

Two Cents Plus Tax Podcast Episode 32: Don't Put Things In Your Vagina
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[Intro music]

K: I'm Krystal.

C: I'm Caitlin.

K: And this is...

[together]: Two Cents Plus Tax!

[Intro music fades]

C: Good morning.

K: Good morning. It's not morning where you are but—

C: Or good afternoon!

K: Good afternoon almost here.

C: Yes. How are we today?

T: We are keepin' it real.

K: Exactly. We are just... just.

C: What Wilson Level are we?

K: [laughs] Uh that's a good question. [C and T laugh] Well actually I saw people recently so I'm not as like my Wilson level's maybe like a 2 or a 3. I'm not a Wilson Level 5 anymore.

C: Wait is the lower you get better?

K: I feel like higher is worse. At least that's how I've been—

C: Higher is worse?

K: Yeah.

C: I'm gonna say I'm at like a 7.

K: Ok!

T: I thought it only went to five!

K: I thought it went to 5 too!

C: Does it?

K: I don't know why we assumed that! We did not talk about the scale.

T: I mean that's fair you can be one of those people that says, you know, 110%. [K laughing]

C: Ok I was assuming it went to 10 my bad. I'll say, if it's on a 5, I'm like 3.

T: I am there with you.

K: I think we're all doing better but not amazing.

C: Yeah it's been a rough week with me personally with my sleeping and before we started recording I was mentioning some documentaries I've been watching that did not help my mood. Very—

K: You gotta—you gotta lighten up, man. Like you gotta like [laughing]—

C: It's so funny you say that because I was literally saying the exact same thing to myself [K laughing] at three in the morning when I couldn't sleep! I was like, "I have got to lighten up, I've gotta lighten up."

K: I mean mostly you seem pretty light like in your personality but like I feel like you consume a lot of stuff that's very dark.

C: I really do!

K: Yeah.

C: I really do.

K: I feel like all of your book recommendations are like, here's this murder thing that happened or here's this mystery thing and maybe a murder is involved we don't know yet like there's a lot going on.

C: There's a lot of murder in my life.

T: You are a true crime girl.

C: Yeah.

K: Yeah. For real.

C: Yeah...

T: But—I mean—[overlapping]

K: I feel like it's not as bad when it's fiction though.

C: It's a lot no I'm reading a murder mystery now that's also like really dark. I need to chill out. So it's a good topic today, very pertinent, then. Because we're going to be talking about self-improvement, maybe self care.

K: Maybe.

C: Maybe, maybe not?

K: I feel like it gets there, they're similar topics so...

C: Ok so Producer Toshio is the one who kind of brought this topic to our attention you wanna mention anything?

T: I am always looking for new avenues [laughs] for self care because I experience maybe chronic depression since high school so there ya go.

C: And—

T: And I wanna know what's the latest, because I feel like you two might have your hands on the pulse.

K: I feel like Caitlin more than me. I'm not like a self-help-y self improvement type of—

T: No no.

K: I mean obviously I want to like be a better person? But in terms of the self-help or self-improvement as an industry and stuff... like I've never really—

T: That's a really sweet sentiment. [K laughs]

K: That I wanna like improve myself?

T: I would say I want friends who would all say that.

K: Mm.

C: What? That they wanna improve themselves?

T: Yeah I mean just—

K: Yeah I mean wanna be better—

C: Yeah—

T: That don't declare, I've gotten to the point where there's just nowhere for me to go I'm the best.

K: I've reached perfection [T laughing]. This is it. This is as good as it's gonna get. No I always feel like it could get better so I do care about that. But I'm not—I've never been—

T: I hear you though on the skepticism about the industry because it is an industry it's a multi-billion-dollar industry.

C: Indeed it is.

T: Indeed. And kind of like I wasn't really aware of it until my friend who is an artiste—well he sold a piece to a patron of his—and he had asked a bunch of us, do you have any self-help books? And I happened to be going home that weekend—my parents had some old ones. And so I can't even remember what they were. Oh maybe one was like the *4-Hour Workweek*.

K: Yeah.

T: [laughing] Which is highly uh—not recommended for me. It's just about—It's by this guy Tim Ferriss who's this now guru who goes around and speaks at tech conferences and it's all about basically delegating your work out to people who are making like a dollar in another country to do what you're supposed to do and then the other three hundred pages is just like common sense that everybody knows—yeah so the art piece, sorry, he made an art piece it was a stack of books that was his exact height and he sold it to this woman who would buy art from him just because she wanted to support the arts and she liked him. I think it was like a thousand bucks.

K: Hm.

C: And it wasn't—cuz I think I remember talking about this with you—it wasn't like, glued together or anything right? It was just books stacked. [K laughs]

T: No it had to be leaning against a wall cuz otherwise it would fall over.

K: Does it— [C laughing] I have a lot of questions about this art piece. So is the idea that you could like move the books around and they would still be—was that part of the idea or was it just like, I'm taking these self-help books and just making something that's my exact height.

T: It was conceptual and...

K: Ok. Good. This is what I don't understand about art. But that's my problem [T and K laughing] not this guy's problem so...

T: Yeah I—I mean—Cuz this guy I don't think of him as someone who—Jason hello—I don't know if you're listening out there [K laughing] but maybe you are, cuz, you listen to

some of the same podcasts, um, not that I'm listening to our own on repeat [K and C laugh] but—

K: What if you were? That would be hilarious.

T: That would be weird.

C: This is what I listen to at night before I—

K: Oh my god that's why you can't sleep! You're like, what are we talking about? [T and C and K laugh]

T: He is also into self-help he also introduced me to Louisd Hay—he did a documentary about her and went and visited her before she died a few years back. Um she's famous for—I mean she had an empire a self-help empire that she started to build in the 1980s. She was on Oprah way back when. Her big boost was during the early HIV/AIDS crisis she held these things that she named after herself they were called Hay Rides—Louise Hay—it was basically like group meditation I believe and it was kind of like willing the infection out of your body.

C: And now we don't have AIDS!

T: Yeah! [T and C laughing]

K: I hate stuff like that. It makes me so upset.

C: I do too. It does.

K: I do not like thinking about people who are like, no no no, this is how you can fix this like super infectious disease you just have to want it. [T sighs] Exactly that's exactly how I feel about all of this [T and C laughing] long sigh.

C: Yup, yup.

K: I always think of stuff like this like the self-help, the self-improvement stuff, I feel like it came to me or I became aware of it from like talk shows? You know like in the 80s and 90s you had like Donahue, and Oprah Winfrey, and like they would often have people on their shows that were about like, oh this is how you have a good life. Or this is how you make your marriage work or this is how you be a good parent. All of these different people with their different books to sell talking about you know this is what you do.

C: Mm hmm.

K: And I just always felt—it always felt super—especially in the later era of like Oprah, it always felt very cynical and gross to me because like most of the time the people she's talking to are also very wealthy people like she is, and it's like, that's how you make your life better right? In these very easy ways like if you have a lot of money, you have a lot of resources to improve yourself and you also have the time to be like, I'm gonna work on me.

C: Yeah, yeah.

K: Always very like, I don't know, it just felt very—it's like trying to sell a yacht to someone who can't even afford a bike. [C agreeing] But that's not going to be useful for them in their specific situation! And it just—it always felt squeaky to me. It just never was something—it just always felt like something—it's just another thing to sell to people and also another way for people to feel like they're not doing enough. Or not like living up to—

C: Right.

K: What they need to do to make their lives like “optimized” or whatever.

C: One hundred percent. Yeah. Absolutely, absolutely. I'm racking my brain trying to think if I actually have read any self-help books. I have read an internet kind of synopsis of The Four Agreements, where it's like four things and some guy wrote it don't ask me it's really famous but it's like, four things you can do to improve your life, and it's The Four Agreements and I don't remember all of them but I remember one is like, be impeccable with your word...

K: Don't take anything personally, don't make assumptions, always do your best.

C: Which honestly I like all those things! I don't—

K: This is exactly what I'm talking about! Like super basic. [laughing]

C: Yeah I don't really need to read a whole book about it, but I do like those things.

K: Yeah.

C: One thing I was gonna say though was so—I don't know if I've talked about it too much on the podcast, some things you know—the fact that we have gotten so famous sometimes it's like I do need to [K laughing] keeping time to myself and not everything is for the public. Like they want so much [T laughing] I can't give you everything. But. Last year I did leave my job and it had become just very stressful and toxic. So leaving was like and the ability to leave after I made some plans—I'm not going to get into the whole thing—but anyhow as I was leaving my boss decided that—and keep in mind too that the pandemic is still going very strong. My workplace does not require masks even though we are working with disabled people and people with chronic illness so I was like, I need to get out of here. So all this is happening and my boss is like, “You know what? Now is the perfect time for everyone to read the Seven Habits of Highly Effective people.”

K: Nooo.

T: Wow.

K: No.

C: And I was like, “Oh my god. Thank god I am leaving.” [K laughing] I don’t have to sit in this absurd training, I was like—out of all the things happening right now, this is what you’re focusing on? My mind was blown.

K: A part of the—not like a recommendation that people should like you can take it or not take it, she was saying this is something I’m going to expect you to do and then it’s going to be part of our—we’re going to have a discussion about it it’s going to be part of the work day or something?

C: Technically it was voluntary.

K: Ok. I see.

C: In reality, no.

K: One of those “voluntary but actually mandatory things.”

C: Exactly because of you—if you don’t go to the training then you’re the asshole. It was just... the audacity.

K: [laughing] for real, for real. Yeah ugh gosh I’m so glad I never had a boss or a workplace where that kind of boss was at the top but also where this kind of thing was expected of you.

C: Think of the timing, too.

T: Yeah.

C: Like, we’re all over-worked, have not gotten a break, traumatized, and now you’re going to bring in this capitalist jargon-y book telling us to work harder [K laughing] like this is so beyond insulting.

K: Yeah and that’s kind of—

T: Wow.

K: why I find these things very—like these kind of very regimented self-help books and like these people who sort of traffic in it. It’s very—like you’re saying “insulting” is like the perfect word because again, everyone’s going through a lot of stuff and you can’t necessarily just—like some of the things that you need to do to improve your life I’m sure are about changing your attitude or how you sort of view your situation or whatever. Sometimes that can help things. But a lot of times what people actually need is concrete changes to their life that are a result of like, capitalism. Or the healthcare system.

T: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

K: You know what I mean? it's not like "Ok well read this book and then your life will be better because it will somehow change your bank account or make your car nicer or newer" like it's not going to do those things.

C and T: Right.

K: So it's just very like this is insulting to people because it's saying everything that you want to be better is within your—

C: Reach.

K: Control.

T: Mm hmm mm hmm.

K: or whatever which is just like not the case.

T: Like there should just be like a curb-cut on every sidewalk [K laughing] magically.

K: Just read this book! That will happen—it's like no, it won't. Won't [indistinct] the elevators either.

T: Literally those things could be fixed if we didn't make like a bomber.

K: Just one.

T: Like one less bomber. And I'm glad that we realize it. And it does feel like more people just had to be faced with that reality that people—are and have been struggling. The difference between the haves and have-nots is so huge it feels like it is more apparent to more people but maybe that is just my algorithm!

C: I don't know!

K: I think it's—I think we're in a weird kind of moment where it both is but then you also still have a lot of like I don't even know—on Twitter it's like derogatorily referred to as grind-culture people.

T: Oh right.

K: Like still engaged in this like, if you just do these things then you—these are the simple things you can do to like, make your life demonstratively better.

T: Right.

K: And it's like—but people are still, like you're saying, there is still because of also social media there is more visibility about how, wide the gulf is between people who are quote-unquote "middle class" and everyone else. And yeah I don't know, I feel like the internet has

both stratified it more and made it more obvious. But it's also created new ways for these kinds of people to sort of get their messages out there now.

T: Mm hmm.

K: I feel like we talk about influencers like in every episode but there are also self-help-y influencers that's what most influencers are. Right?

T: Hm.

C: Mm hmm.

K: Right like here's a lifestyle and I'm selling it to you by saying "use these products" or "believe this way that I believe" or "do this workout" and then everything will be better and it's just like, kind of but also not? It's very it's all very like, insidious.

T: Yeah. I mean this is not—this is a dark hope—in terms of the kids who are coming up today. I mean there are just not going to be as many options out there. I know that the statistics about unemployment numbers are just fantastic um as of now according to the federal government but that is a lie. [C and K laughing] I think that anyone listening to this podcast would probably maybe I would hope yeah be aware that that is a lie because they don't count so many people! They don't count people who, for example, have been looking for work and haven't been able to find it, in I wanna say it's like... six months. It's some short amount of time. It's less than a year and then they consider you just kinda just out of work and just out of society, and they don't count you in that. [laughs]

C: As they shouldn't. [T laughing] You know—Yeah we're in a hellscape. It reminds me too and there was just a perfect example of what we were talking about with social media and capitalist culture and grind culture and wealthy people telling you that you can have it all if you just work harder and that was of course this week with Kim Kardashian quoted saying, you know, women just need to fucking work. And no one wants to work anymore. [K laughing] Which I—

K: That whole family they have some nerve like all you serious? Like—

C: My head just like, exploded. Meanwhile too this is happening while the video clip of her trying to walk in this Balenciaga yellow caution tape outfit I'm just like "Kim, shut up. Just shut up." Now I hate to interrupt myself—not really—but we have an exclusive here with Toshio hard journalism you just ordered a McPlant which I did not know existed.

K: What is that.

T: Oh!

C: Exactly!

K: I'm like—[laughing]

T: Well I didn't know it existed either and I blame the algorithm here also because it wasn't alerting me to the fact that McDonald's new meatless burger had just been—it dropped just in the past month.

K: [whispering] It dropped.

C: McPlant!

T: So anywhere you have access to a McDonald's—

C: Probably not here. I doubt it.

K: I was going to say, cuz I feel like whenever there's new products when I used to live in the valley like they never came there.

C: I doubt we have it.

T: KFC had some sort of like chicken-adjacent item that was vegan, I dunno somebody described it as tasting like erasers. However—

K: [indistinct] taste like to me—

T: [laughing] But I didn't get to even try it for myself.

C: How is the burger?

T: You know what? I'm into it. I love fast food because I did grow up in a household where my mom cared about our health and also could afford to do so and so we didn't get to eat very much fast food it was kind of like, “wow we're really wilin out [C laughs] Friday night get to go to McDonald's.” And so like when I got to high school and I could like, go off campus Junior year: straight to Del Taco.

K: Tight. Del Taco's very good.

C: I've never had Del Taco.

K: Oh really?

C: We don't have em.

K: I just assumed you'd had it when you came to California.

C: No I've been robbed. [K laughing]

T: I guess I didn't—I've been keeping it a secret—

K: It's not like [laughing] fine dining or anything! It's a good fast food place.

T: Do they have them up in NorCal?

K: Uh I don't think they have them—maybe they do have one in Fresno?—I don't know. I've only ever had em in LA.

T: Yeah I think it's more down there. They also have amazing alternative meat options if you're into that—by the way McDonald's you can get this stuff anywhere I believe.

K: They do have it up here!

C: I used to eat McDonald's every day in Junior High. Or all the days that I would go to school. Which was like—

K: I pretty much think we were all like that. Like I remember when I was in middle school it was either Taco Bell bean and cheese burrito and like, Doritos, or like a slice of pizza! [laughing] like that was what we ate like every day. Like nope, that's normal, that's totally fine, nothing's gonna happen to you you're like fourteen or whatever.

T: It's funny like the fast food industry has become the object of a lot of anti-self-help not anti-self-help, um, anti- it's just kind of like a target—

K: Yes.

T: Of self-help influencers. Something that everyone can agree on.

K: Yeah, yeah. But it's also always very like tinged with like classist and anti-Blackness a little bit—not a little bit a lot—right? Like into—this focus on fast food as this thing that you do when you're lazy and you just don't care. Or whatever. Which I guess sometimes that's what people do but sometimes people eat it because they like it.

C: It's delicious.

K: Right or it's like the thing that's convenient for them because they have a lot of other things to do with their time and like, cooking whatever is not a thing to do or something that they can afford in the moment right? It's cheaper than going to the grocery store and buying whatever ingredients and making whatever meal so there's a lot of like, “well, you know if you just didn't do this thing you lazy fat piece of garbage, like then you'd be better” and it's just like, I mean maybe but also like, it's like it exists for a reason because people enjoy it and because you know sometimes—this is obviously not a great thing—but sometimes it's a more affordable option than you know, doing like a full meal that you make from scratch, which can also be bad for you. [laughing]

T: For sure.

K: It's not like you can cook stuff at home and it's only ever delicious healthy food. No people make tons of garbage in their own kitchen—I know I do—so I'm like, I don't [C and K laughing] It's very weird I sort of think, as soon as you said that Toshio I was thinking of

Supersize Me um and I don't know if you all listen to the—not to plug other podcasts on this podcast—but the podcast Maintenance Phase by—

T: I think you introduced it to me.

C: Yeah.

K: Oh cool ok cool I'm glad I talked about it before. But no it's sort of about the way that society sort of views weight stigma and health stigma and all of the things that it does to quote unquote “fight” it and so they talk about different people different eating styles and diets, different like media things like Supersize Me and they talk about it they—so much stuff about that movie that I did not know—cuz I remember watching it when it came out in the early 2000s and being like, I mean I guess I get why people find this interesting. But it also felt very much like a gimmick to me.

C: Yes. Because it was.

K: It's clearly—obviously no one is doing what he's doing—right? no one is going to McDonald's every single day getting the largest possible meal and eating it for every meal [C laughing] No one is doing that! So drumming up this, oh my gosh this outrage this fear for like the health of people that eat McDonald's it's like, it's all like out of whack because you're sort of letting this completely unrealistic way of living determine how you feel about the restaurant. Which honestly the only reason people feel like that is because again they already have negative associations with fast food. Right? They have the classist and sometimes racist you know associations with it. So they're like ok good this validates everything I ever thought about McDonald's. It's like making up a guy to get mad at right? Like no one's eating McDonald's super-sized meals for every meal it's just not happening.

C: Looking back at that it's like, why was this a movie?

K: It doesn't make any sense!

C: Why did this get funding? Like at the time it got such buzz and everyone's like, “ooh Supersize Me yeah” but like twenty years later [laughing] it's just—it's so silly.

K: It's silly.

C: And then he went on to make I remember other movies, I don't remember—

T: Well there was a sequel.

C: What was it?

T: It was Supersize Me 2: Holy Chicken! [all start laughing] And I mean it was basically the same—

C: The same thing?—

T: Same thing.

C: I remember weirdly he had been dating this vegan woman.

K: Wasn't he dating her in the movie? I think he was.

C: Yeah and then they broke up and she decided I guess not to be a vegan and then it was like, huge controversy because I was friends with this—this is like, a long time ago when I was still on Facebook and I was Facebook friends with this girl who'd been vegan for like, a million years, and I was out of the loop I didn't know all of this controversy but it was like a shit-storm about this woman who decided not to be vegan anymore.

K: I do not like moving into the like vegan like debates because they make me feel angry so I don't do that but like ugh, who cares? Like generally if she wants to not be a vegan: whatever! If she wants to be a vegan: whatever! Like why is it any kind of like, why is it drama? Why is there drama around it? It doesn't make any sense...

T: I think it's just people putting—even though she was not herself, maybe she was an influencer but I do not remember her.

C: I don't know. I think she was well-known maybe cuz she was like a well-known vegan but it's like—

T: I think it's just like the celebrity of it all is people just like oh, like holding onto—if yeah—if she was an influencer at the time.

K: Like I get it—the parasocial relationships they exist—have existed for a long time. So I get it.

T: Like with Gwyneth I mean—

C: Oh my god.

T: Who we have to talk about if we're gonna talk about this topic.

C: We do, we do.

K: Self help.

T: I do wanna talk about—like I came to you all with the idea of—you know I wanted to hear if you have any positive feedback around [laughing] self-help that has been you know useful to you.

C: I have one.

K: Ooh.

T: Recently but yeah I mean so we could. Let's talk about it first, and then we can end on a—

K: Positive note.

T: Maybe?

C: Well it's gonna be really short. [laughs]

T: Go for it.

K: I like—I didn't wanna give the impression that every kind of self-help is bad, I just think as an industry it's sort of like the diet industry where you're selling people this very super-simple way to just like, make yourself or your life better, just do this thing or read this book, like...

C: One hundred percent.

K: And it's not really realistic because a lot of the reason people have the problems they have are systems realted.

T: Yes.

K: Right? Not because you personally aren't doing the things you should be doing.

T: Absolutely.

K: So I don't wanna make it seem like self-help is always bad—I just think generally speaking it's a very predatory kind of industry and it makes me feel very uncomfortable. But obviously I don't think it's bad to like...

C: Yeah. I—yes.

K: If it helps you.

C: I would say one book that has helped me that I wouldn't necessarily even call it self-help although kind of is *When Things Fall Apart* by Pema Chödrön the Buddhist nun it is a book too that I have bought for so many people who have gone through a rough time because I find it so comforting. Um, to me I think the book is just fantastic and it kind of goes against most self-help advice. Which is she's like, if you are going through a rough time you need to basically just like go through it. Like stop trying to run away from it and meditate and blah blah blah. And like obviously it's a lot better than what I just described. To me I love that book and it's helped me I definitely don't get into the kind of Brené Brown that kind of thing I tend to shy away from—

K: Yeah she's huge right now.

C: One thing I kinda wanted to discuss in a different angle with the self-help is—you know I gave up drinking in June of 2020—

K: Nice.

C: And one thing I wanted to say too cuz I know a lot of people in my life who struggle with alcohol or whatever and when I was able to finally stop I had a friend who was like, “you know that’s great” and like “I wish I could do that” and blah blah blah and I was like this is an amalgam effect of three years of me trying and not being able to quit. Like it wasn’t like I just said, I’m gonna stop drinking—oh it’s so easy! Like no! There were so many false starts—or not even false starts it’s almost like practice.

K: Yeah.

C: And being able to get to the point where it’s like, finally.

T: right.

C: You know knock on wood like I’m doing well and like—but—with that—so when I first started with sobriety, I was looking at—sometimes they call it Quit Lit. Like books about drinking and all that. An so I did read a couple and one on all of my sobriety apps they were like, you’ve got to read um this guy Alan Carr’s—and there are several Alan Carrs who are British, one of whom’s a comedien—this is not him. It’s like Alan Carr’s simple effective way to quit drinking or something like that. Oh my god so everyone on this app, that I don’t even like, that I use it just to like count my days. I kind of hate this one app I won’t—it’s like every Friday they’re like, will you join me in a weekend pledge for clarity? And I’m like—this is ugh. This is annoying. [K laughing] Like when you’re drinking you don’t want clarity, you want to go into oblivion that’s why we’re drinking. But yes I’ll take the pledge for clarity. Ok. Anyway so everyone was like, you’ve gotta read this one book, Alan Carr’s Whatever Book for Quitting Drinking—it’s so good it’s amazing—oh the Easy Way to Stop Drinking—thank you. Ok I don’t know when it was written. It is so dated. I cannot believe people were recommending this book to me. He is out of control in I felt like reading it I feel like there’s an old white British man just screaming at me this entire time. And like he was referencing songs—he’s like what would I tell you you’re singing along to Waltzing Mattilda? And I’m like, this is not my life. I don’t know what is going on. It was not helpful in any way but other people seem to get something from it. I myself did not. But whatever helps you. I think I had tried some other sobriety-related books that—of course I can’t remember now—

T: That brings up for me, yeah like the idea of Louise Hay and my friend, who—I spoke about earlier. Self help guru famous for, I mean a lot of people would say she’s a grifter who preyed on people who were dying of HIV at the time.

C: I think I would say that! [all laugh]

K: Yeah.

T: Yeah a lot of people would agree with you, and I guess through uh you know reading more about it and my friend made a short film on it, it did bring comfort. So when you’re

talking about this Alan Carr book and how it didn't resonate with you. [bagpipe music playing] Ooh is it Saint Patrick's—

C: Is there a parade?

T: Speaking of drinking.

C: Oh my god I can hear—

K: No Saint Patrick's Day is next week yeah but it's not the twelfth. It's like the—

T: Well maybe they're having the parade today.

K: Maybe they are having it today?

C: I can hear bagpipes.

T: I mean, what else would it be for? Is there another? I mean Lent is around now but—there's a bunch of cops outside so maybe. It does resonate for me you know if it works for you, it works for you. Of course there a grifters out there. Some of the grifters have advice that still brings you comfort or helps you get where you wanna be. Like with Brené Brown—I don't know if she's a grifter necessarily but I think everything that I've heard of that she's done sounds so performative?

K: Yes.

C: I feel like it's just her white woman from Texas vibe that I really—it just makes me—ugh I just can't.

T: Gives you the shivers.

C: The heebie jeebies. [T laughing] But you know I also, Danielle Schneider from Bitch Sess she was like going through a really dark depression and she was like Brené Brown was the only thing that could get me outta bed. Ok. Good. If you find something that works for you go for it.

T: Someone in my recovery group, he—I respect him because he has seen it all when it comes to therapeutic methods. What do they call it—the—

C and T: Modalities.

T: Thank you. Damn. Well I knew between the three of us [C and K laughing] that would happen. Um. Yeah I mean there's obviously, we live in the Bay Area or Krystal and I do [C laughing] and like so many self-help I don't know if you wanna call them movements, cults, whatever, come out of this place. A lot of them are just I think ways for people to make money saying the same shit people have said in the past. [K and C agreeing] But if it does help...

K: I don't—my issue with it is not necessarily the people who find the stuff and find it like you're saying, find some manner of comfort in it or helps them improve whatever situation they're in that they're looking to improve I'm not saying that they necessarily are bad people I'm saying the industry and a lot of people in it tend to be a very—

T: Yeah... predatory.

K: Sometimes it is about like trying to help people and make things better but it's also convenient that it also makes those people very wealthy and privileged. It's like I know I guess—but also yeah sure, sure that it's about helping people. I'm sure on some level it is. I also think that I don't know—I just have an aversion to it, as a general industry, I'm not saying that it doesn't do some level of good otherwise it wouldn't continue to exist.

T: It's so much—it is self help literally the onus is on the individual to make all of the changes some of which are beyond their control. [K and C agreeing] And I think Gwyneth—can we talk about Gwyneth Paltrow.

C: I would love to.

K: I'll leave it to you all [T laughing] I can't stand this whole deal. I can't stand it. I can't stand the way that it—it's a lot similar in my mind to Kim Kardashian—also the way that people sort of put them on this pedestal of girl-boss feminist you know working super hard for their money or whatever [C laughing] and like got my company Goop and like isn't it cool and like whatever. And Kim has whatever it is that she does you know and there's this idea you know that's like look ant these women feminist icons, like doing it. And I'm like, doing what? For whom?

T: Exactly.

K: Like what am I supposed to be looking at them for in terms of like am I supposed to feel empowered from that? They're not empowering me to do anything. You know. They're not giving back in ways that I find useful or helpful they're really just like—it's really all about furthering their financial bottom line—

C: Yeah. Selling things.

K: That's fine if that's what you're into, great. But don't try to make it seem like this is all some kind of, “you go girl” kinda thing that you should be into as a woman and care about as a woman. Like I don't care about what Gwyneth Paltrow is selling. So I'll let you all go on about Gwyneth if you have other stuff to say [laughs] but I'm just like, she's fine I guess.

T: Um I would like to go into the most expensive products. [laughing, C and K laughing] She's ever hocked on Goop.

K: This is so ridiculous everything is so ridiculous. I feel like it's almost like she's almost doing some kind of performance art thing.

C: I wish I wish it were that thought out.

K: It has to be! Because the way that she's doing it and the fact that people are like, not just taking her literally but taking her seriously, I'm just like [laughing] no there's gotta be something else going on here because it just does not make sense that everyone's like, yeah makes sense a jade egg to put in my vagina? Sure. Like yep. [T laughing]

C: Yeah use rose quartz. Use rose quartz don't use jade.

K: Don't put anything in your vagina that's made out of some kind of gem. Don't do that.

C: I still don't understand that and I'm not even gonna google it cuz [overlapping]

K: Turn your [indistinct] search on if you do.

C: God there was a really great article from 2018 in the New York Times where they just like slayed her and Gwyneth and sometimes I wonder, it's called "How Goop's Haters Made Gwyneth Paltrow's Company worth \$250 Million." What I loved was that the article goes into detail about how absurd the Goop machine is and it's this woman kind of following her around at this, "wellness" that's the word of the year, "wellness."

K: I hate it.

C: Um following Gwyneth around at this Goop Wellness Convention and the woman is obviously very skeptical of Gwyneth as a person and it was... to me it was funny. Um and Gwyneth I remember posted it on her Instagram this photo of her, no self-awareness whatsoever and I feel like that just kind of encapsulates who she is as a person. Just completely oblivious to I guess what people actually think of her? Because she doesn't even need to care she has that much money!

K: I don't think she's oblivious though I think when you are that famous and you've been famous for a long time and you come from like a famous family, I don't think you're oblivious about how people feel about you.

T: True.

K: I just don't think you are. I think you can choose not to care about it, sure.

T: Right.

K: But I don't think you're oblivious. There's no way. Especially not with social media being what it is—obviously she's not like doing her own Twitter or like Instagram or whatever there's just no way it's just not possible.

C: Well maybe oblivious isn't the most precise word—

K: I think you can choose to lean into it which is what I think she's done. Is that she's like, yeah this is what people think of me, this is their impression and I'm just gonna go hard—yep this is me all my silly products that cost \$10,000 or whatever that's totally the person I

am because that's what people like to react to.

T: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

T: The most expensive item, by the way. Gold barbells have been featured on Goop that cost—

C: Like weightlifting barbells?

T: Correct, correct.

C: Gold.

T: Um... and you can get them for the, well, I can't really put it in any other way, for the very expensive price of \$125,000.

C: What?

K: That seems fine. Seems like a normal price to pay for barbells. [laughing]

T: Yeah and I think over the past couple years like I remember because I worked for two companies in a row that were focused towards—maybe I've said it before—yoga moms who drive their hybrid SUVs to Whole Foods which maybe I would—that's a little bit of a dated reference some of those things might have different names.

K: Now they drive their Teslas.

T: Yeah Tesla to I don't know, um, would have been Dean & DeLuca back in the day, I don't know Erewhon in LA or maybe Berkeley Bowl?

K: Yeah Berkeley Bowl's good.

T: I like Berkeley Bowl.

K: I like Berkeley Bowl too I feel like Berkeley Bowl's not accurate because there's a range of people you can see at Berkeley Bowl like, I have friends who have no money like me who go to Berkeley Bowl and you might see someone who like has a five million dollar house in the hills who goes to Berkeley Bowl. It's definitely. But that's not happening at Gelson's or Erewhon or wherever.

T: Yes. Gelson's is another good reference. Yeah I guess this most recent holiday gift guide had a \$34,000 it's called a Bubblegum Gym and it is a self-care item, of course. [laughing] What is a Bubblegum Gym you ask?

K: Thank you I love it I'm like, please tell me. I can't even conceptualize what this is supposed to be.

T: \$34,000 and I say this as we are going through a Peleton you know...

K: Moment right now.

T: Well it's dying!

K: It was a really short moment!

T: It was a short moment! It had it's moment.

K: Ok I'm clicking on this thing let me see what it looks like.

C: Ok Bubble Gum Gym I hate that they called it Bubblegum Gym that's really confusing.

K: Ok so I was right I was like, Is this for children? It looks like it's for kids. Like it looks like.

C: It is, right?

T: Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah.

K: Ok I was like, what?

T: My bad.

K: So it's like if you would go to any sort of regular playground.

C: Playground yeah.

K: It's just like a pink.

C: Pink and blue [together].

K: And it's like, there's like mats underneath so obviously for safety.

T: There's some rings.

K: There's some rings there's a little—is that supposed to be a slide?

T: Climbing wall?

K: I don't—

C: Yeah.

T: I suppose.

K: One of the things that I think is funny is you linked us to this Toshio and like, I don't know—I hardly ever do but you know sometimes you'll get to a site that people link you to that has like, the prices or has products you can buy but they don't say the price? So you have to click to get it? That's how you know it's expensive. Because if it wasn't expensive they would put the price there so you would know. But like, if it says "get price" or whatever [laughing] you know it's gonna be something.

C: It's expensive.

T: This is for people who you know, don't think about prices.

C: Yeah you have to email them to get the price.

K: Which is a hilarious way to have an online store. I think that part of Gwyneth or like going through catalogue and looking at all the stuff and being like "that's silly that's silly that's silly." Like I think that's fine. I'm just like whatever that's not a—I just don't like that on her things that she sort of pushes drift over into like we were talking about the area of wellness that's when I get uncomfortable. [T and C agreeing] Like you wanna buy that gym? You have \$34,000 great. Like go for it. Or those barbells. Like, fine. But when it's like these supplements and take this thing, I'm just I don't like that part of it because again, it's getting into this like, idea that like no no no, just take these products that we have discovered and put together that will make your health like, better, when again we all know what our problems with our healthcare system are. Right? Like it's not like that people aren't taking the right supplements. You know?

T: Yeah.

C: I read something, I think it was on Twitter, it was like—and this was one of my favorite things that she did, she said that every morning—cuz you know, this goes again to the wellness thing which that though the Venn Diagram of like wellness people and then the white woman anti-vaxxing community...

K: Yes.

C: Gets...

K: It's almost a circle.

C: It is. And she was like—and the whole thing about how your body needs to be alkaline have you hear that? That's like a big thing like you need to be alkaline whatever so she's like, in the morning I drink some kind of purified water blah blah blah to get my body alkaline so I have this purified water with a slice of lemon. And its like, if you put lemon in it that makes it acidic!

K: Right! You don't know what you're talking about!

C: You do not know what you are saying!

K: It's like that and the Moon Juice lady—

C: What is that?

K: Oh my gosh it was one of my absolute favorite episodes of Maintenance Phase, there's a woman, talk about the Venn Diagram of white women doing wild stuff.

C: Ridiculous things?

K: Her name is Amanda Chantal Bacon and she kind of went viral a couple of years ago because there was like, I think of what magazine does this but it basically has people telling them their food diary?

C: Oh yeah yeah.

K: And her quote-unquote "food" because some of that stuff, I'm like I don't even know what this is. Her "food" diary quote-unquote is like, one of the wildest things I have ever read. It's like ok so in the morning then I put some adaptogens in this and I do bee pollen in this, and I'm like, what is even happening right now? [laughing] and she is sort of someone I think of in the same vein as like a Gwyneth, but she is a lot more into the wellness aspect of things. She has all of these products like Moon Juice and Brain Dust and these—

C: That's terrifying.

K: That you take. And that's why I'm like, ok you wanna do that fine, that's how you eat like whatever. But it's sort of bordering on snake oil kind of.

C: Toshio just linked it in the chat so she's a juice bar owner. And she owns something called Moon Juice. Ok and huh! Treats A-list [indistinct] like Gwyneth Paltrow oh and Shailene Woodley. That doesn't surprise me.

K: Of course! Of course Shailene's in there [laughing]. So the first thing she does, "I usually wake up at 6:30 am and start with some kundalini meditation and a 23-minute breath set along with a copper cup of silver needle and calendula tea before my son Rowhan wakes. Girl! [laughing, C laughing]

T: She's not getting Rowhan up she's got nannies.

K: No.

T: Nannies get Rowhan up.

K: Notice she said before he wakes, she didn't say before she wakes him up ugh oh my god.

T: I know she specifically put that in there because oof god no. I don't it already smells like fake.

K: [laughing] It's so wild, it's so wild.

C: What are activated cashews?

K: I don't know! What is an adaptogen? What is that?

T: It's snake oil terminology.

K: It's sick man it's so weird.

T: It's like, do you remember in the Bay Area I think it was where it started because it was a Burning Man connected thing—Raw Water?

K: No. What was that? [C and T laughing]

C: That sounds like sewage.

T: Raw Water.

K: I assume it's like milk where it's not been like treated or whatever.

T: yeah exactly and—

C: Oh my god, oh my god.

T: My friend works at Rainbow Grocery which, you have a lot of people who are Gwyneth types going in, I mean it's like Berkeley Bowl you have all types like they give, it's a co-op and they give discounts to people who are low income...

K: But it's fancy cuz they have bulk stuff, and supplement stuff...

T: Yeah they have every supplement.

K: It's one of the first places I ever knew where it was mostly organic stuff which eventually Berkeley Bowl was too.

T: Yeah so Raw Water and raw milk are two things they both had to take off the shelf in recent years because—

K: Good.

T: They are not treated and they are known to often harbor chemicals.

K: Bacteria, viruses, chemicals and all kinds of things. Ugh I think yeah that part when people go too far like, oh things are too regulated, we just need to get stuff that is natural into our bodies, it's like there's a reason we don't do that! We did that for thousands of years that's why nobody lived past thirty five. [C laughing] You know? It's so weird.

T: It's so selective what they're talking about because you know like they're wearing something that you know was made of petroleum out of some kind of polyester.

K: Exactly are you wearing fully one hundred percent cotton? No.

T: Living off the grid? Uh uh. [laughing]

K: I like that part of the influencer self-helpy stuff like when it's so far over in left field—

T: Over the top.

K: That you're just like, and also kind of like, how do I say it? They're mostly taking advantage of rich people who have too much money anyway where I'm like, you know what? That's fine. You wanna get these weirdos to pay you \$30,000 so you can tell them to drink some weird mushroom tea? Ok that's their prerogative but you know I just don't know, it's a fine line between like are they scamming, fine. But also like are people doing this because they truly think it's going to help them physically for their health and then I'm like, I don't know. I don't know the whole wellness self-help industry is very suss to me and I just don't—I get why people do it but I also feel like oh no it's sad, it's sad that they do it. We should have a better healthcare system that is actually about helping people.

C: What a concept!

K: I know! Right? [laughing] That isn't super expensive and makes people go into bankruptcy to—

C: Healthcare that helps you—amazing!

K: that keeps you healthy? Like weird, weird idea.

C: I don't know her.

K: Yeah no exactly I'm an American so I've like, never heard of it. Um.

C: Well Toshio you had a good—I like this idea of going around and saying a positive self-help thing that's actually helped that we've tried over the pandemic because—

K: Over the pandemic?

C: Over the pandemic. I do like that idea.

K: I don't have one.

C: You may not [K laughing]

K: I didn't do anything to improve myself! [laughing]

C: I think maybe another way to frame it is like a coping mechanism that you've done that maybe helped like for me it's been reading.

K: I have definitely gotten back into it.

C: Reading is like my number one thing!

K: It's actually been nice I mean I feel like, I don't know if this is how you were Caitlin, but I feel like all of the how do I even describe it? All of the stress and general unhappiness with our political world from 2015 really broke my reading skills like I used to be able to focus and pick up a book. Like when I read *A Little Life* that was in 2015 or something and I just picked it up and read it the entire day, and then picked it up the next day and was able to focus and finish it the second day I had it! Like no big deal. But for some reason everything with the run up to the 2016 election and then after that I just felt like I didn't have the like, mental capacity to focus on a book the way I had before.

C: No I didn't either.

K: And so the pandemic which unfortunately broke my mental capacity in other ways [laughs] at least because I was home a lot I felt like I could read a lot more than I had in the past and I definitely—that's the one thing that I have like that has improved for me during the pandemic was a.) adding to my to-be-read list which I hadn't been doing very much, um so I feel like I'm constantly hearing about books I want to read, and like, obviously part of that is because of this podcast but generally I'm just so much more engaged with books than I have been in like at least five years. And it's like really nice.

C: Me too. It is!

K: It's such a nice thing to read. Reading is actually good!

C: reading!

K: It's not fundamental but it's good.

C: Well it is. Honestly too it has been, not only with the pandemic but I mean it kind of dovetails with it that has been something that I have used very disciplined to help me with sobriety. In that that is my routine. They're like structure is very important. So every night I've got my routine I light candles I put on rain sounds I snuggle with my dog, I read from whatever I'm reading: it is true I'm reading too much of the killers and murderers and I do need to chill out with that. Let me just say too real quick [all laughing] I did finish a book recently that is not murder.

K: Wow.

C: Or wait—well um.

K: You're like wait, is there murder? [laughing]

T: Aah.

C: I won't give anything away but it is a really great book *Black Cake*—

K: Oh yes yes.

C: Which I told you to read that Krystal—I found out too they're going to make a Hulu series out of it I think.

K: Oh interesting.

C: But that book I think the author is Charmaine Wilkerson something like that. Anyway *Black Cake* that was one of my favorite books I've read in a while, I give it five stars I just loved it loved it loved it! Yes Charmaine Wilkerson thank you producer Toshio. So I would say reading has been crucial to sobriety and is my like chill time and nothing I'm not thinking about anything I'm just snuggling with my dog reading a book or like, calm, you know? It's been something I've definitely returned to.

K: I've been actually kind of proud of myself because you know I do probably every other year or so say alright I'm gonna set my reading goals and I'm gonna try to get to them, and then I just fail miserably which I'm not like super upset about but it does, again, speak to the fact that I don't feel like I have had in the recent past like just the capacity to focus on books as much as I used to. And so reading has definitely improved over the last two years. But also like you're saying for me, um, for you having your routine is helpful. For me I also have a routine books are part of it but I feel like ASMR videos are also part of it.

C: Oh yeah!

K: not because I like need to chill or anything, but like in terms of like helping me—not helping me sleep cuz I don't have a problem but I do find it's a comforting thing to fall asleep to. Like I used to be a person who put on a DVD or put on a show you've seen a million times or whatever. But like as I get older I feel like I don't like having a lot of light or TV on when I'm like, trying to fall asleep. I think just partially it's living in a small space, that you're just like, I need it to be—I need to lock it down this is night time, we're about to do the night time stuff. So uh having ASMR videos to sort of still be that thing that like, there's some media happening and it's helping me drift off but not having to be disturbed by video and stuff or like, a screen has been really nice to add to my own little regimen at night.

C: Toshio you mentioned that this podcast has been self-help I completely second that! I completely second that. Absolutely. I cannot say that enough. Here, I've been talking you talk now Tosh sorry. [K laughs]

T: I mean if you can hear me above the din of the bagpipes because they decided to have Saint Patrick's Day early.

K: I love it.

T: It's something that has been a ritual and made it every week and we haven't been fully consistent with getting the episodes out to the fans but we're doing the best that we can.

C: I think we've been pretty consistent.

T: Yeah.

K: We've been better recently.

C: Have we?

K: I think.

T: There was a time, there was a time.

C: My sense of time is just—

K: We kinda fell off for a couple of months where it was a little more sporadic. I also can't use that word without thinking of Clueless.

C and T: Clueless!

K: Yeah I think we've been better over the last couple of months I'd say.

C: That's true.

T: I think things like this, I mean, I guess it's about the connection and also like you said building rituals and structure, as some of the other activist stuff that we've been doing here, the group Gay Shame, we've done some work to get tents to people outside and just straight up money to people. It's just good to have other people who you can complain about shit with [K and C agreeing] and you can do the opposite of complain and say—

K: What is that? I'm not familiar. [all laughing]

T: That's why there's no word for it [all laughing] maybe there's a word for it in Japanese or German but not in English. Um celebrate the little things. Speaking of yeah it's a big thing that June is your two-year—three year?—anniversary.

C: Two years! And you guys, in six weeks I'm turning forty!

K: Oh my god that's right!

T: That is right!

C: I do have to say one thing. I went to the dentist I don't know if it was last week or the week before, time as I said, I have no idea what day it is or when anything happened. I went to the dentist and no cavities! Thank you. Thank you god! Thank you god! If you—never mind. I was talking to my hygienist and she was like, [dog barking] no no no—I said I'm

turning forty and she's like, oh are you doing anything fun or do you have anything to look forward to?

K: Oh no.

T: Jesus she put it like that? [all laughing]

C: My mind started racing cuz I was like, oh my god what do I say? I literally have nothing like no plans really nothing that I am looking forward to and I don't mean that to sound as completely despairing as it does. [K laughing] but I was just like ughh this sounds so sad [K laughing]. So yeah anyway.

K: I think it's fair, because I feel like people put too much emphasis on things like that I think it's fine to be like, I'm turning forty and I feel fine about it, but I also don't have any plans.

C: right.

K: Like that's not a negative thing necessarily? Unless you want to be doing something.

C: I mean I would love to do something!

K: But it's the pandemic still?

C: It's the pandemic and I mean I'll say it's been getting to me lately for sure. Like this past week has been rough. So I would love to have something to look forward to but I'm like, I don't know what that is!

T: We could do a very special birthday episode [all laughing] and I could do all the planning!

K: We could talk about only things you want to talk about.

T: Caitlin does all the planning generally. She sends out the invites for Zooms and stuff.

C: It's a lot of the very comprehensive work that I do with the Zoom invites.

T: Well it does require some—something.

K: It requires a Zoom account!

C: That—that's my big accomplishment. [all laughing]

T: Uh uh. No you made it.

C: I made it!

K: No this whole thing was your idea Caitlin.

T: Yeah!

K: Don't sell yourself short.

T: You're the glue! [laughing]

C: I'm the glue. Alright guys I will say on this self-help episode that everything's gonna be fine.

K: Oh yeah, we're self help. Everything's gonna be fine!

T: Everything's gonna be fine!

C: Yay!

T: Holla!

C: Holla holla holla! Ok bye!

K: Bye!

T: Bye!

[musical outro]