

Shmanners 165: Advice

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Travis: Are you ready to start the show?

Teresa: Oh, I wouldn't if I were you.

Travis: Oh. It's Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, Internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette.

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: Uh, better this week. Better this week.

Travis: Yeah? You have a voice!

Teresa: I do.

Travis: And you know, here's a little— this is a pro podcasting tip for you folks at home. Um, being audible is, uh... It's really— it really helps.

Teresa: Really helps in the podcasting game.

Travis: In the podcast recording process.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And, and you're sounding a lot better.

Teresa: Thank you. Last week, Bebe and I were sharing a cold.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, we are both on the mend, although the coughing... the coughing around this house is, uh... is... it's terrific!

Travis: It's, uh, audibly unpleasant, I would say.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And the thing is... Here's the thing about Bebe. This is a tangent. Here's the thing about Bebe. When she is sick, it's so hard to get her to chill. Like, because she feels terrible and she's like, coughing all the time, but also she's a very rum— rambunctious two and a half year old, so it's like, "Well, we're just gonna sit here and do..." and she's like, "Wahh! [baby noises]"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And you're like, "Ookay, okay."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Um, but— so she's feeling better, everybody's getting better. Um, and so here is the advice episode that we... And now, this is a little tricky 'cause I had to figure out a way to brand this in the tweets, because we do a lot of Ask Shmanners and we give advice at the end of every episode, but this is advice about advice! Whoa!

Teresa: Yes. Do you recall who suggested this?

Travis: Uh, I will look it up, uh, because... I don't.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Off the top of my head. Talk amongst yourselves!

Teresa: Um, well, so. Let's talk a little bit about advice, and advice givers. Not just Travis and I, oh no. There is a rich history of giving advice.

Travis: This is from Abby. Abby recommended this. Thank you, Abby.

Teresa: Um, and—

Travis: Oh, wait! Before we get into that, I did want to ask you.

Teresa: Oh. Oh.

Travis: Outside of this show, and, and, and other podcasts like My Brother, My Brother, and Me, we do a lot of, you know, adv— it's an advice show for the modern era.

Teresa: Well, "advice."

Travis: What do you mean?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You don't— you don't think My Brother, My Brother, and Me is helpful, actionable advice?

Teresa: Uh... no.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I see. Very well. No, of course it's not. Um, but, so we... Outside of these, do you find yourself in life being like, an advice giver?

Teresa: Yeah, I think so. I think it goes with middle child territory. Um, it also goes with... I mean, I would describe myself as a very, uh, straightforward, chill person. Um, and so, in my friend groups, I have been one of the people where people come for advice.

Travis: You are a constant. You are... You are a rock. You are The Rock. You are Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.

Teresa: [laughs] N— no, I'm not.

Travis: I, I find that um... And I try to do better about it now. I, I'm a lot more self aware now at 35 than, you know, ever before. And that's the goal, right, isn't it?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Anyways, I'm great.

Teresa: Continuing increasing in self awareness.

Travis: But I, I find that I am a fixer.

Teresa: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Travis: If, if anybody... Like, yesterday I heard somebody like, saying something just— I was like, at the store or something. And it was s— I had to stop myself from turning around and saying, "Okay, here's what you need to do."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Right? Because like, I like fixing problems! Be it, like, a mechanical problem, or like, a personal problem for people. And so like, when I was younger, especially like, 15, 16, up to like, 23, like, I just couldn't stay out of people's business.

Teresa: And I— I have to also say that, um... I mean, in your former jobs, a lot of the things that you've been employed to do is like, a fixer.

Travis: Yeah, it's what I'm good at. I'm a problem solver, and, and the problem is, with problem solving, is that it's great when somebody comes to you and says, "Hey, can you help me solve this problem?"

It's not so great when you take it upon yourself to say, "Hey, let me tell you what your problem is—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "And how you can solve it!"

Teresa: Yeah... Yeah.

Travis: Yeah. That— that's what I got into a lot, where I would literally say to someone, like, "Do you know what you need to do?" Like, unprompted. Like, "Here's how you could live a..." And it happens now. I find that if I get a little tipsy with someone, especially if it's, like, a business-y... Like, I— if I'm having drinks with business friends.

Teresa: Oh, yes.

Travis: Or— yeah. I have a tendency to be like, "Let me give you advice on your business that you've been doing for decades—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "That I've never done." I don't know. I try not to do it.

Teresa: Um, question, real quick. What should I do if I need to cough? We've discussed that I'm coughing, but I need—

Travis: If you need to cough, just do it, and I'll write down the time codes and edit 'em out.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Okay. Okay.

Teresa: All right. Great.

Travis: There was a cough there! You'll never know it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: This'll be a fun game. You try to pick out where the cough edit points were. Okay. So let's talk about—

Teresa: Please, please don't. Okay.

Travis: Let's talk about advice givers.

Teresa: Advice givers. Now, I have to say, this is some, uh, A+ twin work going on here. Uh, okay. I'm gonna— I'm gonna add my own little antidote.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Antic-dote?

Travis: Anecdote.

Teresa: Yes. Anecdote.

Travis: Okay. Funny story.

Teresa: When I was younger, I didn't know how babies worked, and I said—

Travis: You mean, like, where babies come from?

Teresa: No. I'm—

Travis: Oh, just how babies work?

Teresa: Uh, just the whole... Not just where babies co... Listen, listen to my story.

Travis: Okay. Okay.

Teresa: And I used to say that when I grow up, I'm gonna have twin daughters. I'm going to name them Audrianna and Brianna, so I can call them Anna A. and Anna B.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which is a very weird thing, when you're in fourth grade, to decide.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Especially since you can't make yourself have twins like that.

Travis: Yes. Unless you, like, [grunts]

Teresa: Uh, no.

Travis: No?

Teresa: It doesn't work like that. I suppose there could be, like, some IVF stuff.

Travis: But even then...

Teresa: I don't know if the technology is there.

Travis: You can't make yourself have twins. You know what I mean? Like...

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I think your statement holds true. Let's go to the judges!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I'm getting a nod, yes.

Teresa: But these twins, these twins, A+ twinning game of Esther Pauline Friedman Lederer...

Travis: Whoa!

Teresa: And Pauline Esther Friedman Phillips.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Those are their—

Travis: It's like somebody said...

Teresa: Their married names.

Travis: It's like— but it's like they said, "You know what we need? Every letter in the alphabet in our name.

Teresa: [laughs] But Esther Pauline and Pauline Esther. I mean...

Travis: That... Okay. That feels like the— they didn't know they were having twins. The twins were born, and then like, a doctor or a nurse or somebody was like, "We need a name on this birth certificate now!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It was like, [quickly]"Uh— uh— Esther Pauline and Pauline Esther!" [breathing heavily] And like, those were the two people who like, walked by. Walked by the room.

Teresa: Uh, they were born 17 minutes apart on July 4th, 1918. Um, and so what, what, what came of their kind of twinning... personalities?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Like, so they were always very close. Um, and in her late 30's Esther won a contest to replace the original author of the Ask Ann Landers column, which was appearing in the Chicago Sun Times.

Um, obviously she won it, and it was so... It was such an enormous task. It was very backlogged. It was run poorly. Uh, she brought Esther— she brought Pauline.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Okay. So, Esther brought in Pauline to help her catch up, and the Chicago Sun Times was like, "Hey, wait. You can't do this. We— you won the thing, and she didn't, and you gotta do it yourself." So then Pauline began her own column.

Travis: Okay, wait. Are these— is this the kind of thing where you're gonna tell me, like, they had other names, and they're really recognizable names, and we're gonna go like, "Oh, yeah."

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah.

Travis: Okay. I can't wait to find out who it is.

Teresa: Uh, so—

Travis: I love twists!

Teresa: That's when Esther became Ann Landers...

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: And Pauline started Dear Abby.

Travis: [gasps] Ye— I knew it!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: I knew there'd be twists! Okay.

Teresa: Um, that was the pen name, Abigail Van Buren. And it took off so well in the San Francisco chronicle that it became the biggest rival to Ask Ann Landers.

Travis: That's... But you know what? Do you think that it was a happy rivalry? Do you think that they were like, "I'm fine with this."

Teresa: Uh, well, uh... I mean... The thing about— the thing that I have heard about twins is that there's a, there's a bond. A very special bond.

Travis: Sure, but you know what?

Teresa: And so even if they're feuding...

Travis: I think that's always hearsay, because I guarantee there are twins out there who are like, "Oh, no, I hate them." Like—

Teresa: I suppose.

Travis: It's— It's gotta— like, my brothers and I have a bond.

Teresa: But aren't hate and love very co— very connected? They're very close.

Travis: Oh my God, Teresa. You just blew my mind. We should do a whole episode about Pauline Esther and Esther Pauline, so we won't get bogged down in them. So let's keep going.

Teresa: Oh, okay. Okay. Well, um, so they were both categorized as just the person you'd want to go to with your problem, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: So they were both really good givers of advice. They had, uh, frankness and humor and practicality. Uh, they were actually also quite liberal, by the way.

Travis: Cool!

Teresa: Um, so... I think that that's kind of... Isn't that strange, how it like, runs in... It's— it almost feels like it was in their blood, you know? Like it was... Like you said, we'll do that more in depth another time.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, one of the things that is really important, um, as far as like, giving and getting advice, is it's not... It's not just about, "Go to someone who you think will give you a good answer."

Travis: Right, well, you know, we'll talk about that more in the, in the... Well, okay.

Teresa: It's about find— it's about, find the person... If you're going to ask somebody advice, you should ask someone who has some expertise in that area. Like, you wouldn't want... I would not ask you advice about a medical condition.

Travis: Well, I don't know, I'm pretty smart!

Teresa: I would ask Dr. Sydnee McElroy.

Travis: Yeah, that— okay, that's fair. What would you ask me advice about?

Teresa: Hmm...

Travis: Hmm? Being the world's greatest dad and husband? Or being the world's greatest podcaster? Or being the world's greatest person? Um...

Teresa: I would ask you about dog training advice.

Travis: Okay. Not any of the like, world's greatest parts I was saying?

Teresa: Or, uh, I mean, I come to you with, um, mechanical, like, advice. Say, how— fix this. Do this for me, please.

Travis: Well, what about being, like, the world's greatest something? How to be the world's greatest person, the world's best... person, the world's coolest person? Any of those?

Teresa: Uh, no. Those are already taken.

Travis: By me?

Teresa: By you.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: So how could I get advice to be that person?

Travis: Fair, fair, fair.

Teresa: Because it's already taken.

Travis: Hey, hey, when you're right, you're right. Um, yeah. Here's, here's Travis McElroy's advice top tip number one, and this is about asking for advice. Um, before you ask for advice, really, really, really ask yourself, do you want advice?

Teresa: Mm, yeah.

Travis: Or do you want confirmation? Because that's a thing that a lot of people get tripped up by, is like, they will say, like, "What should I do?" When actually, what they want to say is, "I'm going to do this." And, and then they want the person to be like, "That sounds like a great idea."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Because I have been asked for advice many, many times where I have said, like, "Oh, well, here's what I would do." And then the person was like, "Well..." And I'm like, "Okay, cool, then why did you ask? Then why did you ask

me?" And it's like, "Because I wanted you to tell me that what I wanted to do was right." And it's like, "Okay, well, then lead with that."

Teresa: So, uh, David A. Garvin and Joshua D. Margolis, um, they wrote an article of The Art of Giving and Receiving Advice, um, where they separate out four different kinds of advice a person can be asking for. Um, and—

Travis: Like, personal, financial, blah blah blah?

Teresa: No, no, no.

Travis: Or like— oh, okay.

Teresa: So, discrete advice is the first sub-column.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Uh, this is like, for a single decision. Right?

Travis: Oh, not like, "I killed someone and I need—"

Teresa: No.

Travis: "How do I get away with it?"

Teresa: No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: A single decision with a hope of getting recommendations, as well as kind of like, sussing it out, right? The pros and the cons.

Travis: Okay, great, great, great.

Teresa: Uh, someone to kind of—

Travis: I have a very specific, uh, decision or circumstance that I need help with.

Teresa: Right, to— I need, I need a springboard. I need someone to mull it over with me.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Sometimes even, if you're looking for discrete advice in this way, sometimes even just talking about it out loud with someone else is all that help that you need.

Travis: I, I find that often it's one of my, uh, favorite things about having, uh, Teresa in my life. Having someone who is a, a partner that I can discuss things with, uh, in this case it happens to be my wife, um, Borat voice.

Teresa: [sighs]

Travis: And it's that, um, sometimes literally just like, having all the thoughts that are bouncing around in my head, right? Saying them out loud... Teresa doesn't have to say anything, just me saying them out loud helps me come to the decision, come to a conclusion, or be like, "Yeah, you know what? That is what I'm gonna do. Okay, thank you so much."

Teresa: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Travis: And then like— the— one of the running jokes we have in our house is like, when that happens, because Teresa does it too, like, saying out loud, "Here's what I'm gonna— yeah, you know what? That is what I'm gonna do." Like, "Glad I could help!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] As they walk out of the room.

Teresa: Uh, the next subcategory is counsel. Okay?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, this is when someone is asking for guidance on a complex or maybe an unfamiliar situation, and it's more about navigating their thoughts, right? And less about giving an answer.

Travis: Okay, so this is more like, "Help me walk through this." This is— this is— okay, so if was—

Teresa: So, for discrete advice we're looking for a decision. When you have counsel, when you're asking for counsel, you're looking for, like, the path.

Travis: Yeah. So I would say, to make really very specific comparisons, discrete advice seems like the Lucy, you know, uh... therapy booth? Psychiatrist booth?

Teresa: Oh, sure, yeah.

Travis: Where it's like, you go to her and say, "I'm having this problem." She says, "Okay, do this. Go away." Right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Discrete advice. And counsel seems more like somebody walking down, as you said, a pathway with you, of saying, "Hey, we're in this together. Uh, I'm, I'm going to be..." Oh, like you said, counsel. Like a lawyer, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: We're in this circumstance, from beginning to end, together.

Teresa: Yeah. Um, the next one is coaching. So, this is qualified as specific advice on enhancing skills. So, this is one of the things you want to make sure that you go to someone for coaching advice—

Travis: Who has the skill.

Teresa: Who has the skill, exactly. I, like I said, would not ask Travis for medical advice. He does not have a degree in medicine.

Travis: Not yet! Not that I'm working on it, but who knows what the future holds?

Teresa: [laughs] Um, so it's where people want advice on how their handling specific things or learning situations or how that they can make something they're doing run better.

Travis: That absolutely makes sense.

Teresa: By going to a person who knows that stuff.

Travis: Another, uh, oddly specific comparison, it's like in a movie where it like, "Listen, I'm gonna learn this. I gotta go find this person who retired from the game a long time ago."

Teresa: Oh, yeah.

Travis: And it's like, "Oh, I haven't been in the game for forever." It's like, "But I need you to teach me... I don't know, tap dancing?" I don't know. That's what popped into my head. You get it.

Teresa: [laughs] And then the last situation, um, would be a mentoring situation, where again, someone has specific qualifications and you hope someday to, uh, obtain a guide, right? So this is like... It's like coaching squared, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Coaching to the Nth degree, where you, you have someone who you want to physically guide in the expertise that you have.

Travis: Yeah. Well, maybe that's more them like, going to find the person who retired. Your Mr. Miyagi—

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Uh, perhaps? Yes.

Teresa: Yeah, I think that that's more like it.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: That's more like mentoring. Okay. But giving advice in these, these categories all have very similar processes. Um, listening. Listening. Listening is key, right? And like I said, for some of these— the, the navigation, right? Um, sometimes listening is all you have to do.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Sometimes just being...

Travis: Being present.

Teresa: Being present, being alive.

Travis: Being another body in the room.

Teresa: Um, and when you are giving advice, this is what you are listening for. So the, the person who is coming to you will say, or hopefully will, uh, ask for these things. Um, you're supposed to be listening for why the problem is important, okay? You're s—

Travis: And I love that that's the first one, because it's not, "What is the problem?" Right? That's easy. The person will say, "My problem is this."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Why the problem is important is what guides, like, what should shape your answer, right? Because it's like, okay, cool. What the problem is is easy, right? The person probably already knows that, if they're coming to you and asking for advice.

But seeing the underlying, like... "Listen, I see the stakes of this, even it seems like an unimportant problem." Because if you think about a lot of interpersonal issues and advice and stuff, for people outside of the scenario, it can often seem—

Teresa: Trivial.

Travis: Yeah, pretty trivial. But if you're like, "You know what? I see why this is important to you, so I'm gonna take it seriously and I'm going to address it like it is important, because it is important to you."

Teresa: Great. You should also listen for the person themselves to give the possible solutions.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, because hardly... When I would come to someone asking for advice, I usually know the different ways that I could solve it.

Travis: Yes. And like we said, sometimes what the person wants is confirmation.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Right? They don't— they already know what the solution is. That's, that's me. For me, like, I find that most of the time when I am looking for advice, what I'm really doing is getting a second opinion. Of like— So, I've learned to rephrase my advice to say, "This is my plan of action. Do you think that makes sense?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? And then the person's like, "That's exactly what I would do." And it's like, "Okay, cool." I just needed perspective outside of my own to confirm what I was already planning to do.

Teresa: Exactly. And then, the last thing that you're listening for is why this person has chosen you. Are you appropriate for this? Um, like I said, I might say to Travis, "Hey, look at this rash. What do you think?"

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: He's not— He's not appropriate.

Travis: And I would say, "Ew, gross!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Call a doctor."

Teresa: It's not appropriate to go to him for that. I mean, unless I want confirmation, like, "Yes, it's gross." [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, that's right! Call a doctor. Gross, ew.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And, and that's another good one, because that's something that happens now, where like, you know, Teresa and I? We have a pretty good relationship. We're pretty solid. And so now, like, some of my like, other friends

will ask for like, dating advice. And it's like, "Listen. I've been with Teresa for a decade. I can't remember what dating is like!" [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, when, when you want to know how to be, like... What to do in like, a marriage, especially, or a relationship that's 10 years in, uh, yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. [laughs]

Travis: I can help there. But if you're like, "I got a first date coming up, what do I do?" I'm like, "Ooh... [laughs] Um, let me travel back in time and try to remember."

Teresa: Don't order anything with garlic.

Travis: Yeah, I don't— I don't know.

Teresa: I don't know. Um—

Travis: Don't ask your little brother to come along with you on your first date. That's the only bit of—

Teresa: [pained noise]

Travis: [pained noise] It— well, then again, I say that—

Teresa: And then it worked!

Travis: And then we got married, so maybe do invite your little brother to go on your first date?

Teresa: [laughs] All right, we digress. So— and after you've done that listening, um, as, as you are giving advice, these are the four things that you can offer, right? Advice for, right? Say, "Yes, you're doin' great. That's what you should do." Advice against, saying "I, uh— in my opinion, this is something that you should not do," right? And then you could give information, to help either one of those sides.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And, uh, and the last one is decision support, which is what we've really been talking about. The idea of just kind of a second opinion confirming what the person already thought.

Travis: Yes. And, and I will say, here's Travis McElroy, uh, advice top tip. Uh, did I already say two?

Teresa: I don't know, honey.

Travis: Okay. Next, advice top tip ne— is, you're advice, especially—can change.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? Especially if someone's going through something pretty heavy, right? That confirmation can be where you start. The support of like, "Hey, you know, you're doin' great. Don't listen to them," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Right? And then, once you have supported them to a point where they are now ready for a new phase of advice, then you can offer the like, "Let me tell you— like, now let's maybe work on fixing this scenario."

Teresa: Sure, and this decision support doesn't just include supporting their decision, it also includes supporting the person behind it. So like, "Whatever you choose to do, I still love you. I will be there for you. I will support you."

Travis: For example, like, if you have a friend who like, hates their job and it's making them very sad or scared or angry or whatever, and they say like, "I want to quit my job," right? Maybe you don't want to start off saying like, "Ooh, in this economy? I don't know."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Maybe you want to say like, "Yeah, you know what? I support you. Yeah. Blah, blah, blah." And then, then say, "And now, let's make a plan for how to do it smartly."

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Like, you know, "Let's work on your resume. Let's get you out there."

Teresa: Yeah, combining several of those different advice types.

Travis: Right, right. And not just saying like, "Yeah! Call 'em up right now and quit! Yeah!" Right? Or saying like, "I don't know, it's really scary to quit a job." Right? Finding a balance of those two things is important.

Teresa: So then, as far as... So, that was all about giving advice. Let's talk about getting advice.

Travis: I think we should, but first, let's give a thank you note to our sponsor this week.

[theme music plays]

Travis: We are sponsored this week by Harper Wilde. Teresa? Tell me a little bit about Harper Wilde!

Teresa: Well, Harper Wilde is an online retailer dedicated to make wearing a bra easier. Harper Wilde bras are designed with you in mind. They've got smooth, supportive coverage—

Travis: With me?

Teresa: Well, anyone with breasts who wants to wear a bra!

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: Um, they've got smooth coverage that looks great under outfits, um, and here's the thing. Sometimes shopping for, uh, for a brassiere is a lot of guesswork. You might not know exactly where the measurements are, what you need to do, and they have—

Travis: 'Cause it's just so varied!

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: From like, brand to brand, and style to style.

Teresa: A little bit.

Travis: There's always a little bit give and take.

Teresa: Well there's, there's a number and a letter associated, but they can be different, according to, uh, the way that a person is shaped.

So, they have a "what's my size?" fit quiz on their website, which will really help you out on finding a bra that will work for you. Um, not only are they good for the bra wearer, but also for the world in general.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: They have partnered with Girls Inc. to lift people up around the world! Um, and [laughs] it's really great that in the copy it says "lift."

Travis: I get it!

Teresa: I think that's great. Um, so a portion of each sale supports mentorship and educational programming for girls.

Travis: Aw, that's cool! So, it's time to start lifting up your ladies. There it is—very— okay.

Teresa: There it is again, thanks, copy.

Travis: Uh, with Harper Wilde! Go to harperwilde.com/shmanners and use promo code "shmanners" to get 15% off your first purchase. That's harperwilde, and it's W-I-L-D-E .com/shmanners, promo code "shmanners" for 15% off your first purchase. Harperwilde.com/shmanners.

Nnekay: Hey, James!

James: Hey, Nnekay! What we doin', girl?

Nnekay: We are inviting the awesome listeners of Maximum Fun to join us at Minority Korner!

James: Ooh, fun!

Nnekay: But you know how we go on tangent city.

James: We're the joint mayors!

Nnekay: We're not gonna do that, okay?

James: Supes focused.

Nnekay: Okay, so Minority Korner is where you can all come and get your pop culture takes.

James: Plus social commentary, news, and TV, movie reactions, like Avengers Endgame.

Nnekay: No spoilers here!

James: Ooh, snap!

Nnekay: Sometimes we dig into the vault, and we review and recap those movies you missed.

James: Lookin' at you, Halle Berry's Kidnapped!

Nnekay: I love how she always gives 1000%.

James: Like Beyonce!

Nnekay: Did you see Homecoming on Netflix?

James: She was burning it down like the mother of dragons!

Nnekay: Have you seen the latest Game of Thrones?

James: So good. Only thing missing?

Together: More black people!

James: What'd you think about Mayor Pete?

Nnekay: Wait a minute, James!

James: We went on a tangent?

Nnekay: Yes.

James: Ah, well. Join us every Friday for more tangents.

Nnekay: On Maximum Fun!

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy!

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy!

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: It's a podcast that we do as m— uh, we ma— we are married, and... How's the ad going so far, 'cause I think it's going very good.

Rachel: [laughs] We talk about things we like, every week on Wednesdays!

Griffin: One time Rachel talked about pumpernickel bread, it was so tight. You cannot afford to miss her talking about this sweet brown bread.

Rachel: We also talk about music, and poems, and, you know, weather!

Griffin: There was one— [incredulously] weather?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: One time Rachel talked about Baby Beluga, the song, for like, 14 minutes, and it just really blew my hair back.

Rachel: [laughs] So check us out on Maximumfun.org.

Griffin: It's a cool podcast with chill vibes. Amber is the color of our energy, is what all the iTunes reviews say!

Rachel: They will now!

Travis: Okay. So... I think I start every part two of Shmammers with "Okay."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But I, I'm just gettin' the energy back in there. Tell me about getting advice, and then we'll give some advice on advice! Whoa! In the questions.

Teresa: A lot of these we've, we've been sprinkling. We've been sprinkling throughout the rest of them, um, but I'd like to repeat again, because it is one of the most important parts of getting advice. Make sure the person you're going to for advice has some expertise in the area.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, it's really great. I love to call my mom. Um, we have— we have a pretty close relationship at this point, um, and there are some things that I am very comfortable talking to my mother about. There are other things I reserve away from her, because maybe that's not like, her deal. Uh, when it comes to, like, the Internet.

Travis: Yeah, and you know—

Teresa: She's not— she's not really up on like, the Facebook and the, the memes and the social media biz, so I don't— I don't ask her for that kind of thing, because that's not her deal.

Travis: I would also say, like, there is a difference, uh, not just in expertise in topic, but like, tactics in how someone gives advice.

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Like, there are people in my life that I go to when I need like, emotional support. There are people I go to when I need like, a frank, like, you know, straight-shooting answer. There are people I go to when like, I'm angry and I want them to get angry with me— like, I know that I'm frustrated and angry about something, I can talk to Tybee and we are going to be like, frustrated about something together. You know what I mean? Like—

Teresa: Solidarity.

Travis: Right! And, and so it's not only about, um... It's only about like, actual, like, practical advice about a subject. And like, I know about cars, I know about

sports, I— whatever. But more also of like, who has the tool set that you need in, in that scenario?

Teresa: Absolutely. And now, these, these next two are like two sides of the same coin, okay? You want to keep your own opinions in check, 'cause you're going to someone for advice. You are asking them. Um, and sometimes advice can feel a little bit criticism, so try not to be defensive.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: But, always take advice with a grain of salt, right?

Travis: Yes. Also.

Teresa: They are not in your specific situation. They haven't lived in your life, um, and if something honestly doesn't sit right with you, you can appreciate the advice you've been given without actually, like, doing it.

Travis: When someone gives you advice, you— all you need to say is, "Thank you." Right? And that doesn't mean, "Thank you, your advice is correct." It's just saying, "Thank you, I appreciate you taking a second to give me your perspective."

You don't have to say like, "Well, I don't know about that." Like, you don't have to say "no." Just like, "Okay! Thank you for talking to me about this."

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: Right? And then do whatever you want, right? But I think, I think es— especially if you seek someone out and ask them for advice, even if their advice is way off the mark and you completely, 100% disagree with it, you should thank them, or say something nice about the fact that you came to them, and they were there for you and answered, and gave you advice on it. Right?

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: And then you can completely ignore it.

Teresa: [laughs] And the last one is... Remember, try to be... [sighs] I want to put this in the positive. Be appreciative, right? Instead of... Appreciate the people

around you for the skills that they have. Um, you don't need to be ashamed to ask for help.

Travis: Yes!

Teresa: That's how people, how people grow and get better. Um, so if there's someone who you admire and you want to be more like them, asking them for their advice is a really great way to emulate and appreciate that person.

Travis: Also, here's the thing. This is something, to me, 35 year— I'm 35 years old. Uh, I didn't start therapy until I was 33, and I studied, uh— like, I more or less minored in therapy in college. I started to go back to school to get my Masters in it, and I quit that because I remembered I didn't like school.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But, um, I'm a big proponent of, of therapy, psychology, psychiatry, all that stuff. Counseling, mental health in general. But it still took me until I was 33 before I started going, because I would sit there and be like, "Well, I'm fine." Like, you know, "Yeah, I have this problem, but other people have worse problems." Or, you know, "I can handle it on my own."

And when I finally went and asked for help from somebody, it was life changing. And I think that my lesson, my takeaway from that that I would pass on to other people is one, talk to somebody. Mental health is great. Um, it's—

You would go to a doctor for a checkup for your regular health, whether something was wrong or not. Why not do the same with mental health? Um, you know, if you were throwing up and you like, had, you know, infections, you wouldn't be like, "Nah, I could take care of— other people have it worse." You would go to the doctor!

Anyways. But also, everyone has stuff. You know? And asking for advice is healthy and not a burden, you know? No one's ever asked me for advice and I thought, "Ugh, this person wants something from me."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? What I think is, "Oh, okay! I appreciate that they respect me enough to ask me about this," right?

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: So don't be afraid to ask for advice. Speaking of, here's some advice on advice question— we— and— questions.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay. This is from Mia, uh, who says, "Do you have any ways to respond to a friend when what you want to say is, 'I've already given you all the advice I have and you're not taking it, so I don't know what else you want me to tell you.'"

Teresa: Oh, man. I think that this is a situation where it's perfectly acceptable to suggest someone else give the advice, because it— in this, in this kind of way that they're saying, "I've already given you all the advice I have. Maybe you need someone else's perspective."

Travis: And you know, I think also at this point you can employ a different tool set. If, if you are invested enough in this that you want— still want to help the person but you don't know what else to say to them... Um, and I say that because this also sounds, Mia, like in the circumstance the person would be asking you to do a lot of emotional labor to fix their problem, and maybe they are, you know, not helping, not sharing the load. But if you want— you still want to help, you could ask questions.

Like, "Well, what's bothering you about it? What is it that you want? What are you hoping is the outcome of this?" Right? Because it sounds like they maybe don't want your advice, they just want confirmation about their own thing. 'Cause if you're given them advice and they're not doing it...

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: It kinda sounds like they already know what they wanna do. Or, like Teresa says, just say like, "I think in this—" You could say like, "Listen, I told you what I would do. I gave you my advice. I don't have anything else to tell you." The end.

Teresa: Yep. Send 'em to somebody else.

Travis: I think that's okay to say, here. Um, this is from Tiki. "How do I politely decline/inform a person that I don't need their life advice?"

Teresa: Oh, boy. I think, again, this is like you said earlier, Travis. Sometimes just "thank you" is enough.

Travis: Yeah. And I would say if they keep trying, I think say like, "I really appreciate it, but it's something that I'm trying to come to on my own, and this is something that I'm trying to figure out on my own, uh, and I'm just not ready for advice right now."

Teresa: Oh, that's a good one. Good work!

Travis: Thank you! This is from Squiggs. "What's the protocol for when you offered someone advice once, and now they consider you a Source..." And I like that Squiggs capitalized "source." "A Source on that subject, and come back to you for more advice than you, uh, have energy to provide?"

Teresa: Oh, wow. Well, again, I mean, please be, uh... Be flattered that they considered you an expert, but your time is your time. Um, and perhaps this is something where you can offer... I'm gonna make up a scenario. Say you are a mechanic.

Travis: Okay. I'm a mechanic.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's the dumbest joke!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's such a dad joke, and I can't believe I got a laugh out of you!

Teresa: And, uh, a person keeps coming to you for car advice. Perhaps you have instruction manuals you can lend to them. Perhaps you have some sort of resource material you can point them to. That way, they begin to learn what you know.

Travis: And this another, uh, just going from the other side of this question, another Travis McElroy top advice tip. Be— try to be self aware of if you're asking your friends and acquaintances to do their job for free.

Teresa: Ah, certainly.

Travis: Like, this is a thing of... You know, like we've said, we have Dr. Sydnee McElroy, our sister-in-law, right? It's one thing to be like, "Hey, what's the deal with..." It's another thing to like, once a day, call someone and be like, "Is this get—" You know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like, are you asking someone to do their job for free, over and over and over again? Um, and I think, you know, at a certain point, if— especially if it's that kind of scenario where it's like, "I can't keep telling—" You know, like if you're like, an engineer or like, a contractor or something, you're like... At a certain point, you just need to hire somebody to do this.

I think that's where it comes to like, know what your time is worth, and if the person keeps coming to you say like, "Listen. I am happy to help you with this. I have a bunch of other projects and stuff I'm working on, so if you're to wait like, two months for me to be able to help you with this project, cool. If this is something you need my help on right now, then I can give you a discounted rate, and I can make it a top priority and come over and fix I like, tomorrow." Or whatever.

But if it's more of an emotional thing, I think it's also okay to be like, "Hey, I really appreciate that you consider me like, an expert, and someone you, you know, respect their advice on. Right now, I'm kind of dealing with my own stuff, um, and I need some time to kind of recharge my batteries."

Because this is another one of those circumstances where I think it is not rude to say what you need.

Teresa: Agreed.

Travis: Right? Because the other side— if you don't say what you need and don't ask for a little bit of, of time to recover your energy, what's gonna end up

happening is you're gonna end up resenting seeing this person, and that's going to ruin the friendship or relationship way more.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Um... Let's see. This is from Dingram. Uh, "What's the right way to ask if they want advice, or are just venting?"

Teresa: Um... I think that, here... Let me think.

Travis: I used to do this with us, 'cause when we first started dating, I had a really bad habit of— Teresa would like, come home and complain about something, and I'd be like, "Well, here's what you need to do."

Teresa: That's true.

Travis: And switch into venting, and you'd be like, "No, I just want to talk." And so I literally would start saying, like a child, begin my, uh, tool set right at the beginning, like, do I use a hammer or a screwdriver? And say like, "Do you want supportive boyfriend, or do you want like, helpful boyf— like, do you want fixer boyfriend?"

And then you would say like, "I want supportive." And I'd be like, "Yeah, this sucks! Ugh!" Or you'd be like, "I want fixer boyfriend." And I'd be like, "Okay, here's what we need to do." But I would literally ask.

Teresa: Well, yes. And that's something that the, the person who is listening can do. But you can also... As you're asking for advice... Not really asking for it. As you are trying to figure out what you want, I think that it just... You might just have to listen for a while, you know?

Travis: Yeah, and that's the thing. There is... You know, it's like Parks and Rec, you know? That sucks. Like, sometimes... And, you know, another thing? And this is, uh, another... This seems so obvious. Wait until a question is asked, you know? Because sometimes if, if they're ending all of their sentences with periods or explanation points, none of them end with question marks, they don't need you to answer anything.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like if they're just saying like, "This is a terrible thing that happened today." That's a statement. That's not a question. "What should I do about this terrible thing that happened today?"

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: That's a question.

Teresa: And for those of you who maybe don't have the constant reference of Parks and Rec, uh, what happened was, um—

Travis: Wait, why haven't you watched Parks and Rec?

Teresa: Ann Perkins got pregnant, uh, with, uh, with Chris Trager's—

Travis: Spoil— hold on, spoilers! These are huge spoilers!

Teresa: No— Okay. It's... several years old by now.

Travis: Oh, that's true. Okay.

Teresa: And, uh, with pregnancy comes a lot of changes in your body, and she, uh, was complaining about these changes to her baby daddy, Chris Trager.

Travis: And he was trying to fix 'em.

Teresa: And he was trying to fix 'em, and that's not what she needed. She needed someone to just listen and commiserate with her.

Travis: Yes. Um, and that's another top tip, Travis McElroy top tip. If you feel like somebody has come to you to complain, and you have advice you want to give them, right? But you don't know if they want advice, ask questions. Say, "What are you gonna do?" Right? Or, "How did that make you feel?" Or, "Why do you think they did that?" That kind of thing.

And maybe it will never get to a place where the opportunity to give advice comes up, but it shows that you're interested in this person's well-being, it helps them vent a little bit more, it helps them talk through the scenario.

Teresa: And these are listening tools.

Travis: Right. Ask questions rather than making statements. Uh, if they're— see, okay. This is a good way to think about it. If they're making statements, you should ask questions. If they are asking questions, you should make statements, right? And you know, if they're asking questions, you can also ask questions. It's—

Teresa: Oh, yeah. Right, right, right, right, right.

Travis: You get it. You get the general rule. These are all things I have had to learn, as a person who either wants to talk about themselves or a person who wants to say, "You know what you should do?" All the time. And so, like, learning to ask questions of other people is one of the best, like, tools I've added to my toolbox, uh, in my life.

Okay. So, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for joining us. Once again, sorry we missed last week. It was unavoidable. I don't know what to tell you.

Um, let's see. Coming up here in... I don't know, like, two weeks at this point? Uh, My Brother, My Brother, and Me and The Adventure Zone are coming to Nashville and Indianapolis, um, and I think Shmanners is gonna be at the Nashville and Indianapolis My Brother, My Brother, and Me show. Uh, I assume so. We're gonna be there.

Teresa: I mean, I'm gonna be there. So. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, I don't know why we wouldn't do it.

Teresa: I don't know why I wouldn't do one.

Travis: So, if you want to get tickets, I think there are still tickets available for like, the first half of the year tour. So if you want to go to mcelroy.family and click on "tours," it's all there. Uh, also while you're at mcelroy.family, click on "merch" and you can see the Shmanners tote bag, uh, the Shmanners pen, the Shmanners T-shirt, the Shmanners thank you notes.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: All there. All great. I'm a big fan.

Teresa: And, um, speaking of those live shows, I would love to get some, um, listener submitted topics for those, too. Um, please do send your topic suggestions to shmatterscast@gmail.com. Um, and let me know if you're gonna be at those live shows! That'd be fantastic.

Travis: Yes. I mean, in general, if you have topics, send them to shmatterscast@gmail.com.

Teresa: Yes. Don't tweet at us.

Travis: No, we'll lose 'em.

Teresa: Although, if we make the call for questions, you can tweet at us @shmatterscast.

Travis: Um, let's see. Oh, go check out Maximum Fun and all the other amazing shows there. Um, what else, Teresa? What else do we normally...

Teresa: Well, we always do a thank you note to Brent "Brentalfloss Black for, uh, writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. Again, that's @shmatterscast. Thank you to Keely Weis Photography for the cover banner for our fan-run Facebook group, Shmatters Fanners, uh, and you should join that if you love to give or get excellent, polite advice.

Travis: Uh, and that's gonna do it for us! So, join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmatters.

Teresa: Manners, Shmatters. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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