

Sawbones 506: Medical Jewelry

Published August 6th, 2024

[Listen here on mcelroy.family](#)

Clint: *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, and I'm wearing my headphones for no reason that I can... tell you.

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: They're off now, folks. I'm... goin' solo.

Sydnee: I always think you— You—

Justin: Goin' bareback.

Sydnee: This is not the first time you've done that, and it may not even be the first time you've referenced it in the opening of our show.

Justin: The thing is Syd, I come from a long line of radiomen. And us radiomen like to hear our voices reflected back into our ears, so we can marvel at the timbre and quality of our tone.

Sydnee: I figured it was just like a prop, like you were in podcasting mode, so you had to have your prop on.

Justin: You're not wrong.

Sydnee: Like I feel—

Justin: You're not—

Sydnee: "I feel like I'm in a podcast now."

Justin: You're not entirely wrong, I'll say.

Sydnee: "'Cause of my headphones." There are—

Justin: [giggles]

Sydnee: There are days where I walk around the hospital with a stes—stethoscope around my neck, and it does feel like a prop 'cause I have this whole team of doctors I work with, right?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And so like I'm not often the one doing the listening. I mean I do that, I can do that.

Justin: You don't really listen to them.

Sydnee: No, no, I mean with the stethoscope.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: I mean the oscitation of things.

Justin: Oh, the oscitation.

Sydnee: Yes, not— I mean I'm listening, but I'm like the problem solver, right? I'm like the closer.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: You call me in when nobody else can figure it out. The rest of the team is usually handling— Anyway.

Justin: Isn't it interesting—

Sydnee: It does feel like a prop sometimes.

Justin: Isn't it interesting when you have these objects that aren't really useful, they're not really doing anything, but just the having of them and

the using them makes you feel like they're having like some sort of like mental effect.

Sydnee: This is a great lead in, but I will argue that the stethoscope does absolutely have a use. [chuckles]

Justin: Right, so do the—

Sydnee: And is essential to the practice of medicine.

Justin: So do the headphones. So do the headphones, but I'm saying like you just don't feel right unless you've got the stethoscope.

Sydnee: Right, even if I'm not going to use it, even if I'm looking at a foot wound, I'm going to have my stethoscope around my neck because—

Justin: It's a talismanic symbol of your power.

Sydnee: Okay. I guess we'll— [chuckles]

Justin: [giggles] They don't let you guys do the mirror—

Sydnee: I guess— Well I mean sometimes I might—

Justin: You can't do the mirror.

Sydnee: I might think like, "Oh, but has the infection spread to your bloodstream, and then could you have endocarditis, and should I listen for a heart murmur," and so there might be reason!

Justin: That's right.

Sydnee: For the stethoscope, even if it's a foot wound.

Justin: Here's what I'm sayin', doc. Here's all I'm sayin'. You don't wear a coat at work. You don't wear one of the fancy white coats.

Sydnee: I don't wear a white coat, nope.

Justin: And they— And when you do the mirror on your head, like in the old movies, they make fun of you, 'cause you don't need that anymore.

Sydnee: I don't do that either.

Justin: So you gotta wear the stethoscope so that people know you're a doctor. That's it, that's— you just— People gotta know.

Sydnee: That's the only— Honestly, it really is the only way that people know. I wanna talk about something else that I guess is talismanic. I think that's a good— That's a good way to describe what we're gonna talk about today.

Justin: Honey, I love you, but if you sit here and disassemble the segue that I so lovingly built brick by brick for you, and take it apart and look at each of its components. They don't wanna see how the sausage is made, you just gotta effortlessly glide like, "You know Justin, speaking of—" Be like—

Sydnee: We were on vacation.

Justin: [giggles]

Sydnee: With some friends and family this past week, and one of my dear friends, Autumn, asked me about...

Justin: Long time McElroy listeners will know Autumn is the voice [chuckles] of Krystal with a K from *Steeplechase*.

Sydnee: That's right, and she had seen some ads for these rings that were supposed to help with stress and anxiety and sleep, and just like general wellness.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And she was asking me, thinking these are probably not legit, but like are they? They're not, right? Like that was the kind of the frame of the question.

Justin: She was getting bombarded with ads.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: And a lot of the ads, from her telling, were making a lot of claims that you wouldn't necessarily see with a lot of these sort of more like holistic products, that are a little bit more— The claims are generally a little bit more amorphous.

Sydnee: It usually is— We talk about the wellness space, and sort of like the Gwyneth Paltrow area of I don't even wanna say "medicine." Wellness, wellness is the word.

Because they're not claiming to diagnose, treat, cure anything, right? And that usually is in there somewhere, there usually is a little statement that says specifically, "We're not doing that. We are promoting wellness," and that means nothing, right?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: In a court of law, did this product indeed promote wellness? I don't know, I'm not a lawyer, but I would bet that's kind of a... nebulous thing that you couldn't prove or disprove.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: So it's fine to say.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: The FTC won't get you in trouble. These rings, specifically the Calmi rings, and there are the Calmi rings that are actually like the Calmi rings, but then there are the kind of knock offs that are all over Amazon. One way or another, it's like a ring with some magnets in it.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: This is the point.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Jennifer Aniston wears them, allegedly. I have seen ads that say she does, and there are pictures of her with her hand up, with a ring on that may or may not be magnetic.

[chuckles] I don't know, I don't know Jennifer Aniston, I can't ask her. But perhaps, there we go, maybe Jennifer Aniston wears them. That's a— You could say that about anybody. Maybe anybody wears them.

Justin: Maybe anybody wears them, you don't know. You don't know which rings are.

Sydnee: But before I said that "Well, if this is a magnetic ring, it probably isn't doing the things that it says it does." We've talked about magnetism on the show before, right?

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Do you remember when Ben Franklin wanted to investigate if we could feel magnetic forces?

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: So he gave the kid the stick, and the kid wandered around looking for the tree that was magnetized, and then he passed out 'cause it was so hot.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: That was a great story. Anyway, so I decided to at least look into it before I said this is probably not true, because there are weird things, right? Sometimes you get a tick bite, and then you're allergic to beef, so.

Justin: Or.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: You become The Tick.

Sydnee: No.

Justin: No-one knows—

Sydnee: No.

Justin: — how The Tick came to be, so it's possible.

Sydnee: So I tried to look into the history of these rings, and more specifically I was curious. The idea of medical jewelry.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: I feel like it is pretty pervasive. We— Like we kind of accept, especially with rings. Because rings have all this other sort of side mystical, magical, powerful connotation throughout culture and literature and art, right? How many different forms of media have we consumed where a ring is essential to the plot in some way?

Justin: Yeah, for sure.

Sydnee: I mean if you think about a lot of fantasy.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Very famously, *The Lord of the Rings*. [laughs]

Justin: Obviously it's— Yeah. The circle is a big like element throughout all of, you know, storytelling and—

Sydnee: Yeah, and so that gets really complicated when you— So started trying to search for like what is the history of medical rings?

Justin: There's also something about something that is like on your body the whole time. Like I think you would pro— Like it probably has more to do with like whatever attachment we have to jewelry period, right?

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: 'Cause you're talking about like oh even like royal seals on the rings, and you know rings representing royal power, things like that.

Sydnee: Exactly.

Justin: And so it's definitely like we're imbuing rings with power already, but there's something about the idea of it being on your body physically

all the time that feels, I think to the monkey part of our brain, like, "This must be doin' something."

Sydnee: It— And it's a—

Justin: "It's here all the time."

Sydnee: It's absolutely while it's attached to— It's why there are medical necklaces and bracelets, I'll talk about a few of those, but the ring specifically. We also use rings to symbolize devotion to others, to symbolize positions of royal power.

I'm— So they, you know, to then use the ring medicinally, it— You get why it would feel like it is something more important.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like we would have this sort of innate idea of like, "Well it's a big deal, it's a ring." If you start to try to get into when did this start, it's really difficult. And we talk about this a lot on the show, it— Medicine and faith and spirituality was so intertwined, and still is I think for some people, and a lot of people maybe.

It's been so intertwined that to try to look at when did we first start wearing a piece of jewelry for a medical, physical medical, like physiological purpose is really hard, because we believed in spirits, we believed in negative energy, we believed—

You know, like just as a people, we thought we could ward things off by wearing talismanic or spiritual, or certain symbols, or colors, or gems, or whatever. And I don't wanna sit here and bash the idea that—

Justin: Yeah, I mean—

Sydnee: Of being— You know, if it's your religious, spiritual, faith belief.

Justin: It's not our deal.

Sydnee: That's a totally separate thing from medicine, but the two were intertwined for a really long time. And I mean I personally have worn both a hematite ring at one point in my life, to help with stress.

[chuckles] And a brown scapular, to ensure that if I died with it on, I would get to go to heaven on the next Saturday.

Justin: Right. Killer.

Sydnee: So.

Justin: You— That's a wild thing to say, honey.

Sydnee: That's not actually— By the way, that is not actually what the dogma says. Just in defense— [chuckles] In defense of Catholic dogma. 'Cause I was raised Catholic.

Justin: It's time for— Wait, is it time for this segment already?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: Alright, let me do the jingle.

Sydnee: I'm not.

Justin: [sings]

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: [sings] "Everybody welcome to Sydnee's corner to defend Catholicism."

Sydnee: I'm not!

Justin: [sings] "Here she comes, it's Syd."

Sydnee: I'm not!

Justin: Sydnee, can I please finish the song?

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: [sings] "Here she comes, it's Syd. There's no dogma she won't chase. There's no dogma she won't defend. Every choice the Catholic church has ever made is one that Sydnee loves. Here she goes."

Sydnee: No. That's not true.

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: That's not true. That's not true.

Justin: So you're cancelling this segment.

Sydnee: I was raised Catholic, and I'm just saying that I was— I wore a brown scapular for a long time, which you can look up a picture of this is you're curious.

Justin: Wait.

Sydnee: It's kind of a necklace, but it's not really.

Justin: Wait, people can look up a picture of you wearing a brown scapular? [chuckles]

Sydnee: No, another brown scapular, and— Anyway, I wore one because there was a misunderstanding, and people thought if you died with one on then it sort of was like a get into Heaven free card.

Justin: Oh.

Sydnee: And so that's not—

Justin: A misunderstanding at your church?

Sydnee: — even what the Papabile said.

Justin: [wheezes]

Sydnee: But it was from the 1300s, and I don't know, like...

Justin: [snorts]

Sydnee: Anyway, I don't wear one now. It's fine if you want to. This has nothing to do with medicine.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: I'm just saying. I'm just saying. Anyway, this obviously also overlaps with gemstones, and I feel like that's a whole other area. We haven't really ever tackled gemstones in— on this show. Like the various healing properties of different gemstones, because that's also again like is it spiritual? Is it medicine?

Curative rings in Middle Ages were an actual thing. So like when I was trying to find like when did we call them something medical, you can find references to like there were different kinds of rings in the Middle Ages. You could wear a ring that meant I'm powerful.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like a king would wear. You could wear a ring that meant I'm betrothed to you. You could wear like a symbol of love or romance or, you know, fidelity. You could wear a ring specifically to ward off poison.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: So if you wore a sapphire ring, you would be immune to poisons.

Justin: Now I had one—

Sydnee: That's kind of a medicinal property.

Justin: Now I had one of those in *Baldur's Gate III*, and let me tell you, it worked. Before you go too far down this road.

Sydnee: Can I— Was it sa—

Justin: It protected me from a lot of goblin poisoners.

Sydnee: Was it sapphire? Was it sapphire?

Justin: But— Uh, it was like...

Sydnee: Was it toadstone?

Justin: It was purple.

Sydnee: Oh.

Justin: So it was a good rarity, and I think it stacks.

Sydnee: I feel like you could tell me this, if there's an overlap here. So toadstone was something that rings were often made out of because it had a variety of medical properties attached to it. And it feels like something that would've bled over at some point—

Justin: Into video games?

Sydnee: — to a video game or—

Justin: There is... Let's see. Toadstone is a thing in the *Warhammer* world. It's like a way to ward off spirits, magic disease, and poisons.

Sydnee: Well this was— Toadstone, and there was some sort of mythology around it, like it would come from a toad's head, which isn't really true, but like there was this whole connection with like a toad would eat something and then you would get this out. There was a way that you could do this with snakes too.

But the point is, you find jewelry made of toadstone because it could... prevent again poisoning, but also fix your kidneys, your bowels, it could fix epilepsy, fever. You could even heal wounds with toadstone.

It was good for labor pains, you could give one— give someone in labor a toadstone and their pain would be— I'm not saying that it did any of these things, but here you see like the use of a piece of jewelry for a medical need.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And It's really hard to find it clearly outlined a lot of times, like it was then. And— But obviously, we're drawing on all of these faith, spiritual, cultural, even just creative ideas about rings.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: To create things today that resonate with us in that deeper way where we would be— Even the most skeptical of us may be willing to engage with something that is perhaps a little magical thinking.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: So.

Justin: Even like me, for example.

Sydnee: When have you done that, Justin?

Justin: Okay, well this is a little bit embarrassing, but I'll try to tell it quickly. When I was— The very early days of internet, like mmm... the late '90s, there was a... There was a— I guess it was not the super early days of internet but it was for me in West Virginia.

There was a lot of companies that would do free samples, because it was so rare for people to have websites, they were trying to get you to come to their website. So they would do a thing where like you come here and you put in your information, we'll send you free stuff. And there were like sites that would tell you everybody that was doing this, right?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: So it was Jelly Belly I remember notably would be a giveaway every day at noon, where like if you were signed up for their thing, you'd be there on the page, you could maybe get free stuff.

So I used to do so many of these free samples, and one of 'em was this guy named Alex Chu, who created a ring that would let me live forever. And Alex's deal was that if you put an affiliate banner on for his immortality rings, and 40 people clicked on it, you would get a free pair of rings.

And I did that, I put an affility— affiliate— I don't remember how I got people to click on it, I think I just asked friends to do it 'til It was just a banner that said "New invention allows humans to live forever," and then there's a picture of his face on it.

And then when you click, you can go buy the rings, and you got like a 35% discount. But I did get enough to get the... eternal life rings, just for free.

Sydnee: So you got `em?

Justin: Yeah, I did. I received them.

Sydnee: Where are they?

Justin: Well, I mean I... I got `em, I haven't been wearin' `em a lot lately, but I'm still alive, so I feel like I don't need to worry about puttin' `em on until—

Sydnee: What?

Justin: — things get bad.

Sydnee: What do they look like?

Justin: They are— I'll show you a picture. `Cause you know why I can show you a picture, Syd? Because this affiliate offer is still on his website now, in the year of our Lord, 2024. By my math, it has been some 25 odd years since I did this, it is still on the website to this—

These are the rings, like a plastic— These are neodymium, so it's a plastic adjustable band, with two neodymium magnets on either side.

Sydnee: Magnets. I knew it was gonna be magnets.

Justin: Well that's the whole thing we're talking about, right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: That magnets? Yeah, that's what it is.

Sydnee: Well I didn't know that they were magnets.

Justin: Neodymium though, rare earth, very powerful. But yeah, it does allow you to live forever. He's got a lot of testimonials on his website, if you go look it up, and it says here "See hundreds of testimonials from

Amazon customers about my rings. Verified reviews from Amazon cannot lie." So.

Sydnee: Do you— I have a question though.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Where is the other one?

Justin: What do you mean?

Sydnee: Well who'd you give the other one to? You got two, you don't need to live forever twice.

Justin: You're supposed to wear— You wear `em on each of your pinky fingers.

Sydnee: So you didn't think to give me one?

Justin: Honey, what is half of forever? That doesn't make any sense.

Sydnee: I don't—

Justin: You're gotta wear `em both.

Sydnee: I don't know what half of forever is.

Justin: There's toe rings, would you—

Sydnee: But I would think if I could live half of forever, I'd wanna spend it with you.

Justin: Would you prefer— Here's how old this site was, and how like— Back in the early days of internet, you could make a weird website, and people would notice that.

Can you imagine? Like they would notice your odd website and talk about it, because it's "Oh look, another website. We found another one, guys. This one's wild."

Sydnee: Yeah, no I remember those days of finding websites.

Justin: The original testimonials for this site were in Real Player, if that helps you to date it. Anyway, that is my—

Sydnee: Well.

Justin: Yeah, that is my story. Mr. Chu has taken some weird, weird branching paths on YouTube. He's gotten into some different things. I'm not sure how deeply you need to research old Alex [chuckles] and his views. But yeah, that's— Yeah.

Sydnee: Cool. Oh.

Justin: So, but Syd, this is not going away. This is still happening.

Sydnee: No.

Justin: This happened— This is still a question for our friend Autumn.

Sydnee: That's right, and so I'm gonna tell you about the current state of magnetic rings, and a couple of other rings that I— Or a couple of other medicinal jewelries I found in my quest. But first we gotta go to the Billing Department.

Justin: Let's go.

[transition theme music plays]

[ad break]

Justin: Alright Syd, update me. What's the state of magnetic—

Sydnee: It's—

Justin: Of medical jewelry?

Sydnee: It's Dwight, isn't it. You gave him the other ring.

Justin: What?

Sydnee: You wanted to spend half of forever with Dwight.

Justin: Honey.

Sydnee: I know.

Justin: Honey.

Sydnee: I know.

Justin: You know Dwight's history. If I gave him an eternal immortality life ring, I would charge him for it.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: I would absolutely get money out of that guy. No way am I gonna give it to him gratis. Do you know how many clicks I had to get? I do, it's 40.

Sydnee: Calmi rings. So have you heard of the Calmi rings? I get ads for them now that I've researched them, but I wasn't getting ads for them before.

Justin: Oh.

Sydnee: Which is odd, because I do get a lot of pseudo-science ads.

Justin: Maybe they've got your number.

Sydnee: Because of the research I do.

Justin: "Don't show it to Dr. Sydnee."

Sydnee: So.

Justin: They put you on their blocked lists. [chuckles]

Sydnee: [chuckles] It— So there are magnetic rings, and then there are— You can actually look for like fake Calmi ring on Amazon.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: There are like knock offs, which are the same, I mean it's a ring with magnets in it. So I am not suggesting you buy any of these for money.

Justin: A fake fake is fun. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: It's a fun idea.

Sydnee: Well that's one of the big selling points on the Calmi website is that these are the real deal.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: These are the real ones. And they work with both... magnetotherapy.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: So it's not just magnetism, I assume magneti— Like magnetic medicine, magnet medicine.

Justin: Is magnet—

Sydnee: "Magnetotherapy" is the word that they use.

Justin: So, okay, I—

Sydnee: This was new to me.

Justin: I know there— Okay, that's what I was going to ask. This is something that happens in fake medicine sometimes, we hear real sounding terms, because we do use magnets in...

Sydnee: MRI machines.

Justin: MRI machines.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: That's what I'm saying.

Sydnee: This is different.

Justin: Yup.

Sydnee: I couldn't find— When you start looking at magnetotherapy, you get a lot of hits for Magneto.

Justin: Ma—

Sydnee: The X-Man. Magneto. [chuckles]

Justin: Thank you.

Sydnee: Sorry.

Justin: Whoaaa, Sydnee. You know— She knows, folks. It was just because the other word is magnetotherapy.

Sydnee: Yeah. Anyway.

Justin: It's not Magneto.

Sydnee: You get Magneto.

Justin: I'll tell you, Magneto therapy would probably be very smart for him, because he's got some stuff that he should absolutely work through, a lot of [chuckles] unresolved anger that is well-founded, but is not helping him in his walk, you know what I mean.

Sydnee: So maybe he needs Magneto therapy.

Justin: Maybe he needs Magneto therapy.

Sydnee: So they work through—

Justin: But not magnetotherapy. [chuckles] It probably wouldn't even work on him.

Sydnee: The founder of Calmi, whose name is Cali, and I usually don't even talk about the people who make this stuff because I don't wanna—

I'm never trying to get people to go— like go leave comments like, "This is fake," like there's no point in that. You don't need to do that. You don't have to do that. I am urging you that perhaps this ring would not do what you hope it would do.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And maybe it is not worth your dollars. Cali can do what Cali's doin'.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: The reason her name is important is because that's where the name "Calmi" comes from.

Justin: No, that's not right.

Sydnee: It's from "calm" and "Cali."

Justin: [laughs]

Sydnee: This is on her— I'm just quote— I'm just saying what she says, I'm not—

Justin: It's not though! It's just "calm" with an I!

Sydnee: No, but it's because her name is Cali.

Justin: It's not!

Sydnee: Calmi, Cali.

Justin: It's not that! [laughs]

Sydnee: It might—

Justin: You can't say it's a combination, Syd.

Sydnee: It might be Kylie.

Justin: It couldn't matter less.

Sydnee: It could be Kaylie. Anyway, the point is—

Justin: It's Calmi.

Sydnee: She had personal experiences with—

Justin: Oh wait, wait, maybe it's the K sound from her name—

Sydnee: It's—

Justin: — is at the beginning, so it's actually "Kay-almi," maybe it's like that. Maybe she's the beginning and the end. So you get the L-M from "calm."

Sydnee: Is it Kaylmi?

Justin: This is what I'm saying, it may be "Kay-lmi."

Sydnee: Kalmi.

Justin: Kaylmi.

Sydnee: Maybe it's Kalmi. Anyway.

Justin: [snorts]

Sydnee: The point is, she had some experiences with magnetotherapy and acupressure, and she decided to create a ring that would... mimic those experiences—

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: — for everyone else to have too.

Justin: Sure.

Sydnee: And so she went to Arizona, I think that's where these products are from. There's a lot of this stuff in Arizona.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: What are y'all doin' out there, Arizona?

Justin: Yeah, what's goin' on? Arizona, you doin' okay?

Sydnee: Listen, I— We're in West Virginia, so I'm in a glass house, I'm not gonna throw too many... magnetic rocks. [chuckles]

Justin: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Ancient magnetic rocks, but. So they've designed these, and here's what's wild to me, everything about this product and the way that it's marketed is wild, and I look at a lot of this stuff. They use— This is a modern website. And they say that they draw on the ancient wisdom, this is not my word, of Oriental medicine.

Justin: Huh.

Sydnee: We don't really say that.

Justin: No.

Sydnee: Anymore.

Justin: No, no, nope nope.

Sydnee: Guys.

Justin: We're usually— Like the first thing is, we're usually a bit more specific than "the Orient," because we are not, um, like members of the Adventurer's Society.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: From the early 1800s, talking about where we're going to go hunt the fearsome tiger. You know.

Sydnee: I mean even if someone—

Justin: Even ramen—

Sydnee: If someone—

Justin: Even ramen at this point has switched.

Sydnee: Has changed to soy sauce.

Justin: It's soy sauce flavored.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: It's chicken or soy sauce flavor.

Sydnee: So I mean they do narrow it down to Chinese practices, so they do move from Oriental to Chinese. Anyway, that is not a word we should just be using.

But they— the reason is the tie into acupuncture and acupressure, and I think that that's thrown in there because there actually is like— there are a lot of people who do have studies that indicate that maybe acupuncture specifically— There's some interest there, right?

Like, "I don't know, did that do something? Maybe it did do something." Maybe it did, and maybe you know even if you don't practice traditional Chinese medicine, you may kind of think acupuncture is something worth trying.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: In addition to other healing methods and, you know, traditional medicine and all that stuff. So I think that's why it's thrown in there is so add to the... magnetic stuff, because I think we know by now that magnets don't actually heal you. Don't we? I think.

But that's the other part of it is that they act on your human magnetic field... to do a variety of things. And they're high-quality magnets, by the way. They're made from special rocks in Arizona, and they're also really beautiful. They talk about how beautiful they are a lot.

Justin: So important.

Sydnee: They— The fact that they look good is very important.

Justin: It calms me, when I look at my beautiful rings.

Sydnee: [chuckles] But it—

Justin: Look at them all.

Sydnee: The magnets are acting on your magnetic field, and then the acupressure points on your fingers. So it's not just the mag— where the like— And the magnets are placed like kind of at the part of the band that's closest to the palm of your hand.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like so I guess you would have to always make sure your ring was oriented the right way when you wear it. What does it do for you?

Justin: Nothing.

Sydnee: [chuckles] So specifically, it can— They have a chart. They calm stress and anxiety, support weight decrease.

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: Better sleep.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Be blood flow

Justin: Mm.

Sydnee: And be chic.

Justin: [cackles] Now wait, hold on. That's all so interesting.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: The only thing I can verify is the last one. And I'll be honest Syd, I don't think there's anything that chic about pretend medicine. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I don't— Well, I don't— I mean I found it wild that they would say "calms stress and anxiety." Calm anxiety, I mean... [sighs] That's a— It's a— It's interesting to me that the FTC is cool with all this.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's interesting to me that nobody's said that like, "You can't say that you're increasing blood flow actually."

Justin: The top re—

Sydnee: Because you don't have any studies that say you're incre— Like what, the velocity of the blood? Like the— Like it's moving through your circulatory system faster?

Justin: The very first review on their website from what I'm certain is a real customer, it says, "Love my Calmi ring. Feels great and looks chic." You know it's so strange—

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: — how I've gone roughly 10 years without anybody saying "chic," and then twice on the same page, call me weird.

Sydnee: Chic.

Justin: Chic.

Sydnee: I—

Justin: Tres chic.

Sydnee: It has— There are lots of testimonials, which is common for these products, right? A lot of people who say they work. Magnet therapy has been found to be no better than placebo in multiple studies.

This has been a thing since the '90s at least, and I mean certainly longer, we've done episodes on the idea of magnetism being a force that we could harness for medical purposes. But there have been devices and magnets tried to use—

We've tried to use them specifically for like chronic pain and stuff for a long time. And the thing is like yes, there is— This is usually based on the idea that there's iron on our bodies. But if these— if these magnets are strong enough—

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: — to affect the iron in our body, what—

Justin: Then it—

Sydnee: Then an MRI machine—

Justin: — should just rip out, suck out.

Sydnee: — should just rip the blood straight out of your body, right?
Like—

Justin: Yip, that is something Magneto has done in his darker moments.

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: And it is not a pretty picture, let me just say that.

Sydnee: Well, and that's— I— So it doesn't make sense, you cannot wear a magnet that would provide enough force on anything in your body to physically, physiologic— to do anything. And we have never— we've never found a study that says magnets do something medically.

Justin: Syd, I'm about to get— Can I stop you for a second?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: 'Cause I went to the website to look at some of this stuff, and I'm about to go full tinfoil hat on you. Are you ready right now?

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: Look at the website.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Will you read this bit right here? Can you— I'll turn it so you can read it.

Sydnee: "With its refined look and comfort, the Calmi ring is the perfect way to enjoy the benefits of natural he-ling and wellness." "He-ling," H-E dash L-I-N-G.

Justin: What?

Sydnee: What does that mean?

Justin: Honey, I think—

Sydnee: Is it all AI?

Justin: Well no babe, I wonder if it's— Okay, this is absolutely like gaslighting—

Sydnee: Some of the way the— The website feels... I don't know, I am- it feels to me some of it is AI generated, it's certainly like the way the text is written, it feels like—

Justin: Yeah but do you feel like that could be a way of getting out of fake advertising?

Sydnee: Oh.

Justin: If they're like—

Sydnee: So it's not healing, it's he-ling?

Justin: It's he-ling. I don't know, I might try to look into that, I just think that's very strange.

Sydnee: I just think that's like— To [sighs] calm stress I think you can say, because stress is not a diagnosis. The acupressure part though, I—

What I was interested in is when you look at people who actually do acupressure, and talk about like practitioners who not just believe in it, but feel it is a scientific discipline.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: It is more complicated than just wearing a ring. So I think it kind of— Devices like this that claim to do acupressure I think are sort of flying in the face of what even acu— Even if you are someone who firmly believes in acupressure, this is still not what that is, because they—

There's a lot more that goes into— A lot of it has to do with the connection between the practitioner and the person who's having acupressure done on them. And like understanding what their specific issues are, and working with specific pressure points, and not just like—

Justin: It's a—

Sydnee: — push on your finger and you feel better.

Justin: It's—

Sydnee: Like it's a more complicated concept, and I think it kind of belittles acupressure to say "Just wear a ring."

Justin: It's always a struggle we have with *Sawbones*, because there are all these fake practitioners, and not to say that's Calmi, but I'm just saying there are a lot of fake practitioners that will use... traditional Chinese medicine as like a catch all sort of like, "Trust us, this is big in traditional Chinese medicine."

And the thing about traditional Chinese medicine is we're largely ignorant of it over here, because it's a different—

Sydnee: Exactly.

Justin: And it's a different system than our system. And the efficacy of traditional Chinese medicine is not really the subject matter of *Sawbones*. You know what I mean? Like it's— it's a—

But it is a tradition, and there is a system, and there are rules, and there's people who are practitioners of it. Like it's very sort of... It's really crummy I think to just sort of like grasp at a whole, you know, extremely old tradition to just, you know, sell some rings.

Sydnee: You're appropriating it.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: To sell people rings, and it's— It's why I don't— I try really hard to know what my area of expertise is, not just medicine but in medicine. I was trained in a very specific medical allopathic western medicine. That's what I know. I don't— I am not an expert in traditional Chinese medicine, and I don't—

Justin: We don't do a lot of—

Sydnee: My basis for understanding the human body is different than a Tsien practitioner, and so I wouldn't sit here and claim to understand that type of medicine anymore than I could explain to you osteopathic manipulative therapy, which is in the osteopathic tradition.

Because while most of what allopathic and osteopathic physicians do is pretty much the same, they have this extra area where they do the manipulative therapy that I was not trained in. And so I would not sit here and tell you how to do it, or my understanding of it. I would get an actual EO to come tell you that. [chuckles]

Justin: And you certainly wouldn't sell somebody a ring about it. [wheezes]

Sydnee: No. No. Well, no.

Justin: Is something I can say pretty certainly.

Sydnee: I thought it was interesting though, 'cause as I was looking through that, I stumbled on these— When you start looking for medicinal

jewelry, or like the history of medicine jewelry, or curative jewelry, or healing jewelry, oh boy.

I found these ceramic necklaces. They're— It's from a company called EM Ceramics. Well they're not called EM Ceramics, the product is called EM Ceramics. Now the original EM product is like a probiotic for your soil. This is a wild—

Like if you look at this website, they have sections for farmers, gardening, composting, property care, and then personal health, which is where you find there ceramic necklaces. Like it's a wild collection of you really are like hittin' all markets with this.

And the other EM products talk about like these certain microorganisms. Which like this makes sense to me from a soil perspective.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Of like we wanna put helpful microorganisms back in your soil that will help break things down faster, to help create more, you know, nutrients for your plants.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: This is similar to like composting or like compost tea, maybe. Like it's the same—

Justin: Yeah yeah yeah, I see what you're getting at.

Sydnee: We've gone into this series, so like this all makes sense to me. I thought this was like bacteria filled ceramic jewelry. But what it is... Okay. The EM ceramic necklace.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Is made of far infra-red radiation-emitting ceramics, that provide a natural, chemical free way to improve circulation and recovery. Studies have shown that wearing the bracelet close to the skin can help with sleep, reduce inflammation, lower blood pressure, and promote better body functioning by removing toxins from muscles and internal organs.

Justin: Yikes.

Sydnee: It's all— It's for people and pets, by the way.

Justin: Oh good.

Sydnee: And there are a lot of—

Justin: I was so worried about that.

Sydnee: So then I dug into that, there are a lot of ceramic pet products, because they're touted as like natural ways to keep like ticks and fleas off your dog or whatever.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So there's a whole bunch of like ceramic beaded things you can put on your animals out there. I don't know— The whole thing— As I was trying to dig into like what is this? Where did this come from?

Are— I don't know if they're saying there's bacteria in the clay that emit radiation? That's not such— a thing. I'm really— And I couldn't find any of these studies that showed this. Like they say "studies show."

Justin: Bet you there's none.

Sydnee: I could not— And I found like the creator of these products, and I went through what was listed as all of the— like all of the publications from the creator of these products, and I couldn't find anything about the necklaces or bracelets. What they say is that the EM Ceramics are clay fermented with effective microorganisms. So the clay is fermented with the microorganisms.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And then baked at high temperatures, which would kill them.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: But that it captures the DNA of them.

Justin: Whoa, didn't expect that.

Sydnee: And then they can emit the non— to non-invasive far infra-red waves.

Justin: [chuckles] Cool.

Sydnee: The longest invisible wavelengths in the light spectrum, and they're natural tick repellants, and they do all the stuff that I told you.

Justin: [wheezes]

Sydnee: I—

Justin: They just slid that in there.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Ticks hate these. This one weird trick drives ticks crazy.

Sydnee: I read— And there are knock offs of this other places too. I read about a bunch— about a French company that has made a bunch of these, and like there's a strong defense of all these products, in their very giant product description, including the idea that like there's just kind of like—

The studies don't necessarily show all this, but there's just so much we don't understand, man. There's so much we still don't get. Which is a true statement. [chuckles] But not usually like the end of a scientific paper.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like, "Anyway, it probably doesn't work, but there's a lot we don't know, so maybe it would."

Justin: It—

Sydnee: I— This was one of the wildest, but you can get these ceramic necklaces and bracelets for you or your pet, and I don't— I just can't even like—

Justin: Can I—

Sydnee: From a science perspective, I can't understand how they would do anything other than if you like the look of it, I guess you could also be chic with these.

Justin: Yup.

Sydnee: I thought that was fascinating.

Justin: It is fascinating.

Sydnee: There was one ring that I wanted to throw in there.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Fidget rings.

Justin: Okay.

Sydnee: Okay. Fidget rings, which are you— I think—

Justin: I made you one.

Sydnee: — probably a lot— Yeah, you made me a fidget ring. A lot of people are probably familiar with it, but it's— And there are a variety of different things that could be considered the fidget ring, but it is something worn as a ring that has something on it you can move. Usually they're beads you can slide around, or you can turn a piece of it. It's something that you can interact with.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: It's an activity that you wear on your finger.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And the thought was there are a lot of people who have kind of nervous habits that maybe are less positive for you, such as picking your cuticles, or—

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: — or biting your fingernails, or picking at your skin, or whatever. And this would give you somewhere to put that sort of like physical, anxious energy, excess energy you have, that would be not harmful at all, right?

There are a lot of doctors and therapists and psychologists who have kind of suggested like, “I mean, that makes sense. That’s probably a good idea,” but there weren’t any studies to back it up.

So I will say anecdotally, yes, the fidget ring helped me stop picking my cuticles. Not completely, but I pick them less. I’m not wearing it now, my thumbs are a mess. I pick my cuticles less when I wear—

Justin: I’ll make you another one.

Sydnee: — my fidget ring. That is an anecdote. That is not evidence.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: I am not telling you that they widespread can do this, I am telling you my personal experience, and so it should not be taken as anything else. Unless you are me, I don’t know if they would work for you. [chuckles]

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But there was a small study done last year, this was fascinating, by an undergrad at UNC Chapel Hill, looking to see. And this is a very small study, but they took 51 healthy adults, they were randomly assigned to either receive a fidget ring or a placebo non-fidget ring, which I would love to see.

I couldn’t find a pic— I wanna see a picture of what the pl— ‘Cause if you can’t intera— I don’t know, is it just a ring?

Justin: Just a regular—

Sydnee: I don’t know.

Justin: How would you know if you had the—

Sydnee: That's— That would be tough.

Justin: That would be tough.

Sydnee: That's a— To do something that's equivalent, like the sham part of that is hard.

Justin: Maybe you don't— [sighs] Maybe you don't tell 'em what you're testing?

Sydnee: I don't— Well—

Justin: Well—

Sydnee: — and so they asked them wear the ring for a week and answer daily surveys measuring self-reported anxiety, stress, attention, and engagement with the assigned ring.

And at the end, the group that had the fidget ring had a decrease in anxiety levels, and the control group had no change. Now, this is a small study, and obviously I would wanna see what the fake ring looked like. [chuckles] The fake fidget ring.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: But I think it's really interesting that we have—

Justin: It is interesting.

Sydnee: We are trying to validate, I applaud the scientific rigor. Let's see. I think fidget rings help. A lot of people think they help. We don't know if they help. I'm gonna actually try to figure out if they help or not. So I don't know.

Justin: I—

Sydnee: I would love it if the only rings that come out of all this that are actually medicinally valuable to us are fidget rings. [chuckles]

Justin: The— Honey, I— If we could just one more minute here talking about the Calmi website. If you haven't been to the Calmi website, it's— I'm not saying anything about the product, but I've been on the internet for a long time and I have to get smart about when I see products being— trying to sell to me about how to, you know.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Justin: My Spidey-Sense is going off a little bit. That he-ling thing is weird, 'cause "he-ling" is not a thing, I Googled it. It's not like some word I don't know, they just— They don't wanna say healing on the website, I am 100% convinced. Because it is the only thing that— where they actually say on the website.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: That it actually cures things. 'Cause "soothes," can't quantify soothes, right?

Sydnee: No.

Justin: I mean, you can't. "Promotes restful slumber," you can't. Because a lot of what they're saying is, and I think this is why they keep saying it looks chic. Because you put it on and you're like, "Ah... I feel calmer about how chic I look." [giggles]

Sydnee: I mean—

Justin: There's five different uses of the word "chic" on their website.

Sydnee: It's—

Justin: There's another review that starts with "Chic serenity. I was skeptical at first, but this ring is a miracle worker." I will also say.

Sydnee: "So elegant. So powerful."

Justin: On their testimonials, you can't click through to any of the testimonials. Like to see the actual source of them. And they've got these nonsensical charts next to them.

Like their sleep score without Calmi was three hours and 27 minutes, and with Calmi it's eight hours and 34 minutes. What the heck? Man, if I put on a ring that makes me sleep for five hours, [chuckles] I don't think I'm gonna keep wearing it, guys!

Sydnee: I do think it's weird they say "Customers can't stop ravin about Calmi."

Justin: "Ravin," not "raving."

Sydnee: And it's R-A-V-I-N.

Justin: Not with an apostrophe, it's just "ravin." [wheezes]

Sydnee: Well and it— Yeah.

Justin: With an I.

Sydnee: The— [chuckles] I don't know.

Justin: They have the video to— They have video testimonials on there that are all obviously 100% scripted. They have usernames at the bottom that make it look like they are from a user of a website, but there's no way to click through to independently verify any of this on a place other than on their website.

Sydnee: I—

Justin: It is like— I can't talk about medical stuff, but I'll say like internet-wise, it is— It makes me very nervous.

Sydnee: I'll tell yah, I like this, they have the FAQs down here. "Can I wear my ring— Can I wear the ring all day long? Are there any contrary indications?"

Justin: [snorts]

Sydnee: "The ring is designed to be worn all day long. However, if you have implanted medical devices, such as a pacemaker, consult your doctor [chuckles] before using magnetic products."

Justin: They also—

Sydnee: So, I guess they're trying to be really careful, 'cause how powerful these magnets are.

Justin: They also have a— two banners going across the screen, which is all very web 2.0. And it's a list of places, *Cosmopolitan*, *Beauty*, *Allure*, *Elle*, *Mary Claire*, *Grazia*, *Stylus*. It's just lists, and then Urban Outfitters.

There's— It doesn't say what it is. It doesn't say why they're listing these things. It doesn't say it was in these, it's just a list of brands. [chuckles] That are also fashion. And then in the second banner, it just says "Designed in Arizona" over and over again. [wheezes]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: They— It's a moving banner that says "Designed in Arizona," as if that's what everybody's looking for.

Sydnee: It also say "instant effects," and then there— in the FAQs it's like, "Several days or maybe weeks."

Justin: [mutters] I'm just saying.

Sydnee: I don't know. They ask "Can anyone use it?" and they're like, "Yeah, most people. But ask your doctor." Can you imagine ask— Anyway.

Justin: It says eight hu— 1826 reviews, and there's a picture of five stars next to it. When you click that, nothing happens. [chuckles]

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Justin: It's just like, "Trust us."

Sydnee: I don't know. I found some TikToks about it. There's some— I don't know if they've been— Well that was the one that— That was— It was odd because I was watching a TikTok and they were saying like, "It's so cheap and affordable," 'cause it's \$39.90 for one. Or \$63.84 for two, I guess. But they said that's less than a pizza meal.

Justin: Less than a what? [chuckles]

Sydnee: A pizza meal.

Justin: [cackles] You know.

Sydnee: Which—

Justin: A pizza meal!

Sydnee: That's— I mean, for our family, there's a lot of us, so like yeah, I guess we pay more than \$39.90 for a pizza meal. I would say just for the four of us, we can probably clock in under \$39.90 for a pizza meal.

Justin: Alright.

Sydnee: I mean if you're getting that pizza pizza deal.

Justin: Aw yes, you can get in there.

Sydnee: You could definitely get it for— You can get it hot and ready definitely less than \$39.90.

Justin: I would love to know if any of those brands have actually endorsed this ring, or if they're just listing some of their fashion stuff they know about. [chuckles]

Folks, thank you so much for listening to our podcast. We hope you've enjoyed yourself, we hope you've learned something. And we wanna thank the Taxpayers for the use of their song "Medicines" as the intro and outro of our program. And thanks to you, Sydnee McElroy, for listening.

Sydnee: Well, and thank you Autumn for our topic suggestion.

Justin: Mm, thanks.

Sydnee: Your instincts were correct, don't think this ring will help. Unless you just wanna be chic.

Justin: In which case.

Sydnee: It's pretty.

[theme music fades in]

Justin: [quietly] It's pretty. [normal] [chuckles] That's gonna do it for us this week. Until next time, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

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

[outro theme music plays]

[ukulele chord]

Maximum Fun.

A work-owned network...

Of artists-owned shows...

Supported directly by you.