

Pretty Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Shannon Vaughn

JVN Hey curious people, welcome to Pretty Curious, our podcast on all things beauty. I'm Jonathan Van Ness. Oh, I bumped the table. This week we're talking to Shannon Vaughn, the founder and CEO of one of my favorite self-care and wellness brands, Pursoma. If you remember, I featured them before, one of their signature bath soaks as our body treatments as my product recommendations for pretty curious before I discovered them years ago. And I love their stuff. I'm so excited to get to talk to Shannon. We're talking all about how she started Pursoma, about how bath salts can help us with our mental health and our overall well-being, and also how she went from ideating her brand to launching her brand. I'm so excited to get to talk with her. But first, it's time to get ready with me. I posted on my stories a while ago that I got this big, gorgeous box of Alchemist. I've been using it the house down. I love their vitamin C serum. Oh, and also I went to the on course spa and got a hydro facial and my or the situation there was telling me that I need to get a straight up vitamin C serum. I'm an alginate makes one. So I started using it and it was in that box. And so it's gorgeous. I'm loving the sleeping collagen. The hydro facial was amazing. Naymaka Roberts-Smith was telling us about that, and we love her. That was LAbeautyologist, who we had a few weeks ago. I guess on the Queer Eye front, though, we are having such a good time in big. It is super busy. We're doing lots of filming. But I do love Vegas and I didn't realize I was going to love it so much. But it's so cool here. I've gotten to go to some really cool salons. Our heroes are incredible. The people that make Vegas work are just incredible people. I'm loving the characters here. I brought all the pets and they're also loving it here. And I also, I know I've talked about this like intense newfound love I have of crab legs, but this one place where I love their crab legs, it's called, Joe's. It's in Caesars Palace. There is a Lush on the way out of there, and I have been. Really? I told y'all earlier about the snuggles. I went and got the two full size bottles of it. I'm obsessed. But I also got some of their face masks that you put in the fridge, so I'm eager to use those. I'll let you know what I find out if they're as good as I remember. I'm okay. But I think that's that's giving what I want to talk about for the moment. I love you guys. And thanks for listening to the pod. And keep your questions coming. And. Yeah. Thanks for your love and thanks for your support. I really appreciate it. Our team really it are Getting Curious. Team really appreciates it. Just thanks for thanks for being here. It really does mean so much.

So let's get into a gorgeous listener question. What are some tips for embracing natural curls? I just turned 27 and I feel like my hair texture has totally changed. Oh, interest. It's always been pretty thick, but it used to be thinner. And now oh that's fun that I got like thicker and now it feels wavier and curlier, but I don't know how to treat it. Okay, so typically wavy and curly hair is going to need a little bit more hydration. And if you see on my Instagram, I think it was like a, a couple months ago I posted a video about like how to wash and condition your hair and honestly, distributing the conditioner throughout your hair properly with a wet brush in the shower is so important. If you're not evenly coating all of your hair in the conditioner, it's not going to get as much. Just is is even as a result as it could. And so that it really and your style really starts in the shower. So making sure that you're using a gorgeous hydrating shampoo and conditioner, I do see I am partial to Javi and Harry's nurture line. It is really good. It uses this really cool upcycled, orange peel to make this stuff called Cara Tress. So it's it's this like vegan protein that makes your hair so shiny and it's just beautiful because it's strength and moisture and more, integrity to the hair. It makes it really

supple. I just love it. Also has these really nice amino acids, and addition to our hemi squalene, which is a beautiful sugar based, squalane, which just gives such hydration and trying to the hair. So I am obsessed with that. Also, wavy slash curly hair is typically going to need a few types of products, or at least one product to give it some hold and some definition and some movement. Again, I love our air dry cream, but like we do add amazing curly products. I also love, I do really love weed. Oh, and I also like show more as the curly products and also way makes them I think makes some good curly products. So there are tons of curly products that I love, like a curly cream, or like a curly, kind of like a curl gel. I also love like, a curly mousse, so finding the right cocktail that works for you is kind of the tea. And then also, much like distributing the product throughout your hair and the air, the conditioner, throughout your hair, in the shower, you want to make sure that you're distributing evenly the product, the styling product through your hair after the shower. So using like a wet brush or a wide tooth comb on wet hair and then applying your product and then again working it through with your wet brush, your y tooth chrome, and then scrunching your hair or doing like your finger curls or whatever you're going to do to get your wavy texture. That's going to be the deal. So there's also so much good content on social about it. I've been doing a lot of wavy curly stuff lately, so, Queen, whoever let us or whoever asked that question let us know how it's going. Can't wait. Now, okay. Pretty curious people. Let's get to our conversation with Shannon Von. Shannon. Von is the founder and CEO of Pursoma, a wellness company that aims to help you live a healthier life by creating products like bath soaks and body oils designed to detoxify and rejuvenate your body and mind. Welcome to the show, Shannon. How are you?

SHANNON VAUGHN Good. Great. Thanks for having me.

JVN Shannon, will you take us on a journey to the past, Anastasia style? Except for, like, the overthrow of. Like I was like a random Russian revolution. I don't know what happened there, but what were we doing? Like we were minding our own business on DMs. And then did I dm or did you DM? Like, how did my love affair with Pursoma begin? Do you remember?

SHANNON VAUGHN I think that it was our marketing- part of our marketing team who was really obsessed with you and just loved watching your shows and listening to you perform. And then I think you had done some posting on your love of bathing, and so they decided to reach out, and that's how that connection happened. So I totally credit them with that.

JVN Well, they really slayed because I was minding my own business and I saw this like gorgeous little. I think it was like a gorgeous little, like Pursoma, like Instagram popped up on my in my DMs and are like. And I was like, who are these people? And I got the most incredible silk sent to me. I love, the After yoga one and I love, I mean, I love all of them, but that after yoga one like really, really just turned me out and it turned me into like a forever lifetime, Pursoma obsessed, perfect person. So your some was all about self-care, wellness, and of course, baths. So how did you start Pursoma and why are baths such an important ritual?

SHANNON VAUGHN So I'll jump to your favorite product that you just mentioned, Apres Shavasana and that can kind of segue into why I started the company and bathing in general, but you know when. I was living in New York City. I would go to these amazing yoga classes

and everything, as you know, in a yoga class in New York City. It's like quiet, right? You don't hear sirens, you don't hear noise from here. Police. And you go through this like nice hour long experience with a bunch of people, and it's hot, sweaty, and you feel so calm. And then you walk outside and you're like, oh no, I'm stressed again because it's so noisy. And so I would go home and I just didn't know how to kind of take that Savasana pose with me to my bed. And so I was like, I would always take a bath afterwards and to kind of keep that feeling. And I was like, I really want it to feel like the experience that I felt in the yoga studio and a yoga studio always has a certain scent and a vibe. So I wanted to recreate that scent and vibe so that after I would go home. So Apres Savasana, which was after my savasana, I take a yoga bath and that way I would go basically from the shavasana in the classroom to my bed via a bath. And that's kind of how I did the bathing in general. I had a really bad health crisis, which was cause from some environmental stressors and, really shocked me and kind of woke me up to like the whole mind body connection I went through down a deep rabbit hole of holistic wellness, healed some of the major concerns that I had got better, then went and studied, did some deep study and meditation in India, and made this strong connection between the mind and the body and one of the rituals for healing for me, aside from lots of supplementation, herbal treatments, blood cleaners, there was a lot of different things I used, but one of them was the detox bathing, and the bathing was prescribed to me as part of put a bunch of salt in the tub, put a bunch of clay in the tub because it's known to pull out heavy metals and soak in it and then get out. And the whole experience was super clunky, very messy. I had to order these things in bulk from, you know, apothecary.com, and it just was kind of a clunky experience. And so but I felt really, really good. And what would happen is I would take these bath sweat like I was exercising and then get out wrapped in a robe. And I would continue to sweat and then I would sleep. And so a lot of my anxiety and and disability to sleep was calmed by the bath. So I was like, what if you just had a single serve packet where you could just jump everything into the tub in one serving? I have one detox experience and then go to sleep, and that's kind of help. Your Soma started was I started kind of concocting that stuff in my apartment.

JVN I loved the like idea of releasing, removing, letting something go. How can baths be used to accomplish that? Like to be used as a tool for detoxifying?

SHANNON VAUGHN You could do intention bathing, which without kind of making it sound so intensive. The reason why I like the Pursoma ritual, which is on the back of our packaging, and it took me so much time to, like, figure out what those steps are, is there's a process of, you know, it's just like when you go when you talked about the yoga class like that Shavasana pose at the end, it's like the idea that you absorb all the work you did. But then there's the other way to do it. Like, you want to release all the work you did, maybe in a day. That was stressful. And so I like to have my steps. I turn on the bath, I run the water, I put the salt, I get a bottle of water. I dry brush my body for two minutes in the tub, and I soak. And sometimes I turn on something to listen to and spend the full 20 to 30 minutes. And then I get out wrapped in the towel. And then I have a tea. And typically what I find is like, whatever I went into the bathtub with, for lack of a better way, it kind of goes down the drain. So it all just kind of gets washed away. So I find that that's like a really strong way for me to kind of release that. And you feel it in the sweating, just like you feel it in exercise. So I feel like there's a release, especially if you kind of go with the protocol and make it a and a follow the steps.

JVN Yes. Okay. So, I feel like I can just like, hear some people because whenever I talk about my loves, a love of baths, like some people are like a bath, I feel like I'm bathing in my own, like, shit or whatever. Not to like. But no, that is how you sound when you come for bathing. So, for baths. So this is what I do. But, Shannon, I'm open to your thoughts because I, I guess I was kind of a closet, like, because, like, if I just come back from gymnastics where, like, my whole body has been in like a foam pit where, like, all these children's, like, Band-Aids and like socks and, like, just good God knows what's in that foam pad I eat. I do take a rinse first. Like I go in my shower. I take a quick rinse. I hit my buttcrack legs and like armpits the most just cause I like. I don't know what's going on in there. Oh. My hands. And then I do my bath, and then I actually do full disclosure. I do like a really quick rinse afterwards because I just, I don't know, I feel like I just like, I don't know, I just like, when I like if I was to like, bathing and like something, I don't know, I it's like one of like rinse after good, bad, indifferent. Do you care what do you think about rinsing doing a quick pre bath rinse and post bath rinse.

SHANNON VAUGHN I mean if I'm super sweaty I would rinse off my body before I laid in my bath. Sure. look there are bather the non bathers. When I got into the bath business, I was so passionate about how it helped my mental health and my state of being that the bath was just a vessel for me to calm myself down and remove the anxiety and help me sleep. I didn't really care that it was a bathtub, it just happened to be a bath. And I was so passionate about that. And I remember going into the bath business and everyone was like, whoa, whoa, whoa. That's a really small category. You should go into beauty products and you should go into cosmetics. And a lot of them were right. It's a much bigger business. There's a lot more money there. But what the best advice I got was like, don't try and convert people. There are people that bathe and there are people that shower, and there's about 3 million people in the United States that bathe on a regular basis, which is a very small percentage of our population. And that doesn't include babies and children where their parents are bathing them. But in general, there's like 3 million adults that are like addicted to bathing. That is like their happy space.

JVN What is the best part about being the founder of Pursoma? And what's the most not best part about being a founder of a beauty company?

SHANNON VAUGHN That's a really good question. I mean, I think that. I can answer that, you know, and it can speak to all entrepreneurs in that you start something because you create a business for two reasons. You either want to improve on an existing product and make it better. I wanted to solve the problem of where people were needed, a place to kind of work through their anxiety and be able to relax without having to leave their home, and without having to spend a lot of money and bathing. Meditative bathing for me, is what I would pay 325 nights of the year approximately, and it helped me get through. Death of a parent, raising a child, relationship issues, all of those things like that was my go to. I didn't I don't do drugs or I don't drink alcohol and with any regularity. And so for me, I need to have a place to go. And that was a healthy place for me to go. And so I think that you have this idea in mind, and then it becomes a business, and then it needs money and then it needs people. And not everybody's always aligned like, as it keeps growing. And because you're one person and you have to spread out, you kind of get away sometimes from where your origin was. And so I think that, you know, that's oftentimes if you were to look at a company that, let's say, was sold for a lot of money and very successful, and you were to look back at the

origin of like how that company started and you were to look at what they created the first time 20 years ago. It would be very different from the end result. And that's okay for some founders, it's completely okay. And when you're not kind of when you go into a business and you're not like an economics major and you're not focused on cost of goods and you're not an expert in a PNL, you have to learn those things because it's your business. And oftentimes that removes you from kind of your passion and purpose. And I think it's a really, really hard position to be in. And I don't know that there's like some answer to saying, how do you translate your passion and purpose into a business without losing yourself along the process, or putting yourself in roles that you really don't want to be in? And I think that the answer is just you have to be able to pivot and sit for a minute and say, okay, where am I actually spending my time and what is giving me joy? And sometimes you have to let go of certain things. I mean, we were very, very, very focused on making sure that we could bring bathing to the masses and expanding into a much larger market. And part of that's been really good because we've had larger brand exposure. But part of that has been very hard because it's harder to tell that message at a large scale. And I think that if you're really able to communicate with your core customer and bring it back to like, your passion and purpose, I think that in the end you may have a smaller company, but you'll have a stronger message and a stronger purpose, and you'll feel better about what you're doing.

JVN Oh, Shannon, that's so good.

SHANNON VAUGHN You need to have a really good accountant that you really can have conversations with.

JVN Yeah. That, your lips to God's ears. Honey, that one's really important. So, when you launched Pursoma, what was the SKU?

SHANNON VAUGHN So when I first first launched, I was in my apartment in Georgetown because I went to medical hot minute. I had one of those elwood's moments where I was like, medical school. And I got in and there was like, oh, no, I'm not, I'm not ready for this. And I withdrew from the program and I started Pursoma in my apartment, and I sold my first products at a juice bar. So I would sell the products. When someone buy juice cleanse, they would get a Pursoma product. So at the end of the day of a juice cleanse, which is super annoying to do with clients. They could take a bath and calm down. So the very first product was a little tiny bag, the Super Soma algae seaweed detox bath. So I sold those in, a store in Washington, D.C., and then I started to develop these, for single serving products with clay. So I had Hot Tub Bath, Digital Detox, Restoration, Resurrection Bath and Mineral Steamer. So minerals of the sea. And I was working originally with a, French farmer who I imported the sea salt from and the French green clay. And so that's why I kind of I started with the kind of French naming system.

JVN I've used all four of those. And then how has it evolved?

SHANNON VAUGHN So we stuck with our core products, and then I added more products that were, more centered. So those products don't have a lot of scent, as you know, they're like earthy and they don't really have scent at all. One has ginger doesn't smell, but it's very strong and good. They're more medical feeling. And so then we added more sessions. And so then we had a collection, and then I started to make the things that I was recommending

as the ritual. So water bottles, tea, dry brushing after bath, body oils after bath, body oil for nighttime versus daytime. Then I started bathing. Right. So we have a nighttime daytime. And then I started baby. My daughter and I want a different sense. So we started pure baby. So pure babies for baby and children. So then we have that collection. And then I was like, why? We wanted to compete with the Alps and salt market. So we made more of a, kind of a larger, mass serving and push that to Target and Walmart. And so there are still like the self-care Sunday Spa in a box luxury products at Pierce, Walmart.com. And then there's the mass collection that we sell at some of the larger markets.

JVN I love that you're so passionate about wellness. What are like what's on your algorithm right now? What are some wellness trends that are or what are some wellness trends that you think are here to stay? They or just wellness things that you've been doing for a long time outside of bathing that you highly recommend?

SHANNON VAUGHN So my second favorite thing next to bathing is infrared sauna. I swear by infrared sauna. My friends on the company hired oath and they really turned me on to sauna. I mean, I had a phone in my apartment in New York. I have one where I live now, and I mean that thing. Any any ailment. Or, like you were saying, like, after tumbling, like your body hurts. I mean, when you are not 19 or 20, like, your body just needs recovery. And so infrared sauna for me is hands down, like second to bathing. I think it's the most best investment you can possibly make in the space of health and wellness. When you get in a dry sauna, like the kind where you have to dump the water on the little rocks that it feels like you can't breathe. So it never feels like that. And it's not a steam sauna, so it is dry, but it's like an internal sweat. So it takes you like 15 minutes before you sit in there, before you actually start to sweat.

JVN Okay, that makes sense. Okay. We will continue into our third and most exciting segment, which is our rapid fire beauty segment. And judging by the skin, the hair, and the quality of Pursoma, I have never been as excited to like, give someone this rapid fire before. Because honey, I want to pick the brain. Are you ready?

SHANNON VAUGHN Ready.

JVN Okay. What is your go to budget beauty recommendation under \$10.

SHANNON VAUGHN Tongue scraper.

JVN Really good one. And that's great. Budget beauty recommendation. What about splurge recommendation? We are miss Rich. We can buy whatever we want in terms of beauty. Splurge recommendation.

SHANNON VAUGHN Definitely. Like a crazy, crazy peel. Like a deep, deep peel from an obstetrician. And there's this one called Elaine Brennan that your face falls off you. Looks like you have leprosy for seven days, and then everything comes off. And it's amazing.

JVN Because your skin is, like, fucking pretty.

SHANNON VAUGHN Thank you.

JVN Like, really good. Thank you. Get it clean. Okay, that makes me curious about those. What's your favorite vintage beauty look?

SHANNON VAUGHN I like English bohemian, like lace dresses that kind of look like a nightgown, but they're not a nightgown. That's my favorite.

JVN What era is that?

SHANNON VAUGHN 20s.

JVN Ah!, Okay. This is going to be our meh or major. I already know the first one. Infrared sauna?

SHANNON VAUGHN Major.

JVN Cold plunges?

SHANNON VAUGHN Meh.

JVN Bath bombs?

SHANNON VAUGHN Meh.

JVN Bath beads?

SHANNON VAUGHN Meh.

JVN Clawfoot tubs.

SHANNON VAUGHN Major.

JVN Sugar scrubs.

SHANNON VAUGHN Major.

JVN Oh, but only on dry skin or on wet skin.

SHANNON VAUGHN To dry skin.

JVN So actually, I like to interrupt this segment. This the first time I've ever done this. So when you. So if you do like a sugar scrub type of exfoliant, like one that's more like, you know, a literal exfoliant. So will you, like, get in the shower on dry skin and you do that first and then you rinse it off?

SHANNON VAUGHN Yes. You start from the feet and go upwards, but you take it out. Like if you just buy \$5 one from the store, you start with the feet and go up because think about it, your skin is dry, right? Like you're trying to remove the dry skin that's sitting on top, like this

fuzzy little layer. Just like shaving. If you put water on that, it immediately becomes smooth and then you can't remove the dry skin.

JVN I didn't know that this was going to be my biggest take away from her episode, but wow. Like that really? Wow. You really did the damn thing. We're going back in, showers.

SHANNON VAUGHN Meh.

JVN Drinking wine in the bath?

SHANNON VAUGHN No.

JVN TV's in the bathroom either way.

SHANNON VAUGHN Could go either way.

JVN oh, my God, she's giving openness. Bath pillows?

SHANNON VAUGHN No.

JVN Shannon, can I just say not to get in a fight at the end of our podcast? But I do have one that has those, like, those things that you, like, put on windows to make things like stick, you know, like those suction cups. My husband got me a bath pillow for like Christmas last year. It is so comfy. And it like you can like rest your head on it. It's like your neck feels better if you're like laying in there. So mine is major. But I understand how you could think. Mat. What about bath trays and those bath trays and caddies?.

SHANNON VAUGHN Major because you can put your water bottle, you can put your face wash and you can put. Yeah, I love that.

JVN If my husband let me smoke pot at our house, I would roll joints on that and like, smoke, it would be so amazing. But, my husband doesn't love a smoking pot in the house, so I don't out of, like, respect because I'm a good partner. Shannon. What's next? Where can we follow along? What's next? What's happening for you and Pursoma.. And where can people follow you if they're obsessed?

SHANNON VAUGHN Pursoma on our Instagram. We are, lethargic on our TikTok and all of the other social media that I have not yet to catch up on. Mine, Shannon Vine. Also, I write on the Pursoma Journal and blog. Pretty much. That's it.

JVN Love. Shannon. This also is like the compulsory part of pretty curious where I tell our guest, but only really if I really liked them. So we should edit this out. That part. But get on Tik Tok. The kids would live for your beauty stuff on TikTok and like the like, excellence of baths. Plus, I feel like TikTok is the fastest way for your business model to go from like 3 to 4 million obsessed bathers in the United States to like ten. Like you could sell them on TikTok before it gets banned, which it probably will if they don't do best. But, you know, that's a getting curious episode. Shannon, thank you so much for coming out. Pretty curious. We appreciate you so much.

SHANNON VAUGHN Thank you so much.

JVN I have one more question. I'm sorry. I have one more question. And also you don't have to answer it. Do you do that like facial massage to like, how is your face so fucking pretty? Or is it just like that laser thing, like, do you do that thing on like, cuz I just don't see a, I don't see a fine line on your whole face situation.

SHANNON VAUGHN Gua sha? No, I don't do it. Oh, nope.

JVN I know you don't do this thing. Or do you, like, roll her on the inside or something, you know.

SHANNON VAUGHN No, I think it's I think it's like, I think the lowest hanging fruit of wellness is drinking three liters of water a day.

JVN Yeah, because that skin's giving clear, hydrated, plump, like, pretty good for you, CNN.

SHANNON VAUGHN Thank you. Thank you so much.

JVN Thanks for coming on. That was fun.

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