

Sawbones 408: Bach's Flower Remedies

Published April 5, 2022

[Listen here at themcelroy.family](https://themcelroy.family)

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 co-host, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: Now, here's what we do on this show if you've never listened before. We're going to take you into the annals of medical history and find some of the weird, wild, goofy, scary, terrible, no-good, very bad, but sometimes funny ways that we have tried to heal people over the years.

Sydnee: That's right, Justin. Thanks for that intro to our intro.

Justin: It's been a few hundred episodes since I have mentioned what the show is, so I thought I'd just pop one off in case it's your first time listening. And, hey, maybe this is one you share with people. Say, "Hey, they talk about what the show is in this— at the beginning of this, so you're not going to be lost. Like, [high pitched voice] 'What is this show?'"

Sydnee: I think this is a good representation of *Sawbones* because, uh— so we talk about, like, stuff that happened in the past that we had wrong. Um, and then *sometimes* we talk about stuff that we're still doing now that is wrong.

Justin: Sydnee, are you— are you—

Sydnee: This one is, like— this one spans time.

Justin: [incredulously] Are you telling me this is a cure from the... *future*?

Sydnee: No. [laughs] No, this one is from the past—

Justin: Hold the presses! Why are we wasting this on a podcast?

Sydnee: ... that persists today. Now, I don't know. I mean, there's always the possibility that we're talking about something that hasn't ever seemed to work, and then we're going to find out, in a hundred years, does work. We just were doing it wrong or, like, some wrong part— I don't know. [pause]

You know how, like, on— in the movie *Medicine Man* with Sean Connery, it wasn't in the plant, it was in the ants that were on the plant?

Justin: Yeah, I remember that scene from the movie *Medicine Man*. I watched for sure, for sure...

Sydnee: You don't remember that?

Justin: No, I remember every— every—

Sydnee: 'Cause the ants were in the sugar, and when he figured out it was the ants, but they kept thinking it was a diff— it was a plant. Like, "Oh, no, but the plant wasn't working. It wasn't working. But why did it work that one time? What are we missing?" The cure was in the ants!

Justin: No, Sydnee every— every frame is a painting of *Medicine Man*. It's all etched into my memory. I remember all of it. It's in the ants, of course.

Sydnee: *Medicine Man*—

Justin: That's why I have this "It's in the ants" tattoo. Remember this on right here? It's in the ants?

Sydnee: *Medic*— [laughs] *Medicine Man* was a very influential movie on young Sydnee.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: That was an important movie for young Sydnee to be, like, “There are cures out there, and I want to find them and cure disease.”

Justin: From the ants.

Sydnee: And then, it might be in the ants!

Justin: [serious voice] “What is this, a cure for ants?”

Sydnee: [laughing softly] Okay. We’re not talking about the— in this case, we’re *not* talking about the ants. In this case, we are talking about a belief that the cure was in the plants. Um, thank you, Jessica, for bringing to my attention Bach’s Flower Remedies. Have you heard of Bach’s Flower Remedies?

Justin: No, I have not, Sydnee.

Sydnee: Bach, as in, like, Bach the composer. *Bach*, but not that guy, just spelled the same.

Justin: Got it.

Sydnee: Don’t get confused. [chuckles]

Justin: Got it.

Sydnee: This is a different Bach. I don’t know if this Bach composed any music, but he may have— I think he maybe played piano.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: [chuckles softly]

Justin: Bach. Not that Bach, Bach.

Sydnee: Another one. This is—

Justin: And not the one from Bachman-Turner Overdrive 'cause that would be... And not Tal Bachman, creator of "She's So High Above Me."

Sydnee: But those names are— but those names are Bachman, this name is Bach. These are different names.

Justin: The names evolve over the centuries, Sydnee. I'm surprised you didn't know that. Sometimes they add a "man," so Bach becomes Bachman. [softly] That kind of deal.

Sydnee: Okay. I didn't know that.

Justin: I made it up. [wheeze-laughs] I'm really sorry, I just wanted to be smart like you.

Sydnee: This is— [laughs softly]

Justin: You know so many things and I don't have a computer to read off of, so I just have to say whatever garbage comes into my mind.

Sydnee: Dr. Edward Bach is who we're talking about. He was born in, um— mostly near Birmingham, England, in 1886. He studied at the University College Hospital in London, and he got a degree in public health from Cambridge. So, impressive-sounding gentleman.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Correct?

Justin: You always lure me in with these fancy-sounding people.

Sydnee: Well—

Justin: And then they get *Buckwild*.

Sydnee: I like— so, some people— and we talk about all kinds of different, like, figures in medicine and— and sort of, medicine and almost medicine on our show. Some of them start from a very non-traditional kind of route, like, from an early age they knew that real— like, traditional medicine was wrong, and they had to find a better way.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: And then some people, sort of like, start on a path that sounds, like, pretty basic and then just go, [imitating sound of car breaking] “Rrawrh.” Like, they zig, then they zag.

Justin: Oh, no!

Sydnee: His initial foray into medicine was really traditional. He worked as a house surgeon; he was a consultant; he was a, uh, bacteriologist. So, very much just doing the same sorts of things that would have been very commonplace for physicians to do in the early 1900s.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Um, practicing the same kind of medicine. He worked for 20 years as a— I kept finding this in his bio’s, “a Harley Street Doctor.” And I was, like, obviously, this is a reference that I don’t understand.

Justin: What is it?

Sydnee: Because “Harley Street Doctor”, what does that mean? Um, he was a doctor and he worked on a street called Harley Street— [chuckles softly]

Justin: Oh, okay. Well, that was it.

Sydnee: ... in London. This is— this is apparently the street— Harley Street is famous for the number of, like, health care professionals, doctors, and such, that *work* on this street. And this was true back then and even to this day there are, like— I saw a figure that, like, 3,000 people collectively working in health care, on this one street.

Justin: Yeah. I'm looking at a map. It's just, like, dotted with a bunch of different, um: the Harley Street Clinic, and the Harley Health Village, and all kinds of different—

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: University College Hospital. That is a really wild—look at this Syd, like collection of— if you just look up Harley Street on Google Maps. Look at this, like: hospital, hospital, hospital, hospital, hospital... that's wild!

Sydnee: It is, and this is a long time standing.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: It has been this way for a very long time. I like the idea of, like, just sort of, collecting all the, like, "Here's all the health care, it's on this street." Although it's not very effective actually, this is— really you need to put the— out where people are. You need to bring the medicine to the people, instead of making the people come to the medicine.

Justin: Got it. Okay, yeah.

Sydnee: Ah, but anyway, the point is, like, if you want to— if you're going to get sick— [through laughter] if you want to get sick... nobody *wants* to get sick. [normally] If you're going to get sick, if you get sick, if sick happens, you should probably go to Harley Street it sounds like.

Justin: Hmm.

Sydnee: There should be someone there.

Justin: This is in the area, it says, it's called Marylebone. Marel-bone? Marylebone, yeah. That's— it's the same area where, um, 221 Baker Street is—

Sydnee: Oh, okay.

Justin: ... and The Chocolate Museum and Madame Tussauds and a lot of hospitals.

Sydnee: I know and, again, if you're sick—

Justin: I love maps.

Sydnee: ... this seems like a good place to go.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Um, after a while, Bach was becoming disillusioned with medicine. Can't— we can *all* understand that—

Justin: Whoa, boy.

Sydnee: ... if we work in medicine. He just felt like, "The stuff I'm doing isn't making that big of a difference." Um, and in the early 1900s, you can, kind of, sympathize. Like, we're talking pre-antibiotic era, so—

Justin: That's a rough time; we're, like, so close.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: To getting a lot of stuff and we just aren't quite there yet. [chuckles softly]

Sydnee: It was— I imagine that was a really rough time. If you consider the time period between the germ theory of disease when we really started to understand and accept that there were microorganisms that you would contract that could kill you or make you very sick.

And then, like, the realization that there was probably a way to kill those microorganisms without killing the human host. And then figuring that out and making the antibiotics. Like, that time period must have been so difficult. Right? `Cause, like, it's right there.

Justin: It's like, you know it.

Sydnee: It's right there.

Justin: You can see `em. You can see them in there. What do you do about `em?

Sydnee: You can't— you can't see them, actually.

Justin: [softly] With a microscope.

Sydnee: Well, okay. Yeah, that way you can see them. Um, he also had— he had a brush with death.

Justin: [incredulously] How dumb do you think I am? Like, I know we have a lot of fun here.

Sydnee: [bursts out laughing]

Justin: [holding back laughter] You know that I know you can't see germs without a microscope, right? Like, you're not doing this show with an especially well-trained seal. Like, I am a thinking person... in the world. [wheeze-laugh]

Sydnee: I know you are, honey.

Justin: Robert Cork... ring any bells?

Sydnee: Koch.

Justin: [bursts out laughing loudly]

Sydnee: [chuckles] Are you talking about Koch, like, of “Koch’s postulates”?

Justin: [through laughter] The guy— the guy that came up with microscope... and he solved cells.

Sydnee: Oh.

Justin: [holding back laughter] Who invented cells?

Sydnee: Leeuwenhoek? Well, he didn’t invent cells, honey.

Justin: Who invented cells?

Sydnee: Certainly, he didn’t invent cells.

Justin: [bursts out in wheezing laughter]

Sydnee: I mean, I think that’s a theological or philosophical question. He didn’t *invent* cells.

Justin: [holding back laugh] Robert Hooke found cells. That’s who I’m thinking of.

Sydnee: Oh, okay. Anyway, [laughs softly] nobody— somebody looked at a cork. Is that what you’re thinking of?

Justin: Yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: That he looked at a cork under a microscope?

Justin: He looked at a cork and that helped him invent cells.

Sydnee: N— okay. He did *not* invent cells.

Justin: [bursts out wheeze-laughing]

Sydnee: Okay... back to Bach. So, he had his own brush with death, and this was a big turning point for him and, sort of, his relationship with practicing medicine. He had this very sudden hemorrhage and he almost bled to death. His colleagues were able to, you know, save him.

Um, and they removed this large tumor and then told him, like, at the time, "You probably aren't going to live very— we don't really understand any of this yet, um, but you're probably not going to live very long, right? You had a big tumor—

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: "We cut it out, but things don't look good."

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Uh, and so, you know, from all this he thought, "Well, [sigh] there must be more to medicine than our understanding because we're not doing all the good we could do." And so, he continued with his work and his research, and he started to get better despite the fact that he was told, "You probably won't."

And he began to, like, think that his recovery was probably— since the doctors had, kind of, told him, "Eh, too bad," his recovery was probably more related to something else. And the thing that he connected it to was his own, sort of like, positive mental attitude.

Justin: You bet.

Sydnee: His emotional state fixed the physical problem.

Justin: I believe in this.

Sydnee: [pause] Like, literally, fixed, in this case, ca— a cancer is what he believed.

Justin: That may be— that may be a bit much, but we *know* there's a link between mental state and the physiology.

Sydnee: Okay. I am not saying there isn't a link, but I think we can both agree that having a good, like, optimistic attitude does not cure cancer.

Justin: It doesn't *not* cure cancer.

Sydnee: Honey, it doesn't cure cancer.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: This is an important thing to say out loud.

Justin: All right. I'll reinforce that.

Sydnee: Is it important to *have* a positive mental attitude or be optimistic? Sure.

Justin: It's real. The research of now... No? But no?

Sydnee: No. No!

Justin: No.

Sydnee: No. [chuckles softly] Um—

Justin: But...

Sydnee: And this is where he began to explore this idea of mind-body connection and how could he *use* it better. Use it in the craft. Use it on the stage. Use it in his work.

He began working at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital at this point. Obviously, in his exploration for alternative healing methods, he thought maybe there was something more, uh— to a more holistic approach. Looking at the people, you treat the person, you win every— you treat the disease, you win— you know, that whole thing— the Patch Adams idea.

Anyway, and he'd been doing some research into vaccines at the time, actually. This is what he had— he had, sort of, started with. And he started using some of the principles of homeopathy to refine his vaccine work.

Justin: Oh. Now homeopathy is not real?

Sydnee: Right. And so again, he's so—

Justin: That's one way of talking about it and doing it.

Sydnee: He's so close. He's working on vaccines.

Justin and Sydnee: [simultaneously] Yay!

Sydnee: Homeopathic vaccines.

Justin: Oh, no!

Sydnee: So, we discussed the basic idea of homeopathy before. We've done a whole episode on it. We've talked about it a lot.

Justin: Just go listen to it. It's nothing. It's less than nothing. It's the—

Sydnee: It's some basic principles just to— 'cause this informs what he does, by the way. Like cures like. So, you—

Justin: Cauliflower cures your brain.

Sydnee: Either like that; something that looks like it out in nature will fix— like, a walnut cures a headache 'cause it looks like a brain. That kind of idea.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, or the idea that, like, if something can make you sick, if you give somebody tiny, tiny, tiny amounts of that, or even not the actual thing but the energy of the substance, in very small amounts, then it will counteract the thing.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: So, the thing that makes you sick is the thing that can make you better just given in a different dosage. Right? And again, these are all, like, minuscule amounts of things, dilutions of dilutions of dilutions that you give people. And it's the energy of it that you're really transferring to the person is the concept. Like, you know you're not really giving the person the substance because by the time you've diluted it that much it's not really there. It's the energy of it.

As this idea applies to vaccines because the— and we've talked about this a little bit on the show before, the idea of, like, a homeopathic vaccine is— again, these don't do anything; they don't work, but this is a thing that exists, and they're called "nosodes."

So, basically instead of taking some, sort of, uh, inert or harmless substance and diluting it down and then ingesting it— which is a lot of— that's a lot of homeopathy. Take an herb, that maybe wouldn't hurt you anyway, and then dilute it 'til there's nothing there, and drink some water, basically. Um, you could take some sort of infectious or toxic material that causes disease, dilute *that* down, and then ingest that.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: And, so, this could be, like— a nosode could be an infected piece of tissue, some sputum—

Justin: [groans] Eh!

Sydnee: ... some fecal material, blood.

Justin: [cheerfully] And then you drink it.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, but, I mean, remember you're going to dilute it to a point—

Justin: But you'll *know*, won't you?

Sydnee: Right.

Justin: You'll know there's a little microgram of dookie in there.

Sydnee: And he developed seven bacterial nosodes this way. So, he's still working in the field of bacteriology. He's actually working with germs, but again he— you can see where, like, it sounds sort of similar to a vaccine.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Like, in a vaccine where you're taking an inactivated virus or piece of a bacteria or protein or something, to elicit an immune response in the body so that when you actually encounter the infection out in the world your body is primed and ready to fight it off. You can see where, "Well, we're doing the same thing. We're just giving you a tiny, tiny, tiny dilution of the energy of the bacteria... that we got from some poop."

Justin: [through laughter] "That you're drinking, sorry."

Sydnee: That you're drinking, um, or putting some drops under your tongue or whatever. And you're probably putting it— like, a lot of these would also be put in alcohol, so, like, there's some alcohol there too.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, so you can see where like, it— it's so close, and at the time our understanding of vaccines was still so new. You could see where, like, "Well, this seems to make sense to me, and it seems a lot *safer*."

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: Because it doesn't do anything. [laughs softly]

Justin: Right. It is very safe in that regard.

Sydnee: So, he created these nosodes, and again, since your goal— you're not trying to elicit an immune response with this. This isn't the same thing because—

Justin: What are you trying to do?

Sydnee: Give—Transfer the energy of this to someone. I mean it's— this is really about things that are outside the bounds of... science.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: It's about the energy.

Justin: Got it.

Sydnee: That you're transferring.

Justin: Got it.

Sydnee: Okay?

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: To restore a balance—

Justin: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: ... that will allow you to fight off the infection when it happens.

Justin: With the energy.

Sydnee: With the— yes. Because your body is at balance. Homeopathy isn't really related to the disease process as much. Like, in homeopathy, the idea isn't, like, "You have diabetes, and you have diabetes. Here are medicines I use to cure diabetes for both of you."

It's more like, "Okay, yes, you have diabetes. But in *you*, it is a result of this imbalance, and this energy problem, and this personality, and disposition, and all this, so here is your bespoke tincture. While, for *you*, patient B, it's a mixture of this, this, and this so here's your bespoke tincture." You know?

Justin: People love the idea of customization and personalization but it's not always a great fit with medicine.

Sydnee: And, well, but it's hard because, like, there's an aspect of this, and I think this is why people are drawn to it, there's an aspect of this which is true which is a treatment plan, like, an overall plan for— especially, like, let's talk about chronic disease management. It should be personalized.

Your approach to something like diabetes, which can require lifestyle modifications, like watching your carbohydrate intake, and seeing how much you eat so that you know whether it's how much insulin you're going to take or whatever, right? Like, it has to do with how you live your life. That plan should be personalized.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: To you and your life. So that it works for you. So, that it's something you can actually achieve and—

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: ... feel good about and live a healthy life. [pause] But that doesn't mean that you need a different insulin, necessarily. [chuckles] Like, both patients might still need insulin.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: And homeopathy says, "All of it is up for grabs because it's really based on you."

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Does that make sense?

Justin: Yes, it's not real.

Sydnee: Uh, so Bach made these nosodes. Homeopaths were so excited. And actually, I think, these are still used by some homeopathic practitioners today, these— Bach's seven nosodes.

Justin: Uh, hey, more like quacktitioners.

Sydnee: Well, it's not— it does not do anything to you.

Justin: More like, you heard the... right?

Sydnee: Yes. No, I heard you.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: It was very— it was a good pun. None of the other doctors—

Justin: I could tell that you liked it from your, um, absolute grim face staring at me blankly.

Sydnee: [laughing]

Justin: I could tell you were really rolling with it and loving it. I could tell.

Sydnee: None of the other doctors that he worked with were excited. Homeopaths were excited. Um, and, I mean, this is really where he thought, “Okay, I need to shift gears. I am— I have been practicing in the wrong world, it is time for me to fully embrace my new path in healing.”

Justin: No more practicing, time for quackticing. [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs softly] And we’re going to follow Bach on his career change, but first we got to go to the billing department.

Justin: Let’s go!

[ad break]

Justin: Welcome quack to the show! Sydnee, you were, uh, about to— [holding back a laugh] uh, to continue with the story of Bach.

Sydnee: [laughs softly] Okay. So, he decided that he wanted to continue to pursue this, sort of, idea of healing, okay?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: This new, like, mind-body, holistic energy kind of thing. Uh, but he had a couple changes. First, he thought mind and mood influencing the body was the root of all disease. Which isn’t, like— that’s not... pure homeopathy. This is its own sort of idea.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: And there were— I mean, like, he’s not the only person to think this. But, like, it very much was, like, if you fix the mindset or the mood, you can fix the body.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: This is what is confusing to me. Why do you need these tinctures and nosodes to do that? Like, why can't you just, like, think your way out of it?

Sydnee: Because it's about energy. Because it's not— it's not— I mean, it is, sort of, like a— it's interesting because it is simultaneously recognizing that you *can't* just think your way out of mental illness.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: He's not calling it mental illness, I should say. This is more like a mood.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Now, some of these, as we read into, like, what he's going to develop from this, some of these are he's describing, like, depression. He's describing anxiety. So, they are, what we would call today, a mental illness. And so, him saying, "You can't just think your way out of it. You may need to do something to your body to address it." Okay, yes. We just— we have medicines that alter neurotransmitters now, right?

Justin: I get it.

Sydnee: Like, so, that's not a wild concept. It's just where he arrives, is not really what we would do. Um, and he also— and he said it for everything. Like, it's not just, "We need to do something to influence your brain chemistry so that we can fix your depression." It was, "Also, if you have a cold, it's probably a mood thing."

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: “Also, if you have— I mean, again if you had cancer, it would be a mood thing.

Justin: Just kind of a reference of germ theory answers.

Sydnee: ... Yeah, all of it— all of it has to do with mood. All of it has to do with mindset.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: All of it has to do with emotional state. Um, and so, no matter what the etiology of disease is, you fix the mind; you can fix the body. And that is the approach that he wanted to take. But the second change he wanted to make is, “So if that’s the approach I don’t re— the bacteria thing doesn’t matter.”

Like, “We need to get rid of this idea that whatever is causing the disease is part of it because it’s really about your mind— like, your body will fix itself if we fix your mind. So, who *cares* what bacteria caused it? I don’t need these nosodes. I can find a benign, safe, natural substance that will reset your mood, reset your emotional state, and thereby allow your body to fix itself and cure all your diseases.”

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: “So, away with the bacteria. I’m going to go search for something... prettier.” [chuckles]

Justin: [laughs lightly] Okay. Got it.

Sydnee: So, after trying to do this work in London for a couple of years, he decided, “I need to go to the countryside, where I can be among nature and find these natural things.” So, in 1930, he took his assistant, Nora Weeks, and moved to the English countryside to find the remedies that he believed grew out in nature. Um, and this is where he began to develop his flower remedies.

Justin: Ooh.

Sydnee: He would spend all the warm months out, basically, like, finding different flowers, collecting them, turning them into these tinctures— which I'll talk about the process of. Um, and then he would spend the cold months, basically, consulting with people and telling them which of the... [haltingly] their floral needs [through laugh] should be met.

Um, by 1932, he had found what he called the 12 major remedies. There are, like, 12 core remedies. Um, he added seven more, what he would call, "Helpers," the following year. And then, in 1936, he moved to, uh, a cottage that was called "Mount Vernon" in Oxfordshire to round it out with about— with 19 more. And that was, like— that was it.

Justin: Wow.

Sydnee: That was the catalog of flower remedies that he collected between 1930, when he started, and 1936, when he finished all his work. How would he go about the process? So, you've got a flower; you need to know if it works. What's the best way to find out?

Justin: Eat it.

Sydnee: Well, but, like, you're trying to cure a specific emotional state.

Justin: Find someone with that problem and then have them eat it.

Sydnee: Well, that's gonna— then you're going to have to leave the countryside. You're going to have to knock on doors. You're going to ask— ask people a bunch of questions.

Justin: Try to get in that mental state yourself?

Sydnee: That's what he did. So, he would—

Justin: [bursts out laughing] He would watch *Beaches* and after that— that climactic scene with Barbara Hershey and Bette Midler, he would be like, “God I’m so sad now.”

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: “I think I gave myself chlamydia from how sad I am at *Beaches*. Maybe this tulip will help. I got to eat it.”

Sydnee: Basically, I mean, he would take on the negative emotional state that he was looking for a cure for— for which he was looking for a cure. So, he’d get really whatever... and I’ll go through some. There are many different— it’s not just sad, like,[chuckles] there are a bunch of different emotional states.

Justin: Oh, I know, honey. I know. [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: Well, I mean, like— [laughs]

Justin: [bursts out laughing loudly] Although, I mean, contrary to the evidence for the last two years, [holding back laughter] there *are* mental states other than sad. [giggles] I have to believe that to be true!

Sydnee: I know that when it comes— I know that when it comes to emotional intelligence, you have needed Daniel Tiger’s teachings much more than I. [laughs]

Justin: Yeah. His steady hand.

Sydnee: Um, so anyway, he would then try out his various tinctures and see which one fixed it, his own negative emotional state. And then, one by one, um, he just—

Justin: [through laughter] And just he—

Sydnee: ... continued to feel the emotion, lead to the illness, try the flowers and then—

Justin: [holding back laughter] And he just had to hope he didn't accidentally think about a great FoxTrot cartoon he'd read. [through laughter] He'd just completely pull himself out of the funk.

Sydnee: Parts of the— the way he would do this, by the way, in case you're curious is you would take, like, the flower that you had collected, and you would expose— this is the best way, there are two methods. The first method is, like, the natural, better method but sometimes this is hard to do depending on where you live and what time of the year it is.

You collect the flower. You want to expose it to the sun for three hours while it is floating in pure water. So, like, basically he would have bowls. So, you have a bowl filled with pure water and you just put the flower in it and make sure it's sitting outside in the sunlight for three hours. Okay?

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Um, if you couldn't do that, for some reason, like the sun's not out, or whatever, you could boil it in pure water for an hour and a half. Um, then you would filter out any of the flower. You're done with the flower. You have removed the energy, essence, whatever... from the flower at this point. Okay?

Justin: Gotcha.

Sydnee: All you need is the water. So, you just collect the water that has now been *influenced* by the flower. This is called the "Mother Tincture." Okay?

Justin: Ah, okay.

Sydnee: Then you take two drops of this Mother Tincture, and you add it to brandy. That was his, um, alcohol of choice. Other people had used other alcohols as they replicated these, but brandy was what he believed worked best.

Justin: Hmm.

Sydnee: So, you take two drops, you add it to brandy; this is the remedy. And when you want to use it, you take two drops of that and you can add that to a treatment bottle along with a couple more teaspoons of brandy and 30mls of water. So, you can see where this is getting diluted, and diluted and diluted.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: There is still a good bit of brandy in it. Um, and then you take four drops or two sprays, depending on what form it's in, four times a day.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Of whatever your tincture is.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: And you could make treatment bottles with multiple things. So, like, the idea was you have, sort of, your shelf with all your remedies. And you're like, "Oh, I have two different emotional states that I need fixed today. So, I'll grab a bottle of this, put two drops of this. I'll grab a bottle of this, put two drops of this. Add the brandy. Add the water. Spray... or drop, whatever."

Justin: Drink.

Sydnee: Yeah. Um, as he collected them, he would write and lecture about his remedies. As you can imagine, it wasn't receiving a lot of, um, support from the traditional medical community or any regulating bodies, which, like, any time he tried to advertise, he would usually get in trouble. Like, "No, you can't actually say that. That's not actually—

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: "... we don't have any science that backs this up and you doing it to yourself doesn't count." Um, the only published work that remains is *The Twelve Healers and Other Remedies* which is, like, his main book that he wrote of his remedies and why they work and what they do, and blah, blah, blah, and how to make them. Because he would *burn* his outdated writings and stuff as he moved along, like, basically, "This research took me in a wrong direction, or I don't need it anymore. I'm going to get rid of it."

Justin: He was just so worried about someone being misinformed by his work. He wanted to make sure it was just all the really good, true, dank nuggets.

Sydnee: This is exactly it. He didn't want wrong theories clouding what he finally figured out, like, "This is all you need to know, basically. All that other stuff got me here, but you don't need to know that other stuff. Because what you need to know is where we are." Like, even his traditional medical writings and stuff.

Because, like, before he started practicing homeopathy and the flower remedies and all that, he was doing just, like, the regular medicine of the day. All that stuff's gone. Just burned it. Done with it.

Justin: [laughs softly]

Sydnee: Moving on. Um, he finished his work in— as I said, in 1936, and sadly, he died that same year. Like, he collected it. He published it and he passed away.

Justin: Um, I mean, I don't know if that's sad or not, right?

Sydnee: Well... I mean, it's sad in the sense that he's human, and he—

Justin: It's always sad but it's like when people die penniless it's like, "Well, good job."

Sydnee: It's hard— if you read about him, he was clearly well-loved and, like, sort of, a renaissance guy who, like... I don't know— art, music, flowers.

Justin: I'm not glad he died! I'm just, like, saying, "He got to finish his great work."

Sydnee: I don't know, like— he was probably a really interesting guy to talk to. It's unfortunate that this became, like, an alternative medicine that people might seek out instead of actual medicine that could help them get better.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Uh, which is always the case with these things, right?

Justin: That's the problem. That's the opportunity cost, is what— is what we would say. It's the opportunity cost of seeking out real treatment, like, I mean.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. And it...well. And the other thing that's hard too is that we talk about this on the show a lot. People who set out to make money and were willing to do or say whatever, like, in the medical world—and you see that today. You'll see supplements and stuff being pushed and you *know* that person is not, like, they do not mean well. They're just trying to make money.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: And then there are people like this who are, like, the true believers. He really believed this would help people.

Justin: We thought. You think. We think.

Sydnee: I think. This is the impression I get. And it's harder for me to— I mean, I'm not saying, like, "So, we should cut them slack and buy their flower remedies. [laughs softly]"

Justin: Certainly not.

Sydnee: Um, but I do think, from his writings and his work, he was a true believer. He really thought he was helping people with this. His work lived on at Mount Vernon. Uh, his assistant, Nora continued to make the remedies and stay there and, sort of— actually obtain the licenses for all of them to keep this work alive and still being sold. And still, like, passing along these ideas, like, she could—

Justin: Excellent. Excellent.

Sydnee: 'Cause again, these... true believers. People who really thought, while they didn't have the science to back it up, that the stuff worked. Um, you can still visit there today and buy these flower remedies. I think you can buy them online too. But, like, they're still being made there. There still being in that same tradition. As far as I could tell, they're still using the same methods to create this stuff.

Um, and, like, if you visit and you can learn about him and you can learn about all his flower remedies. There's a— you can also— there's a café called Nora's Kitchen that you can visit.

Justin: Fun.

Sydnee: And, like, you can have a bagel or a wrap or some Prosecco. I think it's kind of cool that they sell alcohol too. So, that sounds like fun— like, a fun crowd. Anyway—

Justin: I love wrap bread.

Sydnee: [laughs] Anyway, you can still visit there if you're interested in learning more about this, I guess, called The Bach Center. Um, I thought it would be interesting to see some of these remedies. Uh, I just chose several. You can look. They're all listed, that— you know, if you're interested. I took a quiz on their website to see which remedies would be best for me.

Justin: Oh, good.

Sydnee: And they were supposed to email me my answer and they never did. [laughs]

Justin: [bursts out laughing]

Sydnee: [through laughter] So— so, I'm like—

Justin: Sounds like you need one to help you with patience.

Sydnee: I'm— I'm very sad though because as I did this— and I gave them my actual, real email address, I thought, [sigh] "Oh, what are you doing? Don't do this, Sydnee."

Justin: Don't do this, Syd.

Sydnee: And I did it and now I know I'm gonna get, like— I don't know what emails I'm going to get but I never got my flower remedy list. Like, what should I be taking? Um, so there's one, um, clematis which is for— there's a human indication and a pet indication, by the way. Because you can also use these for pets.

Justin: Okay, good you said that. Don't get it twisted.

Sydnee: The human indication is: when you have a tendency to live in your own dream world with little interest in the real world, accident-prone, daydreaming.

Justin: Oh, yeah. Help me.

Sydnee: And they have, like, on the site, you can read what Bach wrote about it. So, he wrote, "Those who are dreamy, drowsy, not fully awake, no great interest in life. Quiet people, not really happy in their present circumstances, living more in the future than in the present; living in hopes of happier times, when their ideals may come true." It's all very poetic.

But, anyway, you take this. And, um, for an animal it would be if they have no apparent interest in the world around them. Animals that sleep all the

time, have trouble paying attention or seem to live more in a dream than in the present. So—

Justin and Sydnee: [simultaneously] ... all cats!

Justin: All cats.

Sydnee: Like, *all* cats need this.

Justin: All cats.

Sydnee: All cats need this, [through laugh] apparently. [normally] Um, you can use heather. It will help when you are preoccupied with your own ailments and problems. Overly— and animals who are overly concerned with companionship and very demanding for attention, constant barking—

Justin: These are dogs! Yeah!

Sydnee: So, this is the one for dogs.

Justin: This dog is so needy!

Sydnee: [laughs] It always wants attention.

Justin: Live your own life.

Sydnee: Those who are always seeking companionship. I assumed this would be me. I hate being alone. Uh, you can use white chestnut when your mind is cluttered with thoughts or mental arguments you may be unable to sleep because of the thoughts. I thought maybe this would help you. I know sleep is sometimes an issue. So, you can have some, um, white chestnut.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Uh, anyway, and there's also, like, a Rescue Remedy that has five different things in it. And it's for—

Justin: Be careful with that powerful stuff. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. Uh, it's for emotional emergencies.

Justin: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: It's got impatiens, star of Bethlehem, rock rose, cherry plum, and clematis. They've got remedies, like I said, for pets and kids as well. And they're all used the same way, so the idea is, like, you buy these bottles, their sprays or their droplets, like, either way. It's either a little dropper and you would take a couple droplets or it's a spray bottle and you just spritz it in your mouth.

I think that all of them though, you're supposed to add— again they will walk you through how to dilute them and make it, what is called a treatment bottle. So, you're, kind of, buying the bottle to keep on your shelf and then create your own treatment out of periodically.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um... there is no actual piece of the flower or anything in it by the time it arrives, but I do believe they still make them in brandy. So, there is brandy in there.

Justin: Hey, all right. At least we going that going for us.

Sydnee: And, I guess, you can also take a quiz online and see what flowers you need but I never got an email, so I don't know. [laughs] You may not find out. I should say, again, um, there is no evidence that these would do, I mean, anything.

Justin: Literally anything.

Sydnee: Other than that, they do have brandy in them—

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: ... and so I would be hesitant to give them to my [chuckles] children, personally, because of the brandy. Um, now if they have extracts that are mixed in, and I didn't— actually I could have researched that. Maybe they make some without brandy.

Justin: Ah, who knows?

Sydnee: But I generally do not give my children alcohol.

Justin: Generally.

Sydnee: [chuckles] I recommend you don't either.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: So, there's that and, I mean, as long as we're at it, you shouldn't give your pets alcohol either.

Justin: Yeah... yeah.

Sydnee: So, I would say, be cautious of that. There is brandy in them. Otherwise, there is no scientific evidence that flower remedies treat or cure—

Sydnee and Justin: [simultaneously] Anything.

Justin: Anything.

Sydnee: Anything. And I would encourage you, as always, if you are ill, please go talk to a medical professional. Please do not seek out unproven, unscientific— no matter how nice they may smell or beautiful they are, the location in which they were found, or how lovely this story. Which is a lovely story.

Despite all that, that's still not medicine. Please go seek out a medical provider who can actually help you with whatever the issue is.

Justin: [laughs softly] Thank you so much for listening to this week's episode. Ah, sawbonesshow.com is the URL where you can share the show with people. If you would do that we would, uh, I mean, we'd appreciate it.

We got a new merch store that we just opened up mcelroymerch.com. There's a bunch of cool stuff on there. Some *Sawbones* stuff if you are in the mood to, uh, to, uh... purchase *Sawbones* stuff.

Sydnee: [snorts]

Justin: I mean, I don't know. I don't have an end to that sentence. I just went for it. Ten percent of *all* merch sales this month will go toward The Transgender Law Center which employs a variety of community-driven strategies to keep transgender and gender non-conforming people alive, thriving, and fighting for liberation. So, that is— that's a great cause and you can go to mceroymerch.com to support that. We got a book.

Sydnee: Please do.

Justin: We got a book.

Sydnee: We have a book.

Justin: We have a book. *The Sawbones Book*.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] It's called *Sawbones*.

Justin: *The Sawbones Book*.

Sydnee: Well, yeah. That's what it's called.

Justin: That's how you can tell the difference from the podcast.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: There's an audiobook of it. Don't think about it too hard. Um, and thanks to The Taxpayers for the use of their song. "*Medicines*" is the intro and outro of our program. And thanks to you for listening.

[outro plays]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: And as always, [sung to outro] don't drill a hole in your head!

Maximumfun.org
Comedy and Culture
Artist Owned
Audience Supported

