

Sawbones 010: Weight Loss

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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, "Medicines" by The Taxpayers, plays]

Justin: [slurring] Hello, everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones*. I'm... Justin McElroy. This is a marital tour of misguided medicine.

Sydnee: Uh, I'm Sydnee. Um, honey?

Justin: [slurring] Yes, dear?

Sydnee: What's wrong with you?

Justin: Well, Syd, I'm feeling quite down... because I feel like I've put on a lot of weight lately.

Sydnee: Aw, honey, I think you look great. I don't—I don't—

Justin: Thank you, dear.

Sydnee: I don't think you've put on any weight.

Justin: It's true, I—[gargling]—I—just a half pound or so the last week, but I really, really feel... uh, I feel really hefty.

Sydnee: Did you put that... weight on in your vocal cords?

Justin: No, this is how I talk, Sydnee, because I am a giant, fat person.

Sydnee: [laughs] Oh. I—

Justin: This is how I talk now.

Sydnee: I don't know—I don't know if we can do a whole show of you talking that way, honestly. I don't know—

Justin: It's a great strain.

Sydnee: Could you—could you jump up and do a few jumping jacks real quick, or some push-ups?

[huffing and clapping sounds]

Sydnee: Like, the Presidential Fitness Test.

Justin: [normally] Okay.

Sydnee: Could you do some—some, like...

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: ... pull-ups?

Justin: Okay. Okay.

Sydnee: Hey!

Justin: Hey!

Sydnee: Hey! Did you hang on that bar for a while with your chin over it, and then...

Justin: I didn't actually lose any weight. I'm using my uh, uh, portly voice.

Sydnee: Your portly voice.

Justin: This is my port—[laughs]

Sydnee: I like how PC that word is there.

Justin: This is my portly—well, it's to distinguish it from my giant, fat person voice. Which is my normal—normal, uh, uh, uh, voice.

Sydnee: Aww. Aww.

Justin: But this is my portly voice.

Sydnee: Just everybody in the—everybody in the audience at home: "Aww."

Justin: Aww. Don't feel bad for him. He's trying to get back on the horse.

Anyway, earlier when I said "a marital tour of misguided medicine," that's the thing, right? It's a tour? Is that what we say? I couldn't remember.

Sydnee: I think it's a tour.

Justin: It's a tour.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: And today we're gonna—

Sydnee: We're your guides. This is a tour.

Justin: Sydnee's gonna help me to shed some of these last ellbees with a lot of hip dieting tips that are as relevant now as they were in uh, the 1700s.

Sydnee: That's right, 'cause the Presidential Fitness Test really just doesn't work.

Justin: Oh.

Sydnee: I could never hang on that bar for longer than—well, exactly as long as it took for them to move the stool out from under me.

Justin: And we're perpetuating this myth that anyone can do sit-ups.

Sydnee: Well, s—I mean, I can d—

Justin: The body—the human—

Sydnee: I can do sit-ups. [laughs]

Justin: The human body...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: It's all joints. I'll have to explain it to you afterwards. This is not—it's not a good time.

Sydnee: Well, we'll do another podcast on the impossibility of sit-ups [through laughter] later this month, maybe.

Justin: Yeah, The Impossibility of Sit-Ups is my favorite Arcade Fire album.

Sydnee: On the eighth week of August, we do the impossibility of sit-ups [laughs] podcast.

Justin: Uh, Sydnee, take me all the way back. Let's climb into our time machine here, and say—I see that your first dieting tip is from 1727. It would seem to me—I'm surprised, I guess, that we had—that we had fat people. You should know...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: ... before we start this show, I am, myself, overweight. So when I say "fat people," I mean it with all the love in the world. I've lived my life as a fat person. So there's really no malice meant. I just want all of us to get back of this horse and just feel great about us, you know?

Sydnee: I would also like to go on record of saying that I think you're perfect.

Justin: You're too kind.

Sydnee: It's true.

Justin: 1727.

Sydnee: So I suppose there were probably people trying to lose weight prior to 1727. This was just as far back as I found actual dietary recommendations. And I mean, I think that we have to assume – and I didn't read this, necessarily – but we have to assume that there was a long time where there wasn't enough food for everybody, so we probably weren't so concerned with not, you know, gaining weight. We were more concerned with staying alive and sustaining, you know, like, our functions.

So at some point, people had enough food, and then at that point, they ate too much of it, and then they had to start trying to lose it. God, that's so messed up when I say it that way.

Justin: I know.

Sydnee: But the [laughs] furthest crazy diet recommendation back that I found was from 1727, and I'm sure there are older ones. But at the time, a theory came out that uh—we noticed that people who are overweight tended to live near swamps.

Justin: Okay. I like that. I like that this started like this, because it reinforces what my theory was about uh, why we didn't see more dieting tips, is 'cause we were so dumb that we didn't know that food and being chubby were related. This is my—this is my belief, at this point.

Sydnee: No, I—well, I mean, we have to figure that there was a point where people did not make the connection, that big people ate more and little people probably didn't. So at the time, it may as well—we tend to see really big people near swamps, so try not to live near a swamp.

Justin: [snorts] If you can.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Well, that's not the craziest idea, right? Because you see, while the food—

Sydnee: Are you about to make a case for why swamps make people fat?

Justin: No, that is crazy. No. I mean, while the connection between food and fat may be pretty obvious to us now, I would think that, you know, back in those days, you had to go on what you could see with the naked eye, and you saw people who were thinner who ate a lot, because we didn't understand the things like their metabolism, or whatever.

Sydnee: Right.

Justin: So you know, it might be hard to make those connections.

Sydnee: Well, we didn't make those connections. And then there was—you know, we're also—there's the other thing, where we're battling a whole period of time where it was considered a mark of, you know, you were well-off if you were heavier.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: So once we even did understand the connection between food and your weight, it was, you know, rich people weighed more.

Justin: They were... corpulent.

Sydnee: Yeah! So you wanted to be overweight, because you were just telling society, "Hey, I got food, you don't."

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: "Too bad for you, buddy."

Justin: "Let *me* eat cake!"

Sydnee: “Look at this turkey leg. Doesn’t it look yummy? Bet you wish you had one. Too bad.”

Justin: “You want one? I’ll throw it at you, peasant.”

Sydnee: By the 1800s, though, with the Victorian-period people, really... really liked that whole—and we talked about it in the tuberculosis episode... or, no. In the plague episode—when did we talk about TB?

Justin: Um...

Sydnee: We talked about tuberculosis. People liked to look like they had tuberculosis.

Justin: It was—

Sydnee: Bleeding. It was in the bleeding episode!

Justin: It was in the bleeding episode.

Sydnee: People loved to look like they had TB. People loved to look frail and breakable. I don’t know why. So they starved themselves in the 1800s. It was very popular.

Justin: I like to look unbreakable. That’s why I wear a green raincoat around everywhere, like Bruce Willis.

Sydnee: Just like Bruce Willis, man.

Justin: In the hit film *Unbreakable*. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Uh, so, you know, which actually was probably, I mean... Is it a good idea? No. Is it a good way to lose weight? Sure.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: Sure, you'll lose weight if you starve yourself. So a lot of people in the 1800s just didn't eat. Because it was very popular to look pale and thin, and fragile. An odd time, all around.

Justin: Mm-hm. Victorians.

Sydnee: In the 1820s, Lord Byron actually was kind of our first—[laughs] our pioneer of diets, of weird diets, when he told everybody to just drink vinegar and water.

Justin: [snorts] I mean, that'll do it!

Sydnee: It would make you throw up sometimes, the other times it would give you diarrhea. In general, you would lose weight...

Justin: Sure. Right. I mean, vinegar!

Boy, could you imagine... after a long, hard day at the... gristle factory, I don't know what they had in the 1800s.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] You can—

Sydnee: The gristle factory.

Justin: You can just kick back a cold vinegar on water. Yum.

Sydnee: It should be noted that Lord Byron had, like, all the eating disorders.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: It wasn't just *an* eating disorder. He was a bulimic, he was an anorexic. Um, his dietary tips were probably not... ones we should follow.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Yeah. Uh, I think it's interesting that we look back to 1863 for the first time when someone decided they were gonna address the public, you know, address the people at large – [laughs] that was not meant to be a pun – and tell them to not be so—quite so large.

And William Banting wrote the letter on corpulence, addressed to the public. Where he basically said, "Look. Look, guys, it's 1863, food is abundant, we're all getting—"

Justin: [laughs] People back in those days liked to announce the year a lot. They were very proud they made it as far—listen.

Sydnee: [laughs] Listen.

Justin: We all know it's 1863.

Sydnee: [laughs] It's—"We're all getting a little large, it's time to cut back," and so Banting became popular. That's what they called it, Banting. Which meant—

Justin: Which is interesting, because his name is already a gerund, and they just sort of...

Sydnee: So they just took it.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And made it a thing you might do, which is when you would eat a low-calorie and low-carb diet. Not a bad idea, actually.

Justin: Okay, William Banting!

Sydnee: Uh, Banting. Yeah.

Justin: On point!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: I like that the first guy that came up with a diet pretty much got it. An actual, like, diet. The first guy out was like, "Eh, this will work. [snorts] Try this."

Sydnee: Which is perfect, because—so a guy came up with a good idea on how to lose weight, and then for, you know, 100 or so years more than that, 200 years, people were gonna come up with a lot of stupid ways to lose weight.

Justin: Now—

Sydnee: 'Cause it was too easy.

Justin: Um, did we understand what carbohydrates were back then? We were—this was already part of the nomenclature?

Sydnee: No, I should say this: when I say "low carbohydrate," that's me using that terminology. He said, "You should eat a lot of meat and vegetables, and you shouldn't eat a lot of bread."

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: And pastries, and sweets, and things like that. So he didn't say carbohydrates, but he knew that there was something about those grains...

Justin: There's just...

Sydnee: Something about those grains. They're so yummy.

Justin: They're so delicious.

Sydnee: Um, this was followed by a lot of stupid ideas. The first of which...

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] ... was Horace Fletcher in the 1900s, who came up with Fletcherism.

Justin: That just does not sound—that does not sound appealing to me.

Sydnee: No. Uh, Fletcherism involved, um, chewing your food and then either—either chew it so much that it's a liquid, and I guess maybe you don't wanna swallow it, or actually actively spit it out. And they had, like, pots in places, like ads, where it's like—"spit your chew-chew here."

Justin: [laughs loudly]

Sydnee: [laughs] Like, you know, "Chew this food up, and then spit it out, and then you won't gain weight." [laughs]

Justin: "Hey, hon, uh, do you want to go out to dinner tonight?"

"You know, I have found recently that going to dinner has become profoundly unappealing."

Sydnee: "They've got those—I mean, they've—everybody's spitting out their food."

Justin: "Into buckets? And I really—I—let's stay in."

Sydnee: "Can we just stay here?"

Justin: "Can we get Thai delivered?"

Sydnee: "Could we stay and swallow our food?"

Justin: "Just—let's just go nuts tonight."

Sydnee: "Let's not chew it a hundred times."

Justin: "Let's just swallow it. Let's be bad."

Sydnee: "And then we should swallow it."

Um, the thought was that, even if you did swallow it, once you'd chewed it 100 times, it was liquid, and there wasn't anything in there that you would digest, so you wouldn't gain weight.

Justin: That's inaccurate.

Sydnee: Yeah, that's inaccurate. That's not right.

Justin: Inaccurate. Nice try, humans. [laughs]

Sydnee: But you can imagine that everyone in the early 1900s had very powerful jaws.

Justin: Yeah. Right.

Sydnee: The most powerful.

By 1918, people really, like, had come up with the idea of calorie counting. They knew there was energy in food, there were crude ways of measuring it, and Dr. Lulu Hunt Peters was the first one to say, like, "Hey, maybe if you just, like, tried not to eat so many calories, you might lose weight."

Justin: Well, she wasn't the first, right?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Banting said that, ri—too, right?

Sydnee: Well, that's true. But this was a doctor.

Justin: He probably didn't know about calories, though.

Sydnee: No. He was more just saying, like, "Don't eat a lot of food."

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: She was actually talking about counting your calories and the idea that you probably expended calories when you exercised.

Justin: I wonder if we have a lot of information back then about how many calories a thing had.

Sydnee: It's not hard to do that. You can measure it just in how much heat something gives off. A lot of—a lot of people probably did it, back in chemistry lab, in college...

Justin: [snorts] Yeah.

Sydnee: ... when they burned a peanut?

Justin: [laughs] Yeah.

Sydnee: Anybody? Anybody? Just me?

Justin: No. No one? No one? Just Sydnee?

Sydnee: Okay...

Justin: Alright.

Sydnee: Um, I think my favorite, though, is in 1925, when Lucky Strike came out with a great diet.

Justin: Oh, man, I can—I—I like it.

Sydnee: I was—I mean, it was succinct...

Justin: I'm already seeing where we're going with this.

Sydnee: ... brevity is the soul of weight-loss. [laughs] Reach for a lucky instead of a sweet!

Justin: Yeah, I mean, that'll get it done.

Sydnee: There you go.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: They recognized that nicotine was an appetite suppressant, so just, you know, smoke!

Justin: [snorts]

Sydnee: Smoke a bunch.

Justin: I—I—I mean, that's what—and you know, on—if you look at a lot of dessert menus in the 20s, most of them did have cigarettes on them.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: There was "pile of cigarettes," "cigarettes a la mode," "cigarettes flambé." Actually, that's the only way you can have cigarettes, but still.

Sydnee: [laughs] Um, yeah. [laughs]

Justin: Aw, I like it when you laugh.

Sydnee: Sorry. [laughs] It was funny.

Justin: No! Well, thanks! I'm glad you're enjoying the show. [laughs] We're here every Friday, usually.

Sydnee: [laughs] Uh, so a lot of people were smoking, and they weren't eatin'.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: Which was an—not the best plan, but they also—

Justin: Can't do both at once, gross-o.

Sydnee: At the ti—[laughs] During the time, that was the beginning of people using laxatives, for instance. And people came out with a lot of

bogus diet pills as well. With all kinds of ingredients that didn't make you lose weight.

Justin: God, you know that it was insane. You know they were nutty.

Sydnee: They were probably cocaine pills. Who knows. It was the 20s.

Justin: "Here's pig cartilage! Go nuts!"

Sydnee: "Yeah, eat this! It'll make you skinny!"

Um, in the 30s, though, there was actually like a, "Okay, now so we have a thing, this is a thing you can eat. It's easy, it's attainable, we know where it is, it's just eat a grapefruit.

[pause]

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Just eat half a grapefruit with every meal.

Justin: Alright, I'm—hold on, wait. Wait, hold on. [brief munching noises] Okay, I'm done with my grapefruit. Now what?

Sydnee: Okay. Now you're gonna be skinny!

Justin: That's it?

Sydnee: It was a very popular diet in Hollywood. All the stars ate grapefruit, so they thought, "Well, hey, we'll just eat a grapefruit."

Justin: Now, is this in addition to instead of your regular meal?

Sydnee: No, you eat it before your meal, and in theory you should eat less.

Justin: Ugh.

Sydnee: And then—you know what was funny, is that later in the 70s, this would be known as the Mayo Clinic Diet, because it was mistakenly attributed to the Mayo Clinic.

Justin: But—but no, not from—

Sydnee: No, the Mayo Clinic never endorsed [laughs] this diet, but for a while, a lot of people jumped on board, because they thought they did.

Justin: I got a good diet I just came up with. It's called the "brush your teeth" diet. Just trying to eat a grapefruit after you've brushed your teeth. You will just—you will just die.

Sydnee: I don't like grapefruit.

Justin: I'm not a big fan.

Sydnee: I think it tastes yucky.

Justin: Have—I'll put some sugar on there, but that seems, like, defeatist.

Sydnee: My mom used to eat it with Sweet'N Low.

Justin: [groans] Like Sweet'N Low's not terrible enough as it is.

Sydnee: Can you imagine that? Grapefruit and Sweet'N Low.

Justin: Forget about it.

Sydnee: I remember that from my youth.

Justin: Forget about it. Kids think they don't like fruits and vegetables, 'cause their parents put Sweet'N Low on it.

Sydnee: They also came out, in the 30s, with a lot of soaps that would slim you down.

Justin: Really?

Sydnee: Weight loss soaps [laughs] to rub yourself down with this.

Justin: I bet you you could walk into your local Barney's and find a soap that supposedly helps you lose weight.

Sydnee: I guarantee! Well, they used to have those creams...

Justin: Guarantee.

Sydnee: ... that would get rid of your cellulite, so why not us hope that it gets rid of your fat?

And up until then—you know, up until the 40s, this whole idea of weight loss was kind of like a, um, it was largely a female, I should say, thing. All the ads were targeted at women. It was believed that *women* wanted to be skinny, that it wasn't really men trying to lose weight.

In the 40s, it became kind of both—both genders should be interested. And it was really a patriotic thing at that point. The American government got involved.

Justin: Huh!

Sydnee: So it was a time of war, and the thought was, "We need our young Americans to be fit in order to be good soldiers, so we need a good fighting force." So that was the first time when, like, the government started to get involved in, like, nutritional standards, the food pyramid, you know, advising people, like, fitness initiatives. How to get in shape, how to get healthy. Telling people not to be overweight.

I mean, that's how far back that dates. And you know, we see that today, we joked about the Presidential Fitness Test, but the government's been involved in keeping people...

Justin: Are you telling me...

Sydnee: ... skinny, for a long time.

Justin: Are you telling me Uncle Sam wants me to be skinny so I can help him kill Nazis? Is this what you're telling me?

Sydnee: That's what I'm telling you. Your government is calling on you.

Justin: I'll—I'll—

Sydnee: To eat this grapefruit...

Justin: [quiet wheezing]

Sydnee: Please eat this grapefruit. Please chew this food 100 times and then spit it out, and then smoke a cigarette, and you can—you, too—you, too, can be part of our fighting forces!

Justin: [laughs] I'm in. Sign me up. Give me a gun.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Give me two guns.

Sydnee: And the thing is, you know, as government recommendations came out, they always were pretty—pretty benign, pretty bland. Like, "Try to eat a balanced diet! Don't eat too much! Try to exercise!"

Justin: All sound.

Sydnee: All sound. But nobody wants to do that! That's too hard!

So on we go with the parade of stupid ideas. How about a cabbage soup diet?

Justin: That doesn't sound filling.

Sydnee: You wanna eat cabbage soup? You can eat all the cabbage soup you want. I guarantee you will spent so much in the bathroom, you will not be able to eat very much cabbage soup.

Justin: Uh, 'cause you have to make room in your schedule. You have to pencil that in. Ugh.

Sydnee: Exactly.

Justin: Ugh, I'm not sure I can eat cabbage soup today.

Sydnee: And that was it! The 50s, the 50s, you know, gave birth to the cabbage soup diet. I should also note that by the 50s, you know, weight was becoming—I shouldn't say weight was becoming an issue, but it was recognized that there was a subset of the population that was overweight.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: And people began to, you know, in the clothing industry, notice that, "Hey, there's a whole section of people we can market to!" And so Lane Bryant in particular came out with a great series of ads that you can look up online if you're interested, called "Calling all chubbies."

Justin: Oh, my God, that's fantastic.

Sydnee: Calling all chubbies.

Justin: I got the vapors. That's so good.

Sydnee: That is the word they used!

Justin: I will get a t-shirt with a "Calling all chubbies" ad on it right now.

Sydnee: Not "plus-size," not whatever they say with the euphemisms now, "women with curves... "

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: ... all the things. No, "Calling all chubbies." Isn't that terrible? Can you ima—and that wa—that's what they ran! They're their ads!

Justin: That's their—'cause they were expecting a segment of the population to look at that, and say, "Hey."

Sydnee: "Oh, that's me."

Justin: "Yeah, it's me!"

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: I'm answering.

Sydnee: Chubby girls, chubby teens, there were all kinds of ads for—

Justin: I hear you—I hear you, Reagan. I'm gonna pick that up.

Sydnee: And so, of course, I think that we can—I'm gonna go ahead and correlate these two. So in response to "Calling all chubbies" ads, um, by 1954 people were [holding back laughter] practicing the tapeworm diet.

Justin: Yes! Now we're getting to something that works!

Sydnee: So are you familiar with tapeworms, Justin?

Justin: Love 'em! Ate one today. Didn't tell ya. Shouldn't have mentioned it.

Sydnee: You don't know what tapeworms are.

Justin: They're—okay, they're worms that you put in your tum, and they eat the food that is down there with you.

Sydnee: That's actually not so far off.

Justin: I know, Sydnee.

Sydnee: So they're intestinal parasites. You're not actually supposed to eat them. People, um, traditionally, had accidentally ingested them in food

that was not... so... safe. But they do, they attach themselves to your intestinal wall, and they eat all of your nutrients.

Justin: I love that. It's—you know what it is? It's conservation of energy. It says, "I'm not gonna let this—I'm full. I'm not gonna let this plate of ham and eggs go to waste. I'm gonna let—feed it to my—feed it to my cylin—"

Sydnee: "Feed it to my tummy worm."

Justin: "Feed it to my cylindrical buddy!" Get in th—get in there, annelid! Get in there!

Sydnee: These dudes get *long*.

Justin: Oh, yeah?

Sydnee: They are real long.

Justin: How do you get 'em out? Do I wanna know how you get 'em out?

Sydnee: Well, I mean, you can take medicine.

Justin: Nah, that's boring. That [crosstalk] for me.

Sydnee: But then they—well, you t—but I mean, you know how they come out.

Justin: [deep voice] Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. And it's very important that you don't, like, break them in half while you're removing them.

Justin: Oh, no. [laughs]

Sydnee: You don't want all that to spill into your gut, 'cause then you'll get this big inflammatory response with the acidophils, it's a big mess.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: So you really need to pull them out in one long string... so you take a medicine that kills them, so they detach...

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: ...'cause they're little—I mean, you wanna be freaked out, you look at a picture of that scolex, of their little—their little, scary teeth...

Justin: No, man.

Sydnee: ... clamped into the inside of your intestine. So that when you kill them, they'll let—let go, and then you sit on the toilet, and...

Justin: Just wait.

Sydnee: ... inch-by-inch, yard-by-yard, you remove that sucker.

Justin: Just get outta there, buddy.

Sydnee: It takes a while.

Justin: No more free ride for you.

Sydnee: You know what's funny, is when I was looking up um, information about the tapeworm diet—'cause you really could buy a capsule of parasite. You know, they sold 'em in a capsule, and it was the tiny little parasite that you would swallow, and then it would become attached to your intestinal wall, and then you lost weight, because you were malnourished.

The—every time I looked up something about these parasites, I found a picture of Tyra Banks

Justin: Well, that's weird. Did she take one?

Sydnee: I—I—I think that she did a show once, her *Tyra* show, she talked about tapeworms. I think that's actually the reason I kept finding that. But

I'm gonna go ahead and completely lie and say that Tyra Banks swallowed a tapeworm.

Justin: Did—did Tyra—

Sydnee: That's an utter lie that I just made up, and I—I'm gonna say it.

Justin: Did Tyra Banks swallow a tapeworm, or did her literary alter-ego Creamy de la Creme swallow a tapeworm?

Sydnee: Ahh... No, Cre—honey. Creamy de la Creme was not her literary alter-ego. Tookie de la Creme is her literary alter-ego.

Justin: Now, who's Creamy de la Creme?

Sydnee: That's her mom.

Justin: Okay. [crosstalk].

Sydnee: Come on!

Justin: *Modelland*, people. On Amazon now. Pick it up.

Sydnee: I don't really think that Tyra Banks swallowed a tapeworm. But I just lied and said she did. So there.

Justin: It's on the podcast now. Can't erase this.

Sydnee: [laughs] As time moved forward, people came up with just a lot of different ways of eating to lose weight. So in the 60s—I mean, everybody's heard of the Mediterranean diet. Eat a lot of olive oil, drink a lot of red wine...

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: You'll get real skinny.

Justin: I have not heard of this.

Sydnee: Oh, yes, you have. Everybody has.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: People in the Mediterranean region—

Justin: You're just makin' me feel bad now.

Sydnee: Aw, I'm sorry. They were skinnier than us. That's why we all eat olive oil. Well, that and Rachael Ray told us to.

Justin: Yeah. E-V-O-O, she said.

Sydnee: Exactly. Um, in 1963, Weight Watchers was founded... by a housewife who said she ate too many cookies, so she just had to... help all the other housewives in the world.

Justin: This is classic America. "I ate too many cookies. I'm gonna found a group about it." Hey, I have a cool solut' for you. Maybe just pump it on the Chips Ahoy, lady!

Sydnee: Not so fast, because in 1975, the cookie diet did come out.

Justin: [laughs loudly] I got ahead of us, I'm sorry.

Sydnee: There was a doctor who invented special cookies that he said were made with amino acids that would help you lose weight. Just eat the—just eat these cookies.

Justin: [sighs] Now, this—

Sydnee: Should be noted that, like, everything's made of amino acids, but whatever.

Justin: This is a diet I could get into. Is this still around? Is that still kicking?

Sydnee: Um, it wa—there was a resurgence, like, in the late 90s, I think, early 2000s?

Justin: I missed the boat.

Sydnee: Of the cookie diet. But they're special cookies. I think they're like the cookie equivalent of like, a Super Donut, you know?

Justin: Yeah. Okay, yeah. Full—

Sydnee: A special, nutritionally-fortified cookie.

Justin: Oh, my God. Where's the Super Donut diet? I would get into that!

Sydnee: You know, the 70s also gave us, um, the Sleeping Beauty diet, which Elvis tried, which just means, like, go to sleep for several days, and then you won't eat so much. [laughs]

Justin: [laughs loudly] Sustainable!

Sydnee: I really like that.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh, also, the ProLon diet, which was developed by a doctor, where he made this liquid, ProLon, out of the slaughterhouse byproducts of animals. Like hooves, horns, tendons, bones. You just drink this.

Justin: Here's—here's my—here's my impression of the testing period for the ProLon diet.

"Hey, do you wanna drink this?"

"Nope."

"It works!"

Sydnee: [laughs] Some people did drink it. It only had 400 calories, it had zero nutrients, and a lot of them had heart attacks.

Justin: Perfect.

Sydnee: So it was a bad idea.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Fraudulent MD, don't... no...

Justin: No...

Sydnee: Bad job.

Justin: It was a good try.

Sydnee: That was a bad job.

Justin: It was a bad try, actually. I don't know [crosstalk].

Sydnee: And that's—I mean, that's not the—that's not the first time that stuff was developed that was actually pretty scary. You know? Because the 70s brought us things that were reasonable, like SlimFast, but then they also brought us Dexatrim.

Justin: Okay. [clears throat] SlimFast is not reasonable. I have to take umbrage with you on this, I'm sorry. It is milkshakes. If you only have a milkshake for breakfast, and a milkshake for lunch, yes, you're right, you will only get whatever, 600 calories. That is not a diet! That is just only milkshakes! You could have it with anything—and also, I did SlimFast for like two months, and then afterwards, if I drank orange juice in the morning, I throw up. That still happens today! It ruined me, Sydnee. I can't drink orange juice anymore because of SlimFast.

Sydnee: That's a sad story that you told—

Justin: You didn't—it's not on their sheet, so I'm just mentioning it.

Sydnee: I'm sorry. I will say this, though: I think if you're gonna have to drink a milkshake for breakfast and lunch, it could taste better than SlimFast.

Justin: Well, not if you wanna lose weight!

Sydnee: I don't think anybody loses weight with SlimFast.

Justin: I don't—I really hated doing it, you know, 'cause the one thing about it is I was still hungry. 'Cause it is a—it is not a large milkshake.

Sydnee: Well, you think you were hungry on that, you should've been a Breatharian.

Justin: What do uh—what do Breatharians [laughs]—what are Breatharians into?

Sydnee: In the 1980s, Breatharians came around. They believed that if you were in true harmony with the universe, you really didn't need food or water.

Justin: Perfect. I love it.

Sydnee: So one—one advocate of this lifestyle was on *60 Minutes* and almost died of dehydration.

Justin: [laughs] When I was looking at your sh—I'm not laughing at her. That's terrible. Well, almost, okay.

Sydnee: She didn't—she didn't die. No, she tried to live on air, it didn't work, she's okay. Well, she was.

Justin: She was then. She's probably [crosstalk].

Sydnee: I don't know how she is now.

Justin: Doesn't look like she's doing a lot of healthy living. Um, I—when I was just [laughs] looking at your sheet just now, I thought you it said demonstrating it *for* 60 minutes, almost died of dehydration. I was like, "Well, come on, lady!"

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: [laughs] You can't make it—

Sydnee: You go an hour without food and water, you are *gone*.

Justin: Dead.

Sydnee: But it's true. I mean, when we talk about unhealthy diet fads, I mean, Dexatrim, as I mentioned, came out in the late 70s, and it definitely caused strokes. It was a diet pill, a stimulant, and people died. And that is not—that was the beginning of the diet pill fad where, you know, Fen-Phen and all that, that came out afterwards, were people were taking medicines that were bad for your heart, were causing strokes and heart attacks and arrhythmias and valvular problems, and...

Justin: I remember Dexatrim being available for a long time.

Sydnee: Me too.

Justin: Also, another thing about Dexatrim, the—the—the memory I have of it is watching commercials of it on TV as a kid, and thinking about how delicious it looked. 'Cause it was a white—it was a red capsule, and then on the other end, it was clear, and you could see these tiny red, white, and yellow capulets inside the capsule. So it looked like little candies being poured into a larger candy. And as a kid, I was like, "Man, that looks... really, really good."

Sydnee: Well they wanted everybody to like it.

Justin: It made me hungry! It defeated the purpose.

Sydnee: It made you hungry, and then you took the pill, and then you were never hungry again.

Justin: Perfect. And I had a stroke.

Sydnee: Because you had a stroke. [laughs]

Justin: I had a stroke. Well, I had a good run.

Sydnee: Um, in the 80s, we actually started to see real diets start to come around. Like, not just um, you know, "Don't eat," or "Take this pill, or "Eat a cookie."

Justin: [laughs] "Stare at the sun."

Sydnee: [laughs] No. [laughs] Like, actually eat a—you know, eat a certain way. Oprah came out with her liquid diet. That was when she came out with like, a wagon with like, 62 pounds worth of fat in it or something, and said, "I just lost all this by not eating food!"

Justin: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: "It's the Oprah diet!"

Sydnee: Aerobics came out, Jazzercise came out, and in '92, Justin's favorite...

Justin: Aw, my boy!

Sydnee: ... the Atkins diet came out.

Justin: Robert Atkins up in this piece.

Sydnee: That's right. Now, that was a fa—

Justin: God rest his soul. God rest his soul.

Sydnee: That was really the beginning of – and you see, after '92, like, the low-carb diets just kind of take over.

Justin: Low-carb—

Sydnee: The Zone was a lot more about low-carb. Not quite like the Atkins, but—

Justin: It absolutely works. Just it makes you sad. That's the only problem with it, is it made me sad.

Sydnee: You know what doesn't work, is the Blood Type Diet.

Justin: Now, what is that?

Sydnee: This is when you, [through laughter] based on your blood type, you eat certain foods. That makes no sense. It was based on this idea that we had certain um, enzymes in our bodies based on which blood type we were, and so we'd break down different foods, and it was all kind of BS.

Justin: Before we get too deep into modern solutions for weight loss – and this will be a slightly longer episode just because we feel bad about not giving you one last week – but before we get into modern solutions about weight loss, I wanna mention that like, if you're doing one of the things that we mention in the next hour or so, like, that's great.

Like, and it's working for you, and it's healthy, like, it's not hurting you actively, like, you know what? Maybe that's just the magic feather you need. Maybe it's just the thing you need to keep you—keep you uh, keep you going. So don't—you know, don't think like we're discouraging you if we happen to mention the bogus diet you do.

Sydnee: No, and I should say this: when I talk about liquid diets, Atkins diets, the Zone, South Beach, those kinds of things, I'm not saying that they're bogus. I'm really not. There are plenty of people – and I recognize because you're one of them, honey – who lost weight on the Atkins diet.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: I think it's just, when you're getting into a diet that deprives you of certain things and makes you feel bad, you need to make sure with your doctor that you're doing something that's safe for you.

For instance, if you're a diabetic and you're doing the Atkins diet, mm, I'd talk to your doctor. Because I don't want *my* diabetics in ketosis, and that's exactly what the Atkins diet in—you know, intents for you to do.

So I would just really make sure that you're—if you're trying one of these diets that's a little... medically dicey, talk to your doctor! Go get a PCP.

Justin: See, I'm a big believer in, like, the diet that actually works is restriction. And whatever restriction actually works for you, you should run with it, if it's working.

Sydnee: Absolutely.

Justin: Just to lose the ellbees.

Sydnee: Yeah. And can I just clarify that when I just said, "Go get a PCP," I didn't say, "Go get PCP..." [laughs]

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: I said, "Go get a PCP," by which I mean a primary care physician.

Justin: And ironically, um, the medical advice that Sydnee just gave you is not valid, as we have given you a disclaimer at the beginning of the show.

Sydnee: That's right.

Justin: That doesn't mean you should do the *opposite* of what she does...

Sydnee: Don't get a PCP.

Justin: [laughs] Just means you can't say what—so, Syd, what's the Zone?

Sydnee: The Zone diet was actually not—it was kind of a play on the Atkins diet.

Justin: It is. I mean, it is, right? It's still a thing?

Sydnee: Yeah, no, people are still on the Zone. And it just—you're limiting the amount of carbohydrates, you're pumping up the amount of, um, veggies and meats that you're eating, but you're not completely eliminating carbs like you are on the Atkins diet.

And it has to do with if you're eating certain, like, good carbs, you can eat more of them. A bigger percentage of your diet can be good carbs, like whole grains or brown rice or quinoa or something. But if you're eating, like, bad carbs, like white bread, then less percentage of your diet can be that—that kind of thing.

So I mean, we're getting back to carbs again. Um, the uh—we also saw the rise of the macrobiotic diet, which again was uh, a big focus on vegetables, but then grains came back with that, and the idea was that it actually fought cancer, if you—Gwyneth Paltrow is the biggest proponent of this diet. Grains, local veggies, antioxidants. You can fight cancer this way.

But I should point out that all medical organizations say we do not advise this diet for cancer patients. So I don't know that it fights cancer... that well. You probably will lose weight, though.

Justin: What's next?

Sydnee: Uh, I think one of my favorite is in the early 2000s, the Vision Diet came out. So you know how red—the color red is supposed to make you hungry?

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Well, the color blue is supposed to make you not hungry.

Justin: [softly] Oh, my God.

Sydnee: So um, I think it was a Japanese company developed some blue glasses that you could wear, some like blue-tinted lenses, and they were marketed as, like, "The Vision Diet. Wear these glasses. Food will not look as appetizing, and you won't eat so much."

Justin: I swear to God, Sydnee. If I ever saw a totally fat dude wearing blue glasses and eating a huge dinner, I think I would probably pray for a meteor to strike me down, because nothing would ever be more awesome than that exact moment.

Sydnee: I love—I love the idea of everybody walking around with blue glasses on, and staring at donuts, going, "Please don't look so appetizing. Please don't look so yummy."

Justin: I don't care what filter you have on donuts. Those SOBs are gonna look delish.

Sydnee: This was also the same time period where we saw the um, the idea that you could staple the cartilage of your inner ear.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: As a way to make you not so hungry.

Justin: Seems legit.

Sydnee: Would suppress your appetite, because uh—it was based on an acupuncture technique.

Justin: Oh.

Sydnee: There's a pressure point there, and so the thought was, "Well, we'll just reduce your appetite." It works for like, up to six months, and then you get tolerant to it.

Um, I didn't find any research that this works. [laughs]

Justin: There's no reason to think that's true.

Sydnee: No. Maybe it does for you... I would get somebody who's licensed to do it. Some of the worst fads are um – and this is still going on – eating cotton balls?

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: This I would recommend against.

Justin: [snorts]

Sydnee: It probably would make you feel full, but there is no nutrients in cotton balls.

Justin: Okay. Right. That makes sense, 'cause they're cotton.

Sydnee: And then there was the baby food diet, which is still being touted. Um, again, like, not *dangerous*, per se, but you're gonna look like kind of a weirdo if you check out at the grocery store with a giant cart full of baby food.

Justin: "What are you—what are you eating, Daniel?"

"You know... it's my baby food."

Sydnee: "I love these bananas."

Justin: "Love mashed bananas! Am I your special boy? Am I looking thin?"

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Yes, you're looking thin. Also, please... please go.

Sydnee: You don't have any babies.

Justin: You don't have any babies...

Sydnee: You don't have a single baby.

Justin: ... and I saw your cupboards, and they're all baby food, and you're killing me!

Sydnee: In 2001, I have to bring this up, Justin, because of our personal experience with Nutrisystem.

Justin: [laughs loudly]

Sydnee: Nutrisystem came out, which I think is a great point, because this was when people started saying, "You know what? I cannot figure food out. Would you please send me food that I'm supposed to eat?"

Justin: Nutrisystem is, "I quit. Send me boxes of food."

Sydnee: "Just send me boxes of food. I'll eat what you put in the boxes. I don't know what else to do."

Justin: "I'm lost. Send me boxes of—"

Sydnee: And we're allowed to say this, because we did Nutrisystem.

Justin: We did Nutrisystem. Uh, that, uh, that was not great. All of the cereal tasted like sweepings from a real cereal factory, um, and one time I got—

Sydnee: I mean, it's diet food, people. It doesn't taste great.

Justin: It tastes bad. And at one point, I got muffins... that had a maggot on them. They uh, sent me a free month of food, though, in exchange for my silence.

Sydnee: I don't know what happened. Well, there we go.

Justin: Which I have broken.

Sydnee: Mm-hm. They can have that box of food back, 'cause we certainly never...

Justin: We definitely did not eat all of it.

Sydnee: Never ate it.

Justin: It tastes bad, guys.

Sydnee: Just to kind of round out the more recent weight loss techniques, Alli came out in 2007, the medication Alli.

Justin: Mm-hm.

Sydnee: I think that's another great one to mention. This was on the heels of all of the ephedra-containing drugs being banned because, you know, they were killing people. Um, Alli came out, and – Orlistat is the generic name – and this was a novel way to lose weight. It prevents you from absorbing the fat in your food.

Justin: Well, then where does it go?

Sydnee: Well, it goes right out your butt, Justin.

Justin: [singing] Out your butt!

Sydnee: But not when you want it to. Just when *it* wants to.

Justin: [normally] I—I did Alli to, and the less said about that, the better.

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't—I didn't think you'd want to share that experience. Let's just suffice to say that it's a really great, like, negative reinforcement, because the more fat you eat, the more likely you are to have anal leakage.

Justin: It's also a really great way to limit your social circle to the people who really, really care about you.

Sydnee: And it's also a great reason to never buy white pants again.

Justin: Right. Because of the [quietly] anal leakage.

Sydnee: Um, it probably would help you lose a few pounds if you can stand the side effects. Mainly through, again, negative reinforcement, you will never wanna make the mistake of eating fat again after you take this pill.

Justin: "Hey, do you want some of this bacon?"

"Hahaha! That's hysterical. Do you—"

Sydnee: "Keep it away from me! Keep it away! Keep it away!"

Justin: "Have you ever heard about the anal leakage, David?!"

Sydnee: In 2011, the Beta HCG diet came out. Beta HCG, a hormone of course, that is released during pregnancy, is actually what pregnancy tests check for. So the thought was, you get this little vial of HCG, put a drop under your tongue, and you lose weight!

Justin: Sounds good.

Sydnee: Sounds great, doesn't it?

Justin: Perfect.

Sydnee: Uh, and people probably did lose weight on the diet, but not because of the HCG. Because the diet also required that you eat between 5- and 800 calories a day

Justin: Perfect. Sounds great.

Sydnee: Yeah, and that'll work. I mean, you'll be starving. And I don't know what the HCG is doing to you, and I don't wanna think about it, but... but that was a big fad. And then I think the most recent that we can talk about that I know people are still doing 'cause it's pretty brand-new, it came out last year, is the 5:2 diet.

Justin: Mm-hm. I have not heard of this one.

Sydnee: I had to look it up, because I actually was under the impression that you could eat anything you want from 5:00 AM to 2:00 PM, which I thought sounded like a pretty sweet deal.

Justin: That's a cool diet!

Sydnee: That is not at all what it is.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: So for five days of the week, you eat whatever you want, you eat normally. I mean, don't binge, but you know, eat what you want. And then for two days of the week, you eat like, 500 calories a day. You fast, essentially.

Justin: That sounds pretty good, actually. I could get into that.

Sydnee: It doesn't sound too bad to do, and people say they're losing weight with it. Again, I don't know that it's encouraging any healthy eating habits, like lifestyle changes or patterns to really make you feel good. But... but there it is.

Justin: 5:2 diet.

Sydnee: 5:2. So for five days—Monday through Friday, you just go nuts, and then I guess on the weekend—I think I'd reschedule that. I think I'd make it Tuesday-Wednesday, 'cause those days suck anyway, don't they?

Justin: Yeah, Tuesday-Wednesday. That's where you go.

Um, Sydnee, we've gone through a lot of different possible diets. I think I've tried many of these, especially in more recent years.

Sydnee: I've tried many of these, because I wanted to make sure you weren't hurting yourself.

Justin: Right. And—but the thing that I keep coming back to, that you help me keep coming back to, is the actual real, no kidding, secret to weight loss. And there is one. And there is a diet that actually, genuinely, absolutely, totally, every time works. Sydnee, what is it?

Sydnee: The diet that works is watching what you eat, eating a balanced diet that includes a lot of healthy meats, fruits and vegetables. Counting your calories: calories in, calories out. Burn more than you eat. And exercise! Get active. I think that's the biggest problem, is that people wanna focus so much on what they're putting in their bodies, and they're not exercising.

Justin: It's not easy, as I can attest.

Sydnee: Nope.

Justin: It's not fast.

Sydnee: Nope.

Justin: But it will—it will work.

Sydnee: And there are changes that you can make that'll last a lifetime. And then you can be part of a healthy fighting force. Brought to you... [through laughter] by the US military. [bursts into laughter] This was paid, I'm sorry! I'm a government shill!

Justin: [laughs] I'm sorry. Sydnee's a government shill.

We hope you had as much fun as we had today. Thank you so much for hanging with us, even though we missed our—our—our episode last week. We appreciate you coming back to join us again.

We are here every Friday with a new episode. Uh...

Sydnee: Yeah, and it was totally Justin's fault last week that we were gone.

Justin: Whoa! Why's that, Sydnee?

Sydnee: He left town, he wasn't here... I couldn't record an episode on my own, who was I gonna tell about this stuff?

Justin: [laughs] I—Sydnee does utter the episodes to herself when I—

Sydnee: To our cats?

Justin: To our cats.

Sydnee: I sit, and I tell our cats about things. They're not interested.

Justin: Um, thank you to—so much to people who have—first off, let me say a huge thank you to our buddies, Josh and Chuck, from *Stuff You Should Know*. They uh, gave us a really, really nice plug this week.

Sydnee: Yeah. Thank you so much, guys. I was ecstatic, 'cause I love your show.

Justin: She really does.

Sydnee: I do.

Justin: It meant the world to her. And thank you so much for those of you who have hopped onto iTunes and uh, and reviewed our program. That is so cool that you would do that for us. It—it actually doesn't just boost our egos – even though it does that too – but it um, it also is a great way for us to help share the show. Because when people review it and subscribe to it, then we get, you know, more eyeballs on it, 'cause iTunes is like, "Hey, got this hip podcast for you."

So you have really helped us out with that. Some of the people who have sent us a review recently: B to the Ryan, uh, 3f... threef tanker, I think?

Sydnee: Just Welding.

Justin: Uh, Carrie-Ann M., she's a [???) fan that found us. I can't find an untaken name. Uh, Clicklove, Michael Cthulhu, Kiefers—Kiefer, Consider the

Living, The Hop and Glob, Marked Twain, Ms. Shadow Play, Maise Albec, J-RO 983, Mike C9791, Cupcake Mast—

Sydnee: Cupcake Master, hey!

Justin: Cupcake Master!

Sydnee: Hey, if you really are, send us some.

Justin: Vinny Longda, OMG—OMA—OM Activate, I guess? Nagi, DV Mach.

So many others who have— Action Allen of course, who have helped review our show in the past couple weeks...

Sydnee: I read every single one, and I really appreciate it, guys. Thank you so much.

Justin: Thank you so much. You are—are all the best.

Sydnee: You can always tweet at us @JustinMcElroy. And she's @SydneeMcElroy, S-Y-D-N-E-E. And we have a Twitter account @Sawbones, where we put out the uh—let you know when there's a new episode live.

Sydnee: Or if you have any ideas of things you want us to talk about.

Justin: You can send those to Sawbones@MaximumFun.org. This has been *Sawbones*. I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

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

[theme music, "Medicine" by The Taxpayers, plays and ends]

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