

# Disgustology with Dr. Paul Rozin

## Ologies Podcast

### March 27, 2024

Oh, just a content warning up top. We talk about all kinds of things in this, sex, things you may not want to eat, things you might. It gets gross, it's disgust. What can I tell ya? Enjoy.

Ohhh hey, so it's your friend who offered you a mint and now you're overthinking why, Alie Ward. Here we are, about to experience something together. It gets wild, friends. Come along. This is one that's been sitting in the stacks for a bit, it's kind of been fermenting, because it was recorded over the summer right before I got really sick, and getting into this week, I realized I'd forgotten how absolutely unhinged this one is in terms of subject matter. You're in for a treat... *urine* for a treat.

But first, thank you to Patreon, you submitted thoughtful questions for this revolting romp. To join, you submit yours before our interviews, just hop on over to [Patreon.com/Ologies](https://www.patreon.com/Ologies), where it costs one hot dollar a month to join. Thank you also to everyone wearing *Ologies* merch from [OlogiesMerch.com](https://www.OlogiesMerch.com). Also, side note thanks for all the really, really, really sweet, supportive messages after last week's Field Trip episode of my getting surgery. It meant more to me than you know, and I even got some notes in our reviews. And to prove I read every review, I pick a fresh, non-rotting one each week such as this one from Rnrslc who said:

*Love the theme song, love the tangents and secrets, love the rawness.*

I love that review Rnrslc and thank you to everyone who left reviews, including another user by the name of PooPooPeePee who is right on target for this episode because... Disgustology, it's a real term. It stems from *gusto*, which is taste, so it means "a distaste" or "to put off one's appetite." So, if you are hoping to stop snacking for an hour, you have arrived at the right place. I interviewed a Harvard-trained cultural psychologist who is now a Professor at the University of Pennsylvania. I got myself to this beautiful building in the heart of the metropolis and I was warmly invited into his high-rise home.

Alie: Oh, great building. Should I take my shoes off?

Paul: You don't have to.

Alie: What a view! [*gasps*] Oh my gosh.

His windows were a panoramic vista cast in blue-gray as this afternoon summer thunderstorm churned over the city.

Alie: What's cozy for you?

Paul: Anything you'd like.

So, I got settled in a deep chair next to the couch and we had a lovely just casual kind of chit chat about spit, potty training, fork sharing, spoiled meat, xenophobia, sex kinks, funereal experiments, perfume that you may or may not want to buy, food you may not want to eat, the ick, nipples, World War II, and so much more. It gets *spicy*. So, face your fears and get to know the emotion that keeps you alive with psychology professor, researcher, lauded expert, and he who bears the title officially of disgustologist, Dr. Paul Rozin.

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**Paul:** My first name is Paul, my last name is Rozin, my Russian name. My father came from Belarus and when he came to Ellis Island, my father said, "I want my Russian name." So, I don't have the same name as many of my relatives.

**Aside:** But you can call him Dr. Disgust, several news outlets have!

**Paul:** So, in studying emotion, disgust turns out to be very convenient. Toilet training, which is a very interesting thing, was of course a central issue for Freud, but it's disgusting. There are two things, people don't want to study anything Freud was interested in because we've gotten past him, he wasn't really a scientist and we're a real science now. I mean, it's a fascinating area where you take something that kids love, they love poop, and you get them to hate it, to be really upset by it! And that's an amazing transformation and nobody has really seriously looked at that.

**Alie:** Do you think that in psychology, people think of Freud as a contaminant, and they don't want that contagion of being associated with his work?

**Paul:** I'm not quite sure he's a contaminant but certainly they don't want to be associated with Freud because Freud was not a scientist. He had a lot of interesting ideas, but he didn't pursue them in a scientific way. He thought of himself as a scientist by the way. Psychology is fighting to be called a science ever since I've been in the field, since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and they wanted to be with biology and chemistry not with sociology and anthropology. And shedding Freud was part of that. So, I wrote this paper on the seven holes of the body and how the psychology of each hole.

**Aside:** For more on this, you can see Dr. Rozin's 2007 address, "Exploring the Landscape of Modern Academic Psychology: Finding and Filling the Holes," in which he explains, "In the presence of holes, the clear demarcation between self and other is blurred... Each bodily hole offers both vulnerability and promise," which is so true. For what is our bodily self without access to that which surrounds us? Without a hole for snacks, our body is really hungry and probably dead.

**Paul:** I did one study showing that medical students who dissect the cadaver, so after they dissect the cadaver, they're much less disgusted by cadavers.

**Alie:** Huh! Okay.

**Paul:** But they're not less disgusted by fresh dead bodies.

**Alie:** [*gasps*] Really?

**Paul:** In other words, it's very specific.

**Aside:** Shall we enjoy a reading from the book of Cambridge University Press 2023 titled, "Hedonic "Adaptation": Specific habituation to disgust/death elicitors as a result of dissecting a cadaver." Let's. So, in this, Paul writes that by using the Disgust Scale as a metric, they find a "Significant reduction in disgust responses to death and body envelope violation elicitors" ... Don't know what that means but I can imagine. So, maggots or a dirty Kleenex might still be gross to a med student, but a cold corpse just becomes no biggie.

So, if you're scared of doing something new like taking the bus or wearing baggier but more fashionable pants, just think, with exposure therapy, we can get more comfy slicing into dead people. So, try the pants! Do it. You got this!

**Alie:** Have you ever had to interview anyone that works at a morgue and see why they're able to eat their lunch around dead bodies whereas another person would...

**Paul:** Well, first of all, some people can't do that.

**Alie:** Okay.

**Paul:** But they're not likely to become workers in morgues of course.

**Alie:** Good point.

**Paul:** So, you have a lot of selection. But people get used to almost everything, that's the story. You get used to all kinds of... getting old, you get used to the environment you're in. I had a case where we were doing a disgust study, one of my favorite studies, we were looking at actual exposure to real disgust things with people. Our instructions were... We had 32 tasks, I think, we asked them to do. One of them was to take a glass and spit in it and then would you drink the glass of water?

**Alie:** [*squirms*] Blergh. Ah! Even though that spit was just in my mouth, I don't want to do that.

**Paul:** That's right, isn't that interesting? It was just in your mouth. And we've got a freshly cut pig's head from a butcher and we said, "We have a pig head in the refrigerator, would you be willing to pull it out and look at it?" Yeah. "Would you be willing to touch it? Would you be willing to stick a pin in its eye?" [*Alie yelps*] And we asked people and people listened, some people did, and some people didn't, and we said, "No problem if you don't do it. Fine."

**Aside:** More on human relationships with animals, in terms of food, not other stuff, in a bit.

**Paul:** And we had them do all these crazy things. We also had a starter's pistol, but we showed them what it was and that there were no real bullets in it. Would you hold it to your head and pull the trigger? And some people, "Ohhh, no no!" So, we had all these tasks, we had a true Nazi hat from World War II, and we said, "Would you look at it? Would you touch it? Would you put it on your head?"

**Alie:** Oh boy.

**Paul:** So, we went through this whole thing and one thing we wanted to do was get ashes, cremated ashes. Everything we gave them was absolutely true, everything was what we said, the Nazi hat was a real Nazi hat. And we decided we couldn't really do cremated ashes.

**Alie:** Mmm, people donate their bodies.

**Paul:** But we did want to get something that looked just like it. So, we went to a crematorium, a student and I, [*"We... take a field trip."*] and we visited the guy who does this, and we explained what we wanted, and he said, "Oh! You want to see cremated ashes?" We said yeah. He said, "Oh! Come here!" And he had this room full of like, shoe boxes filled with cremated... He said, "Here's one. Here's another one." And he started showing us like he was selling them to us, okay? And he was so thrilled. No one had ever come to him and said, "I want to see what you do." And he said, "Do you want to see a body burning?" And he went on this whole thing, and we learned from him how to make from a dog bone mash, ground bone, and a couple other things, how we could make it look...

**Aside:** So, instead of someone's abandoned cremains, they opted for mashed-up beef bones from a pet food store and maybe got creative with some fireplace ash and some cornstarch or something. But it was a convincing craft project.

**Paul:** And we got an urn, we bought an urn from him. So, we have this thing which we said were cremated ashes, it's the only lie we told, and we asked people, would they look at the urn? Would they open the urn? Would they touch the ashes with their hand? So, we had people doing all these things and we measured how willing they were to do it. We had previously, they'd already taken a disgust scale, months before, so we had an indirect measure and now we had a direct measure of how disgust sensitive and so we could compare them. The interesting thing about this study is that after the study was over and they'd been through all these things, people said, "This was terrific! I want to get my friends to do this."

**Alie:** Oh geez.

**Paul:** Because this playing with disgust that's safe is actually sort of fun.

**Alie:** Yeah. Well, it's like Halloween, it's like a haunted house to them but with real disgusting artifacts.

**Paul:** Yeah, it's like a haunted house, that's right. So, that's one of the interesting things about disgust, it's so interesting to me, is how central it is in humor.

**Alie:** Oh, for sure.

**Paul:** There are all these disgust jokes, I mean, there's loads of them.

**Alie:** Toilet humor got its name for a reason. Toilet humor, scatological humor.

**Paul:** Yes, that's right. And people can laugh at it as long as it isn't in their face. That is, if they're not facing the disgust, somebody else is.

**Aside:** And if you'd like more on everything from chuckles to hysterics to roast comedy and slapstick, early in *Ologies* I interviewed Dr. Lee Berk, who is a renowned professor and a Gelatologist who studies laughter's effect on the body. He says he's the guy who is serious about studying comedy and he's not wrong and he's a darling.

**Alie:** Going back a little bit in terms of defining disgust, is disgust an emotion? Is it a reaction? Where does disgust fall in the spectrum of things that we can feel? How is it classified?

**Paul:** Well, it's classified as an emotion and it's even classified as one of the big six emotions in psychology along with fear, anger, sad, happy, surprise, I don't like that one, and disgust. [*Alie laughs softly*] There are other taxonomies. There's an Indian taxonomy which has ten emotions, but disgust is one of those too.

**Aside:** Let's explore a few extra emotions via the turn of the century, 2000, paper: "Exploring Hindu Indian emotion expressions: evidence for accurate recognition by Americans and Indians" which lists the culturally recognized emotions, this is via a rough translation from Sanskrit as, get ready for this: anger, disgust, fear, heroism, humor or amusement, love, peace, sadness, shame-embarrassment, and wonder. I love that range and I also love that wonder is an emotion, I'm just in wonder about that.

And I've got to say, if you're not familiar with the Emotions Wheel, look it up. It's this thing, it's like a color wheel but it has the Western psychology's recognized six emotions which are fear, anger, disgust, surprise, happiness, and sadness, with these subsets and variations under each of them. Like under happy, there is peaceful, or remorseful is under sad. Disgust emotions can vary from judgmental to hesitant or disappointed. If you must know, I have a laminated copy of this wheel up in my office, and I also purchased a throw pillow for the couch. If Jarrett and I are pissy to each other, we literally bust out the Emotions Wheel pillow and we point to what we're really feeling, which is honestly usually fear, which has underlying feelings of anxious, inadequate, or even overwhelmed. How about that?

Surprise emotions can include amazed, or awestruck, startled, shocked, or dismayed. So, what if you hate surprises? What if you haaaate them? I'm not one of those people but some personality psychologists say this is in line with higher prefrontal cortex activity in a part of the brain called the anterior cingulate gyrus which handles thinky tasks like decision-making, and attention to detail and avoiding mistakes. According to this book, *You, Happier*, these types of folks who hate surprises tend to be a little more stubborn, but they like routines, and they have a lot of perseverance, maaaybe they're a little more anxious, maybe they hang on to grudges, but they really get shit done.

For more on Personality Psychology, we have an excellent episode with Dr. Simine Vazire, which I hope surprises you with energetic awe, amazement, and eager astonishment, according to the wheel that I just looked up. But let's roll on backwards to disgust.

**Paul:** So, it's got most of the properties of an emotion; it's got a facial expression that's clear, it's an acute feeling, you don't feel disgusted for a month, you feel disgusted... It's almost always tied to some event.

**Alie:** And where does that facial expression come from?

**Paul:** I think disgust is originally about rejecting offensive foods, that's where it starts, and that's I think where we see it first in children. It's closing of the nose, opening of the mouth, gaping sometimes, sticking your tongue out. That's all getting rid of things, it's expelling it.

**Alie:** And you're closing off your palette really, right, to not let anything down the hatch?

**Paul:** Yeah, you're basically spitting out or closing it off, that's right. So, that's what it looks like and that's functionally what it is. Now, when you show that to something else like, let's say, Adolf Hitler, and people go [*revolted sounds*] well, that's of course an extension of that same disgust, it's not about eating Hitler, but it's the same system that's applied to moral things now.

**Alie:** How can you tell that that is disgust and not anger, say, for example?

**Paul:** Well, okay. So, first of all, anger is an approach emotion.

**Alie:** Oh! What's an approach emotion?

**Paul:** An emotion that when you experience it you want to engage with whatever stimulated you. You're angry at it. Whereas disgust is a withdrawal emotion so it's very different, it's the opposite. They're both negative but one is a negative approach, the other is a negative withdrawal. Now, there is some overlap in the facial because this disgust thing also bears your teeth.

**Alie:** Oh yeah, you're right.

**Paul:** One anger face is also a disgust face, and this is a disgust face that is not at all anger.

**Alie:** And that's just, you're not bearing your teeth you're just... tongue out.

**Aside:** Let's turn our attention briefly to the "Varieties of disgust faces and the structure of disgust," which was co-authored by yes, Dr. Paul Rozin. In it, you're going to learn that,

*The nose wrinkle is associated with either irritating or offensive smells and, to some extent, bad tastes. Gape and tongue extrusion are associated with food-offense disgust and oral irritation.*

A raised upper lip correlates to boundary violations, like bodily or personal space, or certain moral offenses. So, humans evolved these signals prehistorically, and this study was authored a scant 30 years ago by Paul. But I'm thinking with the number of selfie camera monologues we deliver to AI-equipped social media biometric capturing platforms, I'm sure we have more data than we could ever use to analyze just what our faces are doing when we're grossed out. Someone out there, work with an evil social media company, and figure this out. They'll do it for the sake of profit and coercion, you might not even have to get a grant. Just thinking about that curls my lip!

**Paul:** The raised upper lip is part of both anger and disgust. When disgust is a moral reaction to, like, Adolf Hitler, it's sometimes difficult to distinguish from anger because psychologically, you're disgusted by Hitler, but you also want to hit him.

**Alie:** Right. Ah! That's an interesting notion. Disgust, is it a lot about threat abatement?

**Paul:** Yeah, it's a threat. You could say it's a threat but it's not a threat that's directed at you so it's one that you can withdraw from. Here's an example, if you're watching someone on the street dressed in formal wear, a man and a woman, and the man steps in dog do on the street, that's really funny. But if you step in dog doo, not funny.

**Alie:** Not so funny. Oh, not funny.

**Aside:** I will say it matters profoundly who steps in it and if I hate them. If it's like, a sweet couple that is celebrating their anniversary because it might be the last one before one of them dies because they have cancer and the nice man wants to take his beautiful wife out to this special dinner and she feels like herself in a wig and a fancy dress and then he steps in dog doo left by some jerk who doesn't clean up after his expensive purebred dog from a backyard breeder, then no, that's not very funny and I'm having too many emotions. But yeah, let's suppose the poo-stepper, let's just pretend, that that is your childhood bully who you later dated but then they cheated on you with your boss and the two of them were going to a fancy dinner using your stolen credit card and then one of them stepped in dog doo and you see it from across the street because you're hiding in a bush because you're getting footage for a court case. That's funny. And why?

Okay, so I looked this up. In terms of humor theory, this one example touches on a few basic concepts, these have been noted by philosophers going back thousands of years. One of them is the relief theory, where something absurd happens to break tension in a situation. But there's also the superiority theory where someone with power over you is humbled, and that's funny. And then there's this theory of disposition, where we can enjoy when good things happen to people we like but then when bad things happen to assholes. So, in this example though, it's best to see it and not smell it.

**Paul:** A lot of disgust humor, it requires that you be away from it. It's not really threatening you. That's true of a lot of things. I have a concept called benign masochism which is that people all around the world seem to enjoy the arousal of negative emotions (fear, disgust) as long as they're not really threatened by them, and that includes a roller coaster where you're not really falling to your death, but you think you are, and the fear becomes part of the pleasure. Disgust at someone else's disgusting situation, you feel it but it's not about you, you didn't step in the dog doo. So, that's part of how disgust humor works, it's a third party who dropped his lunch in the outhouse and has to go down and pull it out. It's not you.

**Aside:** Again, that's your ex who cheated on you, so that's hilarious. And the most tension and release I feel isn't in a three-dollar airport massage chair but it's probably watching the television sketch comedy program called, *I Think You Should Leave*. Every episode, every sketch hurts my soul and I love it, I keep going back for more.

**Alie:** What about cringe humor where you're watching someone have a really uncomfortable, awkward interaction and you're not even involved but it just is like, [*squirms*] hurts to watch.

**Paul:** It hurts to watch but the hurt is pleasant.

**Alie:** Right, right.

**Paul:** Because you initiate it. Because that's the same thing. So, benign masochism is the idea that we enjoy these innately negative things because when we're secure then we are not threatened by them. That even includes jumping out of a plane on a parachute, it includes taking cold showers, and a lot of things where your body is not really threatened but your body *thinks* it's threatened.

**Alie:** But when we're disgusted or when we evade the threat that disgusts us, do we get any pleasure from surviving it?

**Paul:** We might get pleasure from surviving it. So, the pleasure, for example, of pain from running a mile, or 10 miles. There may be some feeling of overcoming but it's also the actual pain can become pleasant, not just the success but also the experience of the pain.

**Aside:** And if you need scholarly justification for remaining emo, you can see the 2023 study, "Glad to be sad, and other examples of benign masochism," co-authored by one Paul Rozin, which explains that hedonic reversals can be a major source of pleasure, and they can range from liking sad experiences, like music, novels, tearjerker movies, or my entire college CD collection, to enjoying food that is spicy or the strong taste of coffee or alcohol. Now, how bad is good? That's the question. So, the study concludes that "the favored level of initially negative experiences is something that's just below the level that cannot be tolerated." So, I guess like edging but with a bummer. Speaking of, does that include kinks? We're going to get to that later. But back to his history.

**Alie:** And what about when your family came over, I was wondering, because you've done studies with Nazi ephemera, did you have members of your family who were Jewish? Or who were...

**Paul:** My family on both sides are Jewish. No one in my family was in Europe during the Nazi period. I've done studies on that, I know two people who were victims of the Holocaust, who were in camps. They were anti-Nazi, but they had no problem going to Germany and I knew lots of American Jews, who never had anything to do with the Holocaust, who wouldn't ride in a Volkswagen, who wouldn't eat sauerkraut, all sorts of stuff and I was really puzzled. I get puzzled by things, how can someone who was in Auschwitz for two years not be anti-German and someone who is just sitting here and none of their relatives even were in Germany, but they're so anti-German? It turns out, just like with disgust, there's an enormous range of anti-Germanists in Jewish people. So, we found that quite a few people who were in the Holocaust were not anti-German.

**Alie:** That's interesting, yeah.

**Paul:** And there are a lot of reasons. One reason, very simple one, is that the German ones had experienced nice Germans before the Holocaust. Germany was not the most antisemitic country in Europe actually and there were lots of successful Jews in Germany. So, they knew nice Germans and then they met in the camps, the Nazis so we got interested in that. We studied about 40 survivors, and we got them to tell us, would they go in a Volkswagen? Could they listen to the German language spoken? Would they be upset about living in an apartment house which had the grandson of a Nazi living in that house? And some of them were, "Oh, that's terrible," and other people, "No, that's no problem."

**Alie:** Yeah. Ah, that's interesting.

**Paul:** Yeah, but anyway. Yeah, I mean there are a lot of puzzling things about people who go through terrible trauma and come out opposite, you know? And we don't understand why.

**Alie:** Yeah. Oh, but it's great to be asking the questions. And what about you? What drove you to this particular niche? How did you find yourself as the godfather of disgust? A disgustingologist?

**Paul:** Well, it's actually a very simple story. I was studying what people eat and why they eat it. Perhaps the favorite food of humans around the world is meat.

**Alie:** Oh, okay.

**Aside:** So yes, this is true, and we discussed hunter-gatherer diets in the metabolism episode in January. Our lead editor, Mercedes Maitland also has an anthropology background and chimed in, letting me know that,

*Meat and honey. Not to say that's what people actually manage to eat the most, but that's what are historically the most prized foods. For example, in hunter-gatherer societies, people will tend to put more time and energy into getting X number of calories from meat than they would into getting X number of calories from plant foods.*

Now, how does this translate to you wandering indecisively at the mall food court, as your lunch break minutes dwindle away? Well, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, globally, pork is the most consumed meat, and it makes up over a third of the world's meat consumption. I wouldn't have guessed that! Next is birds, and yes, we have a whole episode about chickens and yes, it's called Chickenology. I didn't make that up, it is what it is. Do not call me a fool. However, if you listened to the Hydrochoreology episode recently about capybaras, you'd know that those big mammalian rodents are actually fish. Happy Easter!

**Paul:** But then it turns out that meat is also the most tabooed food. You don't get vegetable taboos very often.

**Alie:** Right.

**Paul:** Now, why is this food that is so desirable often prohibited? Sometimes they're tabooed for everybody and if you think of say, Americans, there are 4,000 species of mammals, we eat three: pigs, cows, maybe sheep.

**Alie:** Right.

**Paul:** That's about it.

**Alie:** Huh. Wow, yeah. That's a good point. I keep thinking of birds.

**Paul:** What about the other 3,900... We are meat eaters, we love our meat, but we are disgusted not only by almost every species of mammal and every other kind of species, but we're also disgusted by most parts of them. We don't eat eyeballs, we don't eat skin, we don't eat fat, masses of fat, we don't eat a lot of things. We eat basically muscle. We don't eat brain, in the United States we don't eat most viscera, we just eat muscle.

**Aside:** Again, this is in Western or US Culture. And fun fact, so the way that I met my spouse, Jarrett, was by walking into an organic, nose-to-tail butcher shop and he was behind the counter, he was wearing a chainmail apron... Augh! But that smile. And I remember, he used to tell these tales of all these upscale Hollywood clients that just wanted either pork belly or a skinless chicken breast and *no* other part of the animal. They had to convince people to like, try chicken thighs. But just not a lot of people tossin' pig kidneys into their air fryers.

**Paul:** So, we're eating one kind of thing from only a few animals and the rest of them are all disgusting.

**Alie:** Yeah, why is that? Why, culturally, are Americans like...

**Paul:** So, I would say that the story is... First of all, almost all food disgusts are animal products, almost all.

**Alie:** Huh! Except for durian, maybe.

**Paul:** Yeah, yes. And durian because it smells like it is rotting meat. Yes, that's right. So, the question is, why do we find most meat disgusting? And that includes earthworms and rats and all the things that we find disgusting. But another way to ask is why do we eat any meat? We eat this tiny percentage of all the animal food we could eat, and the question is how we made an exception to that. You could ask the question either way, but the important point is that there's all this great animal protein out there and we don't want to have anything to do with any of it and even



traditional cultures would eat much more meat than we do and much more parts of the animal, still find many animals disgusting.

**Aside:** He says in different parts of the world, different cultures eat different types of protein sources.

**Paul:** But they still don't eat it all and they tend to not like decayed meat, which is generally disgusting. Now, there are exceptions to that but they're very special. There are cultures that eat rotted meat but only in certain cases and it's generally not consumed. So, that's what got me going was here is this most favorite food of humans...

**Aside:** Again, talking meat.

**Paul:** ... and people are rejecting almost all instances of it and they're not just saying, "I won't eat it," like you might say about paper, they're actually offended by eating it. So, I said, what's going on there? And that's how I got going.

**Alie:** And what do you think about types of meat that we'll readily eat such as a hot dog even though we know there's buttholes in it, but we wouldn't eat just-

**Paul:** We know there's what in it?

**Alie:** Butt holes. We know that it's full of anuses. A hot dog is full of pig lips and butts.

**Paul:** Well, you can't be full of a hole.

**Alie:** Well, sure. Its' sphincters.

**Paul:** You mean the liner.

**Alie:** Entrails... I mean, I love hot dogs, don't get me wrong, but I know that hot dogs are full of things that if they weren't, like, macerated and emulsified, I probably would not eat the hot dog.

**Paul:** Yes. In actual fact, I never looked at this, it's a good question. What's in a hot dog?

**Aside:** Do we want to know? Should we learn this? You know, some wieners, you gotta look straight in the face. So, I googled the sentence "What's in a hot dog just level with me." And I've got to say the image search returns had a lot of appetizing photos of crusty buns, taugt meat links and mustard squiggles, and the like, but let's give it up for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals just busting out the disgust with photos of a vat containing what looked like giant ribbons of milk chocolate frozen yogurt but what actually contained whipped and emulsified muscle.

And I found myself knee-deep in a clip on the YouTube channel for *How It's Made*. [*"Traditional hot dogs are made from a mix of pork, beef, and chicken. The cuts they start with are called trimmings, pieces of meat left over from cutting steaks or pork chops."*] and I realized this isn't... You're working with an audio-only format and you're welcome for that right now, but I'm going to have you visualize this because I had to see it. Just think of an industrial stainless-steel tub about the size of a minivan and in it is a churning, fluffy, grayish-brown substance, and it... I stared at it, and I was like, what does it look like? And I realized it resembled Jabba the Hutt just rolling over in his sleep, just over and over. That in a vat, but it's liquid, ish.

**Paul:** I mean, and some other things like that, sausages are actually encased in intestine skin, you know?

**Alie:** Right.

**Paul:** So, there are all sorts of ways that we work around a lot of these things. I mean, after all, people are breathing everyone else's air when they walk around, and they don't seem to be upset by that. You go to a theatre, you're sitting right next to someone, you're breathing their air in, and unless you're

worried about COVID, you don't think about it. People aren't too upset about being in the same room as something disgusting, but they don't want to touch it.

**Alie:** Right.

**Paul:** So, the touch... and eat it. Oh, that's terrible.

**Alie:** It's just exponential contact.

**Paul:** Yes. And eating is the worst thing. No one, by the way, I don't think anyone has ever done disgust sensitivity of the vagina, but I assume it's somewhat like the mouth. I mean, the idea of touching a piece of raw meat to the va...

**Alie:** I mean, it doesn't appeal but then again, it depends on whether the raw meat is alive, and a person, you know?

**Paul:** Yeah. Well, I mean, if you look at what you don't want to put in your mouth, it's probably not unrelated to what you don't want to put in your mouth, it's probably not unrelated to what you don't want to put in your vagina.

**Alie:** Right. For sure.

**Paul:** Whereas I mean, a lot of people wouldn't mind touching it to their ear. I mean, they don't want to touch it to anything, but the ear is not- It's a hole but it's a neutral hole, sort of.

**Aside:** So, would I touch a piece of raw pork to my mouth? No... No. Would I touch it to my new surgically altered vagina? Hell no, brother. And if you're like, "Excuse me? What did you get done to where?" you can see last week's episode, Field Trip: Alie's Mystery Surgery, I'm going to leave you hanging, just got to go listen. Now, would I let raw pork touch my ear which is a neutral hole? I think I would. I think I would because an ear canal is totally different in terms of consistency, it's not a blank canvas for contamination like a mouth, a butt, or a cooter.

**Alie:** Is it epithelial tissue that makes us squeamish?

**Paul:** Well, there's epithelial tissue in the ear too.

**Alie:** Is there epith- I didn't know that!

**Paul:** Well, there's an internal epithelium, which is a little different, which is the moist one that you have in the vagina and the mouth.

**Aside:** I fact-checked this and yeah, it checks out. If you still don't believe me, you can skip over to the 2019 paper, "Single origin of the epithelium of the human middle ear," like I did. But epithelial tissue, it's all over the body. It comes in a variety of cellular shapes like scale or squamous, or tube-shaped cells, and even cubic-shaped cells. And this type of epithelial tissue, it's all over our organs, our blood vessels, it lines cavities. And if you're like, "What does epithelial even mean?" I'm glad you asked because I just learned its etymology and in Greek, it means "on the nipple" or "of the teat" and apparently even the epidermis is a type of epithelial tissue, so this is news to me. I'm all ears.

**Paul:** You have a little bit in the nose. So, it could be the moisture that's... Moisture makes things more conductive.

**Alie:** Right. What do you think of the word 'moist'?

**Paul:** What do I think of the word?

**Alie:** People hate the word 'moist.' How do you feel about that?

**Paul:** Yeah, moist is... You know, a lot of disgusting things are damp, wet, and viscera are wet. Moist, in English has a certain negative... If you ask people is 'moist' a positive or negative word, or damp? They would say negative. So, moist is a feature of solids, that's often associated with decay and there are plenty of foods that are moist. So, moist is fascinating. It has a negative overtone, I think you're right, in English.

**Aside:** Augh, I wish we had a language expert to explain why we hate the word moist, among others. I stumbled upon an article titled, "A Language Expert Explains Why You Hate the Word 'Moist,' Among others," in *Vice*, and that pointed me to a 2016 scholarly article called, "A Moist Crevice for Word Aversion: In Semantics Not Sounds," and they concluded that around 10 to 20% of the population gets the creepy crawlies at the mention of 'moist.'

Now, if you listened to our Rhinology and our Hagfishology episodes, both bangers, in the past, I left all the 'shits' and the 'fucks' in, but I bleeped any mention of the word 'mucus' for sensitive listeners, mostly myself. I have since matured, and though the word 'mucus,' very much still on my shit list, I just grit my teeth and I get through it but know that it hurts me. I don't like it.

But anyway, back to that 2016 study which continued that word aversion is "more prevalent among younger and more neurotic people and it's more commonly reported by females than males," which personally... It tracks. That's making sense for me. But this is all just when it comes to words, at least.

**Alie:** What about culturally... Do certain cultures tend to be quicker to disgust than others?

**Paul:** We do know that women are more sensitive to disgust than men, at least in Japan and the United States. In these two places I know, maybe more than that, because there are disgust scales measuring sensitivity. [*Alie gasps*] There's an enormous range of disgust sensitivity. There are people who show almost no disgust.

**Alie:** Who are those people?

**Paul:** Regular people.

**Alie:** Regular people. But are there certain neurodivergences, like are people with ADHD less likely to be disgusted?

**Paul:** I have no idea about ADHD but in our "normal" population you find people who are hypersensitive to disgust. So, for example, one thing, one criteria we use, would you blow your nose in a brand new piece of toilet paper, coming right out of the package?

**Alie:** Sure. Sure.

**Paul:** Yeah, but there are people who won't do that.

**Alie:** Okay. Ohhh, okay. Oh! Because it's toilet...

**Paul:** So, that's very sensitive.

**Alie:** Oh yeah, I wouldn't care about that.

**Paul:** See, but you're probably somewhere near the middle like everybody. And there are other people who can't believe that anybody would be like that and really don't find feces disgusting. [*"Who are they?"*]

**Alie:** I mean, it also depends on whose dog it is. I don't want to pick up my friend's dog's poop, but I'll pick up my own.

**Paul:** Well, that's an interesting issue there too. Why are we relatively insensitive to your own poop? Of course, you better be because you're carrying it around with you all the time, it's in you. So, people are definitely much less sensitive to their own poop. Sometimes it extends to your lover's poop, sometimes it doesn't. Your baby's poop, yes. Mothers typically find their baby's poop much less disgusting than some other baby's and you said it with the dog.

**Alie:** Right. Yeah, I'll pick up my dog's poop all day but do not ask me to pick up another person's dog poop. [*gags*]

**Aside:** Oh man, I just had the cringiest feeling because I remember during that *soirée*, I had with my girlfriends before my surgery, I talked about it in the Field Trip episode, my friend Dailyn was over early and she was like, "Anything I can do?" And I was like, "Can you take Gremmie for a walk? My hands are so full right now." And I had completely forgotten until right now that Dailyn cannot stand picking up other dogs' poop and she did it, she didn't say a word about it, but I just remembered it and now I want to die.

Also, that night, I suggested my friend Sara, I was like, "You gotta try one of these grapes! These are such good grapes," and she reminded me that to eat a grape is incredibly difficult for her because if it were squishy, it would signify a little bit of rot and she would gag. So, I'm over here, I'm just doing amazing. Anyone want to come see the pig head in my refrigerator or touch this bowl of bone dust? Let's party.

**Paul:** Now, you could say about yourself, your own poop, that that's, of course, you're not threatened by your own poop biologically because you already have all those organisms in you.

**Alie:** Yeah, that's true.

**Paul:** Whereas someone else's poop might have something you don't have. But everyone agrees that disgust has something to do with infection, avoiding infection. So, there's no question about that. So, you could say that your own poop is less threatening and that's why you are less disgusted. I don't think that's the reason myself. But your dog's example, which I think is not atypical, there's no way that you are less threatened by your dog's poop than by someone other dog's poop.

**Alie:** Yeah. Maybe it's the devil you know. You know what I mean?

**Paul:** Well, it's familiarity but you love your dog. [*"That is correct."*] So, you could try to show, for example, the more you love your dog, the less you're upset about its poop.

Now, I once tried to do a study like that, it was about looking at how intimate people are with their dogs as a relation to disgust. So, do they sleep in bed with it? So on, things like that. We wanted to look at that, so we went to the vet school here, we have a great vet school at Penn, and we went into their clinic waiting area and we interviewed people with their dogs and asked them these things and we found much to our distress that almost everybody there sleeps with their dog, talks to their dog as if it's a child, and basically makes it into a member of their family. They treat it essentially as a human being. [*"I plead guilty."*] And so, we didn't get these people where dogs are kept mostly for protection or something and they're not really cuddled with.

**Aside:** Cuddle those pups because according to the 2020 *Frontier's* paper, "Household Pet Ownership and the Microbial Diversity of the Human Gut Microbiota," pets do increase the diversity of our microbiome with dogs contributing more types of bacteria than kitties. A 2017 *New York Times* article, "Are Pets the New Probiotic?" reports that epidemiological studies show that children who grow up in households with dogs have a lower risk for developing autoimmune illnesses like asthma or allergies. Of course, animals can bring in the nasties like toxoplasmosis or salmonella if you cuddle with turtles, so doctors advise washing your damn hands before you eat.

But what if the animal itself touches your food? Let's check out the 2020 paper, "Bugs are blech, butterflies are beautiful, but both are bad to bite: Admired animals are disgusting to eat but are themselves neither disgusting nor contaminating" co-authored by, you guessed it, Dr. Disgust, Paul Rozin. It found that the more you like an animal, the less bothered you are by it touching your food! So, imagine a butterfly that alights upon your sandwich, just blessing it with peace and beauty, would you want to eat the actual butterfly? Heavens, no! But what if a cockroach with the big wings landed on your sandwich, one of those big flying ones, and licked your meat? Would you want to eat anything ever again? Maybe not.

However, cockroaches are fastidious groomers and according to our Lepidopterology episode with Phil Torres, butterflies love to slurp shit and they're often drunk off rotting fruit. So, you would think that studying butterflies would be this hazy rainbow of bliss just set to like, an Enya soundtrack but Phil explains in that episode that in order to lure butterflies, sometimes scientists have to pee on cans of rotting tuna in the rainforest. So, butterfly expertise necessitates a pretty strong stomach.

**Paul:** Now, there are people, occasional cases, neurological cases of people who have no disgust.

**Alie:** What part of their brain is not firing?

**Paul:** It mostly involves the insula at the base of the brain, related to the olfactory system by the way, which is not surprising since disgust is about basically smell and taste.

**Aside:** Again, see our Gustology episode about taste which is linked in the show notes. And right now, take inventory, if you're snacking on a chocolate-covered banana or a sausage or a chocolate-covered sausage, just set it down for a sec... It's going to get rough.

**Paul:** And by the way, we've worked with chocolate dog doos of course. [*Alie gasps*] We made chocolate dog doos that look just like dog doos and we made it with stinky cheese [*Alie groans, gags, and laughs*] and chocolate so it smelled like shit and we'd ask people if they would eat it.

**Alie:** Oh no! Just the thought of it is closing my throat up.

**Paul:** But a simple thing to do is just take melted chocolate and make it into a dog turd, solid chocolate, perfectly good chocolate.

**Alie:** Right, right.

**Aside:** Just a reminder, this is a job... Once again, this is a job that pays money and you need a PhD for it, amazing.

**Paul:** And you ask people, you show them what it's made of, you see it's solid chocolate. Would you eat it? And a lot of people won't bite it.

**Alie:** I know. Just the thought of it is making my throat close. What's happening? My brain is just thinking about it and saying, "Do not put that in your stomach. Don't put it in your stomach."

**Paul:** The thing about it is that we are built in a way that says that if it looks like an X, it's an X because in the real world, that's true. In the old days, if it looked like a tiger, it was a tiger. So, you have something in your head that looks like dog doo, it is dog doo. You know in your brain that that's not dog doo, that's chocolate but that piece of your head is saying, "Looks like dog doo, is dog doo," and you don't want to touch it.

**Alie:** How disgusted are you because your home is immaculate and so...

**Paul:** I wouldn't go that far.

**Alie:** Your home is beautiful and it's so well decorated, everything is in place, there's not a speck of dust anywhere. You're well-dressed, you seem like a very clean person.

**Paul:** Your description of my home doesn't resonate with me.

**Alie:** Immaculate.

**Paul:** I mean, it's not immaculate. It's okay.

**Alie:** But do you fall on the cleaner side, the more meticulous side?

**Paul:** No, generally speaking, you'd expect that most of the people who work in this area are relatively insensitive otherwise they'd be disgusted by their work and not do it. I had a colleague who worked with me, he was very disgust-sensitive but generally speaking, I'm not particularly disgust-sensitive. There are some things I don't like that are a little bit disgusting but no, I'm not disgust-sensitive.

**Alie:** What's the most reliable test a layperson could take to find out where they fall on the scale?

**Paul:** Well, we could start with, I'm just making this up now. Okay, brand new toilet paper at one end, would you be upset about blowing your nose in that?

**Alie:** Not at all.

**Paul:** That's in one way an extreme. Are you willing to use a public toilet?

**Alie:** Sure.

**Paul:** Yeah, but there are people who would really be upset about that.

**Alie:** Yeah.

**Paul:** How about used clothing?

**Alie:** Oh sure! I'll wash it. I'm just thinking for myself.

**Paul:** Yeah, I don't mind any of those things but then you can get to more difficult things. Some things that almost everybody is disgusted by like a fresh piece of dog shit on the one hand, and then on the other end, you have this brand new toilet paper, and you could just see where you stand. But there's a very wide range, this is something that people are all over the place on.

**Aside:** Just this morning, the same morning this will air because we hustle our bustles here, Jarrett and I went to a park and we decided to spend some special married romantic time sipping coffee and taking this Disgust Scale quiz, which was co-authored by this week's guest in 1994. So, we sat down at a park table, we got to work.

*Alie: All right, are you ready?*

*Jarrett: Yes.*

*Alie: Let's. Rate. Our. Disgust.*

*Jarrett: Are you recording this?*

*Alie: Yeah.*

*Jarrett: You're already recording?*

*Alie: Yeah!*

*Jarrett: Oh good, you got it set up. [speaks quickly and excitedly]. Great-great-great! Great-great-great-great-great-great-great!*

Alie: *"Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements or how true it is about you. Write a number 0 to 4, 0 Strongly disagree, 4 Strongly agree." Okay. So, the higher the number, the more you agree. "I might be willing to try eating monkey meat under some circumstances."*

Jarrett: *Mmmm. I would say I guess 3. I'm really opposed to eating monkey meat, [Alie laughs] but I can't— Oh! That squirrel just did a backward somersault while he was trying to eat a stick, it was really cute. Sorry. I can [Alie mumbles] imagine circumstances... Don't say that. [Alie laughs] Because I have ADHD and I couldn't find my pills this morning and I literally just went "Squirrel!" Oh my god, dude. [both laugh] That was really embarrassing.*

Alie: *While taking a test.*

Jarrett: *Okay. [Alie laughs] I can imagine a circumstance where someone would be like, "We're eating this monkey, it's a thing that we do," and I go, "I guess, when in Rome..."*

Alie: *Okay, I had a 3 too. We can't go through all of these...*

Jarrett: *"It bothers me to hear someone clear a throat full of mucus." Strongly disagree.*

Alie: *Strongly agree.*

Jarrett: *Weird. "I would go out of my way to avoid walking through a graveyard." Mmm... 2.*

Alie: *Oh yeah? I used to have panic attacks when I was a kid going through graveyards, driving by one because I used to have nightmares of bodies coming out of the ground. Anyway, we watched Poltergeist.*

Jarrett: *"Seeing a cockroach in someone else's house doesn't bother me." Mildly disagree.*

Alie: *Strongly disagree. "It would bother me tremendously to touch a dead body."*

Jarrett: *2.*

Alie: *Strongly disagree. If you have been raised Catholic... I've touched so many dead bodies because you kiss their cheek or put your hand on them it's like an open casket thing.*

Jarrett: *Really?*

Alie: *I've touched at least three or four dead bodies.*

Jarrett: *"I probably would not go to my favorite restaurant if I found out that the cook had a cold."*

Alie: *A cold or COVID? Because that's real different. "It would not upset me at all to watch a person with a glass eye take the eye out of the socket." It would not upset me. "It would bother me to see a rat run across my path in a park."*

Jarrett: *Strongly disagree, don't give a shit.*

Alie: *Mildly disagree.*

Jarrett: *Wow.*

Alie: *I would rather eat a piece of fruit than a piece of paper. [laughs]*

Jarrett: *I strongly agree with that.*

Alie: *[laughs] At the end it's going to be like, "Please eat the piece of paper." Okay, "Even if I was hungry, I would not drink a bowl of my favorite soup if it had been stirred by a used but thoroughly washed fly swatter."*

Jarrett: *I strongly disagree, I would do it if it was washed.*

Alie: *I would not drink it.*

Jarrett: *"It would bother me to sleep in a nice hotel room if I knew that a man had died of a heart attack in that room the night before." Mmm... Mildly agree.*

Alie: *Mildly agree, yeah. "You see maggots on a piece of meat in an outdoor garbage pail," moderately.*

Jarrett: *That's very disgusting. It's still very disgusting, it just is.*

Alie: *I would say moderately disgusting because I like bugs.*

Jarrett: *"While you're walking through a tunnel under a railroad track, you smell urine." Meh, that's just living in the city babe, but it's still moderately disgusting.*

Alie: *Yeah, moderately disgusting.*

Jarrett: *"Your friend's pet cat dies, and you have to pick up the dead body with your bare hands." Slightly disgusting. Well, how recently dead is it?*

Alie: *I would say not disgusting at all because it's my friend's cat so it's an act of love.*

Jarrett: *That's fine. I'm going to do 0 too. I think I'm going to go with a recently dead cat.*

Alie: *Ah! Look at this next one. [laughs] "You see someone put ketchup on vanilla ice cream and eat it." That, to me, is one of the most disgusting things I've seen here.*

Jarrett: *That's so funny.*

Alie: *That's a 4.*

Jarrett: *A 4 for you? Because I appreciate how weird it is but I'm like, I eat a lot of weird stuff.*

Alie: *It's jam.*

Jarrett: *It's jam.*

Alie: *Because it's fruit and sugar and spices.*

Jarrett: *Yeah, it's like strawberry syrup.*

Alie: *It's disgusting to me. "You discover that a friend of yours changes underwear only once a week."*

Jarrett: *That's a 3, that's very disgusting.*

Alie: *Yeah. I hope it's circumstantial and not habitual or philosophical. "You're walking barefoot on concrete, and you step on an earthworm."*

Jarrett: *I do find that extremely disgusting.*

Alie: *[laughs] Okay. So, here we go. Finally, "Add up all your responses to all 25 and the total will be a number between 0 and 100." Ahh! [giggles] I'm so curious.*

Jarrett: *Okay.*

Alie: *What's yours?*



Jarrett: *I got 41.*

Alie: *I got 48.*

Jarrett: *Pretty close.*

Alie: *Pretty close.*

Jarrett: *We're in the lower end of disgusted people.*

Those sirens are not coming from the road if you're driving, that was in the park.

Alie: *[loud sirens pass by] That's the police coming to arrest us.*

Jarrett: *Yeah, they're coming for us or being gross. [Alie laughs]*

So, 48 to 41. Perhaps we're going to make it in this big disgusting adventure we call life.

**Paul:** It's important to know this because, for example, if you marry someone...

**Alie:** Right.

**Paul:** Are you married?

**Alie:** I am. And I'm married to an absolutely gorgeous, wonderful slob. I would say I'm normal, I'm normal to neat and my beautiful, amazing husband, it looks like a bomb went off in his car.

**Aside:** For more on ADHD, you can see the Attention Deficit Neuropsychology two-part episode with world ADHD expert Dr. Russell Barkley, as well as Part 2 which has How to ADHD's Jessica McCabe and René Brooks of Black Girl Lost Keys. We also discuss really great resources and books for folks who have ADHD and how their family and friends can learn to stop getting mad at them all the time for the way that their brain works.

**Alie:** He says he's messy but he's not dirty. He hates filth but he doesn't mind clutter.

**Paul:** Well, that's another issue, that's right. Messiness is not really disgusting.

**Alie:** Okay.

**Paul:** I mean, to most people who are not that sensitive. They see that as disorder but it's not the same thing.

**Alie:** Right. Like, he changes into inside slippers when he gets into the house, he will not wear outside things into the house and as soon as he gets home from the gym, he washes his clothes and takes a shower.

**Paul:** Okay. So, you see there are lots of people who are disordered in their possessions but very clean.

**Aside:** I prefer everything orderly, but my office shed is home to at least seven alive spiders living their best lives, just in these dusty webs full of dead bug husks. And my husband, he does a much better job of scrubbing dishes and floors and vacuuming yet he does not at all mind if his desk looks like it was raided by Vikings who were looking for a pen.

**Paul:** If you are married to somebody who is very different from you in disgust, you'll have great problems in sharing a bathroom. For example, let's say you're on the not disgust side, you would use his towel...

**Alie:** Sure.

**Paul:** ... and he would *never* use yours and gets really upset when you do that. There are a lot of areas where you could have difficulty, you know, having to do with washing dishes and all kinds of stuff. I

mean, at the extreme, you'd want your own silverware, not to have anyone else's mouth touch your...

**Alie:** It's interesting that we go out to eat all the time and don't even think about the fact that this fork was in someone else's mouth an hour ago. We don't even think about it!

**Paul:** That's right. Well, that's the way we get around this. We don't think about the chair that we're sitting in in a restaurant had a butt of someone else up against it. [*Alie laughs*] We don't think of the people in the kitchen and what they're doing with the food, you know, are they sweating into it? Who knows what they're doing? Unless something hits us in the face, we don't think about it too much.

**Alie:** Well, what about disorders like obsessive-compulsive disorder? I know people throw around OCD like, "I'm so OCD," but it's a real disorder that doesn't...

**Paul:** Absolutely. But like disgust sensitivity, there's a wide range of sensitivity and a lot of people are OCD-ish but they don't meet the clinical criteria, but they have some of the features, one of the features being cleanliness. It's not the only thing but one form of OCD has to do with hyper cleanliness.

**Aside:** And fun fact, that's not the only type of OCD. This is a giant misconception. So, there are other subtypes that involve symmetry, relationship questioning, sexuality questioning, or intrusive or distressing thoughts like imagining violent scenarios, or strict adherence to a moral code and even a distressing level of perfectionism is under that OCD umbrella as an obsession. Compulsions are the behaviors repeated to try to feel better or to mitigate the anxiety and those can range from washing hands, to checking on things like locks or stoves, to just avoidance that looks like procrastination, or seeking reassurance to make sure you're not an asshole. A lot of people have OCD behaviors that they may not even recognize but we're so used to just thinking of like, "Ah, everything has to be really clean." But it's encouraging to know it can get better with the right help.

**Alie:** Is there something, a part of the brain that's firing excessively in folks who are afflicted with OCD?

**Paul:** I don't know. And I don't know if you could separate clean versus, I mean, there are people who are OCD about, nothing to do with disgust, about the door being locked, go back six times to make sure. That's very different in its manifestation from a disgust kind of OCD. But they both have the property of being repetitive, overwhelming, concerned.

**Aside:** I was looking at some brand-new research from June 2023 out of the University of Cambridge which found that OCD sufferers had higher levels of glutamate and lower levels of GABA in the anterior cingulate cortex, part of the brain, compared to people without OCD. The severity of symptoms correlated to the amount of glutamate in the brain! They also found that those with OCD-like behaviors, but not clinical OCD, have increased glutamate levels in one of the brain regions.

Now, exposure and response prevention and more general cognitive behavioral therapy as well as SSRIs have shown to be effective treatments. But some psychiatrists are starting to use Lamictal (or its generic form, Lamotrigine) which is an anti-seizure medication as an off-label OCD therapy because it inhibits the release of glutamate in the brain, which is interesting stuff. Either way, I love my brain, I love your brain.

For other neurodivergent folks, this other study recently came out titled, "Disgust Processing and Potential Relationships with Behaviors in Autism," and that explains that in autism there is evidence for differences in physical disgust processing and research indicates that autistic folks may have higher or much lower sensory capabilities around certain things. So, if you're on the

spectrum and there are specific textures or tastes that really give you the squicks and then others, you're totally chill with, that's common. And it may make you more adept at certain activities. We all have individual thresholds, and we can use them to our advantage instead of being shamed into conforming.

**Paul:** Doctors and nurses and probably less disgust-sensitive because they wouldn't have gone into that, they wouldn't want to deal with body substances, so you get a lot of pre-selection. Extensive experience can make you more tolerant or more sensitized.

**Alie:** Because you overcame it, your sensitivity could go down.

**Paul:** And that's one of the issues in treating phobias. One treatment is to desensitize you, to keep exposure to very weak forms of your phobia and graduate it. In other words, exposure to maximum form, which could be traumatic but, in some cases at least, you overcome the phobia. So, you know, you go into a room full of spiders if you're spider-phobic.

**Alie:** Ah! I would love a room full of spiders. I have put myself in a room full of spiders.

**Aside:** See my office.

**Paul:** You like spiders?

**Alie:** I love them. I volunteered at a spider pavilion at the museum, free-range spiders everywhere! Loved it.

**Paul:** Spiders are interesting by the way, spiders and snakes are a mixture of fear and disgust for a lot of people.

**Alie:** Oh! That's a good point!

**Paul:** Yeah, an earthworm is disgust, it's not threatening. But spiders and snakes are dry, they don't have that moist quality that goes along with disgust.

Anyway, are we discussing what you want?

**Alie:** Yeah! Can I ask you questions from listeners?

**Paul:** Sure!

**Alie:** They know that you're coming on and they submitted questions for me to ask you.

**Paul:** Oh, sure. Yeah, this is fun, I enjoy this.

**Alie:** Okay, good.

**Aside:** Okay, but before we get to questions, a quick break and a donation to a cause of the ologist's choosing. Dr. Rozin would like it to go to Philadelphia's InterAct Theatre Company, which is dedicated to commissioning, developing, and processing new and contemporary plays that explore the social, political, and cultural issues of our time. So, they're doing great work, so we'll send a donation there.

We'll also send a donation to the International OCD Foundation, since we talked about them so much, who is working to clear up misconceptions about obsessive-compulsive disorder, saying, "We know it can be difficult for members of the OCD and related disorders community to hear the term OCD misused, which can belittle the disorder and contribute to a stigma that prevents many people from seeking treatment. The International OCD Foundation provides resources for learning and treatment." So, donations will go to both of those groups. Thank you to sponsors of the show for making that possible.

[Ad Break]

Now, if you're a patron at [Patreon.com/Ologies](https://www.patreon.com/Ologies) you get the inside track to send questions before we record and many of you had this insider question including Andrea Devlin, Caitlyn Powell, Scott Sheldon, TJ Mckenna, and Nicole Kleinman.

**Alie:** Okay. Several wanted to know if you've seen the movie *Inside Out* by Pixar which has a character named Disgust.

**Paul:** No.

**Alie:** [*gasps*] You gotta see it!

**Paul:** *Inside Out*. [*"This is Disgus., [various gagging sounds play] Whether advising on your social life or on life's little misses, disgust is there to, well..." more gagging*]

**Alie:** Yeah, it's a Pixar movie and they represent emotions and one of the emotions is disgust.

**Aside:** Sorry everyone but I did look up that Pixar artists wanted really strong colors to represent those core emotions and that red seemed like a winner for anger, sadness was blue of course, and then disgust, which was voiced by Mindy Kaling, was a green color because as the designers put it, when you see green food, it kind of indicates that it's gone bad. So, let this be a reminder right now to just go grab your leftovers from the office fridge before it starts to smell like Satan's outhouse in there. Do it for everyone.

But of course, not all disgust is food-related, and not all things trigger disgust in everyone... and then I raise my eyebrows at you.

**Alie:** Jadine Lannon wants to know: What's the deal with things that are normatively disgusting/taboo (like urine/blood/feces) becoming sexual fetishes?

**Paul:** Okay. Well, first of all, we have the phenomenon which really hasn't been studied much of disgusting features of a person becoming attractive in romantic relationships. Now, when you kiss and exchange saliva, that's not salient. I mean, if you think about it, it's happening but that's not what makes it a pleasure. So, let's take something... Vaginal odor is appealing to some people, disgusting to others.

**Alie:** Sure.

**Paul:** There are people who will not do cunnilingus, males, let's talk about heterosexual at the moment.

**Alie:** Feel bad for 'em.

**Paul:** And there are others who love it. And similarly, I think of females with phallacio. Cunnilingus is more interesting disgust-wise because it's moist. So, that's a big difference right off, in response to this question.

**Aside:** Listen, you can do whatever you're comfortable with, it's your body. But if you're very famous and you talk about it on a morning zoo radio program, don't expect people to hold their opinions, DJ Khaled.

[*Clip of The Breakfast Club radio program*]

*DJ Khaled: I don't do that. I don't do that. I don't...*

*Angela Yee: Not even like for her birthday?*

*DJ Khaled: No.*

*Angela Yee: Now, what if she told you she don't do that, is that okay?*

DJ Khaled: Nah, it's not okay because, because... [laughter]

So, either silence is golden, or you can go by the Golden Rule, of doing unto others what you would like done to you. Or maybe what's golden, the most, is showers.

**Paul:** Now you get more into the kinky side with people who are interested in being urinated on or maybe defecated on. That's not that common. In the area where something becomes an unusual fetish, certainly, that includes body products. Why that's true, we don't know and how it happens, we don't know.

**Aside:** And echoing Dr. Rozin's thoughts, is the opening statement of the 2021 study "The Psychology of Kink: A Cross-Sectional Survey Study Investigating the Roles of Sensation Seeking and Coping Style in BDSM-Related Interests," which sighs upon opening, [deep sigh] "Empirical research on the motives and underlying psychological mechanisms driving BDSM practitioners is scarce." Not a lot out there.

But then I found a 2022 study titled, "Current biopsychosocial science on understanding kink," which off the bat answers our burning "What exactly is kink?" curiosity with this tight definition. So, they say that kink practices can include,

*Administering or receiving intense sensation (including but not limited to "pain"); eroticizing the expression of power and authority differences; being aroused by unusual sensual stimuli, including specific non-genital body parts or inanimate objects ("fetish"); engaging in role play... of erotic scenarios; and engaging in activities that induce shifts and changes in consciousness (called "headspace" in kink subcultures),*

It clues us in with. And if you're like "Emily White, freaks," the study continues to say that studies find that 45 to 60% of people fantasize about kink, but only 20 to 47% act on those desires.

*The literature suggests that participants remain highly stigmatized, including by some clinicians... No studies have found any psychopathological conditions that distinguish a group of people involved in kink from those who are not involved,*

generally showing that the prevalence of previous trauma and abuse experiences (especially by those who enjoy masochism), is slightly lower in kinky folks than in the general population. So, big shrug here. Let people do what they want if they're not hurting anyone else unless that person asked them to hurt them and gave enthusiastic consent.

But on the topic of rooting around past childhood experiences.

**Alie:** Bass Cliff, Cece Therberge, Sharika Elahi, Jean Pompeo, Edward MacGregor, and Earl of Greymalkin asked, in Bass's words: Why are we not grossed out by things when we're kids but they become really off-putting as adults?

**Paul:** Of course, the great example of that is feces. Little kids, one-year-olds like it, and something about toilet training... Contagion is a major feature of disgust, when something touches something else, something disgusting touches something else it renders it inedible. Like, you wouldn't eat your favorite food if a cockroach walked across it or it touched a piece of feces. Now, that doesn't appear until about 4 years of age. Toilet training occurs, in our culture, well before 4, not in all cultures but in our culture it does. So, a kid who is at 3 years of age in our culture, who doesn't... you show him feces they say "Eww!" But if it touches something that they like, they'll still eat it.

**Alie:** Mm! Really?

**Paul:** So, that comes in at about 4.

**Alie:** [gasps] Maybe they're establishing their microbiome still.

**Paul:** Well, that's a different kind of account. If you're trying to show how and why it served a function, that doesn't explain how it actually happens. But yes, you could make a statement like that. But there are people who are much less concerned about this sort of thing, sharing food, all sorts of stuff like that, which many people find disgusting. At a dinner table, some people don't want to share other people's food. If you bite something, don't want someone to... For other people, it's fine. Never mind if they love you, that's yet another thing, but even if they don't love you. Or if somebody at the next table in a restaurant is eating something you think it looks good, "Would you mind if I have a piece?" You wouldn't, I know people who have done that, [Alie laughs] but the point is, you don't want them cutting a piece [inaudible].

**Alie:** Right.

**Paul:** It might make a big difference to some people whether they cut it off with a knife, so they cut off a piece that's never touched their lips, or they use their fork, which would be contaminating. So, there are some people who would be very sensitive to that and other people who wouldn't even pay attention.

**Alie:** As we've evolved as a species, do you think that our disgust tolerance has changed? A lot of people wanted to know how much of it is learned versus instinctive and how much of it is nature versus nurture?

**Aside:** Which was on the minds of Jessamy Ritchie, Brooke Hicks, Anthony Willis, Alia Myers, Britt Kline, Mariah Walzer, Patricia Evans, Heather Horton Whedon, Samantha, Earl of Greymalkin, oh and Mari Strombom Johnson, first-time question-asker, and Nico Price.

**Paul:** There's a sense in which it's all nurture, a sense in which, in the sense that little babies don't show any disgust. Disgust is universal. Probably the original disgust is something to be avoided for health reasons. My guess is we're predisposed biologically to avoid things that, for example, smell bad. Spoilage smell is the smell of disgust.

**Alie:** Is that why bodies smell inherently so disgusting to people? I always read that once you smell a dead body, you never forget the odor.

**Paul:** Well, it depends when the body died. Decaying human flesh, does it smell different from decaying other animals' flesh? I don't know. But I'm quite ready to believe that there's a tendency, where we're predisposed to learn that that kind of smell is bad.

**Aside:** Oh shoot, I had long notes here for a whole aside, but I'll cut to the chase. So, there are these two compounds that are notable in dead flesh smell, and they are *wonderfully* named cadaverine and putrescine. And then there's another compound, benzaldehyde, and that also comes off a corpse. The last one is said to have this sickeningly sweet, almost almond-like smell, and apparently, Bath and Body Works scent, Cherry Crisp, smells a lot like a dead person or a dying person because it has this benzaldehyde. And so does Tom Ford's very high-end scent, Lost Cherry, because they both have benzaldehyde in them.

Folks on TikTok were up in dead arms about this and I was comment surfing and I saw some great opinions such as, "Omg, I've smelt a deceased person and I know exactly what the sweet smell she's talking about is!! It's the worst sweet smell ever." Another person said, "Interesting, I remember someone died in my apartment building and it smelled like rotten meat with old period blood, in my opinion." And then another person weighed in and said that dead people smell like "rotting meat, bad armpit stink, and a weird, sweet cologne and that the sweet smell is the creepiest because it smells humans." So, if you would like to get a whiff, if you have a dark sensibility, I guess sense with a spritz of Tom Ford Lost Cherry, apparently. On one post about it, TikToker Savannah simply commented, "Tomb Ford." Nice.

**Paul:** Then you think of all these people, you know many of them, who like stinky cheese. They like that smell but only if it's coming from cheese. *[Alie laughs]* If you say to them, here's something to sniff and they smell *[sniffs]* and say, "It's cheese," say they don't know that. Now, if you say, "This is a piece of Limburger cheese," and they say, "Smells great." Then say, "Oh no, I'm sorry. That's cat shit." They'd say, "Oh my god, oh that's terrible." Same smell.

**Aside:** So, side note. If you wonder why some feet smell like cheese you can thank the teeny, tiny, tiny Brevibacterium which both lives on our skin to gobble up dead skin cells like its own charcuterie board and it also ripens many cheeses such as Munster and Limburger. So, it's not that your feet smell cheesy, it's probably that your cheese smells footy.

**Alie:** Have you ever seen those sketches where someone says, "Eugh, that smells awful, smell this." *[laugh track "Hey Kevin, Kevin. You've got to try this milkman, it's so far gone, it's unreal." "Oh-ho-ho! Stop the music, that is bad!" laugh track]* Why do you think we do that?

**Paul:** Yes, that's a very, very common thing. people like, this is what I was talking about before about masochism. People like to experience negative things in a safe context. *[Alie laughs]* That's a very safe context. They're not going to get you with a toxin or anything. People are very complicated so they're enjoying what's negative. Some people probably enjoy defecating, other people don't. If you said to everyone, no one's asked this question as far as I know, "Would you rather be a person who didn't ever have to defecate?"

**Alie:** Oh.

**Paul:** Some people would say no, and some people would say yes.

**Alie:** Some people might say, "Don't take that away from me."

**Paul:** Yeah, there's a pleasure in expelling stuff. So, we differ on all these things. I assume it's the less disgust-sensitive people who are more likely to enjoy defecation or even urination.

**Alie:** Right. Sometimes peeing feels great you're like, "Oof." But maybe that's the relief thing of being like, "Ahh, I'm no longer in danger."

**Paul:** Well, first of all, you're getting rid of heated stuff, so that could be a positive thing. In addition, there is a pleasure. The actual act of defecation produces input to your brain from your anus and that could be positive. There are people who sit on the pot for half an hour reading the newspaper and they love it, and other people just want to do it and get it over with and, "I wish I didn't have to do it." These are fascinating issues; they're disgust on a day-to-day basis.

**Alie:** I have two more listener questions. Now, there's something called, and I'm not sure if you've heard of this, you don't strike me as someone who spends a lot of time on TikTok.

**Paul:** No, I've never been on TikTok.

**Alie:** Exactly.

**Paul:** By the way, I've never been on Face... Face...

**Alie:** Facebook.

**Paul:** I've never been on Facebook; I've never been on anything.

**Alie:** Don't bother. It's all garbage.

**Paul:** I don't want to, I have no interest in it.

**Alie:** It's all garbage. Your life is so much better but there's something on TikTok that is called "the ick." Have you heard of this?

**Paul:** No.

**Alie:** The ick is when you are attracted to someone or maybe you like them and then suddenly, they do something that just, [gags] just the ick. It might be the way they eat a sandwich, it might be the way that they ride a bike.

**Paul:** So, it's not always disgusting, if it's the way they ride a bike it wouldn't be disgusting.

**Alie:** There's something, in Laurel's words...

**Aside:** And also from Naomi Jane, Emma Giles, Isabelle Brooks, Hannah Michel, and yes, Laurel asked...

**Alie:** When it comes to dating and relationships, why is there such a sudden irreversible trigger that's sometimes so arbitrary? And I'm wondering, where is disgust and contempt... You said anger draws you close because you want to maybe hurt or engage with someone but what is it that you just say, "Blergh, no," with a person or a situation?

**Paul:** Okay, so you could ask people, here's this person you like, you thought of dating, but it turns out, he drinks his urine. Now, does that kill it? [Alie squirms] I'm just asking you. You see, that could contaminate the person.

**Alie:** Sure, yeah. That makes me say, that guy's got to do a lot of toothbrushing and a lot of Listerine for me to be drawn in.

**Paul:** For you to kiss him yeah. But suppose you're not even in a romantic... friend. Your friend gives enemas to people in the hospital or something.

**Alie:** That doesn't bother me as much as someone who overpronounces something in a language in which they're not fluent, you know? Someone who does cringy behaviors that are just like...

**Paul:** Well, there's a lot of cringy things that have nothing to do with disgust.

**Aside:** So, "the ick" has been described by some psychologists as a mix of shame, anger, disgust, and embarrassment and some people say it is a gut reaction that that person is not right for you. Others say that's not true, it's a manifestation of avoidant attachment issues that you should work through. So, your mileage may vary but don't talk yourself into something you don't want but also keep in mind, we all have icks. I ick myself daily and I just have to deal with it, I'm never going to break up with myself.

**Paul:** By the way, you get used to everything but when you make a decision right now you might say, I wouldn't deal with that person. And then it turned out that if you have to, you get used to it.

**Alie:** Well, you know, we talked a lot in the beginning about Hitler being a disgusting figure but where does xenophobia come into play when it comes to disgust and people who might have racist or xenophobic tendencies?

**Aside:** This was also asked by listener Gemma who wanted to know about decolonizing disgust.

**Alie:** Are they finding disgust in things that they're threatened by?

**Paul:** Well, they might be finding disgust, for example, if someone from the despised group could be erased, could be anything, touch something, would they not want to hold it? They would be unwilling to wear used clothing that was worn by an X, where an X is someone of a group that they really are phobic to. And we can use that as a criterion for disgust and certainly, I'm sure some xenophobia manifests that way, that you don't want anything to do with their bodies. [rumble]

**Alie:** Oh! Lightning.



**Paul:** That's exciting.

**Alie:** Yeah, that's good lightning.

**Aside:** There is some research to be had, like the 2023 paper, "Body odour disgust sensitivity is associated with xenophobia: evidence from nine countries across five continents," and the 2019 address, "How and why disgust responses underlie prejudice," which notes that people treat an atypical appearance as a stronger sign of unfamiliar pathogens. There's also this paper that came out, "Disgust is a factor in extreme prejudice," which notes that, "Bigotry may be distinguished by high levels of disgust."

So, we've learned that disgust crops up in situations where things won't actually harm us, but bigotry is harmful hence bigotry is worthy of disgust. Much more so than disgust over touching an earthworm.

**Alie:** What about, Julia Taylor and me want to know: What's the most disgusting thing you've ever encountered? Was it smelly or gory or psychologically upsetting? What is the grossest thing about your work or the thing that you like the least? *[laughs softly]*

**Paul:** I have not experienced this, but a rotting human body would probably be about as disgusting as... I fortunately have not experienced that.

**Alie:** Knock on wood.

**Paul:** On the battlefield, you might run into it, in a hospital you might run into it but not normally because your body isn't rotting when you first die, and it's put into the freezer or refrigerator right away. But of course, the police run into this, buried bodies and stuff but I would suspect that that would be the most disgusting... And you might expect that it should be, I mean, because it's about meat and it's about decay and there's nothing more sensitive than human meat.

**Aside:** And just buckle up, we've got a casual revelation coming here.

**Paul:** I'm not terribly disgusted, personally, by the prospect of eating human flesh, if I knew that someone wasn't killed for this.

**Alie:** Oh. If someone, say, donated their body to like, a barbecue.

**Paul:** Yeah, if a person died and right after that, some of their muscle was harvested, I would be interested in just tasting it to see. By the way, I'm saying that when I actually faced it, I might not be. But I think that I'm curious about that and I don't feel widely disgusted by that.

**Alie:** And you know it's interesting because I do feel like a lot of say, campaigns toward having a plant-based diet and eliminating meat or campaigns pro-vegetarianism use disgust as a factor in maybe discouraging meat consumption.

**Paul:** Yes, and in showing people pictures of the way animals are treated, that can be a form of disgust, absolutely. Since going toward a plant-based diet is agreed by most people who are worried about the environment to be a very good idea – I do a little work on sustainability now, the psychology of sustainability – so yeah, I think that disgust is working in the favor of sustainability because it's animal foods that are disgusting. So, we have this funny ambivalence about animal foods, we don't have ambivalence about vegetables. We may not like their taste, but we don't feel there's anything deeply wrong with eating a piece of asparagus, we're not upset about pain that it might produce or anything.

**Aside:** As someone who may have gotten salmonella from a cantaloupe a month or so ago, I should be forever disgusted by melons, we should have not a good relationship. But no, I had some

honeydew yesterday, no ancestors warned or forbade me from diner fruit cup salmonella outbreaks. So, thanks for nothing.

**Alie:** And the Bible doesn't have any passages about like, definitely don't eat broccoli on a Sunday.

**Paul:** Yeah, almost all prohibitions, as I said, are about meat. That's right. So, disgust is working in favor of sustainability, in favor of vegetarianism.

**Alie:** You know, I'm not mad at that. I feel like if you asked me to go kill a hog, I would say, "Absolutely not." But if you asked me to have a piece of bacon I'd say "Sure, why not?" So, I think it's maybe coming to terms with exactly what we are willing to do based on what we see or smell. You know what I mean? I think it's...

**Paul:** Yeah, I'm a partial vegetarian and I've become that in the last 10 years. There are three kinds of vegetarians, sort of, some people are all three. There are health vegetarians, which I am not. Then there are environmental vegetarians, sustainability vegetarians, I'm sympathetic with that but that's not my core motive. My core motive is compassionate, I don't like the idea of killing animals and I don't want to be a party to that by eating meat. Now, I do eat fish and I do eat the shellfish and so I'm a little bit hypocritical and I'm sensitive to that, I don't like that either. But a lobster, or a shrimp that's a moving animal...

**Alie:** No, they can live forever.

**Paul:** In terms of sustainability, if you cut your meat intake 15%, you're doing a good job.

**Alie:** Yeah, that's great to know and it's great to hear. It's something that I'm moving toward as well. The last question I always have to ask is what's your favorite thing about your work? What do you love the most?

**Paul:** Well, I love teaching. I love exposing, not so much about disgust, but I do teach a little about that. I like to open students' eyes to the wonders of the world and how we can actually find out things like what's going on in the head, without looking in the head, indirectly. I love to show them that. So, I care a lot about teaching, preparing people to be good thinkers in the modern world. I like to find things out. I enjoy being puzzled by something and then saying, "I wonder what's going on there" and being able to say, "Well here, I have some idea now about what's going on." I love to look at the world and see something that doesn't make sense to me, my first study on food was why would people eat hot pepper when it tastes so bad?

**Alie:** Oh, that's a great question. Have you ever seen... You probably haven't seen this on YouTube, but it's called Hot Ones, it's celebrity interviews with people who are great actors and serious Oscar-winning actors, and they're in a room with a bunch of hot wings and they go from mild to call an ambulance, and they see how far they can get. It's people like Cate Blanchett and Paul Rudd and they're in so much pain but it's something that once again, we hate to have it happen to us, we don't mind watching it though. *[laughs]*

**Paul:** We like it until it gets too painful. That's what got me onto benign masochism, it was eating hot chili peppers. I did some work in a Mexican village on it and everyone in the village over 4 or 5 eats hot pepper and likes it and none of the animals in the village do, even though they eat it because they eat the garbage, so they eat hot pepper, but they don't get to like it. So, that was to me saying, "There's something about humans here," and it turns out, it is about humans.

**Alie:** We got too much brains for our own good, huh?

**Paul:** Yeah, well these are sort of side effects of having a big brain, there are many side effects of having a big brain. [*Alie laughs*] Once you've got this brain that can do all sort of things and imaginations, all kinds of things happen.

**Alie:** Mm-hm, and they're fascinating.

**Aside:** Just a head's up, there's a New Mexico chili pepper scientist, very much on my list. I'm comin' for ya, I'm coming in hot. But that is in the future and right now, let's shutter up our disgust.

**Alie:** Augh, what a great time. Thank you so much for talking to me!

**Paul:** You're good to talk to.

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So, ask delightful people disgusting questions because you might find yourself chatting about hot peppers and hopefully consensual cannibalism just in the middle of a thunderstorm. We have linked more about Dr. Rozin in the show notes. Thank you, Dr. Rozin, so much for doing this, along with the charities of choice. And no, you will not find his handle on TikTok anytime soon if you want to be online friends, but we are @Ologies on Twitter and Instagram, I'm on both as @AlieWard. I'm also doing a terrible job on TikTok, but I am there. We also have *Smologies* episodes, which are filth-free, they're cleaned up for kids, they're shorter versions of our classics. To join our Patreon and leave questions for guests, you can head over to [Patreon.com/Ologies](https://Patreon.com/Ologies) where it costs \$1 a month to join. *Ologies* merch is available at the link in the show notes, too.

Thank you to Erin Talbert for managing the *Ologies* Podcast Facebook group, Aveline Malek and The Wordary make our professional transcripts, Noel Dilworth is scheduling producer, Susan Hale is our managing director, Kelly R Dwyer makes the website. We welcome brand new second editor Jake Chaffee into the fold, Jake is amazing and we're getting ready for a little exciting shift and an addition in programming debuting on May 16<sup>th</sup>, so mark calendars for that, folks. Our lead editor is the very palatable Mercedes Maitland of Maitland Audio. Nick Thorburn made the theme music.

And if you stick around until the end of the episode, I tell you a secret and this is one of the most disgusting things that has ever happened to me, ever and I'm going to tell you about it. [*deep breath*] So, during this trip to Philly, I overscheduled myself in a way that could have killed me, I'm surprised it didn't. I did 10 interviews in like, three or four days, I did a keynote to 5,000 people, I had a ton of meetings, and then an immediate flight to Catalina Island to teach for this symposium. Stress was high, sleep was little, I was not doing well.

So, when I got home, I started to come down with pneumonia, as you may remember I had in July. Now, at the same time, flies were appearing in our house. Like, not tiny fruit flies, not cute fruit flies, big, hairy, gross flies. No idea where they came from. First, there was just one or two and we were like, "Ah!" and over the course of a week we were killing like 30 flies a day. I couldn't take it. Jarrett has this thing called an assault rifle and it shoots like, a high-powered mist of table salt. This thing is deadly and effective against bugs. It's not humane. I'm sorry, I couldn't deal with them inside. Does it aerosolize fly guts and then you breathe them? We're not going to think about it. But my anxiety was through the roof with these disgusting iridescent bottle flies everywhere. We kept all the doors shut, we sealed up all the cracks, and they kept finding their way in. We eventually killed them all and about a week later, I took out our Swiffer from the broom closet and saw fly egg cases in the back corner. What had happened was one bitch fly laid eggs in a Swiffer WetJet maxi pad thing and I hadn't taken off the dirty one before shoving it in the closet. So, they just nested in there. That's where they were coming from, they were hatching out of a Swiffer WetJet maxi pad.

And anyway, it was truly a blight on my mental health. I think about it, and I start choking with anxiety. Anyway, remove the old Swiffer thing before storing it because I didn't know this horror show was even possible. Also, we have a whole episode on flies and in that, I try to get us to like flies. We're doing our best over here, all right? Also, I can't remember if I've told you this secret before but I feel like it's so embarrassing I probably haven't. If I have, I hope you got the detail that you've been craving. Anyway, I'm sorry flies. Just please go find a dead possum or something instead of a mop. If only I was able to make hot dogs out of the flies... [gags] I'm... actual gagging. I took that too far, I took it too far. Pull it back. Okay, berbye.

*Transcribed by Aveline Malek at TheWordary.com*

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[This is your brain on happy: Machine can read your emotions](#)

[The Moral Affiliations of Disgust: A Functional MRI Study](#)

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