

Sawbones 430: Dr. Oz

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

[theme music plays]

Justin: Hello everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones*: A marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your cohost, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: So happy to be here.

Sydnee: You were still— I had to overlap as you were still doing your—

Justin: I had some vocal— Girls! Sorry, our cats are just like— you'd think we should shut the door— we should have shut the door, but—

Sydnee: I'll shut the door. They're just wrestling. It's okay. They're not really fighting.

Justin: Yeah. They're just— they get so wild with each other. It's great, though, 'cause the, uh, the little cat, Olive, has helped keep the big cat, Amelia, a lot more active. Which has been great 'cause Amelia was kind of a slug, who wouldn't let us touch her. Now, she's an active cat who we can't touch. [laugh-wheezes] So that's important.

Sydnee: But the other cat touches her, so—

Justin: The other cat's *all* up in your business.

Sydnee: Now, she's got interaction.

Justin: She wants to be with you so bad she'll get in the shower. She hates it, but she'll do it if it's what we're doing.

Sydnee: This is— this is the truth. [chuckles softly]

Justin: She's ride or die. [chuckles]

Sydnee: She'll sit on your lap [through laughter] while you're on the toilet.

Justin: She's— yeah, but our kids do that, so that's not as cute. But Sydnee— [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughing]

Justin: Um, but Sydnee, [chuckles] what are we talking about today?

Sydnee: Oh, Justin.

Justin: Yes?

Sydnee: There's so much in the news these days about— okay, we have frequent guests on the show, and by guests, I don't mean actual guests—

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Because I know what you're thinking, we don't have— almost never have guests. Very rarely do we have guests.

Justin: Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Justin: Uh, Laura... and—

Sydnee: Mary Roach.

Justin: Mary Roach. Yeah, that's it, right?

Sydnee: Charlie.

Justin: Was Lin on an episode? He's on an episode of *Still Buffering*. Yeah, Charlie. Rileigh! Took over from—

Sydnee: Rileigh.

Justin: Okay, so we have had a few through the years. But not—

Sydnee: We've had a few through the years, but not— when I say guests, I mean, like, people that pop up in our episodes frequently.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: And, like, usually you're thinking of Pliny. Pliny's not in this one.

Justin: No.

Sydnee: Except now I put him in it, I guess.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Pliny the Elder, who is like—

Justin: Update the Wiki. [laughs]

Sydnee: He's a friend. [chuckles] He's a friend, I think of the show. He doesn't—

Justin: A friend. He's a friend who makes— you ever have that friend that you love that makes bad choices? That's— that's Pliny.

Sydnee: You're like, "Oh, Pliny, not again." Um, another I would not say friend of the show, but frequent— uh, frequent mentioned character is Droz.

Justin: Frequent mentioned character, Droz.

Sydnee: Is Droz or Doctor Oz. But we like to call him Droz here.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, and Droz is just all over the [holding back laugh] news these days.

Justin: Oh, man. Have you guys seen [through laughter] this? Have you guys seen this? [normally] Droz is up in the mix!

Sydnee: I don't know— we're being facetious, of course. I don't know if you're aware, but he's running for Senate, and— [laughs softly]

Justin: [bursts out in wheeze-laughter] I still can't get over it. [normally] Honey, do you love that kind of reveals a true story to you?

Sydnee: Hmm?

Justin: I— I did not— my brain would not comprehend it.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: The first, like, three or four times, I just, like, bounced off it. Like, I must be misinterpreting what's happening here, and then it's like, "Oh, wait a minute. Droz is really running for Senate!"

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: All right! That's wild.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, he is. He is. And the thing is, like, I— and we have talked about little bits and pieces of Droz on the show before. Because we have been talking about, like, pseudoscience or debunking—

Justin: [singing to the tune of "Pictures of You"] "I've been looking so long at all these faces of Droz."

Sydnee: ... debunking something, and we will include Dr.Oz because he was part of the pseudoscientific—

Justin: Wanted to get his thumbprint in there. Yeah.

Sydnee: ... like, advocacy community.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And so, that is why he has popped up on the show, not because of his politics. Because I really— this is not an episode about whether or not he's qualified to run for office.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: I don't know. I am running for office. I don't know what "qualified to run for office" means anymore. I'm not 100% clear—

Justin: Fair.

Sydnee: When you look— when you look— and this is not a recent thing. As I was thinking through this, like, “Well, if you look in recent years, there are a lot of people who hold office and have held office—

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: ... who I would not have thought were qualified to hold office.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: But I think, if you, like, go through all of American history, I think you could call out a lot of stinkers.

Justin: [bursts out in wheeze-laughing]

Sydnee: Who—

Justin: That is the greatest summation of the American experiment that I have ever heard in my entire life.

Sydnee: [laughs softly] And I bet any democratic nation would have the same thing, where they're like, "Well, we've voted for that person, and that was woof!"

Justin: We had some stinkers on that one. Sorry about that.

Sydnee: "That was a mistake!" So, I don't know what quali— I don't know what we as a— like, as a whole, as a society, as a species, as a people, as a nation, as a— any whatever kind of subset of humanity you wanna call out.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know what we consider *qualified* to run for office.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Um, so, I want to talk about the medicine.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Or not medicine.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: That Droz has promoted through the years. That's my focus here. Okay?

Justin: [laughing softly] Okay.

Sydnee: [laughs softly] Um, whether or not you decide that makes him qualified to run for office, that's up to you. This is just about— and what he practices on TV is what we usually call “popular medicine” now.

Justin: Oh.

Sydnee: Which isn't like—

Justin: So, you do unpopular medicine?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: Droz does popular medicine.

Sydnee: No. No. This is the same thing. I mean— and that's why I want it, like, I am also— this show talks— I mean, this is popular medicine as well. Now, I would say that we very clearly— and I think I've said this many— well, we have a whole disclaimer. I am very clearly hoping to give you a little bit of information about history or current pseudoscientific things. Something that I think may be interesting. If it's beneficial, that's great.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But our primary goal is to entertain you.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: It's a comedy podcast.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: We hope that you'll laugh or, you know, tell your friends. 'Cause, like, it was enjoyable. Or it'll make your drive to or from wherever you're driving, you know?

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Whatever. I think the issue is that a lot of what Droz does is really in the realm of medical advice.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: And popular medicine skews over into that. Where it's not as much— I mean, I think he's definitely trying to entertain you, but he's also trying to, like, empower you to change your life.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Which is a very different goal.

Justin: Yes. That is— that is more activist. Is it activist medicine? Is that— is that? No. It's more, um, active.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Active. That's better.

Sydnee: And I'm not— again, I'm not going to sit here and say that I never— I have never told you to, like, I don't know, get your flu vaccine. 'Cause I have.

Justin: Feel good about that still, though.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I still feel good about that. But let's— okay, first of all, credential-wise. Oz is legit when it comes to credentials. There have been a lot of, like, TV, and I'm using, like, air quotes, doctors who are not always, like, maybe they are a doctor, but not of the thing they are talking about.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: You know?

Justin: You know that show *The Doctors*? Maybe half of them are doctors. It's wild.

Sydnee: Well, I think— no, I think they are doctors.

Justin: Well—

Sydnee: There's just— I think—

Justin: Dr. Phil?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Justin: He's a doctor, but it's not a brain doctor. I don't know.

Sydnee: I don't know what kind of doctor Dr. Phil is. But it's— well, it's important that, like, the thing is, there are lots of different kinds of doctors. And it's important that you— you do the kind of doctoring that the degree you got makes you able to do.

Uh, Oz went to Harvard. He went to the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He was a Cardiothoracic Surgeon and Professor at Columbia. I say was; I mean, I guess he still technically *is*. It's just that I— as far as I know, he doesn't see patients anymore.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: So, not that he isn't capable.

Justin: Where would you find the time?

Sydnee: Right. Well, he's really busy. He is—I was trying to figure out his relationship with Columbia currently. 'Cause, it seems like as of this year, Columbia has, sort of like, [through laugh] ghosted Oz. [laughs softly]

Justin: [laughing]

Sydnee: Like, you can't find a lot of mention anymore of, like, his connection to Columbia. I think he technically still is, like, a Professor Emeritus, or a special lecturer, or something affiliated with Columbia, but I don't know that Columbia is thrilled about that these days.

Justin: [laughing]

Sydnee: And that's just, like, as of May. That's very recent. Um, 'cause, as you know, he's now really busy running for Senate. He started out on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* back in the early 2000s. He made a ton of appearances. That was, sort of, when she dubbed him "America's Doctor."

Justin: Ah, of course.

Sydnee: I love you, Oprah, but this was a questionable choice.

Justin: No, this was a whiff.

Sydnee: We've all made questionable choices.

Justin: Yeah, this was definitely not your— not the finest moment.

Sydnee: In 2009, he got his own show, *The Doctor Oz Show*.

Justin: Great name.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: [snickers]

Sydnee: And, like, and he had a— there was another show that predated that, like, *Second Opinion with Dr. Oz*. And he would pop up on, like— I think he popped up on *The Doctors* from time to time: the show, *The Doctors*. There were documentaries, sort of, made about him. Like, Dr. Oz, the surgeon, and, like, stories hit— stories of his life and career. So, like, he's been on TV a lot.

Justin: A lot.

Sydnee: In addition to his own show. And I think his show just ended, right? Didn't it just go off the air recently?

Justin: I don't know. I don't know.

Sydnee: Probably in conjunction with the— I would say this, uh, I do podcasts, and I'm running for office. And you can imagine that there are moments where you have to consider where those two things intersect. I imagine doing a television show and trying to run for Senate; there are lots of moments where those two would intersect. So, I have to think that that was, like, a strategic decision. Or he got canceled. I have no idea.

Justin: Um, yeah. He, uh, yeah. He canceled it, like, in— he announced the cancellation at about the same time as he started running for office. So—

Sydnee: So, yeah. I would imagine strategic or to focus, time, whatever. Whatever, yeah, I don't know. He would— so, he's giving medical advice on his show. He would also serve on Trump's Presidential Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition. And because he was on a Presidential Council, then he could do lots of TV appearances on, like, Fox News. And throughout the pandemic, he was a frequent flyer on Fox News to give his own brand of advice—

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: ... vis-à-vis managing Covid.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: [chuckles lightly] Um, which you can— which, as you can guess, was fraught. So, he has a huge platform to give advice. He has a *huge* platform.

Justin: Huge platform.

Sydnee: And again, I'm not— he is working in a realm that I am also a part of. I'm in a different facet of it. So, I want to be really careful because I think it's fair to acknowledge the line you have to walk to promote evidence-based medicine and science and try to be a voice for that.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Because as I've talked about openly on the show, I realized we had a platform to do that at some point, and I felt like it was my responsibility to say things out loud, like, vaccines are safe and effective. You know? I feel like there is a— you do have a responsibility to do that.

Um, but you're also, in my case, our goal was to entertain people. In his case, he's on TV, and he's trying to sell— sell those ad slots. So, you have this other goal.

Justin: He's also, let's be honest. I mean, with his show like that, just the practicalities of it, you got a lot of time to fill.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: So, if somebody's like, "I heard there's a different way of pooping that's better," you're like, "Well, Wednesday is looking light." [through wheeze-laughter] So, maybe, you know, [normally] once I've talked about all the stuff that works, maybe he's just got some time to fill. You know?

Sydnee: Well, and it depends on what your, kind of, philosophical background is. Like, your *personal* philosophy on this stuff. Because, like, there is no one size fits all advice. There's no cure-alls. We talk about that on the show.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: I could easily say something like, "Humans need sleep."

Justin: Good.

Sydnee: That's true. Like, "Drink water sometimes." Like, these are— these are, like, widely applicable pieces of advice. But there's not that much out there like that in medicine. Um, and I think that— so, his sort of, and he's talked about this, his philosophy is that you have to keep an open mind about everything.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And he words it, like, "I want to give people a chance to rethink their futures." Which I don't know exactly what that means medically.

Justin: Yeah, me neither.

Sydnee: But, um, that is his defense. So, his sort of affinity for alternative medicine predates his television career. A lot of people, sort have painted it as, like, the downfall of a— of, like, a doctor who was practicing perfect evidence-based medicine, and then, like, got ensnared by fame.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Back in 1995, he started The Cardiac Complementary Care Center, which was a complementary and alternative medicine Center to go along with his surgical pursuits. Like, the goal was to practice alternative medicine. So, he already had this sort of interest, obviously, right?

Justin: And if you wanna cut through the jargon, I'm a layman, so I can say this, "Complimentary" means, like, it works alongside the stuff that actually works.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: And alternative medicine is an alternative to medicine that works. So, if those two things help you to clarify what the Center is for, that is the explanation.

Sydnee: And well, but I think there's also some misleading stuff there too, 'cause there is complementary and alternative medicine as a scientific pursuit.

Justin: Mm. Mm.

Sydnee: That is something that people study and research and attempt to, like, find evidence for various complementary and alternative— so, like, *not* the stuff that we typically do in allopathic or osteopathic medicine. There are people who pursue that.

Justin: Great.

Sydnee: That's not what this was because one of the things he got in trouble for was practicing therapeutic touch. Do you know what therapeutic touch is?

Justin: [in a deep voice] Oh, listen. Listen. I've been around a while.

Sydnee: Oh, no. No, this is getting gross.

Justin: I know a thing or two.

Sydnee: Okay. So, therapeutic touch is more than just the idea that touching someone is therapeutic, which is what you might think. 'Cause, like, when I first read that, that's what I thought, like, "Well, you know. In the kind of medicine I practice, I find great value in just, like, performing the

typical physical exam. Nothing, like, weird or different. Just like, listening to somebody's heart and lungs, checking their blood pressure, if they have—

Justin: Nothing weird.

Sydnee: ... an ache or a pain somewhere, like checking out a joint. Or, you know, let me— let me look at that on your skin that you're worried about. Or, like, your stomach hurts, let me do an appropriate abdominal exam. Things like that, um, there is an importance in that, sort of, relationship that you build as a patient and a health care provider. There is— there's nothing magic.

There's nothing happening other than— I mean, there are hormones released when we, like, hug each other or that kind of thing. There's affection, and I don't know; perhaps that could be true when you're listening to somebody's lungs. I haven't done that study.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: But I do think that there is importance in that. The idea that, like, if it's okay with you, I am going to put my hands on you in order to learn more about you, that I can share that information back with you, and take better care of you. I do think that there is something very important and human. That is not what this is. This is a form of alternative healing.

It was developed— what we think of as therapeutic touch really comes out of the 1970s. Now, you will hear Dr. Oz and other people who practice it saying that it's based on ancient techniques, and they'll reference different ancient medical traditions that they've drawn from, but this, as a distinct entity, is really coming from the 70s.

And certainly, all of these things are usually referential and stolen from other cultures and whatnot. We talk about that on the show a lot. But Dora Kunz, who was President of The Theosophical Society, previously, was the one who sort of developed this as a distinct field.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And it's based on this sort of belief that, like, we all have this energy field around us.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Wellness is the result of that energy flowing freely, and in the pathways it should go. Illness is when it gets blocked or isn't moving appropriately.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And therapeutic touch, there is no actual touching. You just sort of hold your hands close to the skin and manipulate that energy field.

Justin: Like Reiki. So, like Reiki?

Sydnee: You just hold your hands and, like, move energy around.

Justin: I only know about Reiki from ASMR videos about Reiki. Um, but it's in a similar idea of your manipulating —I think. From what I understand, it's a manipulation of, like, energy fields.

Sydnee: Yes. And there are, again, which is why they can— they can make the claim that it's based on other traditional forms of medicine, you know, from the ancient world or from other cultures, is because you'll find the sort of concept of, like, energy field manipulation and, like, that we have energy flow. You can find that echoed throughout different medical traditions. The thing is he—

Justin: That's like saying— but that's like— that's, kind of like, saying *The Lion King* is an ancient movie because it's based on Hamlet.

Sydnee: Yes. This— the people who practice this, and this is practiced in different places throughout the US and all over the world, are— they're basing it on this 1970's sort of model.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Just to, sort of, give you an idea of, like, what this exact thing, how ancient it is.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: The ideas it's built upon are ancient. Does that make sense?

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Okay. So, I guess he was doing therapeutic touch at his Cardiac Complementary Care Center, and the university that he was associated with was kind of like, "Ehh. No, please don't. Let's not. No."

Justin: No. Stop.

Sydnee: "Don't do that." Um, so that interest was already there. I want to go through some of the most famous [chuckles] pseudoscientific—

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: ... theories and ideas that have been put forth.

Justin: Pseudo— pseudo— pseudoscientific. [laughs]

Sydnee: Pseudo— pseudo. Most famously, to get us started, Droz is into homeopathy.

Justin: Oh, man. That's not real.

Sydnee: He stated that his own family has practiced homeopathy for a long time. So, again, not indicating that he got— that he just wanted to sell stuff. Like, it's—

Justin: Can I say something weird?

Sydnee: Hmm?

Justin: And this is probably, like, more of a late, late show, but sometimes I like to go to pontificate for a second, so you can get some coffee while we're recording.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: It's bizarre to me that someone's self is expansive enough to contain Droz. I mean that, literally. And I don't mean it as a dig or a compliment, really. It's just weird to me that someone could do all the things that he has done in allopathic medicine and then, like, leave so much room. How does that not harden you a little bit? You know what I mean?

To, like, learn, and practice as much as he has. And then, like, still support these things that are not evidence. Like, how do you make room for both of those positions, I guess, is what kind of surprises me.

Sydnee: I actually think that there's— and again, I know this is not where we usually talk about this, but I actually think there is sort of a circular thing to this that makes sense to me. The more I have learned in medicine, the more I know I don't know.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I think that—what I always look for in students and residents is someone who will freely admit they don't know something and ask me questions. Because that's someone who understands the limitations, at every level of training, of what you can know, and eventually, you get to a point where you realize you can't know everything. There is always stuff out there that you don't know. And keeping that open mind is *really* essential in medicine.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Especially, like, with what I do and primary care, because I have to, kind of, know everything.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: I always have to allow—

Justin: At least that's what you tell me.

Sydnee: [laughs softly] Ha, ha. I always have to allow for the possibility that there's something. It's the unknown unknown.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I don't know, I don't know it.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I always have to allow for that box to exist.

Justin: The quote from you're here at Donald Rumsfeld.

Sydnee: [laughs] Did Donald Rumsfeld say that?

Justin: [laughs softly] That's the movie. Remember that Errol Morris documentary?

Sydnee: Oh, he did say that! Oh, no. Well, that's not what I'm referencing— that was in a lecture I had.

Justin: *About War*? Is that— I think that was the one.

Sydnee: I was in— we had this in a lecture in medical school where they drew the boxes of the known known, the known unknown, then the whatever and then unknown unknown, and how you always have to know— you have to be aware of that in medicine that there's an unknown unknown.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And if you don't keep space for that, you're gonna miss something, or misdiagnose, or whatever. Those are all really important principles in medicine, and it's how you take the best care of people honestly.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But what I don't— so, I get that. I get him opening his mind to that.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: What I don't get is how, when you latch on to some of these fake treatments and cure-alls, then you're returning to this concrete place.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: This is a miracle cure.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: If you have said that, you know you're off the rails.

Justin: Yeah, you know it's not—

Sydnee: You know you've lost it.

Justin: Yeah. You know you're—

Sydnee: And so, that is what— that is the place where I've— I lose track of Droz.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Okay. I wanted to—

Justin: For me, it's corn mazes, weirdly.

Sydnee: [laughing]

Justin: It's, like, he gets in there. I have no clue. No clue. [yells] Droz? Droz? Honey? We're leaving!

Sydnee: All right, we're gonna talk about Droz.

Justin: [yelling] You want apple cider, Droz? I'd like you to come out now!

Sydnee: He has a contentious relationship with apples. But before we talk about that, we gotta go to the billing department.

Justin: [chuckles softly] Let's go.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Justin: Sydnee, you said you wanted to talk for half an hour about Droz and apples?

Sydnee: We're gonna get there. I was about to homeopathy, so, I gotta start off with homeopathy.

Justin: All right.

Sydnee: So, this is— and there are *many* articles written about all of the pseudoscientific claims Droz has made. And not just in— obviously, there are more articles in the last year because there is a renewed interest in that because he is running for office. This has been— I mean, you could look back, and there are articles from 2011, 2013, 2016, 2017. I mean, there are articles from before his political career criticizing his pseudoscientific stances.

So, he said that his family has used homeopathy for a long time. He brought on a homeopathic practitioner, I believe, like, a doctor of Naturopathy, to come on and talk about a homeopathic starter kit.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Um, one of the ways-- I watched this clip, and one of the ways he promotes it is he says that the great thing about it is that homeopathy uses (quote) "less substances than Western medicine." I think that's a—

Justin: Less substances?

Sydnee: Less substances. I think when you just start talking and you don't know what you're gonna say, sometimes you come out with a sentence like, "It uses less substances."

Justin: [laughing]

Sydnee: Which in that sentence— like, in that context, would mean that substances are bad.

Justin: Yeah. Just like material. [laughs]

Sydnee: Like substances.

Justin: Substance.

Sydnee: So, the example he— that he uses is, like, okay, so if you drink a lot of coffee, you might have insomnia. Okay?

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: So, dilute the coffee— dilute it a bunch, and that could cure it.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Drinking really dilute coffee.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: If you mean instead of—

Justin: Weak coffee. Yeah, sure.

Sydnee: If you drink super weak coffee. [chuckles]

Justin: Eventually, if you do that long enough, and it just gets weaker and weaker and weaker, eventually, that would work.

Sydnee: Well, and in homeopathy—

Justin: He's talking about weaning, though.

Sydnee: [chuckles softly] In homeopathy, you're not— you wouldn't be drinking dilute coffee. You would be drinking water that has the essence of coffee in it.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: That has the energy, the vibration of coffee.

Justin: Like, um, how La Croix just has the essence of raspberries.

Sydnee: [laughing softly]

Justin: Similar.

Sydnee: But not like those holiday seltzers that you got that time. Which, like, now that was eggnog.

Justin: Oh, God!

Sydnee: That was not the essence of eggnog.

Justin: Oh, boy.

Sydnee: That was Egg Nog. Capital e, capital n.

Justin: That was Egg Nog, yeah.

Sydnee: But despite he—

Justin: Now, I actually got just nauseous thinking about those Bud Light Holiday Seltzers. Yeah.

Sydnee: And that's— and he says there— I mean, he basically says, despite a lack of evidence, a lot of people are really into this. And that's sort of the selling point for it. A lot of people use it.

Justin: And?

Sydnee: So, he puts together a kit that you should get, I guess, to start off your homeopathic pursuits, um, belladonna for fever. And that sounds, I know what you're thinking, like, "Can't belladonna make you super sick?" Yes, but the thing about homeopathy that they always tout is that it's really safe because, at the end of the day, it's really just water. Because it's been so diluted that there is no active molecule of the thing that it started as in it, essentially.

So, the sort of, like, emergency pack, and he has, like, a little box for wipes. And he says you can take each of these— take the wipes out. Take each of these little, um, test tube-looking preparations of homeopathic remedies—

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: ... and put them in your little box and, like, keep them. I guess, instead of a first aid kit. [chuckles softly]

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: And that's—

Justin: And at the first sign of trouble, you pick up that kit, [through wheeze-laughter] throw it in the trash.

Sydnee: Call 911. [laughs softly]

Justin: [through laughter] Call 911. That's my workflow. That's how I like to handle these things.

Sydnee: So, belladonna for fever. Phosphorus, for a cough. Um, and then some, sort of, traditional herbal things, like gelsemium for flu, pulsatilla for sinus infection, and nux vomica for indigestion. We've talked about some of these on the show before. Again, it— to talk about whether or not these

substances actually do anything for these various ailments wouldn't matter because they're so diluted that they're not— like, you're taking a drop of water.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: He says on the show, like, as he's interviewing this practitioner, he says, "And you can use this alongside Western medicine." And she's like, "Yeah, yeah, definitely. And then a lot of people have been able to stop taking their medicines and use this instead."

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So, this is in the show. Like, I watched just a clip of this episode, and this is *in* the episode. It's putting forth the idea, again, that it's not complimentary.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: That it *is* an alternative. And if you're going to tell people to stop taking a medicine and start taking drops of water with the essence of, you know, belladonna in it, you better have some evidence to back up that claim. And he's already told us in the show that he doesn't have evidence. 'Cause, there is none.

Justin: So, there you go.

Sydnee: Apples. So, there was an episode in which he warned that apple juice contains dangerous levels of arsenic. And what he was talking about is that there's a lot of apple juice made from concentrate. And he's blaming it on China. He's saying that we get this apple juice concentrate from China. That they don't have very strict regulations on pesticides, and so the apple juice from concentrate that you're giving your children has arsenic in it. Now you can imagine that that could cause quite a panic. He has a large audience and—

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: ... he's talking about— and he cited some testing that was done that *showed* that there was too much arsenic.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: The big controversy is that there are two forms of arsenic, organic and inorganic.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And we have different thresholds for different *kinds* of arsenic 'cause the inorganic is the dangerous one, for sure. The organic one, it does exist in soil, and probably apples and other things grown in soil.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And the organic is generally accepted as not toxic. There are also different levels for water versus apple juice and other juices. In part, because, you know, we drink a lot more water. And also, because the organic and inorganic balance is different, in different forms. So, for all of these reasons— and he also only measured the total. He didn't break it down to organic and inorganic.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: So, for all these reasons, like, because of this episode, the FDA had to come out and start doing testing to show that apple juice was safe. And to reexamine how much arsenic we can have in apple juice and reaffirm this is why it's okay, and these are the tests we've done, and we did not, you know, the evidence that he found, we could not find. We did independent testing. But it was this whole panic over apple juice. Which is also interesting, now, if you're worried, though. Apple sauce *is* also listed in his, like, great weight loss tips currently on his website so—

Justin: Great.

Sydnee: "You can just dip melon in it," he says.

Justin: Just dip melon in what?

Sydnee: Apple sauce.

Justin: To?

Sydnee: Lose weight.

Justin: Okay. Great. I mean, it sounds good.

Sydnee: I should preface— and we could put this in the description. I should preface that Dr. Oz talks a lot about weight loss, so we are going to mention a few more weight loss things he talks about.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: He warned that cell phones can cause cancer. He was talking about storing them in your bra. That's something I used to do when I would run. I would just stick it down in my sports bra.

Justin: Sorry, you ran?

Sydnee: This has been a long time ago. [chuckles]

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: I don't run anymore. But I'm just saying, I know people do that. They'll stick it down in their bra. And he was saying, "Don't do that, 'cause it causes cancer." There's no evidence for that.

Justin: [through laughter] Why would— it does also begs the question, like, “Droz, if it’s bad up here, it should be bad pretty much— it should be bad anywhere.” [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: Well, yeah. I mean, if a cell phone causes cancer, the cell phones gonna cause cancer.

Justin: You know, I would prefer leg cancer, Droz.

Sydnee: He called raspberry ketones a number one miracle in a bottle to burn your fat and promoted this as a weight loss cure. There’s a whole list, by the way, of substances he’s promoted as weight loss cures. He, uh, very famously, green coffee bean extract.

Justin: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: We talked about this on the show before.

Justin: He got in a little bit of heat for that.

Sydnee: Yeah, he had to go before a [chuckles] Senate Committee for that one because he called it the “Magic weight loss solution.” That it was a miracle drug. After he— and that’s always the key. He says, like, “I’m not selling this stuff.” But when you stand on stage, on a very popular television show, and tell people they should— that green coffee bean extract is a weight loss miracle.

Justin: You definitely are.

Sydnee: You know, hundreds of thousands of bottles of that are going to get sold.

Justin: Yeah, you definitely are. For sure. 100%.

Sydnee: The study that this was based on was later retracted.

Justin: Good.

Sydnee: And studies can be retracted for a lot of reasons that aren't intentional, by the way, I should say. Like, there is this— I mean, that does happen in science. Where people reexamine, and you realize there was a confounder you didn't control for or something. But in this case, the data appeared to have been altered.

Justin: Oh, okay. Wow. So, a little bit more intentional, maybe, with that.

Sydnee: So, he also promoted HCG. We've talked about that on the show too, as a weight loss supplement. The problem, other than the fact that we don't have any evidence that it works, is that the diet that is recommended to go along if you're gonna do the HCG injections usually is a 1,200 a day calorie diet.

Justin: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: And, um, he did— I will say, in the episode, he did make the note that you should talk to a doctor before going on a 1,200-calorie-a-day diet, but that’s an incredibly dangerous thing to promote out in the world, is that sort of extreme calorie restriction that can be very harmful to people for a variety of reasons.

Justin: It’s so— it’s just— it’s *all* so one size fits all.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: In the way that health— just that we’ve seen in this podcast, is— like, is not— like, it’s that’s not that way. Like—

Sydnee: No, it’s not that way at all. It also is not— he’s equating— because he’s a doctor, when he stands on TV and tells you how to lose weight, the implicit message is you *need* to lose weight.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: And that’s a really dangerous message that he’s starting off with. Like, he needs— like, we’re— we have to take a step back. Why are you promoting ways to lose weight? Why are you promoting ways to lose weight *quickly*, as well?

Justin: Yeah. Right. Yeah, what is the... yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, there's a lot of dangerous ideology behind standing on stage and telling people this supplement will make you lose weight, that he's not even— he's not really willing to engage with. Um, he promoted *Garcinia Cambogia*, as well, which doesn't work, but also—

Justin: I heard he promoted *Garmonbozia*, which is the demonic corn from *Twin Peaks*. [chuckles]

Sydnee: [laughs softly]

Justin: Which *that* went too far. Really *Garmonbozia*?

Sydnee: He says we— that— oh, and this one, maybe, causes liver toxicity in some people. We're not entirely sure how dangerous it is or isn't, but the point is, this is why— he often will say, like, "Well, we don't know if it works, but why not try it?" You'll see him say that on the show a lot, "Why not try it? Why not try it?"

Justin: Why not try it?

Sydnee: Why not try it?

Justin: 'Cause I gotta buy it, Droz! And it hurt my liver, Droz!

Sydnee: Because it might be harmful. Because it costs you money. And because you're seeking out an alternative, in some cases, to some sort of

actually evidenced based medicine that might help you. So, like, there's lots of "why not try it?"

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: The why not— the "why not try it?" is a really dangerous question. And it's also, like, he knows better. I don't —this has been the, as I've been doing this episode, I'm trying to figure out if he's, like, a true believer or not. I can't— I can't put my finger on it. Because if you're a true believer, the "why not try it?" makes sense to you. But what worries me is we both went to medical school.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: He was in residency and fellowship longer than me because of the kinds of doctors we are. You know the "why not try it?" I *know* you know that. And this is what's— what stymies me. But, um, and he also, of course, touted hydroxychloroquine for Covid. He— during the pandemic, he made lots of remarks.

Justin: I feel like the pandemic was, sort of like his, um, his origin story as the Droz we know today. I feel like it was the flip or fly moment of, like, I'm either going to hard for, like, alternative medicines or I'm gonna go hard for, like, guidelines and helping everybody get through this in a safe way.

And I— you know, I don't know. I didn't watch all of his programming during that thing, but it definitely seems like that led us to where we are at today. Like, you kind of had to rubber meets the road. We're beyond, like, "Have more energy." You know what I mean?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: It's no longer, like, "Get a little spring in your step." Or "Have the colon of a 30-year-old," or whatever.

Sydnee: I can't imagine he planned going on TV and saying, "We should reopen schools because it would only be like two or three percent mortality increase."

Justin: I mean, I wouldn't plan on going on TV to say that.

Sydnee: And then, like, somebody saying, "Do you mean, like, two to three percent more kids die? Or what— what do you mean there, Droz?"

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: What do you mean there? And, I mean, and later, he sort of apologized, or tried to explain it, or whatever, that statement. That he did not *intend* to just write off the deaths of humans of any age.

Justin: Mm-hmm. He had hoped it would mainly be bullies, and that was what he was thinking when he said that number.

Sydnee: [laughs softly]

Justin: But, of course, there are non-bullies at schools too.

Sydnee: And, you know, again, throughout the pandemic, we've talked about it on this show. We did some early episodes on Covid where I had no clue that it was going to become what it became.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I did not predict what was going to happen.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Which we have been totally forthcoming about, and [through laughter] never told people any different.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I think that's the other thing, is, like, science evolves. And you can't make these statements and then just stand on them forever. He also promotes Iridology. He had somebody on his show to talk about—it's another pseudoscientific study where you examine someone's iris in their eye— their iris—

Justin: Oh, wow. Isn't this like phrenology for eyeballs?

Sydnee: Sorta like that. Yeah.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: You look for colors and patterns, and then you can tell them about their health state. Um, I want to do a whole episode on this at some point, but just to give you, like, a sneak peek.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: When I looked into “Where did this come from?” It looks like it started with a 19th-century Hungarian physician, who got the idea after he saw— he was looking in the eye of a man who had broken his leg. And the streaks of color looked similar to the eye of an owl whose leg he had broken once.

Justin: [quietly] What?

Sydnee: And he thought, “Well, maybe, these streaks appear when you break your leg, and there’s a science here.”

Justin: Excuse me.

Sydnee: This may be an apocryphal story, but it was the first story that came up as I was looking into Iridology, so that will be our next episode. Will be Iridology.

Justin: But hold on. How did he break an owl's leg?

Sydnee: I don't know, honey. I'm hoping to find out, and that might not even be true, but we got to find that out. So, tune in next time. [laughs lightly]

Justin: I've seen three owls. I can name them for you. Like, I can tell you the exact moment I've seen owls three times. Never in a million years would I have gotten into a situation—

Sydnee: I don't know. I'm gonna get into this episode.

Justin: Okay. All right. You're right. Sorry.

Sydnee: Anyway, so, he brought on a doctor who does this, and then said, like, "Listen, this is an ancient thing. So, who am I to question it?"

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Which we *know* is a fallacy. We know that's a fallacy.

Justin: A modern person, [wheeze-laughs] who knows better.

Sydnee: And, of course, we've done a whole episode on this before, but he also tweeted [chuckles] about medical astrology. The idea that your zodiac sign can help in some way inform your health status. For instance, I am an Aries, so I have issues with migraines, jaw tension, and sinus problems.

Justin: Ah. Ah.

Sydnee: I don't have issues with those things.

Justin: `Kay.

Sydnee: But I actually do not think that has anything [through laugh] to do with my zodiac sign one way or the other. [normally] Justin, I tried to look into what you Scorpios have.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: And it said something about, like, reproduction and regeneration.

Justin: Whoa. No, I just popped it up on here. Cool Butt-itis?

Sydnee: [laughing softly]

Justin: It just says, "You have a cool butt that looks great in jeans or shorts."

Sydnee: [laughs] I like astrology stuff, and I will say whenever you look up Scorpio stuff, genitals come up a lot. Just saying. But—

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Uh, but I don't like it for medical stuff. I like it for talking to my mom about it, 'cause she's into it.

Justin: That's what astrology is for. Talking to your mom.

Sydnee: It's for talking to my mom about it. There was a 2014 study published in the British Medical Journal you may have heard of. It looked at *The Dr. Oz Show* and the show, *The Doctors* for, "Do they have evidence to back up their claims?" And what they found was that, um, evidence supported about 46% of the things that are said on those shows, evidence completely contradicts 15%, and there is no evidence found for 39%. So, less than 50—

Justin: Now, that's Droz and *The Doctors*, though, right?

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah.

Justin: Okay. Just to be clear. So, maybe he was the 50%.

Sydnee: No.

Justin: [bursts out in wheeze-laughter]

Sydnee: So, less than half of the time, Droz has evidence for this stuff he's saying. And I think that, like— and, you know, he would probably defend that by saying, "Well, I say that on the show." [laughs] "I say that I don't have that evidence."

Justin: I say it's made up.

Sydnee: "I said that. I said that I don't have evidence."

Justin: So, there ya go.

Sydnee: But the thing is, it's *The Doctor Oz Show*.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: He *is* a doctor. He's a medical doctor who went to Harvard, and everybody knows that. And he also was on— I remember the show where they watched him, like, he did heart surgeries, and they followed him around in his scrubs, and looking very cool, and doing his surgeries. So, like, we *know* he's a legit doctor. And so, when he stands up there and talks about something, I mean, we take that seriously. You know?

Justin: Mm-hmm. I know.

Sydnee: I mean, we're programmed to take that seriously.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: And a lot of people think, "This is America's doctor, and he's giving me advice." And it sounds so *easy* sometimes. That's the other allure of it.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like, it all— it would be so easy if this stuff was true. I always think it's interesting this idea that doctors hide this stuff from you 'cause it's so simple.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I'd give anything if medicine was as simple as Droz makes it sound sometimes.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Because then a lot more people would be healthy and happy. And, I don't know, maybe, we'd live forever. And that all sound awesome to me.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: But, unfortunately, it's often a lot more complex and nuanced.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And also, individual. It also is personal to each— yes, we have guidelines and studies and evidence that tell us generally what works and what directions we should go. But when you sit down to make a treatment plan, it's just you and the patient making that plan. 'Cause, it's what works best for their life. And you can't make those calls on television, other than, like, humans need sleep. I would say that that's a fair one.

Justin: And having the rectum of a 30-year-old.

Sydnee: [laughs softly]

Justin: Thank you so much for listening [through laughter] to our podcast.

Sydnee: He does do an episode on vaginal age.

Justin: Yeah. Yeah, we saw a clip from that. Thank you so much for listening to our show, which is called *Sawbones*. We hope you've enjoyed yourself. 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. We sure appreciate it, and we hope you have a great week. That's gonna do it for us until next time. My name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

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

[outro plays]

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