

Sawbones 335: Grounded for Life

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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: And Sydnee, you wanted to open this week's episode talking about animated films. Is that correct?

Sydnee: I wanted to, or you wanted to?

Justin: You wanted to, you said, "I got a lot to say about these."

Sydnee: I don't.

Justin: "No one reached out to me about my opinions on watching animated movies."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: And you just wanted to really put everybody on blast. Is that how I understand it?

Sydnee: No, that is not accurate whatsoever.

Justin: You don't wanna talk about animated movies.

Sydnee: I just— okay. I don't, but now you have put me in this position, so now I am forced to. Last week, of course, we reviewed Osmosis Jones, and I would like to—

Justin: [snorts] "Reviewed" is quite a choice.

Sydnee: Evaluated, explored Osmosis Jones. And I would like to say that my statement that I didn't know who this movie was for is not based on a belief that I don't think adults should or can or would benefit from watching animated movies at all. I watch animated movies. I watch many animated shows with my children and I enjoy quite a few of them. Not all, but quite a few of them. I think animation is for everyone, contrary to what many listeners believe about me.

Osmosis Jones in particular, I'm not sure who it was for because it didn't seem quite for kids or adults. That was my only point. I didn't know who that was for. If you enjoy animation, please watch it and enjoy it and know that I am happy that you are happy watching your animated whatever. Whatever age you are. I think that's wonderful. So.

Justin: But, just for you personally...

Sydnee: Well, I watch—

Justin: You think animation is for babies.

Sydnee: No! [laughs] I watch a lot of animation with the girls all day and so when it's my free time I usually wanna watch something live action. That is my personal preference and it is not a value judgement on anything whatsoever. I think we know, like, I'm a huge fan of Steven Universe and we watched Apple & Onion together because you were on it, but it was also really great.

Justin: You watch some anime. I know you've watched—

Sydnee: Oh, I watched a ton of anime.

Justin: In the past.

Sydnee: Yeah, in the past, I was hugely into Fushigi Yugi growing up, I mean, Neon Genesis Evangelion...

Justin: But now you've put away childish things.

Sydnee: No! I'm just—

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Stop! I just, I think a lot of people, a lot of—

Justin: This is all Sydnee has talked about for this past week. You don't understand what I have been through, listeners. Please stop tweeting and emailing my wife about animation. Please. It's all she's talked about over the past week is how mad everybody is at her for not preferring to watch animated works.

Sydnee: Well no, I think people got the impression that I was saying animation is only for kids. And I was not saying that, and if it came across that way, I apologize. That was not my intention.

Justin: I will say it if it will get you to stop tweeting at my wife. If you need somebody to beat up on, please come at me.

Sydnee: No. And I have the book Cells at Work. Everybody's been saying, "But have you seen Cells at Work?" I have that book, Tey got it for me. So yes, I have not seen it, but I have read it. And it's great. Anyway. [laughs]

Justin: And now, the greatest Sawbones controversy of the past six months has been put to bed. No one's gonna tweet about animation anymore.

Sydnee: Here are the things I've learned on Sawbones. Don't come for fluoride, don't come for animation.

Justin: Yep.

Sydnee: There are strong opinions.

Justin: Very strong. Um, Sydnee, we are not talking about— as much as I would love to sit here and meditate about Osmosis Jones for another thirty minutes, that is not what we are discussing this week.

Sydnee: No. We are gonna talk about something you had never heard of.

Justin: Had never heard of, no. That is correct. This is completely foreign to me.

Sydnee: And this really surprised me. I asked Justin, "I was thinking of doing a show on grounding this week."

Justin: And I said, "I don't know what that is."

Sydnee: And I said, "Earthing."

Justin: Which I think is to my credit, because that means that I have self-policed my own social media feeds enough that I don't get inundated with this kind of stuff, right? That's impressive.

Sydnee: Well, to be fair, part of the reason I know about it is my profession, not social media.

Justin: Really?

Sydnee: Yeah, well, I mean, you know, when you're a doctor in real medicine, fake medicine is asked about a lot.

Justin: I'm not saying in comparison to you, I'm just saying as, like, a consumer of fine medical treatments.

Sydnee: Ah. Well, I was just surprised you'd never heard, because it, grounding or earthing, whichever term you prefer, has become, um, it's a very popular... I don't wanna already say "woo", but...

Justin: [laughs] That was early you tipped your hand.

Sydnee: I know. But Gwyneth Paltrow's a fan.

Justin: Oh, well okay. Alright, got it.

Sydnee: And a lot of our listeners wanted us to talk about it. Cora, Chris, Paul, Kyle, Whitney, Natalie, Merrit, Mia, Kay, Elena, Macy, Audrey, Lena, Julie, John, Yusef, Katie and Adrian all recommended this topic. Thank you. It's a good one, because it is very popular, and I guess with, um... oh, oh what's his face that has his show about being out on the earth now? You know?

Justin: Zac Efron?

Sydnee: Yes, that nice young man who has a show about being outside, I believe.

Justin: Zac Efron is Outside. That's the name of the show.

Sydnee: [laughs] I think that's what it's called. I guess he has talked about it recently. So, I went into this, by the way, I wouldn't say necessarily with an open mind because—

Justin: That ship done sailed?

Sydnee: Well, I was already somewhat familiar with the idea of it before I started doing this research. And it doesn't— it never quite made scientific sense to me, like the theory behind it. So, I wouldn't say that I was, like, ready to be convinced. But, like, I read all the research. I did have, though, an open heart. Because my understanding was that this was something that was probably, well, almost certainly harmless in most scenarios, and free. And seemed nice. And so I thought, you know, maybe this would fall into, like, as long as you're not using it as a substitute for real medicine, if you just like doing this, this seems pretty harmless.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: That was kinda the way I entered this topic. Thinking that would be my takeaway from it. If you like to do it, why not? You know. But, of course, I didn't think about the monetary aspect.

Justin: Always gotta be a monetary aspect, come on.

Sydnee: There's always gotta be money. You'd think— we've mentioned this before, you'd think I have watched enough Penn & Teller to know there's gotta be money in there somewhere. And then I was disappointed. So— I should know better. How long have we done this show?

Justin: I know.

Sydnee: So, the idea is really simple. Okay, Justin. Here is the idea behind grounding or earthing. Whatever you prefer.

Justin: Okay. Grounding is a word and earthing is not, so I'm gonna go with grounding.

Sydnee: We can call it grounding.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Humans need contact, physical contact, with the earth itself. Unobstructed contact with the earth. To balance our bodies, our systems.

Justin: Okay...

Sydnee: That is the concept. There are a lot of spiritual aspects to this, like, if you dig back through the history of this concept, there's tons, there's a lot that connects this to, like, various spiritualities and faiths and belief systems. I'm not gonna talk about any of that, because that's not what this show does. We're not talking about the spiritual part. If whatever your faith is, you feel more connected to it by touching the earth, okay, that's fine. I have no part of that conversation. But there's a science part to it that I think is what we need to talk about. The proponents of grounding or earthing, of course, start out by appealing to our ancients, obviously.

Justin: Appeal to ancient wisdom, yeah.

Sydnee: Yes, for the inspiration. And the original connections are pretty vague. It's that idea that, like, well, you know, back in olden times people didn't have shoes and they slept on the ground, and they were fine.

Justin: Right. They loved sleeping on the ground because it was so healthy for them, and they loved not having shoes because it really helped connect them to the earth.

Sydnee: Now, here's the weird thing, this statement, because I hear this a lot, like, "People back then were fine." Were they? Were they fine? This is always the problem with this. Were they fine, though?

Justin: Yeah, because I think they would probably enjoy the shoes.

Sydnee: No, but they weren't fine. Because they were dying of, like, infections that now we treat easily with antibiotics or over-the-counter ointments. They were dying of vaccine-preventable diseases. They would get an appendicitis and die, because, you know, we didn't have antibiotics or surgery or anything like that. We didn't have any, like, we couldn't fix a trauma.

You, like, fall and break a bone and we're like, "Well, hope for the best. We can't do surgery, we don't have anesthesia or antiseptic technique. And also giving birth, cross your fingers, and also, you know, food could

be spoiled but we don't know about spoiled food or food poisoning. And also the water might be dirty."

Justin: I heard someone say, I think it was David Cross, like, a very long time ago, say, "The thing to remember about when you're talking about ancient teachings, ancient wisdom, is that you are referencing things that people thought when they were even dumber than they are right now."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: So think about that. Like, you are actually talking about people that are dumber than we are in this moment currently.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, it's the answer to, "What did people do before there were vaccines?"

Justin: Died.

Sydnee: They died.

Justin: They died.

Sydnee: I mean, that's the sad answer. So, like, I would argue that people weren't just fine when they were sleeping on the ground and not wearing shoes. But I'm not gonna necessarily connect it to their lack of shoes at this point.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: So, we could put the first, I don't know if you wanna say credit or blame for this idea, on a German naturopath, Adolf Just. Just? Yust?

Justin: What is going on in Germany? I feel like they are, it is flip a coin and see which— if you say someone's a German, I feel like it is like flip a coin whether they are going to be a heroic scientists figuring a bunch of stuff out, or an absolute madman. I feel like it is always, like, that is all you get. It is fire and ice over there in Germany. Fire and ice.

Sydnee: Well, it's weird because there's a lot of, like, this naturopathic kind of stuff that traces— it's not all of it, obviously, but some of its roots to Germany. And then there's also, like, homeopathy, which can trace its roots there.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: But then, yes, you're right, there are also real scientific advancements. I don't know. But at the end of the 1800s, early 1900s, he kinda started popularizing naturopathy in general, but also these beliefs that, like, a return to nature is the way to health, right? Like, a return to the way we used to live when we were more connected to the earth. Like natural remedies, raw foods, fasting, just drink a lot water. There's a lot of focus on clay in his writings. The importance of Clay. Like, you know, we've talked about that before, that's an idea. He also had some other ideas, like he thought gymnastics were bad for you because they're artificial. He thought vaccines were poison and that technology was an affront to nature.

Justin: I hope that went okay.

Sydnee: In addition, he advocated for walking on the ground barefoot and sleeping on the ground as a way to reconnect to the earth. And this was all, by the way, part of his medical but also spiritual beliefs. This was definitely connected to his faith as well. Like, this was a way to be closer to his belief system, was also to return to this simpler way of living. But then it was also supposed to give you good health. So, it was like both connected. On a positive note, he was anti-homeopathy.

Justin: Great.

Sydnee: Which tells you something about homeopathy.

Justin: Mm hmm.

Sydnee: Even this guy...

Justin: Even this guy. [laughs]

Sydnee: Knew it was fake. [laughs] There was also a French agronomist who followed in those footsteps, Matteo Tavera, who wrote a series of letters. And I've read some of them.

Justin: B. S. Was that the series of letters?

Sydnee: [laughs] No, it's fascinating.

Justin: W. T. F.

Sydnee: It's the kind of writing that is very lovely, it's almost like it sucks you in and you're reading it and you realize, like, I have no idea what I've been reading for the last five minutes, but it felt nice in my brain as it resonated there. So, I can see how it was persuasive.

The idea is that we have this sacred mission on earth, that's what it's called. And it has to do with the fact that there is a natural electricity in the earth and also all around us, and we act as, like, antenna for it. And the way that we can maintain life, I don't know, indefinitely, maybe, is to connect with the earth appropriately, ground ourselves with the earth so that the passage of electricity can move through us and we can stay alive.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: So.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: I'm just saying, all of this is what would inspire the guy that we're going to talk mainly about in this episode, Clint Ober.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Ober was a cable installation guy in the 1990s. He worked for a— started, I believe, a major cable installation company. So, he understood very well cables. Like, electricity. That part of things.

Justin: As depicted in the hit film Cable Guy.

Sydnee: Exactly. Exactly like that, I assume. I've never seen that, but I assume.

Justin: It's very dark.

Sydnee: After retirement, he alludes to in his writing some sort of health issue, some sort of challenge he encountered with his health, and it sent him on this sort of spiritual journey, health journey, around the world to try to, like, reconnect with himself and understand himself and where he

fits in and that kind of thing. All very normal, I think, after facing a big health challenge.

In his travels, he describes this sitting on a park bench kind of situation where he's looking around at all the people walking around him and it occurs to him that the problem is that everybody is wearing shoes.

Justin: Ah.

Sydnee: And we all have poor health because our shoes are usually made of an insulating material, rubber, plastic, or something like that, that keeps us from connecting with the natural electricity of the earth. And maybe if we weren't wearing shoes, we would all feel better. Because, of course, our forebears did not wear shoes and they were fine. Although we've established they weren't. Or, if they did wear shoes, he allows for this, they were made of, like, hide, like leather.

Justin: Conductive.

Sydnee: Which is conductive, right. So, we need conductive shoes or no shoes to help us. We need to be grounded, just like a cable has to be grounded in the earth.

Justin: I would say, as a rule, that scientific truth does not find you on a park bench. Truth about human experience, I could see. Strength.

Sydnee: À la Forrest Gump.

Justin: Thank you Sydnee. Yes of course, that timely film, Forrest Gump. But I would argue that scientific truth is found in a lab, is found in books. Scientific truth very rarely occurs to one while sitting on a park bench.

Sydnee: I don't know. Wasn't Newton sitting under a tree?

Justin: Yeah, but—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Newton— here's the difference, right? Newton was sitting under a tree, let's say he was on a park bench. An apple fell out the tree. Isaac Newton wasn't like, "Oh, I get it. Okay. Here's the whole bit. Let me lay it out for you." Apple fell on him, he was like, "Oh God, this hurts. Let me

take the rest of the afternoon off and then start working on this thing," right?

Sydnee: People like to imagine— it's like House. It's like when House has his House moment in every episode where somebody says something random and he's tossing the ball in the air and he goes [gasp].

Justin: He catches the ball and he's like, "Oh my God, gravity."

Sydnee: "And I got it." I wish everything worked that way.

Justin: Yeah. It's one of those things that feels like it should be true, right? Like, "Oh this makes sense. You know what? Maybe the problem is all the shoes." Except what's the problem, dog? Cause we're living much longer now. [laughs] So it doesn't make sense.

Sydnee: No, it doesn't. And I mean, you can see where it ties into, like, his background. In like, cable and grounding and that kind of thing. But anyway, so, if this story ended with, like, so he recommended everybody should spend some time walking barefoot, and like, camping... okay. But of course, that's not where this story ends.

You can't charge people for telling them to walk barefoot. Well, you probably could. I'm sure somebody does. But also, like, you know, doctors might get in the way because we would point out things like, "Well, you do need to be careful about, like, stepping on things. Or like, hookworm, you know." Sleeping outside isn't always an option. So we have to find a way to ground ourselves inside.

Justin: What?

Sydnee: How can you get grounded and earthed in your house? In the convenience of your own home.

Justin: I don't know.

Sydnee: So, Ober built a bed. A grounded bed. Basically, he attached a grounding wire from his bed to a rod outside.

Justin: Okay...

Sydnee: And then he slept on his bed that was now grounded to the earth. I think, like, metallic duct tape was involved in this process.

Justin: Okay, yeah.

Sydnee: And he noticed after sleeping on this grounded bed, he noticed a huge difference in his own personal symptoms of chronic pain. And he also noticed his sleep was improved. And he wanted to share his discovery, so he made some for his friends, he grounded their beds, and they were all like, "You're right! This is great. I love my new grounded bed."

Justin: Or you just don't wanna insult your maniac friend that came over and tied a wire to your bed.

Sydnee: [laughs] Then, a couple years later, his first—

Justin: I bet he did it while they were asleep and he didn't ask. That's what my theory— I'm just kidding, I'm sure he was... very polite.

Sydnee: His first experiment, and many of these experiments, by the way, are kind of, like, led by Mr Ober. But his first experiment was kind of a makeshift. He took, like, a random group of older people that he found. Like, he had a nurse help him find old people in pain. [laughs] And then he grounded half of them and sham-grounded the other half. Like, it looked, they thought they were grounded, but they had, like, a spacer between themselves and the grounded part.

Justin: Okay, double blind. Double blind.

Sydnee: Right, yes. And he published... well, he... I don't, "published". Printed. Put, made a PowerPoint? Somehow, he shared the results of this and it was just overwhelming that the people who were grounded had better sleep and better, like, less pain than the people who weren't. No worse.

Justin: Well that should be— I feel silly for dogging this guy then. That should be enough for you, Dr. McElroy. He did research. It's fine.

Sydnee: [laughs] So, he wanted to share it with the world, of course.

Justin: Yeah, me too.

Sydnee: So, he found a cardiologist, Stephen Sinatra, who—

Justin: That's a good name.

Sydnee: Who looked at this research and was impressed. And a writer named Martin Zucker, who it looks like writes a lot of these kinds of books. Like, he's teamed up with a lot of different people to write a lot of, um, wellness, we'll use that word, wellness-type books. And in 2010, *Earthing: The Most important Health Discovery Ever* was published.

Justin: God, that's a good title though.

Sydnee: [laughs] That's the book.

Justin: You gotta give it up. That's a good title. Who's not gonna read that? [laughs]

Sydnee: And it got a lot of attention, as you may imagine, since it is the most important health discovery ever. And from other doctors. There were two physicians in Poland who were related, who specifically kind of latched onto this and wanted to do more research in this area after reading this book.

And again, if all of this just amounted to people reading a book and for whatever pseudo-scientific reason, saying, "Well maybe I'll go outside barefoot occasionally," that would not be a big deal. But as I've already said, Ober maintains you need to be able to ground yourself in the house. And so, in order to do that, you gotta have products, right? You gotta have stuff you can buy.

Justin: Yeah, a line of grounded products.

Sydnee: So, you can go to their website. There are mats to take with you. Like, there's the grounded bed idea, which is like a mat that you lay on your bed. You don't have to buy the whole bed, you just get the grounding mat for your bed. So there's like a grounding mat, there's a grounding pillowcase to put on your own pillow so that you can get the whole set, the whole bed going. There's a mat you can take, a travel mat you can take with you. There are bands to wear around your body that are supposed to focus on, like, your gut balance. There are patch kits, which are like little patches that you attach to, like, electrodes all over your body so you can just, like, do some, do a touchup here and there.

Justin: Yeah, just a little bit of grounding.

Sydnee: As you need it. There's a chair that is called The Ultimate Relaxation Chair that is billed as "grounded, zero-gravity, heat and pulsating massage relaxation chair" for the low, low price of \$3,399.

Justin: A bargain.

Sydnee: Yeah. So, there are all kinds of things you can buy. And I know what you're thinking, "But does it work?", because so far all we know is that he did this study, it looked like it worked, this cardiologist and these two doctors in Poland agree that it worked, so...

Justin: What I'm thinking is where's my credit card? I'm buying this chair.

Sydnee: I'm gonna get into the research. But before I do that, let's go to the billing department.

Justin: Let's go!

[ad break]

Justin: Okay, my chair will be here in a couple of days, so I do need to go ahead and hurry this up so I can clear space for it and install properly.

Sydnee: Well, I have some bad news for you. [laughs]

Justin: Impossible.

Sydnee: Now, as you read— you can go to, like, the Earthing Institute online to read more about this whole story, but I mean, and there's a book. Obviously, there are other books you can buy about earthing.

Justin: I'm so disappointed. I mean, when you said online I got so disappointed. I did wanna go to the physical Earthing Institute.

Sydnee: I don't think there's a physical place. I don't know.

Justin: Who knows.

Sydnee: And there's a store called Ultimate Longevity where you can buy all this stuff. And if you look on their site where you can buy stuff, you start to see some things that might set off some red flags if you're a fan of this show. One, they have, like, a system that is there to reduce

EMF in your home. They have an EMF-free zone system that you can have installed to go, um, [laughs] you're already looking ahead, I can see.

Justin: No, I just went to their website. Yeah.

Sydnee: And on a side note, the idea of electromagnetic fields that are harming you in your house.

Justin: Yeah?

Sydnee: It plays big into all this. That's part of— if you accept that we need to be grounded to be balanced with the earth and it has to do with the flow of electrons— which I haven't really specified. That's his theory, is that this natural electricity from the earth is in the form of a ton of, like, free electrons that are floating around on the earth's surface, and the only way that you can get these free electrons into your body is to go, like, put your bare feet and hands on the earth.

And then you get this flow of free electrons into your body that are gonna go around and fight all those— that's where things get kinda wild. Like, they're gonna fight all the free radicals in your body and they're gonna fight all the, um, the, what else does he say? You need them as anti-oxidants, he throws that I there. Like, all of kinds of, like, well none of this really...

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know what you're trying to say. But then it just comes back to, like, well, "they'll balance you." Which... I don't know what that means either. But EMF plays a big part in this, because EMFs are the reasons that our electrons are so out of whack, is part of the argument. There are lots of reasons, stress, modern life, blah, blah, blah.

Justin: But the main thing is...

Sydnee: Yes. And we should do a whole show on EMF, because... it's fine. But— [laughs]

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: The other thing is adaptogens. He sells something called The Ultimate Adaptogenic Elixir, which says on the page, "based on ancient

wisdom and sacred science". Sacred science. I don't know how to— that's a lot to unpack.

Justin: Wow. Can I just read this one bit here?

Sydnee: Sure.

Justin: "Our ancestors considered them sac—" they're talking about plants, the plants that are in The Ultimate Adaptogenic Elixir, "Our ancestors considered them sacred and superior to all of the plants on the planet and named them Tonic Herbs, because they knew that if these plants were grown, harvested, made into extracts and married, blended and balanced properly, the finished extract elixir would resonate one's innate divine frequency through transference, toning, awakening one's miraculous divine blueprint on all levels, body, mind and soul."

Is there something in this elixir that makes your sentences just absolutely wild? Just like clause on clause on clause. Is that necessary to the process?

Sydnee: It's to hide that fact that—

Justin: That was one sentence.

Sydnee: It's to hide the fact that they can't even tell you how it's supposed to work. Whether it does work or not, they can't even tell you, because nobody— again, adaptogens are a whole other show, because they— you can't— no one, even people who are proponents of them don't know how they work or why they would work or what they would actually do, other than, again, it's this idea that you need to be balanced.

There's this weird idea that, like, health is balance. And I... because we do this show, in my mind, I trace it back to the four humors. Like, what we're really talking about is the humoral system of medicine. Oh, so you wanna bring my humors into balance? Well, we already know that's not how the body works.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: But I feel like they're kind of calling to that same idea, that that's really what health is, is balance. And then I think, again, we're getting into some spiritual things which do benefit from balance. But

that's not medicine. That's something else. Anyway, what does the data say?

Justin: I don't know. You tell me.

Sydnee: [sighs] So, there are not tons of studies, I would say. There are studies on this. Not as many as you would think, if it was the most important health discovery ever, or whatever they say. And many of the ones that do exist have been funded by Ober.

Justin: What do you think the most important medical discovery ever is?

Sydnee: Hoo. Um, I mean, vaccines are way up there.

Justin: I think, like, cell theory. Or germ— germ theory.

Sydnee: Germ theory of disease. Penicillin.

Justin: Discovery of the cell? Quark?

Sydnee: I mean, I could maybe narrow it down to a top five, but that's a rough, that's a tough question.

Justin: That would be a good episode. Top five.

Sydnee: Yeah. Top five.

Justin: Grounding has to make top five though, it's the most... important.

Sydnee: [laughs] A lot of the studies do seem to be the same sort of group of researchers over and over again. So it's not like independent researchers all over the planet are—

Justin: Finding the same things.

Sydnee: Right. Not every single one. Some are very small. All are small, some are incredibly small. There are no, like, giant, you know, multi-center, hundreds or thousands of participant studies. Some are observational, some are not blinded or not controlled. There's one that is literally just one guy who is both the subject and the investigator and then writes about his own experience.

Justin: Folks, the study sizes don't get much smaller than that. [laughs]

Sydnee: And then there's one that I particularly—

Justin: That's barely one. That's .5, I would say.

Sydnee: [laughs] There's one that I particularly like where eight guys have to, like, live in a hotel and do toe raises every day and then have, like, a lot of blood work done.

Justin: Coming this fall to Netflix.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: When you finally reach the bottom of the barrel, come watch Eight Men Do Toe Raises.

Sydnee: [laughs] They have to hold barbells while they do it.

Justin: Oh, okay, well that's a little bit more exciting. But they also have to talk to their future spouse while wearing a mask. Amazing.

Sydnee: [laughs] Is Carole Baskin in that one?

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: Of course, they all, all the studies— because you can link to them from this website. All the studies say it works.

Justin: Yeah. Haven't found one that didn't yet, huh?

Sydnee: No. But it depends on what you mean by "work".

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: A lot of the data is, well a lot of it's subjective.

Justin: Depends on what your definition of what "is" is.

Sydnee: And that's why— and we talk about this a lot when it comes to snake oil. A lot of it is based on testimonial. And, like, these studies, I would say are not that far from just testimonials. Like, "It made me sleep so much better!", "My stiffness and achiness was so much better!" So it's very subjective.

And I'm not saying that these people didn't experience any benefits, it's just that's a really hard thing to measure if you're just asking questions of these participants who, I mean, who knows what their— why they came into this, how were they selected, did they already— like, some of them it seems like were recruited through massage therapists or those kinds of, like, where they already may be prone...

Justin: Open-minded.

Sydnee: Open-minded, you know. So, I don't know, but I don't know all that data because I don't have— it's not given to me. But the other stuff that isn't subjective, it's just kinda weird. Like, sometimes they did EEGs, which is how we, like, sort of measure brain activity and brain waves, which can tell us some things about the brain. But not all things about the brain can be found out through EEGs. EMGs, which are like, they're measuring muscle contraction and reactivity and that kind of thing through some of them, and the nerve conduction and how those signals are passing through and where they're getting through.

Sometimes they're just doing, like, surface conduction of the skin. Electricity on the skin type measurements. Some of it is live blood analysis, which we've talked about on the show before, is fake. Some of them are just standard blood tests. They're just checking, like, a complete blood count or a chemistry panel before and after various things. And I don't know what to do with any of that. They take all that data and go, "So obviously it works."

For me, it's weird because it's like... it's like if you were trying to lose weight and you did something, like we're talking in a scientific experiment, you did something and you were gonna see if it helped you lose weight. And so, you measured your head circumference and then did the thing and then measured your head circumference again and went, "See? I lost weight." And I would go, "What does any of that have to— like, how does that prove anything?" Like, the measurements don't— I know what those things mean and I know what they can tell me, but I don't know why they would tell me anything about your pain level or your sleep or—do you know what I'm saying?

Justin: Yeah. There's no connection.

Sydnee: There's just random numbers that are thrown out and like, "Look at the change in the alkaline phosphatase," and it's like, "Okay... ? I

don't know what that means." So anyway, the data, I would say, is weak. To put it mildly. And would need to be done appropriately double-blinded by multiple investigators in different centers who are not already being funded by the guy who's selling products.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: You know, based on this. What can it help with? What do they say it can do for you?

Justin: Oh my God.

Sydnee: Because we've talked about pain and sleep, which again are somewhat subjective and you could, you know, we know from this show that you can often sell people things that aren't real that will convince them, you know, through the placebo effect, that it did help them with their pain or their sleep. But what about the other things?

Justin: I need somebody to make a, please hire the animaniacs, get them back together, and I need a song where they're just singing this list that we can play for every one of these, like, panaceas. [sings] Anemia, autism, asthma, arthritis, anxiety, burns and bipolar. [stops singing] It's like, that's just the beginning.

Sydnee: It's, and if you'll notice, it's in alphabetical order, because on their website they just have the whole alphabet there and you can click on each letter of the alphabet and it will tell you all the things that start with that letter that it helps out.

Justin: [exhales]

Sydnee: So, that is why I have it in this order. But as you said, all those things, blood pressure, colds, cellulitis, complexion, circulation, chronic fatigue. Children are listed on there, so it'll help with children.

Justin: [laughs] Listen, okay, listen, I'll try anything at this point, folks.

Sydnee: Depression, digestion, diabetes, eyes, electro-sensitivity, [laughs] frequent urination, fibromyalgia, gum disease, groundedness, [laughs] hernias, headaches, kidney disease, leg cramps, lupus, Lyme, MS, memory. Pets?

Justin: Pets?

Sydnee: Pets? Yes, you can ground your pets. Pneumonia, Parkinson's, there are products for that too of course, plantar fasciitis, panic attacks, pain, rheumatoid arthritis, strokes, sinus problems, stress, sleep, sex, skin, tendonitis, tinnitus, thyroid, veins, and then these other blocks of quote-unquote "multiple complaints" in both men and women. And then there's a lot of other even less specific stuff about, like, it fights inflammation, it stops free radicals, it is an anti-oxidant. And this is when they start to talk about indirect things.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: About how because it blocks inflammation, chronic inflammation. That's always the thing right, with all this stuff. It helps with chronic inflammation, which stops tumorigenesis, which stops—

Justin: You name it.

Sydnee: Cancer.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: So, then the cancer gets thrown in there, but indirectly. Cause that's where the, that's where you get really cracked down on.

Justin: It's just a nice perk.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: We're not saying it cures cancer, we're just saying it will fix the problems that cause cancer.

Sydnee: They do mention that you gotta be careful with Lyme, and I think they're talking about the concept of chronic Lyme disease with this. Because when you start grounding, you can have this, like, inflammatory reaction as all the hidden spirochetes die off. So you gotta go slowly with grounding if you have chronic Lyme.

Justin: Yeah, that's kinda like, when you have two made-up things at the same time, it's kinda like a humidifier and a dehumidifier next to each other.

Sydnee: You just gotta be careful.

Justin: Just, so careful.

Sydnee: There are lots of testimonials. There's an interview where he was on Goop, he was featured on Goop in an interview. You know they've gotta get into grounding. This is so Goop. But one of the— and Goop, by the way, if you're not familiar, is Gwyneth Paltrow's, um... lifestyle website? Where among other things, she talks about wellness and a lot of questionable medical, pseudoscientific things.

But he says, "One of the first serious illnesses I dealt with was a hospice patient suffering from crippling arthritis." This is Ober himself. And this was a hospice patient, by the way, which to qualify for hospice means that it is likely that this patient will pass away in the next six months.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: That is likely. "He was unable to leave his bed and his nurse and daughter had to help me lift him out of the bed to install the grounded sheet. A week after my visit I got a call from the patient, who told me that a squirrel had chewed through his ground wire. It was significant for two reasons. First, this man who had been unable to walk was now active enough to leave the house and check the wire. Second, the effect of grounding was so dramatic that he noticed immediately when the connection was disrupted. He later told me that the grounding reduced his inflammation and that the burning pain he felt had finally subsided, and he lived six or seven years longer."

So, I mean, there you go. He talks about, like, after these sorts of experiences he was looking into grounding for fighting age. That's the ultimate, that's the ultimate, like, all these things lead to one path, which is "How do we stop aging and live forever?"

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: I always find, like, these wellness things end up there. So, the deal is that there is no solid evidence that this does anything. I mean, the theory behind it that, like, there are all these free electrons out there and all you have to do is touch the earth and you get these electrons, and they only exist on the surface of the earth, like, which earth? Like grass, or dirt, or sand, or what if there's snow? Is that a problem? What about my driveway? Does it matter if it's cement or asphalt? Like, none of that

is clear. Our dirt sucks and can't grow anything, is it okay? Do I need to get some fresh soil?

Like, I don't think any of those are answered by, like, what... "the earth will balance you." And, you know, I know that probably there's no harm in walking outside on the earth, right? Like, I walk outside barefoot a lot. But, you know, you do wanna be careful about, I don't know...

Justin: Dead mice.

Sydnee: Dead mice?

Justin: You never know.

Sydnee: That's what came to mind?

Justin: That's what comes to mind for me. If I'm walking outside barefoot and there's a dead mice and I step on it, oh my God. That's my whole week.

Sydnee: Well, my mama always said I would step on a bee, so not to run around barefoot.

Justin: Much rather step on a bee, are you kidding me?

Sydnee: Well, no, that would hurt. But there are, I mean, I guess it depends on where you live, right? Cause, like, there's broken glass, there's like, the old don't step on a rusty nail, you're gonna get tetanus. That was always my biggest fear growing up, because I'm gonna have to get another tetanus shot.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: You should get your booster anyway, I finally learned. But the point is, I guess there are some risks. I mean, I don't wanna engage in hyperbole. There are risks to walking around outside barefoot. And there are risks to sleeping outside, depending on, you know, the weather or where you are. Also, there is hookworm, which we've talked about on the show before, from walking around barefoot.

Justin: Jimmy Carter wants to fix it completely.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: He's trying.

Sydnee: That's not the one he's after.

Justin: No. Guinea worm?

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Yes. Sorry. But he'll come for hookworm next, is what I'm saying.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: He's gonna wrap up the guinea worm here real soon, and then hookworm's next on his hit list.

Sydnee: Absolutely. I have faith.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: But I don't wanna be pedantic. I don't wanna say that, like— if all this guy was saying is, "I think you'd feel better if you stood outside in bare feet," I'm not gonna give somebody a hard time for that. You know. It's nice to be outside. I enjoy being outside. I think if people enjoy being outside and also seek medical professionals for their medical problems, I think that's all great.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: Please wear your sunscreen, but like, I think that's all great. But then you get to the products. There's gotta be the products. And I mention this website where there are products. Of course, if you just do a quick search there are tons of earthing products out there that you can buy. There are socks you can buy, there are all kinds of special earthing shoes and sandals that you can buy that are made of materials that will conduct the free electrons from the earth into your body in stylish, in stylish sandals, [laughs] there are tons of products out there. And that's my problem, or it's two-fold.

One, it doesn't meet our test here, because you can pay a lot for some— as I mentioned, that chair is over \$3000, but even, like, the smaller products they sell are a couple hundred bucks here, 80 bucks there, you know, 50 bucks for these shoes, whatever. So, you might be getting

ripped off. Which, I guess, if you have all the money in the world, is your business. If you wanna buy special earthing sandals. But not everybody does, and some people are gonna read this and think it sounds just believable enough that maybe they'll give it a shot because they're scared and they're sick and they're desperate.

Justin: And nothing else has worked.

Sydnee: And nothing else has worked, and they'll spend money on this kinda thing.

Justin: And our healthcare system in America is broken so they can't afford it anyway.

Sydnee: Exactly. And yeah, you don't trust the healthcare system so by way of that you don't trust your doctors, because they're part of the American healthcare system that scares you and intimidates you because it is so bad and broken. So, you do this instead. And that's the big part. You do this instead. That's the final point.

That's my worry with stuff like this, is if you think you could cure your... what in that list do you want to fix? Do you wanna fix your MS, do you wanna fix your circulation? Do you wanna fix your thyroid disease? Do you want to buy these products to try to... and when I say "fix" I'm using this as you shouldn't do this, fix autism? They always throw that in here and it's so, in all these fake medical things, it's so frustrating. Do you want to address neurodivergence by buying a \$3000 massage chair?

Justin: People with autism don't need fixed.

Sydnee: Exactly.

Justin: We've said it before, but I think it bears saying again. Like, different life experiences, they need to be supported just like [quick drum roll] everybody else on planet earth. Ugh, it's so irritating.

Sydnee: And I think that's the frustrating thing. If this is a spiritual thing, like, the German guy was doing it cause it was his spiritual belief. Now, he also said vaccines were poison, so I don't think we would have been buddies, but you're selling people something and you're taking their money, but you're also giving them hope and you might be leading them away from medicine that could actually help them. Like, they could be going to doctors for any of those above diagnoses that I mentioned and

actually getting help and getting better, and instead they are wasting their time on earth and their money on you and your stuff. Which, if it's your personal belief, you go sleep outside and walk barefoot as much as you want, but once you start ripping people off it's not fair.

Justin: Then you're on our neighborhood, and we're gonna take ya... take 'em down, take 'em out.

Sydnee: I don't know if he's gonna— I'm worried he's gonna come for me.

Justin: Yeah. This is the problem with doing living people.

Sydnee: But, I mean, you know, again, I think that the science is incredibly weak and if you wanna prove that any of this makes sense, you gotta do, I mean, something else. You gotta do a lot more research, and it can't just be the same people who've already bought into it, you know? You have to have open-minded outside researchers to reproduce these experiments on large scales in appropriately-controlled methods, measuring something that actually means some— I mean, like, the data you collect has to be meaningful, it can't just be random lab tests and studies and imaging. And it can't be testimonials. Testimonials don't mean anything.

Justin: Thank you so much for listening to our show. If you would like to buy a second-hand, never-used grounding chair at a much reduced sticker price, please get in contact with me.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Thank you to The Taxpayers for the use of their song, "Medicines" are the intro and outro of our program. Thanks for your support during the Max Fun Drive.

Sydnee: Yes, thank you all so much.

Justin: We really appreciate it. We're gonna continue to upload episodes of Fast and Furious and Justin and Sydnee. I know I've been lax on that. There's four up there. We're recorded five and six, we just need to watch seven and eight. I think it's just gonna be hard to say goodbye to Paul. I think that we're both kinda dreading it.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: We don't wanna— anyway.

Sydnee: You know, I think that's actually true.

Justin: I know. I'm not kidding.

Sydnee: No, that's not, yeah.

Justin: That's not a joke. [laughs]

Sydnee: No, I didn't know if you were being facetious.

Justin: No, I'm not.

Sydnee: But yeah, no, I am having a hard time, yeah.

Justin: Yeah. Because it's about family in the end, Syd. If you think about it.

Sydnee: All family ain't blood, and all blood ain't family.

Justin: That's what it says on the Facebook meme. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] I don't even— does it ever say that in the movie?

Justin: No. I don't know.

Sydnee: Now every time I see that Facebook meme that's all I can wonder. Will I ever find that in the movie?

Justin: But thank you for your support during that, especially in these très weird times, it means a lot.

Sydnee: And thank you for all your feedback on animated films and television series. I don't ever want to tell anybody that they shouldn't enjoy the harmless thing they enjoy and I never want to give anybody a hard time, because there is no age on what movies or books or TV shows are okay to still enjoy. I happily read Archie comics to this day, so I am the last one to throw shade.

Justin: Thank you so much for listening to our show and be sure to join us again next week for Sawbones. But until then, my name's Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

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

[theme music plays]

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