

## Chatterbox #192 – Alternative medicine

### Episode description

While no one likes going to the doctor, it's still very important to take care of your health. Luckily, going to a Western doctor isn't the only option. In this episode, Andrew and Suzanne discuss alternative medicine! Join them to hear Suzanne's story about how she fixed her health troubles using alternative and non-Western medical help.

### Fun fact

Did you know that massage, the practice of rubbing or kneading joints and muscles, is a form of alternative medicine? While some alternative medicine is controversial, everyone can agree that massages are a great way to treat and reduce muscle pain!

### Expressions included in the learning materials

- Go-to
- Hogwash
- A gut feeling
- Funky
- To throw [someone or something] off



## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

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Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name's Andrew.

Suzanne: And my name is Suzanne.

Andrew: And we are back with another Culips episode.

Hey, Sue.

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew! How are you?

Andrew: I'm good. How are you feeling today?

Suzanne: I'm feeling really good. I had a nice day yesterday of some R&R, some rest and relaxation. It was a much-needed little break. It was like a day of self-care.

Andrew: Hmm, that sounds really, really nice, actually. How did you care for yourself? What did the self-care involve?

Suzanne: Well, I went to my first osteopath appointment. Have you ever had an osteopath session?

Andrew: I don't even know what an osteopath is. Could you explain this to me and the listeners, too?

Suzanne: Yeah, sure. I mean, I'm very new at it, so I hope I can do it justice.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: Maybe someone out there knows even more or can correct me. But it's an alternative medicine where the practitioner can, using their hands, feel where there are blocks within your body, especially looking at your posture and how your bones and your ... The way you move, the way you stand, the way you maybe bend down, how things are responding. And from there they can tell what needs to be worked on. And they do a series of movements, almost like a Thai massage, where they stretch and move your body and release certain muscles that have been tense and causing some ... Maybe blocks or problems.

Suzanne: And when you leave, you feel like you've had an amazing massage and you feel like everything is really aligned. And you feel like your feet are firmly planted on the ground. It's similar to how I felt after acupuncture or something. So it was really nice.

Andrew: Well, Sue, you know, it's actually a huge coincidence, but today our episode is about alternative medicine. And maybe people won't believe me, but I didn't know that you just received some alternative treatments. So this is very, very timely.

Suzanne: It is!

Andrew: You got this procedure done yesterday.

Suzanne: It really is, yes. Perfect timing.

Andrew: Perfect timing, so we're going to do a Chatterbox episode today and, if you don't know what that is, I'll explain it right now. A Chatterbox episode is where we have a natural conversation in English and you, the listener, get to eavesdrop and listen in on us. We'll use completely natural English and everyday expressions.

And if you want to follow along with the transcript and our learning materials, which also includes detailed vocabulary explanations and a quiz, then you can sign up to become a Culips member on our website, which is Culips.com.

OK, Sue, so our topic for today is alternative medicine.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: And I'm thinking we should start by just talking about the differences between alternative medicine and mainstream medicine, which we also call Western medicine.

Suzanne: Yes, absolutely. So Western medicine, which it's commonly called because it's been developed more so in the Western world, right? It's our **go-to** way of treating things. Doctors treat symptoms and diseases by using surgery or radiation or prescription drugs. And it's based on scientific research. It's maybe more useful once you have been diagnosed with something. So this kind of medicine, Western medicine methods, are really not used for preventative medicine or preventing illness. It's mostly used to diagnose and then treat something that's already there. And it's really useful for maybe like emergency situations, right?

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Suzanne: If you break your arm or you get into a car accident and you're bleeding, you really need that kind of care, you know, stop the bleeding and ... You know, kind of care.

Andrew: Yeah, well you're absolutely right. If you get into a car accident, for example, you're gonna wanna go to a doctor who knows how to perform surgery. And you're gonna wanna go to a hospital where you will be able to recover, absolutely.

And this is kind of the default definition of medicine, at least for me. When I think of medicine, when I think of going to the doctor, I always think first of Western medicine. But there are alternative medicines and alternative medical practices, and I really like the distinction you made, Sue, between Western medicine being about curing a problem and healing, and alternative medicine being about prevention. 'Cause I think this is a good way to think about it.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: And so alternative medicine, though, it doesn't have as good as a reputation. A lot of people think that it's **hogwash**, that it hasn't been scientifically proven. And so some kinds of alternative medicine include things like osteopathy, which you mentioned earlier, as well as acupuncture, naturopathy, which is about eating healthy foods, and hypnotherapy, hypnosis

So if you're following alternative medicine disease prevention, maybe what you'll do is follow a special diet or you take vitamins or herbs or teas.

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: This kind of thing.

Suzanne: I have an interesting story about my experience with the same issue. I had a physical issue, a health issue, and my experience between the Western and more alternative medicine approaches that I went to.

Andrew: Mmhmm?

Suzanne: And, um, it's quite interesting. I think it's a good example of the two.

Andrew: I'm all ears.

Suzanne: I think I was 29 years old at the time, so then 10 years ago, whoa!

Andrew: Whoa ...

- Suzanne: I know! That doesn't feel like 10 years ago. Maybe I was a little older, I don't know. But I found a lump in my breast, OK?
- Andrew: Oh no!
- Suzanne: In my left breast, and I got so scared. I found two lumps and I thought I had cancer, like breast cancer.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: But I was so young, you know? But it does happen to women under 40, absolutely. Many women.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: And so I went to a breast specialist and they did a biopsy of the tissue inside the breast, and they said that it was not cancer but that it was confusing, which we never wanna hear that.
- Andrew: No, that is one thing that you don't want your doctor to tell you, that ...
- Suzanne: I know.
- Andrew: This thing that you have, it's confusing.
- Suzanne: Yeah, come on. He had said to me that it was acting like a tumour but feeling like a cyst. So that's why he was confused as to what was happening. So he wanted to remove it, just like that. He scheduled a surgery and he wanted to take it out.
- Andrew: Mmhmm?
- Suzanne: And I just didn't feel right. You know, something inside my **gut feeling**, like my instincts were like, "I don't ... I don't feel like that's what I should do." And I didn't know why because I always trust doctors, you know? They know best, they've done the research.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: They've ... You know, they're specialists in that field. So I went home and I spoke to some friends, and I had a friend give me a number of an MD who also comes from a long line of Chinese medicine. Her family has practised acupuncture for many, many, many generations.
- Andrew: OK.

- Suzanne: And she also gives herbs as well. And I took that number and then I spoke to another friend, and she gave me the number of another alternative medicine person, and this is called BEST, B-E-S-T, bio-energetic synchronization technique.
- Andrew: BEST, B-E-S-T, I've never heard of this before.
- Suzanne: You can look it up online, yeah. And it was created by Dr Morter, so a medical doctor who is also ... So he's a Western doctor but he's a chiropractor as well. And he has been doing research on people in an epigenetics way. So not just on the physical body, but also in your magnetic field, basically working on your body on an energetic level, not just in a physical level.
- Andrew: And this is what epigenetics means.
- Suzanne: Yes. Genetic is more like your DNA, right?
- Andrew: Mmhmm, mmhmm?
- Suzanne: Which this actually works on as well.
- Andrew: OK.
- Suzanne: But it also works on a level that is more about emotions. Like when you have say, a paper due and you're really nervous, and then you start to get a stomach ache, like a physical reaction to your thoughts, right?
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: Do you ever have that, where you get nervous and anxious and then your stomach starts to get **funky** and not feel good? Or you ...
- Andrew: Yeah, or you get a headache.
- Suzanne: A headache ... Exactly, these are manifestations of ... So physical manifestations of emotional experiences that manifest these physical things.
- Andrew: OK, I see.
- Suzanne: Right? It's the same thing if you think of a friend you love and who's really funny, and then you start to smile and laugh?
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: It's the same exact thing, right?

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: So, anyway, I took these two numbers and I went to them, to both of these alternative medical people, practitioners.

Andrew: Yeah, we usually call them practitioners, right?

Suzanne: Yes, yes. Well, the acupuncturist is a medical doctor. She's also an MD.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: So she was considered a doctor as well.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: But I cancelled my surgery twice.

Andrew: Cancelled your surgery twice?

Suzanne: Yeah, because I just felt like it wasn't the right thing. I felt like he was just going to put a band-aid on a larger problem. I felt like removing something was going to just take it out, and then it might appear again because I don't know why it's there. I don't know what is causing that issue in my body.

Andrew: It's not actually fixing the problem, right? It's just ...

Suzanne: No.

Andrew: A stopgap measure.

Suzanne: Exactly. It's like putting a band-aid on something but it's like, well, if you keep doing the same thing with the same stimulus, it's probably going to come back, so ...

Andrew: Totally, totally.

Suzanne: I needed to change more than just removing the lump, in my mind. That's what I thought at the time.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: So I cancelled the surgeries and he moved away to another state, so I didn't hear from him again, this doctor. And I went to, for 6 months, to the acupuncturist and to the BEST practitioner.

Andrew: Mmhmm?

Suzanne: And after 6 months it was gone. My lump ... The two lumps were gone.

Andrew: They were gone? Wow!

Suzanne: I went to another breast specialist because I had to find a new one, because the guy moved away.

Andrew: OK.

Suzanne: She took an x-ray of my breast and she said, “I don’t know what you’re doing,” but she compared the old picture and the new picture and she said, “But it’s gone.”

Andrew: Wow!

Suzanne: It’s nowhere to be found, so keep doing what you’re doing.

Andrew: That is remarkable.

Suzanne: I know! I said, “You know, I’m so glad I listened to my gut, my intuition.” Because I had a feeling that I just needed to understand what was causing it, you know? I changed a lot of my diet, I changed a lot of my pace. Like I wasn’t so stressed; I was more relaxed.

Andrew: Mmhmm?

Suzanne: I was more positive and I changed a lot of my lifestyle, and it changed also my physical body. So I don’t know. I’m not saying Western medicine is bad because it’s very helpful for many, many issues. But sometimes it’s also interesting to go into preventative care to prevent larger problems by learning why your body is responding the way it is, you know?

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. Now you must’ve felt very relieved when you saw that second x-ray and saw that the lumps had disappeared.

Suzanne: Yes—I was crying because I was so joyful. And when you listen to your instincts and then it comes to be that they were right, that your instincts were right on and you’re healthy and you’re on the right track, you feel really good, you know? So I was very grateful.

Andrew: Now, have you kept up some of these changes that you made with your diet and trying to be less stressed?

Suzanne: Yes.

Andrew: Have you maintained those practices?



Suzanne: Yes, absolutely. I did have a very stressful moment during the master's program that we both did when I was writing my thesis. That's when I wasn't in a very healthy place because I was so stressed. Stress can really, really mess with you and make you ...

Andrew: I think so, yeah.

Suzanne: Yeah, it's not good. So that definitely **threw me off**, but then after I finished that thesis I was ... It was like a whole new ... Oh, I was back to me again, so ...

Andrew: I'm glad to hear it.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: Well, Sue, we're almost out of time, actually.

Suzanne: Oh my gosh, I'm sorry.

Andrew: No, it's great. This was a great story, and it really, I think, illustrated some of the benefits that alternative medicine can have in thinking outside of the box, and really exploring all your options before you make a big decision like that surgery. So I think you made the right call.

Suzanne: Yeah.

Andrew: Suzanne, I feel like we've only scratched the surface of this topic, but it was really interesting to talk about some of the differences between Western medicine and alternative medicine, and hear your story and your experience.

Suzanne: Well, thank you, Andrew, for listening to my story, and thank you guys for spending your time listening to us. Our website is Culips.com. If you want to learn more about how you can study with us and improve your English, visit Culips.com.

Andrew: Yeah, Culips.com is the place where you can become a Culips member. And, again, guys, when you become a Culips member you get full access to our learning materials, which include transcripts, detailed vocabulary explanations, and quizzes for each episode.

And we love hearing from you. If you have an idea for an episode, definitely send it our way. You can get in touch with us through our Facebook website, actually, which is Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast, or send us an email directly at the address [contact@Culips.com](mailto:contact@Culips.com). We'll talk you next time. Bye!

Suzanne: Bye!

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## Detailed Explanations

### Go-to

**Go-to** is an adjective that can be used to describe people and places or services.

A **go-to** person is someone who can be relied upon to either complete a certain task or to provide useful information about a particular topic. That person is the one you want to go to in order to deal with a particular issue! For example, if you have a friend who works as a chef, they might be your **go-to** person for advice about cooking.

You can also describe a location or service as **go-to**. For example, if you have a favourite restaurant that you eat at a lot, you could describe it as your **go-to** restaurant. Another example can be found in today's episode when Suzanne mentions that Western medicine is our **go-to** way of treating illnesses. In other words, Western medicine is the service that most people count on to help them when they are sick.

So, whether you're using **go-to** to describe a person, place, or service, it always refers to the dependable, reliable option.

Here are a couple more examples with **go-to**:

Milo:	I can't believe it's time to do taxes again. I hate taxes!
Anne:	Why don't you hire an accountant if you hate doing them so much?
Milo:	I would, but I don't know how to find a reliable accountant. I don't just want to pick some random person I find online.
Anne:	I'll give you the number of my accountant. He's helpful, a real <b>go-to</b> guy for any financial questions or problems.
Milo:	Great, thanks!

Fred:	I'm so bored of going to the same café all the time. Their coffee isn't even that good.
Jessica:	Why don't you just go somewhere else?
Fred:	I don't know, it's just my <b>go-to</b> spot. They never have a lineup and the coffee always tastes the same, even if it's not that great.

## Hogwash

**Hogwash** is a noun that is most simply defined as nonsense—an idea that is either untrue or stupid, or makes no sense. You should note that **hogwash** is an informal and slightly outdated word. While people will understand you if you say that something is **hogwash**, you'll sound a little old fashioned.

In this episode, Andrew mentions that a lot of people think alternative medicine is **hogwash** because it hasn't been proven and tested by Western science. In other words, many people think that alternative medicine, and the ideas behind it, are either false or stupid.

Can you think of an idea or practice that you think is ridiculous? You can refer to it as **hogwash**!

Here are a couple more examples with **hogwash**:

Katherine:	I hear you're training for a marathon. How's that going?
Mark:	I haven't been doing too well lately. My times just aren't what I want them to be.
Katherine:	Oh, that's too bad. Are you going to train harder?
Mark:	No, I have something even better! I just bought these amazing shoes that the salesman promised would cut my time in half!
Katherine:	You know that's complete <b>hogwash</b> , right? No pair of shoes can make you run faster.

Linda:	I see you're drinking tea today. That's a first!
David:	I used to love coffee, but over the weekend I found out something really scary about it.
Linda:	Oh yeah, what did you learn?
David:	Apparently drinking coffee can lower your IQ! I'm never having another cup.
Linda:	Oh, David, drinking coffee does not lower your IQ. Where did you read that idea? It's total <b>hogwash</b> .
David:	Now that I think about it, it does sound a bit stupid.

## A gut feeling

**A gut feeling** is a noun used to describe a strong belief or understanding with origins that are difficult or impossible to identify.

In this episode, Suzanne mentions that she had **a gut feeling** that she shouldn't go through with the surgery her doctor recommended. This is **a gut feeling** because, despite it usually being a good idea to listen to your doctor, Suzanne somehow knew that surgery wasn't the right option for her.

In this case, Suzanne's **gut feeling** was correct! However, it's important to note that **gut feelings** are not necessarily true. **A gut feeling** is simply a strong, instinctual belief that may or may not be correct.

So, you can call any solid belief that is not necessarily based in reason **a gut feeling**. For example, if the weather forecast says it's going to be sunny, but you still really think it's going to rain, you can say that you have **a gut feeling** that the weather is going to be worse than expected.

Here are a couple more examples with **a gut feeling**:

Joe:	I heard that your bother just got married! Send him my congratulations!
Heather:	Yeah, sure.
Joe:	You don't seem all that happy about the good news.
Heather:	I know I should be happier about his marriage, but I just have this <b>gut feeling</b> that it's not going to last.
Joe:	Cheer up! Even if you're right, that doesn't mean that they're not happy right now. And your <b>gut feeling</b> might be wrong!
Heather:	That's a good way to look at it. Thanks!

Steve:	Have you heard back about your job interview last week?
Shannon:	I just heard—I got the job!
Steve:	That's great! I knew you were going to get the job. I had <b>a gut feeling</b> .

## Funky

**Funky** is an adjective with three different meanings. Today we'll touch on two of them. The third refers to a style of music, but we won't go into that here.

The first meaning of **funky** is a slang term for fashionable in a different or unusual way. If you see someone who has a cool but unconventional sense of style, you can say that their clothing is **funky**.

The second meaning of **funky** is foul smelling or generally bad. You can use this meaning of **funky** in two ways. The most common is to describe things that smell bad, such as rotten food or sweaty clothes. However, you can also use **funky** to describe a bad feeling in your body. This is the way **funky** was used in today's episode when Suzanne described feeling nervous, saying that your stomach starts to feel **funky**. In this context, saying that your stomach feels **funky** is the same as saying it feels rotten or simply bad.

So, you can use **funky** to describe something fashionable but unusual, something that has a bad odour, or a part of your body that feels bad.

Here are a couple more examples with **funky**:

Nora:	Hey, Kyle, you look pretty pale. Are you feeling OK?
Kyle:	I'm not feeling too great, actually.
Nora:	Oh no, are you going to be all right?
Kyle:	I think so. My head feels <b>funky</b> . I'm probably just getting a headache.

Megan:	How long does food usually keep in the fridge?
Sean:	I don't know, it really depends on the type of food.
Megan:	Oh, OK.
Sean:	Why do you ask?
Megan:	I made some chili about a week ago and I'm not sure if it's still safe to eat.
Sean:	Does it smell <b>funky</b> ?
Megan:	No, it smells fine.
Sean:	Should be OK to eat then. The smell test almost never lies!

**To throw [someone or something] off**

**To throw off** is a phrasal verb that means to cause someone to be confused or something to have unexpected and undesirable results. Let's look at these two cases separately.

When you talk about **throwing someone off**, this means you've caused them to be confused, distracted, or otherwise negatively diverted. For example, in this episode Suzanne mentions that she couldn't stick to her healthy habits during a difficult and stressful time while doing her master's degree. She says that the stress **threw her off** her regimen. In other words, the stress distracted her and made it more difficult to stick to her healthy routines.

When you talk about **throwing something off**, this refers to something that is negatively affected by some action. For example, if you make a mistake when cooking and add too much salt, this can **throw the dish off**. In other words, the taste of the food is worse than expected because of your mistake.

So, **to throw somebody off** means to negatively distract or confuse that person, and **to throw something off** means to cause it to be worse than expected.

Here are a couple more examples with **to throw [someone or something] off**:

Robert:	How was your day?
Rita:	Not good. I'm in a terrible mood.
Robert:	What happened? You seemed really happy this morning.
Rita:	Three buses drove past my bus stop this morning, so I was half an hour late, and when I got in my boss yelled at me. The whole thing <b>threw me off</b> all day.

Olaf:	Did you have a nice lunch with your family today?
Emma:	No, I did not!
Olaf:	Oh dear. What went wrong?
Emma:	My sister was being difficult and rude to everyone. She clearly didn't want to be there and was taking out her frustration on us.
Olaf:	That sounds terrible. That kind of bad behaviour can really <b>throw the mood off</b> and make everyone else feel bad too.

## Quiz

**1. What can you call a strong belief about something that is not based in reason?**

- a) a rotten feeling
- b) a gut feeling
- c) a stomach sense
- d) an intestinal sense

**2. When someone is thrown off, they are:**

- a) happy and relaxed
- b) confident and sure
- c) distracted and confused
- d) angry and dismayed

**3. True or false: You can use go-to to describe a reliable person, place, or service.**

- a) true
- b) false

**4. When you hear an idea that you think is complete nonsense, you can say it's:**

- a) dogwash
- b) hogwash
- c) ratwash
- d) pigwash

**5. If something smells funky, it has a \_\_\_\_\_ odour.**

- a) rotten
- b) neutral
- c) sweet
- d) spicy



## Quiz Answers

1.b    2.c    3.a    4.b    5.a

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### Episode credits

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