Justin: What I like about it is that they were so str—they were struggling so badly at this time in terms of, like, actually treating stuff, that it must've been a little bit of a relief to just be like, "Okay. Listen, y'all. I know we've had a hard time. But this whole time, it was the planets! What are we supposed to do about that?!"

Sydnee: "Yeah, it's not *our* fault."

Justin: "It's not our fault, it's the different planets!"

Sydnee: "It's just Mercury."

Justin: "The sun and stuff! It's not us!"

Sydnee: "It's all Uranus's fault!"

Justin: "It would've worked, except for the different planets! Or—and the stars and things!"

Sydnee: The—the time when medical astrology really shines is the Middle Ages.

Justin: Hm... [chortles] Yeah. Yes. Everything gets worse in the Middle Ages.

Sydnee: Shock—shocking no one. So, um, there—there were a lot of practitioners throughout the Middle Ages—and I'm calling them medical astrologers, but honestly, this probably would've just been your doctor. Because it—I mean, it overlapped a lot. Where you would go and they would read your chart, and they would diagnose you based on all this stuff, and then they would give you, like—like, again, the same idea. "Eat these certain foods. Do these certain exercises, because of all this planetary stuff, and you will be healthier."

Um, in the 17th century, this started to morph into more of, again, an attempted science. It is not a science. But a lot of this had to do with our understanding of astronomy, and the two kind of intermingling, which I think we're all very clear on the separation now, right?

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Between astronomy and astrology?

Justin: I think we *all* are.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Justin: On this show.

Sydnee: So—so a lot of this came from the chemist Robert Boyle, who—he thought that there were certain particles—he called them corpuscles from the universe—that could have an effect on the atmosphere of the Earth, which would then have an effect on the humans... that live here. Right?

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: So a lot of medical practitioners came up with the sol-lunar theory of disease, meaning that the heavenly bodies could affect the fluids in our bodies, and then cause... medical conditions.

Justin: We've talked—that sounds—that sounds... familiar.

Sydnee: We've talked about this before the with phases of the moon. The idea that the moon... just as it affects the tides, could somehow affect, like, the fluid in your ventricles and your brain, and then... cause—this was the idea behind, "Why does the full moon cause—why are there more illnesses and accidents and bad things happening on a full moon?"

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: "Because it affects the fluid in our brain and makes us act in ways we wouldn't otherwise act."

This is—this is the same theory, just expanded to all disease.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Right? So just like the tides, the moon and the sun and all the planets are pulling on fluids inside your body, and they're making you sick or well or whatever. And this would inform your decisions as to, like, if you want to, I don't know, go outside or attempt something dangerous or go on a long journey or whatever... based on the position of all these bodies.

And this also accounted for, like—they would say that it's worse if you live closer to the equator.

Justin: Okay. [pauses] Sure.

Sydnee: So.

Justin: I don't know.

Sydnee: Yeah. And also in places where it was hot, it was thought to be worse, which also that's closer to the equator, so—

Justin: So...

Sydnee: —kind of cheating there. Um, and—and, like you already pointed out, this was just a variation on a theme. The phases of the moon... affect—like, today, even people *today* think that the—that a full moon will affect mental illness.

Justin: Hm.

Sydnee: However... when we get to today—because this is all the basis, I don't wanna dwell too much on the history of this, because I—I really wanna talk about where—why this is important now. um, modern medical astrology—I—I really tried to understand it by reading just—I mean, I had to—a variety of people who are practitioners and who are proponents of this. Um, because it is not a regulated scientific field. It's not like something I can—I don't have a lot of data. [laughs quietly] That's why—I—I'm uncomfortable with my lack of data. So I had to read what a lot of different people said, and a lot of different people say a lot of different things that conflict.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: So it's hard for me to give you a—a good description of modern medical astrology. Um, the idea is that—first of all, there's your sign. So your medical practitioner's gonna wanna know your sign.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Well, they're gonna figure it out. They're gonna do your nativity chart. Just like they would've done in the Middle Ages, they're gonna figure out your nativity chart. And so your sign is like your personality and your predispositions—which, by the way, a lot of this is still linked to the four humors, but that's—

Justin: Y'all...

Sydnee: —that's another episode. Um, and then you've gotta consider the planets. So each planet has properties that kind of govern that arena... when you're born. So that's part of it too.

Then there are the aspects, and the aspects are the relative positions of different heavenly bodies in space. So it's not just where they were, it's where they are in relation to each other.

[pauses]

I'm tellin'—see, I told you! This was very complicated.

Justin: Sydnee, I can't—I can't do this.

Sydnee: And—and this not only affects the time of your birth but, like, if you come in sick, they're gonna do the aspects at that *moment* of your illness. Or, like, if you're trying to get pregnant. Or if you wanna have a surgery or whatever.

And then there are the houses, which—I had to ask my mom what the heck this meant, 'cause I kept reading about houses, and they sounded the same as the signs, although this means something entirely different when you get into, like, Ayurvedic medicine. The houses are something entirely different, I should just note.

But the houses are like—they encompass each sign.

[pauses]

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: They—they—and, like, the—and you can think of the sign itself as, like, a tenant of the house.

Justin: Okay. Got it.

Sydnee: This is the way it was explained.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Um, and this is not just determined by the date but by, like, the time.

Justin: But this was, like, thousands of years ago.

Sydnee: But it's now. It's the same.

Justin: But...

Sydnee: It's the s—all—I mean, if anything, it's just gotten more complicated, because we know about more heavenly bodies and we can measure things better, but it's all the same.

[pauses]

Justin: [sighs quietly] Okay. Well... I guess tell me more.

Sydnee: Uh, I'm gonna get into specifically Dr. Oz and everything, but before we do that, why don't we head to the billing department?

Justin: [resignedly] Let's go!

[theme music plays]

[ad break 18:42 to 22:40]

Justin: So, you were about to tell me, Sydster, the... [sighs] got all excited talking about grilling. Um, you were gonna tell me about how this is still a thing.

Sydnee: Okay. Okay. So, this is still a thing. So, it's the same idea, except—

Justin: Do we want to talk about astrolo—astrology is still a thing, and that's obviously a thing—

Sydnee: Well, astrology is still a thing.

Justin: —and we're not, like—

Sydnee: And astrology—I mean, if you—this is why this was—this is hard to look at. So, astrology is pervasive, and it's different in every culture and religious tradition all over the world, and I am not here to be an expert on astrology as a whole. Nor am I saying that everybody who believes in astrology is... wrong or bad.

Justin: Sydnee's mom would never let her live it down if would say that.

Sydnee: No, I'm not saying that. Because I think—my mom did nativities for me and my friends when we were younger. She didn't do it for money, and she didn't give us any, like, in—intense life advice. It was like—

Justin: No stock tips.

Sydnee: No! A lot of it is—it's kind of the nice stuff. Like... "This is why you are so g—[snorts quietly] good at sports. This is why you're so tough. This is why you're able to be resilient. This is—this is why you tend to be so sensitive when people say mean things." Like, and it—it was just—it was almost like a way of therapy.

Justin: [hums uncomfortably]

Sydnee: And it's—and it was nice, and it was—and nobody took money, and she didn't tell anybody to, like, break up with their significant others or quit jobs or.. anything wild like that, and she *certainly* never gave anybody health advice.

So I—I think that's fine, and I am not—I understand that astrology is intrinsically linked with other medical traditions, other than Western medicine. And I am—I'm not—I don't even—I have no understanding of that, and I'm not even going to get into the way that it ties into Ayurvedic medicine or traditional Chinese medicine, because those things exist, and practitioners—it's, like, seamlessly wound in to a lot of different practices, so... I am talking about the intersection between Western medicine—

Justin: Or allopathic.

Sydnee: —[laughs quietly] and—well, also osteopathic.

Justin: Oh, sure.

Sydnee: Uh, and astrology.

Justin: 'Kay.

Sydnee: Alright. So, modern times, this would be used—basically the idea is that if you use this nativity chart, you can maximize the chances that whatever you're—you're doing will have the best outcome. So, um, like I said, getting pregnant would be a good example of this, or, like, having a surgery or something.

Um, and this is getting more complicated, because we know a lot more about different heavenly bodies, and so you start to see, like—I found this whole—this whole, uh, site that this one medical astrologer was dedicating to the influences of an asteroid called Hygiea? Which actually we—we've known about since 1849.

But, like, they say things like... if Hygiea is influencing you, then you may be, um, easygoing in the use of drugs and stimulating foodstuffs and tobacco and alcohol.

And, like, they would tell you things like, um, people who are under the influence of Hygiea are probably burning the candle at both ends and drinking too much and—and that if you don't stop this, then "Judgment will be handed down in the form of illness, disease, degeneration, and habitual instability." That a quote from the website.

That's the kind of stuff that I found very upsetting, because... it's a good—it's good to tell somebody, "Hey, I'm worried. I think you might be drinking too much, and that's bad for your health."

It's bad to tell somebody that the reason that they shouldn't be drinking so much is 'cause an asteroid is going to hand down judgment... on them.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Right?

Justin: Sure, yeah!

Sydnee: So this is—this is why I feel like it's fair game, 'cause the intersection of this is disturbing. And Dr. Oz, as I have said, tweeted about this.

Justin: Droz...

Sydnee: Yesterday. So, Dr. Oz's tweet, which has since been deleted...

[pauses]

Justin: Hmm!

Sydnee: Yes. So I don't think I'm the only one that, um... that was concerned. But, uh, Dr. Oz tweeted this, and you can find it—um, I found a Vox article that had it.

But, uh, he tweeted: "For centuries we have used astrological signs to examine our personality and how we interact with those around us. However, these signs may reveal a great deal about our health as well. Discover what your astrological sign can tell you about your health."

And then he links you to a, uh, slideshow. It's a—there's—then this article is still on his site. So, like, you can follow this, um, if you just... I mean, google "Dr. Oz astrology" it'll come right up.

There's a slideshow, and it's the same thing I've just been telling you. Like, it starts out with Aries, and it's like, "You might have, uh, sinus or jaw tension or migraines." And then there's Taurus, and you could have neck problems, and—anyway.

It's all there. Dr. Oz tweeted about this because of a guest he was having on his show. And that guest is Rebecca Gordon.

Now, I—I had to—I was not familiar with Rebecca Gordon, so I had to go to her website to discover more about her. And the first thing I discovered—

Justin: Can I just say one real quick sidebar about Droz? Before we move on from him?

Sydnee: Mm-hm.

Justin: Or are we gonna come back to Droz?

Sydnee: Uh, we're go—I—I'm assuming we're probably gonna talk some more about Droz.

Justin: Okay. This is unsurpri—if you follow Droz at all, and sort of his—his whole thing, it is wholly—this is wholly unsurprising. The only thing surprising to me about this—this tweet was the response to it from people who were, like, all worked up about... Droz, like, getting buck wild.

Sydnee: "How could you do this?"

Justin: D—Droz gets buck wild *every day*. Maybe not every day.

Sydnee: He—

Justin: Very frequent—I guess—you know what? There's part of me that's sympathetic to it? Because... you gotta crank out an episode every day? It would be kind of a bumner episode if you did a whole thing and then at the end of it you're like, "[out of the corner of his mouth] Also this is all made up. [normal voice] Anyway, that's me, Dr. Oz, out."

You gotta believe in a lot of stuff to be able to have enough material for an entire episode of TV. The guy did a—a episode about how there's arsenic in apple juice, and it's dangerous! And we gotta pull it from the menus!

Sydnee: See, he should've done what I did, which was just talk about all the stuff we got wrong instead, 'cause it's—

Justin: Yeah!

Sydnee: —it's a lot better to continue to make a show about. [laughs]

Justin: He did—he did a—he did a, um—a episode about, uh, reparative therapy for gay people that was sort of like, "[mockingly] I don't know! Does it—does it? Does it not? I don't know! Let's talk to two opposing sides."

[yells] How about you don't?! Th—that's a different thing you could do, is—is *don't* do that!

Sydnee: How about—

Justin: Maybe just say—say the *true* thing, and not elevate a bunch of... absolute *goons*, who have an ax to grind or money to make!

It's like—what—[stammers]—what—what kind of use of your platform is that, Droz?! You're a doctor, supposedly!

Sydnee: Well, that's—I—I... I guess we're gonna talk about Dr. Oz right now, and I'll say two things about it.

So, Dr. Oz, you may remember, had to testify before Congress, um, about how he was promoting green coffee extract in 2014.

Justin: The hardest thing for him must've been wondering, like, "What is it they wanna...? Oh my God, wow. Hoo, okay! Of all the things—wow, okay."

Sydnee: "*That's* the thing?"

Justin: "I guess I'll see you guys next week!"

Sydnee: Well, he was promoting it for weight loss, and his—his reaction to their questions I found, as a physician—and he is as well, so I hold him to the same standard I hold myself to—as a physician, he said that he felt his job on the show is to be a cheerleader for the audience when they don't think they have hope, when they don't think they can make it happen. I wanna look for any evidence that might be supportive to them.

So what he—he's basically saying is, "I wanna tell people that something works. I'm starting from a bias of, 'This will help you.' And then I'm gonna try to find any evidence that will support that."

Justin: [sighs]

Sydnee: That's the opposite of how we do science. That's the *opposite* of how medicine works.

Sometimes I have to look at a patient and say, "I don't have a pill for that. I'm sorry. It's not easy. It's hard, and I don't have any easy answer for you. I can encourage you, I can motivate you, I can tell you all the things—all the tools we have, but if you're lookin' for just an easy thing, it doesn't exist."

And that's a hard thing to look at somebody you care about and say. And—but that's what—that's our job. And he doesn't do his job.

The other thing I'll say is, from reading about Dr. Oz, I've learned that there's a whole other field of medicine now, which we call popular medicine.

Justin: Ohh, interesting.

Sydnee: Popular medicine has very little to do... [laughs quietly] with medicine. It's just the stuff people are talking about, and you can sell it. You can sell it on TV, you can sell it in books... you could sell it in podcasts, although that's not what we're doing. But you could! [laughs]

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: Um, and that—that's a whole—and it's—and it's—it's loosely related to actual medical science. And it's scary, because Dr. Oz, I feel like, has—he's crossed the Rubicon.

Justin: Yeah. And I mainly—one of the reasons I was so excited to do this episode is so we could just, like, make sure that anybody who doesn't know does. It's like, if you see people talking about Droz, if you hear your family talking about—about Droz, please remind them that, like, it's Droz and Gwyneth Paltrow. Same level.

Droz is a charlatan. He is a mountebank. He is—like—and he is not to be trusted! Like, he's—it—it—it's—

Sydnee: It's—well, it's hard, honey. 'Cause sometimes he gives actual—like, sometimes the things he's saying are right. But he has muddied those waters with so much other stuff that he's become an unreliable narrator now. I don't know what he's telling patients. I don't know—

Justin: [simultaneously] Well, that's the—that's the problem, is, like—

Sydnee: —I don't watch his show, so I'm not gonna ever know all the details, but what he's telling you may be true, and it also may not. I have no idea.

Justin: Yeah. It's like Fox News, right? Fox News will report the—the truth sometimes, certainly. But, like, that's not a source that I can trust for information, because I know where they're coming from.

Sydnee: So let me—let me tell you about where—where all this came in.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: So, he got a medical, um—well, not just a medical astrologer. She is an expert in astrology, this Rebecca Gordon. She has a whole website. You can check her out. Mypathastrology.com if you want to read about her thing.

And she came back—this is her third time on the show.

Justin: Mm. Mm!

Sydnee: So this is not new for Dr. Oz. This is her third time on the show. Um, she has a book that she's pushing, which is the connection between your body and astrology, and how you can use that to maximi—I don't know. Maximize your health potential.

Justin: That's a bad title, Syd. [through laughter] I'm gonna come right out and say, it's very long.

Sydnee: No, it's called *Your—Your Body and the Stars*.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: She also—

Justin: [through laughter] The John Green! I love that one.

Sydnee: —she—and she's doing two things. One, she will offer you an astrological health reading, okay?

Justin: I bet.

Sydnee: So this—and this—this is where it borders into what I do, and so I feel like it's fair game.

So, she will meet with you, do your chart, and then give you... health advice. And, I mean, it's very—it's very clear she's not gonna give you *medical* advice, but she—but, I mean, it's health advice. So she's trying to cover herself, so she doesn't get in trouble here. And—and the cost of these things!

So, if you want to go have... an astrological reading from her, it costs 250 dollars for an hour. Um, most medical readings are an hour-and-a-half, so it'll be 300 dollars. That's your usual start out cost.

Um, that's what they call your initial consultation. Which, by the way, is also doctor language. It's what we call it, too.

And you can focus on different things. You can focus on your health. She has all the other stuff, too. Things like life path, work, romance—you know, all the other astrological things. But this is about health.

Also, she will give you monthly cosmic coaching. If you want to sign up for a year of this, it's 2,400 dollars. For monthly... coaching, based on your astrological signs, from—from her, including—*including* health advice.

Not only that, but she now has a four-week medical astrology class, so that you can learn how to spread this—

Justin: Just deputize yourself.

Sydnee: —to others.

Justin: Get out there—

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: —into the Old West of—of validity, that is [crosstalk]—

Sydnee: So she's franchising.

Justin: [loudly] I just...!

Sydnee: So to speak. And—and this—this is why—this is what's very upsetting for me, is that, um... I—I use science to advise people, and people sometimes—I think a lot of times really listen to what I say, and so I take that incredibly seriously.

[pauses]

Rebecca Gordon has—she's not a doctor. She doesn't have to do that. She believes in astrology. She believes she's gonna help people. She's a true believer... who also likes to make money.

Justin: We thi—we think. You have no re—

Sydnee: We think. Who also likes to make money.

Justin: —you cannot know the contents of someone's heart.

Sydnee: No, I don't know. I don't know. She—I mean, she's also chargin' a lot of money for this! But you pay a lot of money to see a doctor, so, you know... fair game. Whatever.

But she—let's assume she's a true believer and she thinks she's helping people. Fine. Dr. Oz, you know better. You know better. I know you went to medical school. You know better.

Justin: A real one, too! [laughs] Like, a pretty good one!

Sydnee: This is not—this is not what we do, and it really does a disservice to everybody who watches your show and believes it, sometimes more than me! I have patients who I'll say, "I don't really think that's accurate."

And they'll say, "Well, I don't know. Dr. Oz said it."

And they are serious! The problem is—and this is something that, I mean, even though he believed in medical astrology, Hippocrates seemed to understand. It is a—it is a tr—it is a huge privilege to be a physician. It's a privilege. It's hard work, and I'm not saying that everybody who earned their—their degrees and did their training didn't work their butt off, and also pay through the nose for it, 'cause we do.

But it's also a huge privilege to walk into a room with one other person, ask them the most personal questions you can, and then ask them to trust you to advise them on how to cope with things that are affecting every aspect of their existence.

That is a huge privilege, and to go on TV and give people false advice, that you *know* is, and try to justify it as, "Well, I'll just say anything to give people hope."

That is—that is so... diminishing to the role of a physician, and it is—it's insulting to every person that he is advising! It's insulting. 'Cause what he's saying is, "It doesn't matter if it's real or not. If it makes you feel good, and you'll watch me say it, I'll say it."

That's not our job. That's not our job! I mean—

Justin: People don't do that with law, right? You know what I mean? Like, people don't do that with law and say, like, "Listen. For you? If *you* kill somebody... it's not a crime. 'Cause, like, go for it! What does it ma—" you know? Like, you—what—it—it's just like any other field! Like, you can't just lie and say, like, "Well, I'm trying to give people hope."

Like, that's fine—like, good! Good impulse.

Sydney: Then give people real hope. There's real hope in medicine every day! We make new discoveries and breakthroughs, we have vaccines! There are amazing things that medical science has brought us, that science has brought us, that we could give people hope with on a daily basis.

We don't have to resort to pseudoscience to give people hope. And if you look at somebody and say—and with a lot of his stuff, it's the hard stuff. It's weight loss. It's—it's how to cope with stress. It's things that there's not one pill, there's not one answer. It's personalized, and it's a journey, and it's failing and then getting back up and trying again.

And if you look at somebody and say, "But you can still get there, and let me be with you. Let me hold your hand and walk with you every step of the way."

It might be a harder journey, but that's hope, and that's real. What he's saying... it's fake, and as soon as it doesn't work for you, you're just as hopeless as you were before, *and* you're out a couple thousand dollars because he sold you a false bill of goods.

Justin: But hey, at least you watched. You know? How's—how's the follow up, Dr. Oz? Like, what's the—how are you managing this patient of yours that you're giving false hope to? You know what I mean? Like, how—how—how is the follow up with them?

It's nonexistent. Medicine isn't a drive by. It's not a google search. It's a relationship!

Sydnee: It's a journey, because it's your whole life, and it changes, and it's personal. And you *can't* stand on a stage and give mass medical advice to everybody and help them. And—

Justin: That's why you work so hard to not do it. And occasionally I think you will get—we have given some very benign advice on this show, I think? Like—

Sydnee: I—I will stand behind—

Justin: —"Wear sunscreen." I will stick by that.

Sydnee: —yeah, I'll stand behind that. And getting vaccinated, I'll stand behind that. But I try very hard not to give much else, 'cause—not just for liability. I know that's important, but because—

Justin: But our dad does—my dad does the disclaimer, so it's fine.

Sydnee: —yeah, your dad covers that. No, it's because I can't give good medical advice to everybody at the same time! You can't! There's so few things that apply to pretty much everybody. I mean—and almost nothing that applies to every single person!

Justin: I'm sorry I got off on a tangent. Is there anything else you wanted to say about medical astrology?

Sydnee: Um, no. I think we covered it. I had some—I found our medical astrology readings.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: So, I'll give you—I've already kind of said about me. I'm Aries, I'm supposed to have head problems. [laughs quietly]

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, it also tells me that I drive too fast and I need to slow down. That is not true. Once I—after I had kids, I drive very slow, so.

Justin: That's true.

Sydnee: Um... but Justin, I'll give you this information. So, because you are a Scorpio, and that governs, as we've already discussed, not only your sexual organs but your, um, bladder and your prostate gland—although you gotta share your bladder with Libra, so all you Libras out there, you get to share... [through laughter] share Justin's bladder.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: They also govern the bladder. It's a shared organ. Um, so... Scorpios' rough life force should always be directed in a more productive way and not be repressed, because if that happens, self-destructive situations may begin.

So your competitive nature will find its bliss in sports while your body will enjoy a good cardio.

Justin: I mean, that's me! That's me, medical astrology! You got me!

Sydnee: I really thought that was—

Justin: [holding back laughter] Find my bliss in sports!

Sydnee: —that you—I really thought, like—

Justin: [through laughter] It's me!

Sydnee: —that's how—that's what Justin does. He finds his bliss in sports.

Justin: I find my bliss in sports. Watching it, playing it, eating it, whatever. However I can get my sports. My vitamin sports, I call it.

Sydnee: Mm-hm. Um, as far as modern thought on this, I think we've probably pretty well covered, it's not a thing. Medical astrology is not... I mean, is it alive and well, making money? Yeah. Is it gonna help you with your health? No. Um, as far as the influence of the heavenly bodies on us, I mean, we've already discussed sunburns and skin cancer, so that's definitely an influence from the heavenly bodies. And also you can get vitamin D deficiency, I guess, if you don't get enough sun. I mean, that's a balancing act.

Justin: Or a vitamin sports deficiency. Like, that is—

Sydnee: For you.

Justin: —for me, if I'm not out there in the sun getting my vitamin sports, on the field... of sport, then I—don't even talk to me until I've had my sports.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Justin: That's kind of how I feel. You know?

Sydnee: I, uh—and again, I want to say, if you—if you enjoy astrology—I mean, like I said, my mom does. And my mom was like, "I can't believe you're doing this episode. I can't believe you'd do this to me, Sydnee."

But my mom also said, "Well, I would never—I don't believe that it has health advice. You don't get medical advice from astrology."

She said it's fun to hear about aspects of your personality. And you can find—I read my entire natal chart, and it has a lot of things that I think are true, and then just as many things that are not true at all. But that's because it's super long, and it has, like, every possible personality trait in it, ever! And so of course I'm gonna connect with some of 'em.

Um, and that's my take on it. If you just—and my—and I think that also, my mom has said before, "I would never take money for this stuff. If you really believe in this, you don't take money for it."

So there you go, Rebecca Gordon. [laughs quietly]

Justin: So... [sighs] okay. Well, that's gonna do it for us—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: —folks. Uh, we hope you've enjoyed this week's program. Um, make sure to tune in every week. Uh—

Sydnee: Not to Dr. Oz.

Justin: Not to Dr. Oz.

Sydnee: Just to—

Justin: And you know? Don't—don't—I don't know. Just... like, let's—let's just all stop pretending that Dr. Oz is—is, like, a real, regular doctor. And let's give Sydnee her own TV show. She's got, uh, a face bolstered by astrology, so if you're worried about her being camera-ready, don't.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Because the sign of the moon is in the seventh house. That makes her, like, always ready to shine.

Sydnee: I'll never be able to practice the upkeep that Dr. Oz seems to.

Justin: Handsome guy. [laughs]

Sydnee: I know! He's in great shape.

Justin: Droz—Droz looks great. I will say that.

Sydnee: And I'm sure he's—let me—like I said, he's probably a fine surgeon. I have no—I'm not questioning that.

Justin: This is like—I'm completely pulling this out of my butt, so, like, no harm no foul. But... I would guess that when he's actually, like, practicing, and not saying a bunch of nonsense on TV that I'm sure is, like, littered with disclaimers about how "Don't do anything Dr. Oz says to do and please don't sue him" and everything—I bet he probably, like, is a pretty sound doctor, right? 'Cause he doesn't have to fill 45 minutes every flippin' day.

Sydnee: Which is why you have to respect—if you have gone into medicine, you respect the power you've been given. You have to be respectful of that, because people really listen to what you say. [pauses] Some of the time.

And—and that's really—you cannot take that lightly.

Also, um, Dr. Oz, you can stay out of podcasting, 'cause that's kind of *my* thing? He's getting into podcasting now.

Justin: Droz...

Sydnee: You already got TV, man.

Justin: Droz...

Sydnee: So...

Justin: Sydnee's gonna get her own TV show, then. Comin'—comin' to *your* house, kick things over, see how you like that.

Sydnee: Well, no. I'm not—I'm not—I'm not saying that. I'm just sayin'... I guess he came in—he also came into my wheelhouse [through laughter] when he came into podcasting.

Justin: Yeah. So stay out of the house, Dr. Oz. Man, he's releasing a lot of 'em! Droz, sheesh, okay!

Well, uh, [through laughter] that's gonna do it for us, folks. Thank you so much for—

Sydnee: It probably has something to do with his sign. He's just a hard worker. I don't know.

Justin: He's just a hard worker. He puts out a lot of episodes of his podcast.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Uh, that's gonna do it for us, folks. Thank you so much for, um... uh... listening to the program. Uh, please leave us a positive review on iTunes. Um, if you enjoy what we and the other shows in the Max Fun Network are doing, you can go to Maximumfun.org/donate to become a member of the Maximum Fun... Network, and we sure appreciate you doin' that.

And, uhhh... that's gonna do it for us, folks! This week—thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of their song "Medicines" as the intro and outro of our program. And thanks to you, for listening. We will see you next time.

But until then, my name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

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

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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