

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Tara Foley

JVN [00:00:02] Welcome to "Getting Curious", I'm Jonathan Van Ness. And every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I am joined by Tara Foley, founder of The Follain, where we discuss the power of taking care of our bodies with nontoxic products and what clean beauty really means. You're like a clean beauty skin care advocate. And you're also the inventor of Fullain, which is a?

TARA FOLEY [00:00:35] Clean beauty retailer, we have the best of clean beauty by over 80 brands and a growing actually assortment from our own brand as well. And we vet for safety, but also for performance. We know that women have to have high performing beauty products 'cause that's the benefit of beauty.

JVN [00:00:49] Really? I think people. Have to.

TARA FOLEY [00:00:52] Yes.

JVN [00:00:52] Yes. But yes, people need high-performance beauty RN.

TARA FOLEY [00:00:56] Yes.

JVN [00:00:56] They can't help it but that we do. You know, because we want nontoxic ingredients. We want ingredients that work. But actually, I do think that there has been some clean beauty things that were high-performance like because I think like Aveda like was?

TARA FOLEY [00:01:09] Back in the day when Horst Rechelbacher was still involved.

JVN [00:01:12] Yes. 'Cause my mom was that shammy and the, and the glass bottles.

TARA FOLEY [00:01:16] Yeah.

JVN [00:01:16] And I was 9 and I was like wow.

TARA FOLEY [00:01:18] That, your mom was so ahead of the time.

JVN [00:01:20] She was, she went to this, she went to the Frontenac Mall in St. Lewis and she went to the Aveda store there, honey and they really educated her. But-

TARA FOLEY [00:01:30] You're lucky.

JVN [00:01:31] But how did you get into this? Because you started blogging about clean beauty like before there?

TARA FOLEY [00:01:37] Before it was called clean beauty.

JVN [00:01:38] Right?

TARA FOLEY [00:01:39] Before it was a thing.

JVN [00:01:40] Yeah. Why?

TARA FOLEY [00:01:42] Because so I was a public policy major. I've always been an activist at heart. I always wanted to do something where I could make an impact. And basically, I was in a job that I did not like, working at a law firm in marketing, studying for my LSATs at night. And I started to focus on my own health and wellness for the very first time because I did not grow up in an organic household like you, I wasn't so lucky.

JVN [00:02:05] I didn't either.

TARA FOLEY [00:02:05] I didn't know about that stuff.

JVN [00:02:06] I mean, I didn't know Aveda was like, OK, first of all, I should say, like, I was chugging Diet Pepsi and shoving Pop-Tarts down my throat and like we were by no means an organic household. My mom just like walked past like an aggressive salesperson.

TARA FOLEY [00:02:18] Yeah. She fell for it.

JVN [00:02:19] Outside of an Aveda store, and she was like, takenable. Yeah. But I mean, I that was how I was introduced into sustainability. And the idea of sustainability or like organic ingredients in any capacity really was from that interaction. So in that term or in that way, I am lucky. But we are by no means like a super organic house.

TARA FOLEY [00:02:36] So you came into it through beauty?

JVN [00:02:38] Yes.

TARA FOLEY [00:02:39] But most people come into it through food. So I was one of the, I-. So I basically was so focused on, you know, food and fitness and everything. And in researching how to take care of myself in that way, I started reading little things about how there's no regulation of the beauty industry in the U.S. and how basically all of my beloved beauty prod-, because I love beauty products, I always have. All of my beloved beauty products were filled with a bunch of toxic crap. And specifically here in the U.S., I just got so fired up, I felt like, I felt like we were being disrespected, basically. And here I was trying to get into advocacy or trying to get into something where I could make impact. And I was like, man, is that going to be through lipsticks?

JVN [00:03:15] Yeah, maybe so.

TARA FOLEY [00:03:15] And it was.

JVN [00:03:17] Yeah. But I mean, I think that's I mean, I learned I we got to meet when we did. I met you through working with gorgeous Biossance, which I loved so much. And they're clean academy, which has been really so helpful for me. And it really has put me in a position to learn so much about the skincare industry and ingredients that I didn't know before, which I think is really fascinating. But one thing that I learned about with you is like, just so I already knew that with ingredients that they were, I knew that they were listed in order in which like how much is in each

product. So like the first ingredient there is the most of that. The second ingredient, there's the second most of that all the way down to the end. What I didn't know. You're like, yeah queen, you're preaching to the choir, I already know. What I didn't know was this whole fragrance, parfum, double asterisks.

TARA FOLEY [00:04:00] Yeah, it's really bad. It's-.

JVN [00:04:03] Put it on the people.

TARA FOLEY [00:04:05] It's, it's, it's crazy. So-.

JVN [00:04:07] Also too, just really quick and I will shut up, I swear to God.

TARA FOLEY [00:04:08] No.

JVN [00:04:09] This is literally not something that like Tara made up. It's like a wives' tale. This is like literally like sometimes when I hear this, I think like this has to be an urban legend. But it's not. Like it's true.

TARA FOLEY [00:04:25] Yeah. I mean, there's great documentaries. There's great books on this. There is a movie called "Stink" on Netflix, actually, that people can check out. It's a documentary that a dad made and yeah. So regardless, fragrance is, is a loophole. It's considered a trade secret in the United States. And so basically big beauty companies, really big any companies, any CPG companies will list fragrance on.

JVN [00:04:49] What's CPG?

TARA FOLEY [00:04:49] Consumer products goods.

JVN [00:04:52] Oh shit. Ok.

TARA FOLEY [00:04:52] So like anything like-.

JVN [00:04:54] Cleaning supplies.

TARA FOLEY [00:04:54] Cleaning supplies. I mean, there's fragrance in trash bags. It doesn't really need to be in there.

JVN [00:05:00] Yeah.

TARA FOLEY [00:05:00] I think I mentioned this last time we were together like that's just kind of silly. But so anyhow, fragrance is added to a lot of these products and it's a loophole. It's considered a trade secret. You don't need to say what's inside of the word "fragrance". So because of that, companies, big companies will sometimes include many, many toxic ingredients. It can be up to a thousand ingredients inside of that word. And they don't need to say. It's not like. It's not like they're trying to do harm. It's, it's just like a really easy way to get in some of these ingredients that aren't very good for us.

JVN [00:05:32] Well, sometimes I feel like that's coming up for me a lot lately in the podcast is that like, you know, they weren't trying to do harm. And I think that I hear that a-, I feel like I'm, I'm finding myself hearing that a lot. And it does make me think of that, that phrase like "the road to hell is paved with good intentions", like but like not meaning harm is not the same as not doing harm.

TARA FOLEY [00:05:58] Or coming from a place of goodness.

JVN [00:06:00] Right. Because like people can come from whatever the fuck they want to come from. But the proof is in the pudding. Like, you know, it's like because I've found-, I've also found that with myself, like professions like you can say all whatever you want to say about how much you care. But if you're, if the work is not working, then it doesn't really matter like what you say.

TARA FOLEY [00:06:19] I feel like clean beauty is the exact, is exactly what you're saying. It's the exact opposite of, "Oh, we didn't do har-". So there are all these trends now where you see free of sulfates, free of parabens, like all of these things. But that doesn't mean that it's clean beauty. Clean beauty is rooted in a place that it was actually started from green chemistry principles. It was actually started from a place of trying to make something that is only positive for people and planet. Right? And so that's the huge difference right now. There's this big trend and people are trying to get on this quote unquote, clean bandwagon. And so they're like, oh, we're paraben free and we're even fragrance free and we're free of all this stuff. But you read the ingredients and it's, it's not good. And it has a lot of other chemicals that there just haven't been human studies on. So like, we don't even know if they're good or bad. And you can tell when something's rooted in goodness or when something's like trying really hard.

JVN [00:07:09] So what what are some of the, what are some of the hidden ingredients that we can find inside fragrances?

TARA FOLEY [00:07:16] Well, so it's funny because you're not going to, you're never going to see it fully listed out unless a company discloses and you're going to see a lot of synthetics in there. And synthetics aren't always bad. The bad, the worst issue with fragrance is something called a phthalate. Do you know phthalates?

JVN [00:07:32] Yeah, phthalates, OK. I think I do. But phthalates are most notorious for being an endocrine disruptor.

TARA FOLEY [00:07:38] Endocrine disruptor. Exactly. Yeah.

JVN [00:07:38] Which is most, which endocrine system is what controls our thought-, or controls like our hormones?

TARA FOLEY [00:07:42] Yes, exactly. And that's, so when people are having reproductive issues, when people are, I mean, even just feeling sluggish and bad. I mean, think about all of the products we use every day, not even just our beauty products. Our skin care products, our cleaning, everything. Think about all of these CBG, the consumer products goods, and, and what's inside of all of them. And it starts to add up.

JVN [00:08:03] Especially. Well, like I was just reading this article about like how there was this one type of chemical that was really harmful for housecats. That was in like a cleaning solution. And like it used to be like one in 100 cats had thyroid problems. And then like in the 80s when this chemical started being used, like it became like 27 out of like, it's just like it's like-.

TARA FOLEY [00:08:25] 100%. Yeah. I mean not 100% but I know you mean.

JVN [00:08:28] But it made like 25 percent more cases of this like issue.

TARA FOLEY [00:08:32] Because we're all the guinea pigs. They don't test this stuff on humans. They what they do is they create products that are solving a marketing need or they're solving a need for the company and they're not considering people on planet in making them. So it's like, how are you going to make a body lotion so you never have to shave your legs? OK.

JVN [00:08:50] Right.

TARA FOLEY [00:08:50] They're just getting to an end point, right?

JVN [00:08:52] Right. So for you as a consumer, we'll actually let me answer, or ask the first question, which is like how? So you have been talking about this and writing about this and learning about this since before it was an industry like why? You were like "Oh my god, is this going to be through lipstick", but like, how did that happen for you?

TARA FOLEY [00:09:08] I started just telling my friends and my family members and they just were like, "What are you talking about? I've never heard about this. I've never thought about the ingredients". "Oh, well, the government regulates", I mean, people just, they thought I was crazy. And the more and more I dug, the more I realized that I wasn't crazy and that people needed to know. And ultimately, like, I'm running a business, but I consider myself an educator at the end of the day. I've always had the exact same mission and it's just been different approaches. And like the first approach was a blog. Right? And basically through the blog, I was meeting with all these passionate brand founders and they told me, "Tara, we have no home". There's no clean, you know, Sephora or no clean Blue Mercury or something. And so I was just like, "All right. My next thing is I need to build a home for them". And there was no such thing as clean beauty. And I couldn't, like, go to the beauty industry to learn how to create it, because in many ways we were trying to disrupt it. So I just built a store.

JVN [00:10:02] Right.

TARA FOLEY [00:10:03] So I was just like, it was like, you know.

JVN [00:10:04] Oh, but you actually have like freestanding stores.

TARA FOLEY [00:10:07] Yeah. We have six stores across the U.S., across the U.S. I say with bunny, in quotations. We have one in Seattle and then everything else is on the East Coast. But we have one in New York. We have two in Boston, we have one in Dallas and we have one outside of D.C. and then one in Seattle.

JVN [00:10:24] So. Is it can, so is someone that's passionate about, like the beauty industry, it's like how do you deal with like when you realize that you have something that's not good for you?

TARA FOLEY [00:10:36] How do you deal with it?

JVN [00:10:37] Yeah. Like, how do you like. You really don't buy it anymore?

TARA FOLEY [00:10:41] No. I mean, I think I think you have to be ready to make the change. Right? So and that can be for anything in your life, because you really have to make a commitment to it because it's going to feel very different and foreign when you first start doing it. So think about when you first started doing like your figure skating or I mean, a lot of people we speak about like yoga in the store or starting a new diet. It feels so foreign and different when you first do it. You need to be able to stick with it and commit to it. It's kind of like a psychological thing because, you know, most people are using. I don't know, like a very traditional conventional face cream. And they come in and we're going to match them to the right thing for their skin type and concerns. And maybe it's gonna be a face oil, maybe it's going to be a cream that feels and smells very, very different than what they were using. And we can tell them that the performance is gonna be better in the long run. You're gonna really love how your skin looks. It's based in nutritious, real ingredients that are usually plant based, but it's gonna feel really different. So you need to kind of stick with it. And so I think a lot of people are, they're a little bit scared off at first. And then they they, you know, they give up. But you can't give up.

JVN [00:11:47] How do you vet new products like to bring into your house? Like if it's like a cleaning product or a beauty product?

TARA FOLEY [00:11:54] So we don't, oh into my own home?

JVN [00:11:55] Yeah.

TARA FOLEY [00:11:56] Oh. Oh. So I'm actually to be honest, I'm, I'm pretty minimal. So I have two young kids. I have a three year old and a nine month old. And, and we're like incredibly minimal. I mean, we. So I always obviously check the ingredients. I can tell you some of the brands of cleaning surpri--, supplies and things like that. I use very few products on my kids. I use very few products in my house. I, I believe kind of less is more and find the things that work best. And that's kind of the approach I've taken with Follian too. We don't carry any full brand portfolios. We only carry hero products by brands and we only carry things that we truly can stand by.

JVN [00:12:33] Oh, I love that.

TARA FOLEY [00:12:34] Yeah. I mean, we know that basically. I mean, this is again, this is a hard switch. And if people believe that it doesn't work, they're going to, they're going to swear off of clean beauty forever. So we really have to carry the things that do the best work.

JVN [00:12:47] Love. We're gonna be right back with more Tara Foley right after the break. Welcome back to "Getting Curious", this is Jonathan Van Ness. Ok so regulation. The thing that doesn't exist in the beauty industry in the United States, which this is really hard to understand because the FDA, the Food and Drug Administration. Right? I think the "a" stands for "administration".

TARA FOLEY [00:13:15] Yeah.

JVN [00:13:15] It only regulates like skin care and beauty stuff if there is an active drug in it and, which usually is like only sunscreen.

TARA FOLEY [00:13:22] Sunscreen and then some acne products as well.

JVN [00:13:25] So but like by and large, like your body lotions, your body washes, your deodorants, your shampoos, conditioners, eye cream based serum, any sort of salve, your nail polishes like.

TARA FOLEY [00:13:38] You can keep go-, I mean.

JVN [00:13:39] Yeah. Your eye shadow, like all that. It's like it's it's 100 percent.

TARA FOLEY [00:13:43] Yeah.

JVN [00:13:43] Unless there's like a random test like when they found asbestos in like Jojo Siwa's, like stuff from Claire's.

TARA FOLEY [00:13:50] When people freak out they'll have knee jerk reaction sometimes but they still aren't, they still, still aren't often acting anything into federal law if that makes sense. So there have been many, many bills in front of Congress over the past few years. And that just means-

JVN [00:14:05] There's actually a popular one right now that like Cortney Kar-, Courtney Kardashian is involved with.

TARA FOLEY [00:14:10] The Personal Care Safety Act or the Clean Cosmetics Act.

JVN [00:14:14] Well it's like one of those.

TARA FOLEY [00:14:14] There's four, there's a, there's three that I know of that I'm very familiar with that we're involved in and like we signed on and, you know, I support it in every way. And but it's just it's just kind of sa-, this is the reason why, again, like I had a background in public policy when I made this discovery that there was an issue in the US. I very much considered going back to D.C. and working there and try to make change but then I saw, ok, there's been no, there's been no update since 1938. And-

JVN [00:14:40] Yeah, so 1938 is the last time that we had any sort of the personal care-. What was that act called? The personal care?

TARA FOLEY [00:14:47] Gosh, I, I'm blanking on it right now.

JVN [00:14:49] But literally since 1938 have not had any-.

TARA FOLEY [00:14:51] Right.

JVN [00:14:51] And the reason is because it's like the chemical lobby is extremely powerful and we actually don't we-. So tell me a little bit about this chemical lobby. Who are they?

TARA FOLEY [00:15:01] I mean, I honestly I don't know exactly. I can't say it's just one company, but-.

JVN [00:15:06] 'Cause it's not.

TARA FOLEY [00:15:07] It's not. It's not. It's kind of it's like, it's like the cigarette lobbies back in the day or it's like the sugar lobby. It's basically a number of different companies that are behind it that are trying to insure that they're still certain, like oftentimes petroleum based ingredients, oftentimes fragrance based ingredients, things like that that are included in almost all fast moving products in the country. And so they're going to do everything in their power to make sure that their ingredients are still going to be active in these products.

JVN [00:15:36] And or like like a pegten or like a serconium like, whatever.

TARA FOLEY [00:15:41] Exactly. I love that you brought up pegs. Nobody-. Pegs are in everything.

JVN [00:15:44] Yeah, what are pegs? What do pegs do?

TARA FOLEY [00:15:44] So so pegs are in for a number of different reasons. But the reason, what makes them really, really bad is that to create a peg, which is ethoxylized ingredient. By the way, I talk like I know what I've learned enough to be dangerous in chemistry, but I'm not a chemist, but from what I've learned from expert advisors and friends in the space. So pegs basically are created using a process called ethoxylation. And as a byproduct of that, something called 1,4-dioxane is created and that's a known carcinogen. And that's something that like, you know, they found a massively high amount of it.

JVN [00:16:16] So when we make pegs-.

TARA FOLEY [00:16:18] Pegs.

JVN [00:16:18] A byproduct of that, does that wind up in the product?

TARA FOLEY [00:16:19] 1,4-dioxane. And so it's in it but it's not, it doesn't, it's not listed on the ingredient list.

JVN [00:16:27] Is that kind of like with keratin treatments like the formaldehyde isn't in the keratin when you put heat to it and then it makes it.

TARA FOLEY [00:16:30] Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Exactly. It's a formaldehyde release. Exactly.

JVN [00:16:35] So when we're using stuff that has pegs in it, it releases?

TARA FOLEY [00:16:39] Its all. Yes, exactly. That's exactly right.

JVN [00:16:41] So if I use a lotion that has Peg 10, it creates.

TARA FOLEY [00:16:46] Any pegs.

JVN [00:16:46] Any. So when I use the lotions that's got any peg in it.

TARA FOLEY [00:16:49] Yeah. 1,4 dioxane.

JVN [00:16:51] It makes 1,4 dioxane, which the known carci-, and it's a known carcinogen.

TARA FOLEY [00:16:55] Yeah. And it doesn't need to be listed on the.

JVN [00:16:57] Of what can, of what cancers?

TARA FOLEY [00:16:59] I don't know exactly.

JVN [00:17:01] Oh my God. Is it my balls? Is it my bones? Is it my fuckin throat? Is that my goddamn fuckin skin? Is it, what is it? Is it my fucking rectum? Is it, what is it? I'm so sick of all these cancers. They're everywhere. Get away from me.

TARA FOLEY [00:17:17] They don't. And anyhow.

JVN [00:17:18] Fucking ew!

TARA FOLEY [00:17:20] It's, it's a terrible.

JVN [00:17:21] Can cells just stop dividing so goddamn much? Can we just fucking relax. I've had it. I'm leaving. Ok, I'm just kidding. So, um. Okay. So pegs, scary.

TARA FOLEY [00:17:33] Yeah.

JVN [00:17:33] So pegs are one big thing that we don't like. What else do we hate?

TARA FOLEY [00:17:37] Well, I mentioned fragrance. That's what I hate.

JVN [00:17:39] You hate fragrance.

TARA FOLEY [00:17:39] Absolutely the most. I mean, I. So first of all, I don't love fixating on the stuff I hate so much, but it's makes it easier.

JVN [00:17:45] Remember those? The, the, those environmental-. We learned about them together, those environmental bioaccumulatives.

TARA FOLEY [00:17:53] Yeah, that's many. That's many different.

JVN [00:17:56] And. But the one that we learned was like a tot, na?

TARA FOLEY [00:18:00] Not tocopherol.

JVN [00:18:00] What's tocopherol? What's she do?

TARA FOLEY [00:18:01] That's just Vitamin E, that's just used like as a preservative.

JVN [00:18:04] Oh, we like her?

TARA FOLEY [00:18:04] Yeah, I mean, it's a so-, there are lots of synthetic ingredients that are safe. A lot of people think chemicals are bad and that's just not the truth. You need actually, you need synthetic stuff to preserve products or else are gonna get moldy and kind of be unsafe in a different way. Right?

JVN [00:18:19] Right.

TARA FOLEY [00:18:19] So anyhow tocopherol is just-

JVN [00:18:20] She's fierce

TARA FOLEY [00:18:22] Yeah, it's fine, she's fine.

JVN [00:18:23] Or can't be fierce. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So but when it comes to regulations like the, so but it's like the different. Can the group of different chemical lobbies or what keeps these laws from passing in the United States.

TARA FOLEY [00:18:34] Yes, absolutely.

JVN [00:18:35] And I'm guessing that Mitch McConnell probably like is really good friends with them and like they're like besties, and I bet like about Lindsey Graham and Mitch McConnell and all the chemical.

TARA FOLEY [00:18:43] I think it's an ugly, ugly world.

JVN [00:18:46] Yeah, I'm sure.

TARA FOLEY [00:18:46] And some ugly conversations.

JVN [00:18:48] Because I, because, you know, there's so many. You know, when we think about. I mean, I am not a conspiracy person. But when you think about all the different health, adverse health effects that we see rising across this country, because it's that, or that, you know, want to get pinned on so many different things. But when you think about like the Trade Secrets Act and the fragrance lobby and the things that we are slathering all over our bodies from head to toe, day in and day out, putting it on our counters, the floors, our cars, our everywhere. It's everywhere. Like that has-, and we really don't do research on that.

TARA FOLEY [00:19:24] Well, I mean, in some ways, you shouldn't have to. Right? Like you should be able to trust somebody in some capacity, but you just can't.

JVN [00:19:31] And but how can you if there's no even really regulation or enforcement, like does the Center for Disease Control or the FDA like are they doing like tests?

TARA FOLEY [00:19:39] No, they they don't even, they don't even have-. So as part of these new acts that are right now in fron-, these bills that are in front of Congress, recalls are part of them. Right now, they, if, if somebody, like did you hear about the hair care line where everybody went bald? A few years ago.

JVN [00:19:54] Yeah.

TARA FOLEY [00:19:54] I won't bring up the name of the brand, but, so the FDA didn't even have the power to recall those products. I mean, that's crazy. So, so anyhow, so nobody's really doing the work for you. So. So that means that you kind of have to do work for yourself or you need to find people or brands or whatever that you trust. And obviously you work with these brands that you trust. And that's awesome. And I just I feel like it sounds so, so, so incredibly extreme. But I think in the future people are going to think about this as like the cigarette industry one day. They'll just because like it's so obviously like glaringly just at fault, but nobody's doing anything about it.

JVN [00:20:31] Yeah. I mean, well, one thing that I, like has been really scaring me is like the difference between a chemical, mineral sunscreens and like I've always been someone that uses chemical sunscreen, like just because they like, you know. Air-, I'm holding up air quotes, but absorbed better.

TARA FOLEY [00:20:42] Yeah.

JVN [00:20:42] But I have actually switch all the way to mineral. I'm only using the Biossance SPF 45 one.

TARA FOLEY [00:20:48] Great.

JVN [00:20:48] That is I believe she's zinc based, but chemical sunscreens work by actually absorbing the radiation into your skin in the first place. That doesn't even reflected at all.

TARA FOLEY [00:20:57] Right.

JVN [00:20:57] Like it's, and I was like ew. Like, why do I want to absorb radiation into my skin next to my little baby cells that are trying to, like get away from this sun exposure?

TARA FOLEY [00:21:05] Totally.

JVN [00:21:06] Just theoretically, it doesn't make as much sense.

TARA FOLEY [00:21:08] Yeah. I mean, there, you, you read about the new. Actually, I, I know that you read about it, you've discussed it recently on a recent podcast. But it's just the FDA study on that said, OK, it's absorbing and we can prove that it's absorbing in, but we don't know if it's doing any harm. It's like, well, if these are like I mean, har-, they're killing coral reefs, by the way,

and they're being banned, you know, in this country, in Hawai'i and other, you know, specific regions in this country and all over the world because they're killing, you know, aquatic life.

JVN [00:21:36] But I wonder-

TARA FOLEY [00:21:37] What do we think they're doing to us?

JVN [00:21:38] But I wonder if our mineral based one, I hope the mineral, because maybe because they're naturally derived, they won't be as detrimental.

TARA FOLEY [00:21:43] So mineral based sunscreens that are zinc based and then, by the way, don't have any other bad things like any other phthalates, parabens, whatever, mineral based sunscreens are biodegradable. So basically. So like when you go into the ocean or when you take a shower or whatever, when it washes off your body, it's going to turn into organic compounds. So it's a, that's a known thing versus these chemical ones. It's not turning into an organic compound. That's impossible.

JVN [00:22:08] That's the scary thing about those. I think there are called like we learned about them together from-

TARA FOLEY [00:22:14] Oxibenzone. Octinoxate.

JVN [00:22:15] Well, there's those things that are like the biocumulatives, like when we wash them off of our bodies, a lot of like, a lot of them are like cetaphils. Like they're those things that made things more flexible and pliable, but they like their bioaccumulative. Like when we wash them down the drain, like they don't go away, like they just accumulate.

TARA FOLEY [00:22:31] That's I mean, that sounds like phthalates.

JVN [00:22:33] Sounds like phthalates. Ok. So, yeah. So, so phthalate to the known endocrine disruptors.

TARA FOLEY [00:22:37] Yes.

JVN [00:22:38] Parabens are also known endocrine disruptors, aren't they?

TARA FOLEY [00:22:41] Yep.

JVN [00:22:41] But are they also carcinogenic?

TARA FOLEY [00:22:43] No. I mean they're mainly I think so. There's six different types of parabens and obviously some of them are more harmful than others. I mainly, again, like I'm not a doctor, but I, I know a lot about this subject. And basically, you know, they're, they're most known to be endocrine disruptors.

JVN [00:23:01] Got it. What and then? So when what else are we, do we not like want to just steer clear of?

TARA FOLEY [00:23:08] Well, again, there's just there's different reasons why you would steer clear of different ingredients. So we mentioned chemical sunscreens, we mentioned fragrance, we mentioned pegs, we mentioned parabens. Another one that we didn't go into detail on is sulfates, specifically SLS. And that's, that's not actually known to do a ton of long term bioaccumulation or any kind of long term harm. It's actually just a really bad irritant.

JVN [00:23:33] Yes.

TARA FOLEY [00:23:34] So for somebody who has like, you know, skin issues, it's specifically like very, very, very harmful. It's also harmful to put back into the water stream. That's.

JVN [00:23:43] Oh, sodium lauryl sulfate is?

TARA FOLEY [00:23:44] Oh, yeah. So, so that I mean, the water system thing is actually what makes this a public health issue. Right? Because, you know, it's good if you and I, you know, stop using parabens and phthalates and all those products. But until everybody does, all of these ingredients get washed off people when they're washing their hands or when they're in the shower and it goes back into the water system.

JVN [00:24:02] So sodium lauryl sulfate is an irritant to the water system. Does it require more ammonia?

TARA FOLEY [00:24:06] It's because it's an ethoxylated ingredient and it also has potential traces of that 1,4 dioxane in it. So it's not at, at as high of a level as a peg by any means. But anything that's ethoxylated has that in it. But it's.

JVN [00:24:21] An SLS.

TARA FOLEY [00:24:21] Yeah, the most because it you know, it the easiest and this is like a crude.

JVN [00:24:26] So but so many shampoos, their first ingredient after water is sodium lauryl sulfate.

TARA FOLEY [00:24:31] Oh, yeah.

JVN [00:24:32] I mean, so many of the ones that you all love are like. That is the first ingredient is sodium lauryl sulfate.

TARA FOLEY [00:24:36] To make it foam.

JVN [00:24:37] Yeah. And that actually really and I said this in "Queer Eye", but it's true. It's like that is the same thing that cleans your engine of your car and it's also like what they use like on ducks and wildlife. I get like the oil, like oil off of them. It is an extremely aggressive chemical.

TARA FOLEY [00:24:52] You see a lot of overlap between, you know, big chemical, like cleaning supplies, you know, paint literally, car fuel thing-, all of this and beauty products, because they're oftentimes made by the same companies or at least sourcing the same chemicals from the big chemical companies.

JVN [00:25:08] What about people that have like a skin issue? Like are skin issues like where, like what are tools that they can use to kind of like get more information?

TARA FOLEY [00:25:17] So skin issues like inflammation.

JVN [00:25:20] Your psoriasis. Your eczema.

TARA FOLEY [00:25:20] Yeah. Your rosacea, acne.

JVN [00:25:21] Contact dermatitis.

TARA FOLEY [00:25:23] Any of those.

JVN [00:25:24] Yeah.

TARA FOLEY [00:25:24] So. So you mean if they're trying to start using clean beauty products?

JVN [00:25:28] Yes.

TARA FOLEY [00:25:28] How do they? So. So I do think that starting as basic as possible is the right way to go for somebody that has inflammation.

JVN [00:25:37] Yeah. What if someone's in the throes of inflammation?

TARA FOLEY [00:25:40] Yeah. I, so again, like I would, I would almost do a mini skin cleanse if possible. So this is, this is why I'm not a very good business person, but I would say like not use any products for a while and then slowly add in very basic products. Like I always think that a face oil is the best place to start for a moisturizer because you're not going to have the petroleum, you're not going to have any of the mineral oils, any of the things are going to be potentially comedogenic.

JVN [00:26:06] But you also have a mineral oil and a face oil of the company sucked.

TARA FOLEY [00:26:10] Look for. I would actually, if somebody a severe inflammation start with a single source oil. So like just argan oil.

JVN [00:26:16] Yes.

TARA FOLEY [00:26:16] Just rosehip oil. Just something like that, basically. And obviously different oils are better for different skin types. I think that somebody with more combination skin should start with a faster absorbing oil like a squalene oil. And somebody with seriously dry skin might start with a Barberi fig or a prickly pear. And obviously it depends on what your skin is going through at the time. But I would start by literally washing with water, no foaming anything like just go back to basics and then slowly add things in, because if you start using a whole new product and a whole new routine, you're not going to be able to tie back any any of the goodness or any of the harm that that product's doing because it has this whole long laundry list of ingredients.

JVN [00:27:01] Where do you suggest people that they just do not know how to get into clean beauty or skin care? Like they're just overwhelmed they're like "I'm brand new". Like, where does someone start?

TARA FOLEY [00:27:11] It's, it's interesting because there aren't very many resources in terms of content that are dedicated 100 percent to clean beauty. So, I mean, you can go to a place like the EWG, the Environmental Working Group. They have a great database called the Skin Deep Database. It has, you know, I think around hundred thousand products logged in there right now. So you can look up your own products to see if they're quote unquote, "safe" or "unsafe" on a scale of 0 through 10. And so that's a good place to see if what you're using is, you know, good or bad. Honestly. And then I would, I would look out there for some of the retailers that have clean seals and programs like obviously we're 100 percent clean at Fullin and but Sephora, Target. I mean, even QVC this week announced that they have a new clean seal. Literally, this is hitting the mainstream because people obviously are interested and excited about it, but they don't know where to begin.

JVN [00:28:05] Ok wait, standby. We're gonna be right back with more Tara Foley right after the break. Welcome back to "Getting Curious", this is Jonathan Van Ness. We have Tara Foley. We get to meet each other working through Biossance with the Clean Academy, which was really so fun. So when we learned a lot about the differences between like the banned products that are involved in Europe and Canada and Japan, do those countries have more like? Has anyone ever done testing around like what like dimethicone does? Or like what pegs do? Like have, like how did those other countries, like, know to ban this stuff?

TARA FOLEY [00:28:49] So how did those other countries know to ban that stuff?

JVN [00:28:52] Yeah, like know, to make a ban list, like, has someone done research on it?

TARA FOLEY [00:28:55] I mean, absolutely. So there are, there is a lot more research funded in Europe. So for instance, like the research around aluminum zirconium in deodorant and everything else like that. That's all out, I mean, the majority of the studies are coming out of Europe. Yes. Short answer is yes. There's tons of research and studies that would substantiate everybody having bans on these ingredients in everyday consumer products. The US just hasn't stepped up to do it.

JVN [00:29:26] Who do you think is like the most transparent?

TARA FOLEY [00:29:29] That's interesting because they all have, all those countries have very different, and all those different parts of the world have very different approaches. So. So Japan is potentially the most rigorous in some respects, but not, but not every respect. To be honest, nobody's perfect. So you can still find stuff that wouldn't meet the criteria, that wouldn't meet my personal criteria. And in all of those countries, like people say, "Oh, if I go to Europe, I should be able to buy anything and it's all going be safe". That's that's not true. They still allow.

JVN [00:29:59] Example?

TARA FOLEY [00:30:00] They still, I'm trying to think of something specific. Actually, some of these chemical sunscreens that are, that are very hot button right now, they're still allowed in

Europe. I think that they're gonna jump on the bandwagon, actually, and I think they're going to do that sooner than the whole U.S. does, but.

JVN [00:30:15] Because in sunscreens, even if it had like fragrance, it could have like a phthalate or that would make that DL. What's that one DL thing again that so scary? D.I.?

TARA FOLEY [00:30:24] 1,4-dioxane.

JVN [00:30:25] 1,4-dioxane. 1,4-dioxane. This is like my biggest takeaway from this episode, 'cause that's the thing I feel like I didn't learn about before and I didn't know we were to learn about. 1,4-dioxane. And that's not in your ingredients. But it's a byproduct of any time I'm using anything that was an i-

TARA FOLEY [00:30:43] That's ethoxylated.

JVN [00:30:45] Ethoxylated.

TARA FOLEY [00:30:45] So pegs, polysorbates with a high number after them, even SLS. Some, some people say that anything that has an "eth" involved. So like sodium laureth sulfate.

JVN [00:30:58] Yes.

TARA FOLEY [00:30:58] Like all that. But I don't think that that rule can actually be applied universally. So but it's, it's anything that's ethoxylated will lead to 1,4-dioxane. And I think, I think I mentioned this before. But I mean, Chuck Schumer basically was on this whole campaign against 1,4-dioxane because he had to be because in Long Island they were finding it in these massively high levels in the drinking water. And it's like why? Because everybody's using products that release this ingredient. So.

JVN [00:31:26] And that was in our clean-, or in New York is suppose to have like the cleanest water.

TARA FOLEY [00:31:31] I think it was specifically in Long Island. I don't know if. I mean, I don't think it was New York City. I can, I can look into it more. But, but that was the first time I heard anybody talking about it in the news. To be honest. And it's like, I don't know, it's hard.

JVN [00:31:45] So how do you figure out, like if you're going to, like, incorporate a new like, what do you look for? Like, am I going to start supporting this company or not?

TARA FOLEY [00:31:52] So we start with our restricted list of ingredients that we don't allow because it's easy. But then that's table stakes for us. From there, we, it's easy I mean to say if we can if we should keep going to the next step with a brand. From there, it's really like what are they solving for? And so if they're trying to, if you use inflammation as the example before, if they're trying to solve an acne, solving, you know, acne for a customer, it's like, how are they approaching it? Are they approaching it with almost entirely synthetic ingredients? Are they approaching it with plant based ingredients that we know have good proven results for this? So.

JVN [00:32:28] So salicylic acid maybe?

TARA FOLEY [00:32:29] Yeah, yeah, exactly. Willow bark. So basically you, we want to make sure that it's safe, but that it's also effective and then it's performance driven as much as possible because we again, we know that people try clean beauty all the time. And then if it doesn't work in the very first step, they're going to move, they're going to move on. They're going to say "Clean beauty doesn't work".

JVN [00:32:48] Well, I do think that because like I've always thought that, like, it needed to be like a mix of like science and nature. And I think sometimes, like, it's synthetic can be a mix or synthetic can be science. But that doesn't automatically mean bad for the environment or bad for you. Like you can't have synthetic that is clean or green, like I believe this. But what about the people that say, what's the science behind like does, does introducing synthetic ingredients like make the natural or-. Does in, does including synthesized ingredients make the, make the earth derived ingredients like less effective?

TARA FOLEY [00:33:27] Well, that's an interesting question. I think the answer is it depends. It's a little complicated. I see really beautiful formulas all the time that have both. And that have clinicals on them that show really great performance. So I, no, I don't think that. I don't think it should. I think, I think sometimes they're synthetic ingredients in a formula that are almost going to boost and help penetrate and help, you know, the product work even better.

JVN [00:33:54] Oh, that's interest. Because actually, I think that that's, I mean, not, this is not a Biossance commercial podcast, but I do really like Biossance. But I do feel like the way that they, 'cause like their squalene isn't from because historically squalene came from shark liver or olives. And that is not where Biossance gets theirs. In their bio, and I think their squalene would be considered synthetic because it's made from yeast and sugarcane in those big, gorgeous vats. But, but both of the things are natural ingredients. But all I know is that when I use things that are based, that are Biossance, that have that squalene in it. It does. It gets into my skin. It doesn't like sit on top of it, which is like, I feel like it. I like things that don't.

TARA FOLEY [00:34:40] It's working, you like the performance. Yeah.

JVN [00:34:42] Yeah. Because, I mean, I can tell it when I use something like sits on the outside of my skin.

TARA FOLEY [00:34:45] I think is. So that sounds like they're using isolates of plant ingredients. And it sounds like they're using chemistry to make it, which is again, like that's not a bad thing at all.

JVN [00:34:53] Well, it's actually better because I mean if you were, like it, because they can make the amount of squalene that all of Biossance needs. They, it takes up a square kilometer of space to make all of the sugar cane that they need to make that like all year long.

TARA FOLEY [00:35:05] Wow.

JVN [00:35:06] And they're not like I mean, it literally saves like millions of sharks. If you're going to sharks to get to get the squalene oil. It like, the environmental impact of harvesting squalene in

this way is like so much less of an ass than like harvesting it from olives or harvesting it from sharks.

TARA FOLEY [00:35:23] Right. That's, that's true green chemistry. I didn't know that about their, about their product. But that's.

JVN [00:35:27] You didn't?

TARA FOLEY [00:35:28] No, I didn't.

JVN [00:35:29] That's literally how they make their squalene. Yeah.

TARA FOLEY [00:35:31] That's awesome.

JVN [00:35:31] And so they put like this yeast in these like big vats that are like, you know, a couple stories high and then they introduce the sugar cane and by, by, by determining like what molecules of the sugar can get introduced. It literally makes squalene.

TARA FOLEY [00:35:43] That's awesome.

JVN [00:35:44] And yeah. And all of, and then even like all the byproducts like from the sugar cane is like used in the packaging. So they actually like use every single bit of the sugar cane plant in the production of either the product or in the box.

TARA FOLEY [00:35:58] That's pretty amazing.

JVN [00:35:58] It's definitely like, it definitely, they're trying to, and and also by making their squalene that way, they sell it to other companies because they're trying to like lessen environmental impact of like ingredients to make clean beauty.

TARA FOLEY [00:36:12] Yep. Yeah. I mean, that's that's really interesting, especially on the packaging front. A lot of people think in clean beauty and green beauty and all the different things that this piece of the industry is called, that packaging all needs to be glass. And it actually at the end of the day, I mean, glass is great because it won't leech into the, into the ingredients, inside the bottle. And I mean, it's highly recyclable, all those things, but are highly reusable, too. But at the end of the day, it's so, so, so heavy to transport across the country, the world, wherever you're shipping it. It's also it can be harder for some people to recycle, especially when it's mixed materials and if they're not separating them and everything. So, so packaging is actually a really, really interesting one. It sounds like they considered it. And, you know, the sugar cane plastics, which is super potentially super light, I think. I don't know, I never actually touched it.

JVN [00:37:02] No, it is. It's light.

TARA FOLEY [00:37:03] and hopefully, you know, it's not leeching into the ingredients or anything. So.

JVN [00:37:07] What about plastics leaching into the ingredients? Like where, where, where are we at on studying that? Like is the, what about these BP? Is that like?

TARA FOLEY [00:37:15] The BPA. Yeah. Bisphenols. All bisphenols. And that's, that's another thing. Like I mentioned in the beginning, when you see BPA free on it. When you see anything free, by the way, I think you should be skeptical because, you know, they've done tons of studies on plastics. If it's BPA free, maybe there's BPS in it. Maybe there's something else. So, again, I would I would always optimize for finding out somebody that like lists their values and their policies and their standards, whether it's a brand or retailer, you know, a content creator, whoever, and then just trust that everything's going to fall within those parameters. Because when you see these big, big, big companies saying, "Oh, we're BPA free" and "We're sulfate free", "We're all these things free". I would be very, very skeptical. Because plastics can be very harmful potentially.

JVN [00:38:03] And I mean, talk about like plastics.

TARA FOLEY [00:38:05] Not all plastics by the way. Plastics can be ok too. I mean, I don't want people to be, I don't want people to be scared of plastics. But like you, maybe you're about to bring up microbeads and things like that.

JVN [00:38:13] No, I was just thinking about like plastics lobby. When you think about transparency and like getting to like the truth of something, I think it's.

TARA FOLEY [00:38:20] Forget about that. Yeah.

JVN [00:38:21] Yeah. Well, what about like in terms of clean beauty with like plastics that are used to package clean beauty, like, is there anything that you try to steer clear of or worried about or are interested in?

TARA FOLEY [00:38:32] So it depends on the formula. So if something's going to be, if something has a lot of oils in it that are like a tea tree oil or citric oil, citrus oils, we are much more concerned about the plastics than something that, you know, is a basic cleanser that has mainly water in it and a few other ingredients.

JVN [00:38:53] Is that because tea tree is more naturally abrasive.

TARA FOLEY [00:38:55] Yeah. Exactly.

JVN [00:38:56] So it would invite things from its container into itself.

TARA FOLEY [00:38:58] Exactly. And to be honest, like it's, it's we, we have a few. It's not worth going into the policy we have, but we have a few things that we made need to make sure that the plastics meet. And it's very basic and plastics are pretty OK with us. I mean, for us-.

JVN [00:39:14] As far as Fullane?

TARA FOLEY [00:39:14] Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

JVN [00:39:15] But so what are they?

TARA FOLEY [00:39:18] Honestly, it's like that I don't feel like it's worth going into detail on it. I mean, like PET is generally okay. Piece, post-consumer recyclable is actually one where we push a lot harder because you don't always know what's inside of the PCR. So.

JVN [00:39:36] Is that like if a package is made of PCR?

TARA FOLEY [00:39:39] Yeah.

JVN [00:39:40] Which means that it was made of.

TARA FOLEY [00:39:42] It's, it's made of other plastics that's been recycled to make a new plastic container.

JVN [00:39:48] But wouldn't theoretically we kind of like that because it's already been used?

TARA FOLEY [00:39:51] You don't know what the plastics were to, to make that one. So.

JVN [00:39:54] I wonder if there's some shit we could put in there that's not that important. Like like a shoe box or something. Like an organizational container, like we know we put the thing in there that we're not going to eat.

TARA FOLEY [00:40:04] Well, just the risk that you run there is that, you know, there may be BPA or other things.

JVN [00:40:08] Oh, and it's going to touch your fucking clothes or something? Jesus Christ, Tara. Can anyone win? You know what I'm saying?

TARA FOLEY [00:40:15] That's the problem and it's. And it's, and nobody's perfect and like, you know, you're not. It's just like we're just trying to do our best basic, basically.

JVN [00:40:24] I remember, I read this book called "Yoga and Vegetarianism", that's a whole chapter. It's like everyone is just doing the best they can with what they know.

TARA FOLEY [00:40:28] Trying to our best.

JVN [00:40:29] It's very true. Well, we've come to that part in the podcast where we've, we've reached our time. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that we should talk about that I missed? It's like It's a golden moment. We can, if we missed anything that you want to share?

TARA FOLEY [00:40:43] So I guess one thing that we talked about a little bit was just how to start your journey and what products to start with. And basically just how to start in general. And I mentioned I, I hope that people stick with it no matter what. A couple of the product categories that that we all use that could be potentially easy swap outs are things like body lotions and body soaps and things like that. Think about the products you use most frequently throughout the day and then also the products that cover the most surface area of your body. And then beyond that, I would say, I would suggest that people think about the products that they use most in life. So.

JVN [00:41:19] Well, I am really into the Follain hand soap and body wash and have been using it so flagged for that, we can make sure that I say that. But yes, I'm really into it. I think that it's amazing. I love that it's reusable. And I also just and if Biossance wasn't exclusively at Sephora, we would love Biossance.

TARA FOLEY [00:41:31] Oh of course. Yeah.

JVN [00:41:34] Follain loves Biossance. Much major big hearts, much approved. Yeah, that's so interesting. So really. And when you say that you hope people stick with it, it's that you hope that people stick with supporting and buying clean beauty products from brands that are truly clean beauty brands. And basically more talking about big companies that say this free or that free when there is a big company, it's harder a lot of times for, its longer processes that have, you know, come, had brought bigger companies to where they are. And it's harder for them to like correct their ship, so to speak.

TARA FOLEY [00:42:11] Totally.

JVN [00:42:11] Which is like what we're saying is like not the big companies can't make meaningful contributions to a clean beauty space, but in general, supporting brands that are smaller, they're more nimble, they're easier, they're, it's easier to track their transparency and, and tr-, to track what, you know, makes their brands tick. And basically, you're saying like, I hope that you stick with the brands that you find. And we, and I hope that you really read ingredients and make that switch to supporting and knowing what clean beauty is in your life.

TARA FOLEY [00:42:38] Yeah, to educate yourself. I mean, it's a, it's an issue of self respect in a way. And it's just basically like you can make a decision to eat your McDonald's or to eat your kale chip. But like at least your you know, what you're deciding between. So I would just say this is another area of your health that I would highly encourage people to get educated on and to know what they're deciding between.

JVN [00:43:01] Tara Foley, thanks you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

TARA FOLEY [00:43:03] This was so fun. Thank you.

JVN [00:43:04] It was so good. You've been listening to "Getting Curious" with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week with Tara Foley. You'll find links to Tara's and Follain's socials in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Follow me on Instagram and Twitter at CuriousWithJVN. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quin. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. Leave us a review on that Apple Podcast app if you want to, honeys. Sign up a friend for it, you can find us on Spotify, do whatever you want. You know, really, we support you making good, responsible decisions for yourself. So big hug. And we'll see you next time on "Getting Curious".