

Sawbones Episode 35: Oil Pulling

Published March 18th, 2014

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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 song Medicines by The Taxpayers plays]

Justin:

Hello, everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I am your co-host, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy. And Justin, what are you drinking?

Justin:

Oil.

Sydnee:

Is that, is that a bottle of Wesson oil?

Justin:

Yeah, I'm drinking oil.

Sydnee:

No, stop! Don't! What are ... Don't drink more! What are you doing?? Why are you doing that?!

Justin:

Don't that take ... I saw it on Facebook.

Sydnee:

You saw ... What, what did ... What?

Justin:

I saw it on Facebook. Oil.

Sydnee:

You saw oil on Facebook, and now you're drinking it?

Justin:

Okay. I saw-

Sydnee:

Was this a Pinterest thing? I told you, you don't know how to use Pinterest. Stay away from it. [laughs]

Justin:

I saw a bunch of people saying... Well, I didn't see what they said. There was a picture of oil and you put it in your mouth, and something happens that is good. I saw it on Facebook several times, so this is coming from a reputable source that I did not investigate the procedures of specifics of it.

Sydnee:

So, so you didn't read any of the, no... Just, okay, no. Please stop. Just... Until we're done, could you not drink that anymore, please?

Justin:

But I need it.

Sydnee:

No. Uh, so did-

Justin:

For... Sorry, for health.

Sydnee:

Right, for health. So I'm guessing you didn't read any of these articles?

Justin:

No. I saw oil and you put it in your mouth, which I'm assuming you swallow it, that's what I do with things in my mouth.

Sydnee:

That's a whole other conversation. No what... okay.

Justin:

There's no Mr. Yuk on this bottle of Wesson. I'm assuming I'm cool.

Sydnee:

No, no, that's not... I, I think you were... I'm gonna guess you were seeing articles about oil pulling.

Justin:

That's sounds familiar.

Sydnee:

Is that... Does that, probably what it was?

Justin:

I didn't make it deep into the headline. I'm not like a deep reader, I'm more like a casual browser on Facebook.

Sydnee:

You didn't, you didn't read the entire headline?

Justin:

I saw most of the picture.

Sydnee:

Most of the picture.

Justin:

[laughs] It was definitely-

Sydnee:

You didn't even look at the entire picture.

Justin:

Definitely a mouth, definitely oil, definitely for my health.

Sydnee:

Okay, well you're... I think you're using the internet wrong, but we'll cover that some other time.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, right now, it sounds like you're, you're oil pulling.

Justin:

Oil pulling.

Sydnee:

And it, it sounds like you're doing it very badly.

Justin:

Uh, I, I'm not... I would say I'm not getting many health benefits. Let me just... I'll just say that for one.

Sydnee:

And a drink- drinking oil, that, no wonder.

Justin:

I feel like bad, I guess. I feel actively worse than I did before I started.

Sydnee:

Yeah, next time you're gonna try something like that, I really wish you'd talk to me first.

Justin:

Well, maybe you could talk to me about actual oil pulling, and I'll see how it differs from my sort of like more homespun off the grid method.

Sydnee:

Right. If, uh, if you'll make me one promise.

Justin:

Hit me.

Sydnee:

Until we're done with this show, will you please not drink any more oil?

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Okay.

Justin:

I can't make that promise, but I will do my best.

Sydnee:

Okay. Well, I, I suppose I'll live with that. So let's go back to ... Before we talk about oil pulling, which I know everybody's dying to hear about-

Justin:

Yeah, this is like our most requested episode ever. Normally, we, we don't talk about things that are, uh, uh, hot right now. Not, not modern treatments.

Sydnee:

So trendy. So super cool.

Justin:

This is very cool. Lots of people are into this right now.

Sydnee:

I know. I feel very hip talking about it.

Justin:

Yeah, I feel like finally plugged in like the first time ever.

Sydnee:

T- this is the coolest thing I've ever done in my life.

Justin:

All right, tell me about oil pulling.

Sydnee:

Okay. The reason we can talk about it is that it's really old, actually.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

It's new and it's old. It's, it's an old new thing. So the roots are in Ayurvedic medicine, which is... I, I think I've mentioned it maybe a couple times on the show before, but it's a traditional form of, uh, it's, it's like folk medicine and it's from India. Um, there were the texts, the original religious texts were the Vedic texts, and then there were texts written after that called the Ayurvedic texts, and they're kind of about, um, healthy living, actually about the treatment and you know, uh, curing of t- the curing diagnosis of diseases that kind of thing. But in general kind of like this holistic approach to how you should live.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Uh, so that's where this idea comes from. So before we get into oil pulling, I wanna tell you a little bit about Ayurvedic medicine and why this maybe ... Uh, give you some context that may explain where, where the heck this came from.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So the idea in Ayurvedic medicine is there are three basic elements or doshas. Um, that's the vatha, the pitta, and the kapha.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

And you have to keep these three things in balance. Does this sound familiar at all?

Justin:

Yeah, kind of like the, uh, the humors, right?

Sydnee:

I kind of thought it did. I, I wonder if that's not a similar idea, you know, to the, the origin- origins of the, the humorous theory, you know?

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

That there's different stuff going on in our body, we don't really understand it, but we definitely wanna keep it in balance.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, and that's the, that's the same kind of thing. Balance equals health, imbalance equals disease. What is unique about this, unlike the humors which we pretty much accepted that everybody had to have the same balance of humors-

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

... uh, with the doshas, uh, your balance is unique to you.

Justin:

Okay. I feel... That makes me feel kind of special, actually. A- a lot of this that was can be kind of dehumanizing, uh, make me feel like just a number. I'm glad I'm, I got a special, special doshas.

Sydnee:

I think it's kind of neat, you're ... 'cause they determine your personality. So one might be more fiery, one might be more like, even-tempered. You know. And what, what mix you have of different ones. Um-

Justin:

Ones like... Is there one that's like good at basketball 'cause it seems like that would be kind of my thing.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That's the, that's the hoops.

Justin:

Hoops dosha.

Sydnee:

The hoops dosha. That's what you have like, 95% of you is hoops.

Justin:

That's what I figured.

Sydnee:

Um, [laughs] the other, the other 5% is black bile.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

That's weird.

Justin:

That's weird how that works out.

Sydnee:

Um.

Justin:

That's why I'm so fierce, though, on the court.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Uh, so, so again, it's not just maintaining a perfect balance of these three elements, it's maintaining your balance. It's restoring your body to your personal balance that makes you you.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, and, and like I said, in these texts, they go through mention of, like, traditional diagnostics that we would use today, things like testing your own insulin. And these are really old, I should mention. Like the earliest date back to, like, uh, 100 AD.

Justin:

Wow, okay.

Sydnee:

Um, I'm gonna be referencing a lot from the Charaka Samhita, which is from probably 300 to 500.

Justin:

Geez, all right.

Sydnee:

Uh.

Justin:

So this is like old medicine.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

This is a real medical history. Now we're getting that realish.

Sydnee:

Exactly. This is old, old time med- old timey medicine. [laughs]

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Technically.

Justin:

Old, old timey medicine.

Sydnee:

Old timey medicine. But they're already talking about in these texts, like I said, diagnosis through testing various bodily fluids, there's some surgical advice, like how to do C-sections and some plastic surgeries we've talked about-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

... previous episodes. Um, and then some, like, diagnostic and treatment approaches to things like tuberculosis, leprosy, seizures. Even, probably, diabetes, what they were describing as diabetes.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

So there's some really useful medicine in these texts. Um, especially for the time. I mean, it, uh, again, understanding what the time period was.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, but there's this whole other section, again, probably not only as useful, maybe more useful on, like, healthy living.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

So that's where you get into, like, diet and digestion and yoga and meditation and the importance of sleep and hygiene and that kind of stuff.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Importance of, like, doing you and standing in your truth and just being, being the best you you can be.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Well, yeah. I mean, I guess that's actually not too far off because it's all about maintaining your personal balance.

Justin:

Yeah. Okay.

Sydnee:

So, yeah. It kinda is.

Justin:

This is like the i- ... You're saying ... Basically what you're saying to me is that Ayurvedic texts were the *Cosmo* of their day, basically.

Sydnee:

I mean, they were probably that popular.

Justin:

Okay. I can accept that.

Sydnee:

Now, is *Cosmo* still popular?

Justin:

I don't know what, no magazine is popular. No one's ever read a magazine that is alive today.

Sydnee:

Really?

Justin:

Yeah, that's actually true.

Sydnee:

I thought I'd read a magazine.

Justin:

Nope, no.

Sydnee:

No? I haven't?

Justin:

No one's ever bought or purchased a magazine. They're there strictly as a window dressing at the grocery store so that you do not guess that you are in a *Truman Show* style production-

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... of, uh, your life as a television program.

Sydnee:

I'm pretty sure *Entertainment Weekly* comes here.

Justin:

Hm, have you ever tried to open it? You can't. It's just a prop.

Sydnee:

I thought I read it to keep myself grounded. [laughs]

Justin:

No. When you start to think you're too podcast famous, you open it and realize, "Hey, [crosstalk 00:09:27]

Sydnee:

"I'm not, I'm not really famous."

Justin:

I'm not really famous."

Sydnee:

Nobody knows who I am. Somebody at the hospital recognized me today.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

I know. So-

Justin:

Do you, do you work for them?

Sydnee:

No. No.

Justin:

Okay, like a stranger.

Sydnee:

Well, like a friend of yours.

Justin:

Okay. I can live with that.

Sydnee:

Um, so the, the one, the one thing I should mention, one downfall of the Ayurvedic texts 'cause I've been talking about all the cool stuff that's in them, um, is the Rasashastra-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

... which is the practice of adding, um, metals, like, heavy metals or minerals to, um, medicines.

Justin:

So that sounds good. I know, I have like iron, uh, uh, you've taken, like, iron supplements before and, like, I take magnesium-

Sydnee:

Well-

Justin:

... supplements for my cramps.

Sydnee:

Well [laughs] that's, that's true, then that's fine. But-

Justin:

Is magnesium a metal?

Sydnee:

Uh, yeah, it is a metal.

Justin:

Yeah, so there you go, magnesium.

Sydnee:

Okay.

Justin:

I, I take that, so that's fine.

Sydnee:

Well, that is a good metal, but you probably don't wanna take, like, mercury and arsenic and lead, and that, those are things that are included at times in some of the Ayurvedic medicines.

Justin:

Those would have the Mr. Yuk on them.

Sydnee:

Yes. You don't wanna drink those. Those should have a tag that say, "Justin, don't drink these."

Justin:

"Justin, keep out."

Sydnee:

Um, and that's why, actually today in India, you have to list ... Because Ayurvedic medicine is still practiced, not by everyone, but it is still practiced, uh, you have to list what kind of metals you might include in your medication-

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

... so that people know what they're getting so they don't take toxic doses. They probably shouldn't take it at all, but at least don't take toxic doses. And, um-

Justin:

So you're saying, a light amount of arsenic is A-OK.

Sydnee:

Well, I, no-

Justin:

I can have... a light amount of arsenic.

Sydnee:

What I'm saying is we're-

Justin:

A tasteful amount of arsenic.

Sydnee:

... we are all exposed to small amounts of these substances throughout our daily existence.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

But, uh, in, in these medications, you have to list what's in them so if you don't perhaps don't wanna take mercury, which, that would be me, uh, you can avoid them. And, and that's why in the US, the FDA has not approved any of them, and they've also put import alerts on a lot of these medications, uh, because we've had many cases of he- heavy metal toxicity among people in the US who are taking them.

Justin:

Okay, so that's troublesome.

Sydnee:

Okay. Yes, so let's to get to oil pulling.

Justin:

Okay, I'm ready.

Sydnee:

It, it comes from, like I mentioned, one of the Ayurvedic texts, the Charaka Samhita, and this may actually be the oldest of the, of the texts, the foundational texts. It's not entirely certain. 300 to fi- to 500 is a good estimate. It may date back to 100. Um, but that's not 100% clear.

Justin:

CE, you're talking about.

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Uh, and it has a lot of health advice. Again, it doesn't just talk about, like, curing disease, it, it also gives advice on, like, setting up hospitals, uh, what kind of people would make good nurses.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

But also a lot of really practical hygiene advice. Um, and you have to remember, like, to put it in context, this is a time period when the best thing you could do for your health is probably taking a shower, washing your clothes.

Justin:

It's interesting, for all the, like, crazy medical things we've attempted over the past, you know, forever, uh, we would've gotten halfway there with a lot of this stuff via proper hygiene. Like, hygiene would have been the most important breakthrough for a lot of this stuff.

Sydnee:

Absolutely.

Justin:

Uh, you know, just in and of itself.

Sydnee:

Absolutely. Well, that's why it's, it's probably the most, I mean, of all of the, the treatments and kind of like these are the things you should do advice listed in the texts, I think this is the most helpful maybe even today is keep yourself clean, you know, uh, inside and out and, and that's a good way to avoid disease. Um, and as part of that, part of the daily routine, they list oil pulling, or oil gargle is how it's listed.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, and this is, it said that it will "prevent disease, strengthen tissues, and sense organs." That is a quote from the text. That's what it's supposed to do.

Justin:

Okay, sounds good.

Sydnee:

So here's how they describe doing this. So this is straight from, you know, straight from the book. "Oil gargle. It provides strength in jaws and voice, development of face, maximum taste and relish in food."

Justin:

I like that. I'm into that.

Sydnee:

[laughs] "One does not suffer from dryness of throat, lip cracking, tooth cavities, pain in teeth, oversensitivity of teeth on taking sour taste." Other things we can't, we can't be... No.

Justin:

Yeah, sour is definitely your cool one.

Sydnee:

Just sour. "Uh, teeth become firm-rooted and able to chew even the hardest food."

Justin:

That's something that I've been looking for in my day-to-day. That's actually really exciting for me. I'd love to be able to chew harder stuff. I'm always pushing myself trying to take it to the limit. I mean, I'm not Matter-Eater Lad, but I'll, I'll, uh, you know, I'll chew some hard food. I'll eat some hard tack-

Sydnee:

Uh-

Justin:

Have some, uh, jaw breakers from time to time.

Sydnee:

I thought, I thought that your teeth were kinda soft.

Justin:

Well, there's no need to get, like, personal. It's just a podcast.

Sydnee:

I just was wondering. I thought-

Justin:

It's fine.

Sydnee:

I thought that was a thing about you.

Justin:

Eh, it's fine.

Sydnee:

Okay. Well, then you would, you would enjoy oil ga- oil gargling because it can make your teeth very strong and t- to put this, a- again in more context, if you look at the sections right before and after this-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

... right before oil gargle are several descriptions of oral cleaning routines. So toothbrushes, early toothbrushes and the process of brushing your teeth, tongue scraping, um, how to wash your mouth out with various, like, fruits and leaves and things. Um, there's this whole kind of oral hygiene section then.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

And then right after that, they- after some extra uses for oils that they go into like oiling your head and [laughs] ears and massaging with it and things like that, they have a whole section on the importance of bathing and cleaning your clothes. So again, that's where this, this thing, it's, it's kind of like part of your daily, um, hygiene routine.

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

That's, that's where you would, uh, fit this in.

Justin:

Now, Syd, I wanna hear all about the modern take on oil pulling, uh, because I, I, I have a feeling that's where we're headed next, but-

Sydnee:

That is, Justin.

Justin:

Thank you, thank you. I have a sense for these things. But, uh, before we get into that, I wanna take a moment. I know that you are new to the Maximum Fun network. Uh, I, I've obviously been on it since, uh, 2011 or something.

Sydnee:

[mocking tone] I've been in it since 2011 ...

Justin:

Okay, like, we don't need to get like that. It doesn't need to be personal, but every year at the Maximum Fun network, we do the thing called the Max Fun Drive. Uh, as you know, all our shows are free to listen to. Uh, we, we don't force anybody to pay to listen to these programs. We want the, this to be free for everybody to enjoy.

Sydnee:

I'm very weak, I probably couldn't force you to pay if I wanted to.

Justin:

[laughs] She can not twist your arm.

Sydnee:

I, I have no upper arm strength.

Justin:

But, uh, once a year, we come to you and say, "Hey, if you have enjoyed the things that you've been listening to this year and plan on listening to for the year to come, uh, could you maybe give us some money?" I know, you love your money, but we just need a little bit of your money to help pay for the programming on Maximum Fun. Now this doesn't just go to Sawbones, of course. Uh, it goes to *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, it goes to *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* and *Bullseye and Lady to Lady*.

Sydnee:

What? This goes to other shows?

Justin:

It goes to ... Okay, it does go to other shows. We got a whole network to support.

Sydnee:

You didn't tell me that.

Justin:

Uh, this helps us buy equipment, it helps us, uh, pay for people to make the shows and record the shows and produce the shows. Of course, we do all that ourselves, but lots of the, the cools shows have producers and that they have to pay.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

People who work for them, et cetera. And, uh, it, it-

Sydnee:

But it'll make Justin feel good about himself.

Justin:

It will. It-

Sydnee:

'Cause he does all that.

Justin:

I ... Yeah. It will make me feel like a big tough guy. Now, we are coming to you with open arms and open hearts and saying, "Please, spare a few bucks for us," but we are not coming to you necessarily empty-handed. We do have gifts for you if you can, uh, spare some of your money. For five dollars a month, you can be a Maximum Fun member. You're gonna get exclusive bonus content. This is bonus episodes for all of our shows, uh, on the network and including the episodes that they released in years prior. There are like five bonus episodes of *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, a bunch of bonus episodes of *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* and, uh, uh, *Wham Bam Pow* and *Throwing Shade*. So many other shows. Uh, up to, there are over 44 hours of shows on there.

Sydnee:

And we've got one.

Justin:

We have got one that is about, uh, how medicine today, what parts of medicine today might seem, uh, silly or *Sawbones*-worthy-

Sydnee:

100 years from now.

Justin:

100 years from now.

Sydnee:

So we moved into the future for that one.

Justin:

We have stepped into the future and we recorded that bonus episode. You can get that for a just five dollars a month and you can download all those shows and you'll be a member of our family and it will mean the world to us.

Sydnee:

And we will love you.

Justin:

Forever and ever.

Sydnee:

For real.

Justin:

10, for \$10 a month, you'll be a friend of the family and you'll get an 18-month mini Max Fun calendar that features original paintings by Megan Lynn Kott of Max Fun hosts as cats.

Sydnee:

Yes, so yeah, we'll be as cats. I don't know.

Justin:

We will be as cats.

Sydnee:

That was not her full name. [laughs]

Justin:

No, no. She- yeah, we were drawn as cats, it is delightful.

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

If you can do-

Sydnee:

Uh, she didn't have my permission, but it is granted retroactively-

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... 'cause it's, 'cause it's a pretty cute drawing. [laughs]

Justin:

It's adorable. \$20 a month, you're gonna be a member of the Diamond Friendship Circle. You're gonna get the Max Fun morning essentials kit. This is really cool. You get a cobalt blue Max Fun rocket mug, which is very tasteful and stylish.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Uh, a half bag of Tonx coffee, which we have been enjoying.

Sydnee:

We have been. I have been-

Justin:

... different Tonx.

Sydnee:

... despite the fact that I'm not, oh no, I'm really supposed to.

Justin:

What? Well, you have a little bit. You can have-

Sydnee:

I have a little bit of co-

Justin:

You can have a little bit of coffee.

Sydnee:

I have under 200 milligrams. That's totally safe.

Justin:

Totally cool. Uh-

Sydnee:

So I've been, I've been having that just 'cause it's so delicious.

Justin:

And you can, and, uh, Tonx Coffee usually comes with a description of where it is made 'cause it comes from different places all the time. I have regaled you, you can attest-

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Justin:

... with stories of where our coffee [crosstalk 00:19:10]

Sydnee:

Of where it comes from and how's it's supposed to taste.

Justin:

No-

Sydnee:

All the, all the notes that I should pick up.

Justin:

It's the delicate notes. And you're also gonna get a bar of Stack Soap which is a- amazing because it is a, a, a bar of soap with a divot in it, so when you run down your, uh, bar of soap and you've just got a stupid sliver there, um-

Sydnee:

You can stick it in the new bar.

Justin:

It's amazing.

Sydnee:

There you go.

Justin:

So, and, uh, if you can do \$35 per month, you're gonna be part of Judge John Hodgman's justice squad, and you're gonna get all that stuff that are up above, plus a pair of rocket engraved highball glasses with the Max Fun logo on it.

Sydnee:

And you can have a drink for me.

Justin:

And have a drink for Sydnee because she is unable to, at the present time. There's other gifts, there's \$100 a month, you be one of Jesse's golden eagles and you'll get a monthly, uh, cultural gift selected by one of us here at Max Fun. For \$200 a month, you're gonna get all that stuff plus free registration on the Atlantic Ocean Comedy and Music Festival at boatparty.biz. Uh, so this is really, really, um, it's really important-

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Justin:

... because if you like cool stuff, and I do, and I know you do.

Sydnee:

I know, I know. You love stuff the most.

Justin:

I love the stuff the most.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

But I like cool stuff and I like to support the stuff that I like. So if you like the stuff we make on Maximum Fun, uh, then, uh, it would really be great if you could go to maximumfun.org/donate, uh, or go to maximumfun.org and just click the donate button. It's up to you. Uh, and, uh, pledge, uh, a monthly gift to us. It would really be amazing, uh, and let them know that, uh, Sawbones is your favorite show on Maximum Fun because-

Sydnee:

Even if it's not, say it is.

Justin:

Even if it's not, just say it is because listen, we got a baby on the way. Alright, there, I didn't wanna-

Sydnee:

We got another, we another mouth to feed.

Justin:

We got another mouth to feed, okay? So just do that.

Sydnee:

So don't, don't take this money out of your medical emergency fund. I know how important that is.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

I preach about that.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

But if you got an extra fiver, hey.

Justin:

Hey. Kick it in. Maximumfun.org/donate. Do it now, uh, and again, sorry for the interruption, but we only do this once a year. We- we have ... Well, pledge week goes for 10 days, so, uh, next week we'll remind you about it, but do it now. Don't wait. Uh, maximumfun.org/donate. And with that said,

Sydnee, how do you properly do oil pulling since you said my method is inadequate?

Sydnee:

Well now, now that you're back, I know you're happy to be back for this disgusting description of how to-

Justin:

I'm ready. I'm pumped.

Sydnee:

... how to do oil pulling.

Justin:

Yes.

Sydnee:

So here's what you do. And you can take this from me, but trust me, if you, if you Google this, you are going to find a million different descriptions and they'll all have their own little nuances on how to prefer to do it. In general, the idea is that first thing each morning, before you eat anything, so it's important that this is on an empty stomach-

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... you take one to two teaspoons of an oil. Now, preferably, this was traditionally listed as sesame oil.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, if you look around online, you'll see a lot of people like to use coconut oil, but then there are probably just as many who say you're not supposed to use coconut oil. I have no reason to believe it matters either way.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, so you can use coconut, you can use sesame, you can use sunflower, olive oil. Any of these.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Uh, I don't think Wesson is an option.

Justin:

Fair enough, that's fine.

Sydnee:

Uh, so you take this one to two teaspoons, depending on what you can handle, you put it in your mouth, and you swish it around for 15 to 20 minutes.

Justin:

That sounds, like, so boring. That will take forever.

Sydnee:

Now, they recognize that you probably at first are gonna, like, try five minutes.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Uh, but you wanna work your way up because everybody will tell you online, all the people on the internet that know these things, that it doesn't work unless you can do it for at least 15 minutes, but 20 preferably.

Justin:

Wow, okay.

Sydnee:

'Cause it's the swishing that really helps.

Justin:

Okay. So that will take forever, so I'm a little daunted, but I wanna hang in there.

Sydnee:

So-

Justin:

So what do I do? I just swished it around for 15 to 20 minutes.

Sydnee:

Uh, then you spit it out into a trash can.

Justin:

Not the sink, I'm assuming because oil can clog up your plumbing.

Sydnee:

Precisely.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So, so spit it out into a trash can. And then, uh, you don't have to do this, but a lot of people suggest you rinse your mouth out with warm water.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Or even brush your teeth afterwards just 'cause it feels icky.

Justin:

Yeah, feels gross.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Um, and now they tell you that the oil will have changed colors, and the idea ... so, so it'll, it'll be clear at first, but then it'll be, like, um, foamy and white at the end.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

And that's because it's absorbed all of your toxins and so that's why it's a different color.

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

Um, and it's, it's been swished around in your yucky mouth for a while, so there are probably a lot of reasons, but either way, um, the oil should've changed color when you spit it out, so you're supposed to look for that.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Make sure that it's a different color. So why would you do this?

Justin:

I, I don't know, Sydnee. I just ... I don't know. My mouth hurts and it tastes like oil. I don't know why I did all this.

Sydnee:

So it's been claimed that, uh, oil pulling can cure just about everything.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, I found a list that was ... I actually, I actually stole this list from somebody, so I'll reference him-

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... 'cause I stole it directly from him 'cause I was looking for, like, all the things online, page by page that you could cure with oil pulling. And I found one guy, Mike Rothschild, who does *Skeptoid* podcast-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

... and he made a whole list, so I'm just quoting his wholesale.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So this is what it, this is what, what you will find on the internet that it will treat. Chronic pain, insomnia, cavities, allergies, thrombosis, diabetes, asthma, bad breath, gingivitis, digestive issues, meningitis, low energy, heart disease, kidney disease, toxic bodily waste, PMS, leukemia, and even AIDS.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Now, now to me, Sydnee, sitting here in *my* chair, that sounds a little bit like a cure-all. A bit like a cure-all to me.

Sydnee:

I think that's a fair assessment considering that I just, I just had a list with both bad breath and leukemia in it.

Justin:

Fair enough, okay. But our general rule is that cure-alls cure nothing.

Sydnee:

Nothing.

Justin:

Right. Is that the case for oil pulling?

Sydnee:

Okay, not, not entirely.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Now, I don't wanna say ... Okay, I don't wanna say that it cures anything.

Justin:

I get suspicious of anything when we start talking about toxins because toxins is, I have learned, uh, this is what I believe personally based on, like, science and crap, is that toxins are kind of like at boogey man of a lot of people who are into natural remedies for things, uh, then is toxins is kind of non-specific and it doesn't mean a lot, right?

Sydnee:

That, that's entirely true. That's, uh, one of the points that I, I read a lot about this because I know there are gonna be people who are gonna argue with me that this is a good idea. So I read a lot about this, and one thing you need to, uh, one point that was made, there's a really good article on this concept on toxins are reference to oil pulling and then in general, um, on Discovery Health if you wanna check it out, but, um, it, uh, it talks about the fact that your teeth in your mouth shouldn't be toxic to begin with.

Justin:

I know that's w-

Sydnee:

Yeah, it's not.

Justin:

Well, that's what I'm trying to get rid of. I mean, that's the problem, right?

Sydnee:

Well, no, it's not toxic. Your body, your body shouldn't be toxic. Um, that-

Justin:

I know. That is why I'm trying to get them out.

Sydnee:

I would always question something that is supposed to be a detoxifier because, I mean, uh, I'm, I'm familiar with what toxins are. For instance, I can get, like, staphylococcal food poisoning, which is a toxin, food poisoning, and then you, you know, puke your guts out for several hours and then it goes away.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

But, like, that's specific. You shouldn't be full of these all-

Justin:

Or serin gas like in 24.

Sydnee:

Sure.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So, I mean, there are certainly toxins. I hope you don't have them, but most of us aren't working around with them.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, so I would always be skeptical of that.

Justin:

And you have systems in your body that naturally get rid of, uh, things that would be toxic to you, correct?

Sydnee:

Yes, exactly. Like sometimes you just puke or poop it out.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And don't you're, like, kidney or your liver or something-

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm [affirmative] yeah, oh, yeah.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

You have lots of ways to try to rid your body of toxic substances naturally.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Yeah, I mean, if we didn't, we'd be ... our species would never have survived.

Justin:

So if we take the toxin thing off the table, what was oil pulling do for me?

Sydnee:

So there are a lot of studies. If you do, if you do some, like, actual look for research papers, people who have done real, real deal science studies on this, there are lots on its effect on oral health.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, the results, though, are kinda inconsistent. Uh, I, I found some studies, and some studies show that it works as, like a mouthwash. So if you put it up against chlorhexidine mouthwash, which is just a common component of mouthwash, that it wo- that your mouth gets just as clean.

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

Whether you use mouthwash or, you know, oil. Um, some studies say that it really doesn't add anything to a daily health routine if you're already brushing and flossing or using a water pick, which you, which you love.

Justin:

Yeah, I-

Sydnee:

You like your water pick.

Justin:

I like my water pick.

Sydnee:

Um, so if you're already doing those things, adding oil pulling probably doesn't help. Um, now, there have been some positive results. There are some studies that say, well, but when we look at the colony counts of bacteria in your mouth before and after, they're lower.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Uh, statistically significantly lower if you, if you do oil pulling. Um, and these bacteria, we know can contribute to plaque and gingivitis and cavities and bad breath. And so while oil pulling isn't going to cure a cavity, maybe it can reduce your chances of getting one by killing some of these bacteria. That's, that's one, one of the theories that the studies put forth. Um, and maybe it makes your breath better because it's gonna kill these bacteria.

Justin:

So should everybody start oil pulling right now, then?

Sydnee:

Well, there are some problems with these studies.

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

So I read, I read quite a few of them, and let me say that first of all, by and large, they're very small. Um, are you familiar with what an N is, have I told you that before in a study?

Justin:

It's the number of people in the study, right?

Sydnee:

Oh!

Justin:

Or the number of whatevers in the study.

Sydnee:

Very good.

Justin:

Thank you.

Sydnee:

Number of participants. So a lot of the studies that I looked at are very small. Have an N of, like, 10 or 20. To 10 or 20 people that we're checking. So 10 people used oil pulling, 10 people used mouthwash. What's the difference? That's, that's tough to be statistically significant and really see differences at that level, that's really hard.

Um, some of the ones that I found that were a little better were, like, blinded studies that were done, you know, in a scientifically accurate way were only done on adolescents. And this is my problem with that, how good are kids at brushing their teeth?

Justin:

Bad.

Sydnee:

So if they're doing anything for their dental hygiene, isn't that a little better?

Justin:

Yes.

Sydnee:

And I didn't see if they controlled for that. I did not find evidence that they were necessarily controlling for how good these kids were at taking care of their teeth to begin with.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, they also found a lot of studies with, uh, people who already had plaque or halitosis, bad breath.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

So again, what was their or- oral hygiene like to begin with?

Justin:

[whispers] I don't know.

Sydnee:

'Cause I mean, uh, the question of is this better than nothing keeps popping up.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

And I would say that there's definitely evidence that it's better than nothing.

Justin:

Well, oh, yes.

Sydnee:

Um, but a lot of the studies, too, are, are really strongly biased. They're people who you should never go into, I mean, everybody goes into a scientific study with a hypothesis.

Justin:

Hm.

Sydnee:

We believe there will be this difference or we believe there won't be this difference. But you shouldn't go into science with an agenda. I think that oil pulling is the best thing on earth and I'm going to keep doing studies until I find evidence to support it. If you go in... Or vice versa. I believe that oil pulling is BS and so I'm gonna keep doing studies until I prove it wrong. If you're going in with that bias, you're research is tainted.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

And a lot of the studies are people wanting oil pulling to be this great thing, and the, they're written that way. I mean, you can ... there's a lot of subjective, you know, information in them. There's a lot of, um, we don't write flowery in science.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

We don't say things like, "Now this has proven to be a viable alternative to chemicals," and things like that. I mean, we don't use that kind of ... That's the kind of thing you see in commercials. So if you're reading that in a study, I'd raise an eyebrow.

Justin:

It does sound like, though, that like, it, if you maybe were somebody who, who was already brushing and flossing and didn't like, like the super stringent, uh, or astringent, uh, mouthwashes that are, that are, that do feel very chemically, uh, that it, this is, is a pretty decent natural alternative.

Sydnee:

I think that that's a fair thing to say. Uh, a lot of people have, have made the point at the end of all of, you know, kind of their synthesis of the data that I have done, I would arrive at the same conclusion, which is it's probably better than nothing and if you're already brush- brushing and flossing, it probably can't hurt.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Um, you know, if you want to add it to your routine or replace your mouthwashing routine ... I don't know a lot of people who are that good that they brush, floss, *and* use mouthwash every day. So if you're already at that level, I don't think replacing it with oil is gonna hurt you.

Justin:

No, your game is already elevated.

Sydnee:

Now-

Justin:

Don't let, don't let us sit here and tell you how to clean your mouth, 'cause you are a professional.

Sydnee:

Exactly, and, uh, but I will say this, all those other claims, you know, HIV and PMS and heart disease and all that crap that they say that it's gonna fix, I didn't find anything to support that. Um, there's a lot of theorizing in these studies that hey, if we reduce the bacteria in your mouth, it restores your oral health and that this is part of your whole healthy balance, and so holistically, it's gonna affect the rest of your body, so everything else gets better. Ehh, no. I don't have any evidence for that, so I would not try to start oil pulling as a cure of your diabetes, please. Um, if you have meningitis, go to an emergency room immediate- ... Actually, no, call 911. Stop what you're doing, stop listening to this podcast, call 911. I don't know why if you have meningitis you're not in the hospital. [laughs] Um, and if you have leukemia or, you know, heart disease, see a doctor, please.

Justin:

Yes, don't-

Sydnee:

Um-

Justin:

Now, it, it, will it hurt, Syd? Like-

Sydnee:

This is a tough question.

Justin:

Aside from obviously, like, you know, if I do this instead of, uh, uh-

Sydnee:

Sure.

Justin:

... a classical treatment for a real disease-

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... that it could be dangerous, but I mean, is, is there a danger to is outside of that?

Sydnee:

No, I think you're exactly ... The biggest danger is people, you know, doing this instead of, like, taking insulin but, um, there s- some small evidence that it could be harmful. There are a handful of cases where people have aspirated on the oil-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

... while they've been swishing, and these are people who are usually at that 20 minute mark, who swish for that long. So they aspirate, it goes, it goes down their trachea, you understand, they're not swallowing it, it's going into their airways, and it can lead to a lipid-induced pneumonia.

Justin:

So-

Sydnee:

So a pneumonia that's caused by, you know, a big wad of nasty bacteria-filled oil being lodged in your lungs.

Justin:

So basically they're doing their oil pulling, listening to an episode of *Sawbones*. "Oh man, Justin just said the funniest thing, I start laughing. Oops, it's in my throat. I got pneumonia."

Sydnee:

Right. I mean, kind of a ludicrous scenario that, you know, it would be you and not me. But, you know.

Justin:

Well no, it's, no- no, I mean, it- it's possible anything ... I mean, it's likely, I would guess probably is definitely habit, but again, this is a small, that is a small N, right?

Sydnee:

Right. That's, no, no-

Justin:

There's, there's not a lot of Ns that have choked on oil and gotten pneumonia.

Sydnee:

That's very small. And there are people who will bring up, like, this theoretical situation where what if you aspirated on enough oil to stop breathing, then maybe you could die.

Justin:

Okay, well, all right then.

Sydnee:

I think- [laughs]

Justin:

Let's just pump the brakes there, Paco.

Sydnee:

I think barring some really catastrophic event, like, I don't know an earthquake occurring while you're oil pulling or somebody punching you in the gut. Like, if you, okay, if you have problems swallowing for some reason, if you have some problem with your swallowing mechanics, don't oil pull maybe. But otherwise, I can't see that happening really. I mean, I suppose it could, but I think it's highly unlikely. Um, but it may be a reason to consider limiting your swishing should you choose to do this to five to 10 minutes instead of 15 to 20.

Justin:

But that, that won't do as much, I thought.

Sydnee:

Well, but that's the thing. People will tell you that that won't work so-

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, here would be my take on point.

Justin:

Okay, I'm ready.

Sydnee:

If you already br- brush and floss-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

... which you should be doing. Or a water pick if you don't like flossing. Water pick is acceptable. But if you already do this, there's not a lot of evidence that this will add anything to your routine. You're doing a good job, your teeth are probably as healthy as they're gonna get. Keep up the good work, see your dentist, don't worry.

If you wanna add this to that routine, you're probably okay. Please try not to aspirate on the oil. [laughs]

Justin:

If you can. For us.

Sydnee:

If you can. Um, if you have trouble swallowing, don't do it. How about that? If there's any problem with your airway and/or swallowing mechanism. Um, the farthest that I would be willing to go is to say that maybe this is a viable alternative to mouthwash-

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

... if you don't like mouthwash. So brush, floss, use some oil instead of mouthwash.

Justin:

If you d- ... Okay, if you don't like mouthwash and you have 20 minutes to kill in your day that you'd like to fill somehow with swishing.

Sydnee:

[laughs] If you do, I am so jealous of your life.

Justin:

Wow. How is your life going? It sounds pretty good to me right now.

Sydnee:

I think I can maybe pull this off on Saturdays.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

I think that would be the-

Justin:

Maybe.

Sydnee:

... furthest I could get. But none of this is solid.

Justin:

Even then, I would need co- a coffee break in the middle, and I think that would probably defeat the purpose.

Sydnee:

Uh, this is the big thing for me. If, if there is not a compelling reason that I have to swish olive oil around in my mouth for 20 minutes every morning, I'm not gonna do it.

Justin:

Fair enough. Uh, so that is the dirt, people, on oil pulling.

Sydnee:

Take, take what you will from that.

Justin:

Take what you will from that, but there is, there is our take on it. Uh, uh, we hope that you enjoyed it. A lot of people ... This is probably our most requested one ever. Uh-

Sydnee:

I hope I haven't killed anybody's, anybody's spirit with this.

Justin:

The thing about it is, guys, here's, here's the, here's the broad point, right? There's no magic bullet. We'd all like to think that there's one thing that we could do, and if we just did this one little easy thing, then all of our health problems would remedy, but that's not the case, and it's never gonna be the case ever.

Sydnee:

No, no, and-

Justin:

We're not gonna find that magic bullet that fixes all the stuff. The body's too complicated for that. The body is, is, is an incredible machine that's not gonna be fixed by one simple thing.

Sydnee:

And remember that when this was, um, proposed, it made a lot of sense. People didn't have access to toothbrushes and water picks and weren't flossing, so it made a lot of sense to do something like this.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

Anything swishing was probably better than what people were doing, so it comes from a real place. We've got some better ways of cleaning your mouth today.

Justin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Sydnee:

If you really wanna do it, I mean, that's okay, but yeah, Justin's right. It's not, it's not a cure-all. Nothing's that simple. It does pass my test, though.

Justin:

Which is?

Sydnee:

My test is that if there is something that is not, you know, really well-studied or proven to do anything, if it's cheap and it's safe, well, okay. [laughs] If it makes you feel better and, maybe it cleans your mouth a little better, I think it's okay.

Justin:

All right, now-

Sydnee:

... so this, this is cheap and safe.

Justin:

That rule's not necessarily gonna end up on a cross stitch anytime soon, but I can definitely see-

Sydnee:

[laughs] Guys, it's true. Cheap, safe. And, you know-

Justin:

Okay, all right.

Sydnee:

And, you know, you maybe ... Hey, maybe your breath is a little fresher.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Maybe you prefer the smell of sesame oil to-

Justin:

To, uh, wintergreen or what have you.

Sydnee:

I don't know. You have the Listerine. I'm not sure.

Justin:

Um, so thank you so much for listening to our program. We sure hope you enjoyed it. I wanna give you one more, more reminder, uh, that we are in the middle of the Max Fun drive, uh, for five dollars a month, 44 hours of bonus content. It's insane. Uh, there's new stuff if you've, if you've donated in the past, uh, there's all new stuff from every Max Fun show. Uh, at 28 do- and \$10 a month, you're gonna get a calendar. A beautiful calendar.

Sydnee:

A kitty calender.

Justin:

A kitty calender.

Sydnee:

A beautiful kitty calender.

Justin:

With us tastefully, uh, tastefully portrayed as cats. Uh, at \$20 ... And thank you to Megan Lynn Kott, by the way, uh, for, for that gift. \$20 a month, you're gonna be part of the Diamond Friendship Circle. You're gonna get that cool mug. You're gonna get some coffee from Tonx. Uh, thank you so much to them. And to Stack Soap for, um, helping us to, to make this possibility.

Sydnee:

Go get so, so clean.

Justin:

Go get so, so clean and so, so amped for your day. And \$35 per month, you're gonna be part of, uh, Judge Hodgman's justice squad, get a, get a rocket engraved high ball glasses as well as so many others. And this, it isn't about the gifts, though, guys. It's about supporting the things that, uh, you really, uh, you really care about and you really like.

Sydnee:

Like me.

Justin:

And hopefully, we fall into that category.

Sydnee:

And Justin.

Justin:

Uh, uh, if you like our show and you want to help us make more of it and also to make other shows on this network, it would just mean the world to us if you could kick in a few bucks. Go to maximumfun.org/donate to, uh, to pledge your gift now. This is only gonna be a two episode thing. We're not gonna harp on you for cash, but, uh, once a year, uh, it really does help us to make more great stuff and we hope that, uh, you agree that great stuff should be made and, and can help us with a donation.

Sydnee:

And thank you so much in advance-

Justin:

Yeah, tell-

Sydnee:

... for anything, anything you got laying around to send our way.

Justin:

Be sure to tell us on Twitter so I can thank you, 'cause it, it really does mean the world. And choose *Sawbones*. Again, baby on the way.

Sydnee:

That's right.

Justin:

Gotta, gotta keep the show on the air. [laughs] We're like a pirate radio station. Just, just fighting, fighting, uh, uh, uh, oblivion all the time. Help us-

Sydnee:

Radio Free Roscoe.

Justin:

Radio Free Roscoe right here.

Sydnee:

Live for you.

Justin:

Uh, if you, uh, once you get done with that, maybe go to iTunes and review and you guys know all this stuff, subscribe, all that good, good stuff. Tweet-

Sydnee:

Tweet at us, email us, you know.

Justin:

@sawbones, sawbones@maxumumfun.org is the email address. Uh, but, but you know all that stuff. This week, uh, we, we don't wanna infringe on any more of your, uh, free time here, so we will just say thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you for listening. Thank you in advance for

donating, if you can. And, uh, we will see you next Tuesday for another episode of *Sawbones*. Until then, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

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

[theme music plays out]

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