

## Shmanners 177: Crowds (w/ Alison Rosen!)

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**Travis:** Two's company...

**Alison:** Three's a podcast.

**Teresa:** 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, dear.

**Travis:** How are you?

**Teresa:** You know? As good as it gets, I think.

**Travis:** Oh, okay! Cool! Just like the movie!

**Teresa:** [through laughter] Just like the movie.

**Travis:** And, hey—

**Teresa:** I'm feeling very nostalgic.

**Travis:** Yeah? Should we talk about your nostalgia, or should we introduce our guest?

**Teresa:** I think we should introduce our guest. It'll be more interesting.

**Travis:** Yes. We can welcome her to the show as well. She's been on Shmanners before, one of our few guests. She talked with us, I believe about tourism, and here she is again. You may know her from Alison Rosen is Your New Best Friend, as well as her new parenting podcast, Childish. Am I saying that right, Alison Rosen?

**Alison:** You're saying it exactly right. You are hitting it out of the park. I'm super excited to be here. Yeah, I did your live Sketchfest Shmanners podcast.

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** It was a blast.

**Alison:** I had the best time and I—

**Travis:** Thank you for being there.

**Alison:** Thank you for having me.

**Travis:** You made it funny.

**Alison:** No, you guys made it funny.

**Travis:** No...

**Alison:** No—maybe—I'd like to think I helped make it funny, but you guys made it very informative. I was very impressed with your ability to give advice. On Childish, we give parenting advice, and oftentimes when the—and I shouldn't even admit this, but when the questions come in, I think, "Huh. I wonder how I'm going to answer that."

So I'm—do you guys have that, with giving advice on Shmanners? Because my memory is that you were, like, very... confident in the advice you gave, and it was really good advice.

**Teresa:** Well, here's a couple of Inside Shmanners: I don't usually look at the questions beforehand, even though Travis does his due diligence and sends them to me.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Teresa:** I don't usually look at them beforehand, and the heart of a lot of my advice defers to people like Ms. Manners and—

**Travis:** Emily Post.

**Teresa:** Emily Post and things like that, so I pretty much say the same things over and over again, and they are the ones who really give the advice.

**Alison:** Teresa has once again offered great advice about giving advice.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So—Alison, I believe you know this. Teresa is about—I almost said halfway pregnant.

**Teresa:** I mean—[laughs]

**Travis:** That's not what I mean.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Travis:** We're about halfway to—

**Teresa:** About halfway.

**Travis:** —due date.

**Alison:** Congratulations.

**Travis:** And she's exhausted! It's 8:45 PM here. Might as well be, like, 3:00 AM!

**Alison:** Yeah. I—my second pregnancy—in between my pregnancies, I had forgotten about just the crushing fatigue.

**Teresa:** Yes!

**Alison:** And it's harder when you have a kid, as you guys know.

**Teresa:** I feel like with my first pregnancy, I could just lay around the house and just be as still as I wanted—

**Travis:** But now Bebe's here! Like, yes, of course you can't do that anymore. We have a three foot tall, like, monster who runs around and just needs your attention all the time, and... yeah! I'm—'cause I'm not gonna—I'm too busy playin' video games and watching TV, you know what I mean?

**Alison:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And eating potato chips.

**Alison:** You... right, you've got your first loves.

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** My potato chips.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Now, here's the thing. I was gonna say that—

**Teresa:** Also, I'm older now.

**Travis:** Yes. Well, listen. We're all older now... and now... and now.

**Teresa:** And now.

**Travis:** I was gonna make a joke about how, you know, "Oh, we talk about children and the show's Childish, but we're not talking about—" but actually, we're talking about crowds. [laughs] When you start to get up to, like, two, three kids, it gets pretty crowded!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Alison:** It does.

**Travis:** So it kind of works.

**Alison:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Now, you, if I remember correctly—I'm trying to remember the name of your book. It's Casual Attire?

**Alison:** It's Tropical Attire. You were very close. Tropical Attire Encouraged (and Other Phrases That Scare Me). And the title came from an essay in the book. I received an invite to a party that said "tropical attire encouraged," and a friend of mine kept texting me asking if I was gonna go, and the story is just kind of about how if there's anything I'm not gonna go to, it's a party that encourages tropical attire, and why is everyone trying to take all of our clothes off? And can't we just go to, like, a sweater party? And stuff like that. Just, yeah. Feelings about my upper arms and social anxiety.

**Travis:** There's something about that—

**Teresa:** I also have feelings about my upper arms!

**Alison:** I'm not a fan of mine.

**Travis:** I like mine!

**Teresa:** Well... good for you.

**Travis:** I'm a beefcake, though.

**Alison:** You're so—you have such body positivity, Travis. I admire it.

**Travis:** I just have overall positivity. I'm great! Now, somehow I connected that in my mind with, uh, tr—[stammering] you even said it. "Tropical Attire Encouraged." That title made me think, like, I imagine I know how Alison Rosen feels about big crowds, but I thought I'd ask you. How do you feel about big crowds, Alison Rosen?

**Alison:** Not a fan. Not a fan.

**Travis:** Mm, that's what I would've guessed, yes!

**Alison:** Yes. I went through a phase where I liked to go to outdoor concerts, actually, and maybe everyone went through this phase. Maybe not someone as overall positive as you, Travis. But I went through a phase where I was like, "I want to be the popular girl who's included in everything," and this was back in high school.

**Travis:** You wanna be where the people are.

**Alison:** Yeah! I wanna be that person who—

**Teresa:** Travis definitely feels that all the time.

**Alison:** —like, I wanted to be Mallory from Family Ties, to use a not timely reference. I was like—I love shopping, I love the mall. When I turn 16, I wanna drive a white cabriolet with a surfboard in it.

You know, I just very much didn't know who I was yet. I was a person who pretended I enjoyed tropical attire. So, that person did love crowds, but this person, the one I truly am, detests crowds. I find it very agitating, anxiety-provoking, I'm always afraid that I'll need to get to a bathroom and I won't be able to, and—you know, basic concerns of a 65 year old person.

**Travis:** Now, what about you, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Um, you know, I don't mind crowds. I don't seek them out. I definitely—I was not the kind of person to go to concerts and things. Still not, but, like, I can navigate a crowd. As long as I know it's gonna end. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yes.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Travis:** See, I have no problem with crowds that are moving. Like, convention crowds don't really bother me, you know? Everyone's, like, moving from place to place. Even if you get jostled, I don't mind that. I cannot stand standing room only crowds where you're, like, you're nearer the front and it's like, "There is no way I'm getting out of here. I'm stuck here forever. This is where I die."

**Alison:** Do you guys get claustrophobia?

**Travis:** Oh, yes. But I only get claustrophobia if I can't move around. I have no problem, like, being in an elevator or being in a closed space or whatever, but as soon as I feel like my maneuverability is compromised, I start to get very antsy.

**Teresa:** Uh, no. I'm fine with tiny spaces.

**Travis:** How do you feel about big spaces? That's a thing too, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Alison:** Mm-hmm, yeah, open spaces.

**Teresa:** Yeah, I think I'm okay with those, too.

**Travis:** Okay. What about medium spaces?

**Teresa:** Also those!

**Travis:** Okay! Then I guess we're all set. Hey, we've got a bunch of questions, but first, Teresa, can you tell us a little bit about—I guess—the history of crowds?

**Teresa:** Well, no.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I wanna talk about the psychology—

**Travis:** A long time ago, two people stood together.

**Teresa:** [laughs] And they were a couple, but a third person joined them.

**Travis:** Then a thi-oooogh! By the way, I looked up—'cause I had it in my head that there was more to "Two's company, three's a crowd." I was like, I think there's, like, a one, a two, a three, and it's just "Two's company, three's a crowd." But what is interesting to me is the number of, like, dictionary entries I found defining what that phrase means, when to me, it seems like the most, like, clear—

**Teresa:** Pretty self-explanatory.

**Travis:** Yeah, right? Like, it's [mumbling]... it's about third wheels.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** No, but welcome to the show, Alison. It's so great to have you here.

**Alison:** Thank you. I feel like a third wheel.

**Travis:** But you're a welcome third wheel! Like a tricycle.

**Alison:** [through laughter] I guess thank you.

**Teresa:** So what I want to talk about instead of the history, because like you said, [through laughter] whenever three people get together...

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Uh, the psychology of crowds is very interesting. There are a couple of, like, headliners, right? And one of the things we think about is the idea of mob mentality.

**Travis:** Oh, yes.

**Teresa:** Right? It's usually categorized if there's a Venn diagram that exists... it's in the aggressive area.

**Travis:** Yeah. Very rarely, I think, is there positive mob mentality?

**Teresa:** We'll get to that.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I do know, 'cause I remember this from psychology, intro to psychology I think, where they were talking about, like, if a bunch of people—you can do a test, right? Where there's one person who's not in the know, and everyone else in the



elevator is in the know, and everybody's, like, facing to the right instead of forward, and the person in the elevator will almost invariably get in and turn to the right, too.

**Teresa:** Interesting.

**Travis:** Just 'cause everyone else is doin' it.

**Teresa:** Yeah. I mean, that makes sense. I'd be like, "I guess this is how we're supposed to do it."

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** So, one of the people who has started this crowd psychology was Gustave Le Bon.

**Travis:** Oh, yes. That's a very, very, like, psychological name.

**Teresa:** Is it?

**Travis:** Doesn't—that sounds like someone who's way a psychologist.

**Teresa:** I thought that you recognized this—

**Travis:** Nooo.

**Teresa:** No, okay.

**Travis:** I was just gonna say, somebody who's just, like, Steve Jones. He could have any job. But whatever name you said—

**Teresa:** Gustave Le Bon.

**Travis:** That's a psychologist.

**Teresa:** Well, not only was he a psychologist, he was also an anthropologist. He studied medicine, sociology and physics.

**Travis:** And he shopped at Anthropologie.

**Teresa:** Uh—no, he didn't.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Teresa:** It didn't exist.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Okay. I'll just be over here.

**Teresa:** So, he has a book called *The Crowd: a Study of the Popular Mind*. And he's credited with the first person to coin this term, this idea of mob mentality.

So what he did was he argued that while a crowd is made up of individuals, their individuality is overshadowed by whatever kind of common goal they're sharing, right?

So this makes sense in a way, right? Sporting events... you can get swept up in the excitement or the devastation—

**Travis:** I have many times—a sport I do not actively care about, uh, mostly soccer—I will be, like, in a bar where a big soccer game is playing, and people will get interested in it and they start cheering, and so, like, I start paying attention, too! It happens.

**Teresa:** Of course you do. Same thing—I mean, it runs the gamut of emotions. Also funerals, right? You may not have—

**Travis:** Weddings.

**Teresa:** —weddings. You may not particularly know the people involved, but the collective kind of feeling of the room may amplify your own feelings.

**Travis:** This is why anyone who's ever done theater, or any kind of performance, really, will tell you, there is a different energy to a full room than a half full room, right?

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Because no one wants to be the first person to laugh, and even, like, drama, right? Like, this is psychology, right? When people are listening, they're paying attention and you can hear people, like, gasping and crying. It affects the room differently.

**Alison:** And also, haven't you had that experience—or, I've had the experience where I've seen a movie in a theater and thought it was really good, and then I watch it at home and think, "Oh, this wasn't as good as I remember."

And it's not because it's on a different screen, it's because I don't have the reinforcement of the crowd.

**Travis:** Yes, absolutely.

**Teresa:** That makes complete sense.

**Travis:** That actually happened—I went and saw *Anchor Man* in a crowded, full theater, and I was like, "This is hilarious!" And then, like a week later, my older brother Justin and I went to, like, a matinee, and there were, like, three other people in there. [through laughter] We got, like, 10 minutes in and we're like, "This is not good!" And we snuck out of that theater and went and watched *I, Robot* instead.

**Alison:** Yes, I had that experience with—

**Travis:** That's just a true story, yes.

**Alison:** I have a true story. I don't know if *Gustave* has written about it, but I had that experience with *The Hangover*, which actually I thought was a good movie, but second time, not very crowded room, not that good.

**Travis:** And then you watched *I, Robot*.

**Alison:** That's right. Then I met up with you at *I, Robot*.

**Travis:** [simultaneously] It all comes back to *I, Robot*. Yes.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs] So there are—there are three kind of umbrellas that Le Bon puts these feelings under, right? And why they occur. The first one is "Anonymity."

**Travis:** Oh, yes.

**Teresa:** So, being part of a crowd makes it so that the crowd becomes its kind of own thing, and you are just a cog in the machine.

**Travis:** I think that that—'cause that's one of the most interesting—there's a lot of psychology experiments you can find that are really fascinating, about as soon as you take the onus of responsibility off of one person and you spread it, even to, like, two or three people or someone in charge telling them what to do, their morals become a lot more pliable.

As soon as they don't think the buck stops with them with responsibility, which is very terrifying, and true. There are some really, really scary psychological experiments where—the one that I'm thinking of is—there was an experiment—I won't go into it, 'cause it's too dark for our family friendly podcast!

**Teresa:** It's kind of a bummer.

**Alison:** Are you talking about the Milgram Experiment?

**Travis:** Yes.

**Alison:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** So, if you wanna have a bummer time, look that up!

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Teresa:** But like you said, it makes you feel kind of invincible, right? As part of this machine that's been created. That's one of the reasons why people say terrible things on the internet. This whole idea of anonymity is like, "Nobody knows who I am. I'm just part of the ether. It doesn't really matter what I think, just as long as I find the group that I belong to."

**Travis:** And it's amonini—amonimity—and a sea anemone... both ways, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Because, like, if you use the example of a football game, right? Half the crowd is yelling at the other half of the crowd, but I guarantee you take any two of those people and pluck them out and say, "Now yell at each other—"

**Teresa:** [through laughter] Right.

**Travis:** They're gonna be like, "No—I don't know them." Right? Now, there will be *some* people. [through laughter] I've been to football games where I've seen people do it.

**Teresa:** So, the second umbrella is contagion, which is one of the reasons why something so ridiculous as, "Is this dress blue and white, or—" what is—no, wait. Is it black and white—

**Travis:** Black and blue or white and gold.

**Teresa:** Right. Why that kind of thing can spread so fast. So, in a crowd setting—and the internet counts as a crowd setting.

**Travis:** Oh, yes.

**Teresa:** Every action becomes contagious. This is why memes work, why things go viral, even if you don't exactly know what it might mean or the implications of what's happening, you share it because you see that it has so many shares, right?

**Travis:** Yes. You wanna be part of the crowd that's sharing the thing.

**Teresa:** Exactly. This is how things like the Tide Pod Challenge happen. Blegh...

**Travis:** [quietly] That was nothing.

**Teresa:** It was nothing. It wasn't real—

**Travis:** But people talked about it.

**Teresa:** But people talked about it, even though you weren't doing a challenge. The idea of the challenge spread like wildfire, just because of the idea that "I wanna be in on the thing that everybody else is in on."

**Travis:** But there is good—but like you said, there is a good option in that, because we had the Ice Bucket Challenge to, like, raise money and good and stuff.

**Teresa:** Sure! Absolutely. Alison, what were you gonna say?

**Alison:** Would that be like an urban myth, too? Would you put that one in that umbrella?

**Teresa:** Oh, the Tide Pod Challenge?

**Travis:** No, I think she's saying the contagion, right?

**Teresa:** Ohh.

**Alison:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Like, "I knew someone who this happened to," or like, "A friend of my cousin's, or whatever, said this."

**Alison:** Or like the Mo—like, remember how fast the Momo—

**Travis:** Yes.

**Alison:** —I mean, I guess that one's playing on fear, but that's still—a crowd is carrying it.

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Oh, absolutely, yeah.

**Teresa:** Absolutely I would. And then the last one is probably the most dangerous. It's the idea of suggestibility, and I think that's what you were talking about, Travis, in the—in the elevator.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** You know, that's a very small sample, right? But if a person is in a crowd for a specific amount of time... I'm not sure what that is, though.

**Travis:** And I'm sure it varies from person to person, yeah.

**Teresa:** They enter into kind of this hypnotic state, right? That helps them to conform, helps them to follow the leader, helps them to do what everybody else is doing.

And this is—I mean, obviously one of the reasons why this is so dangerous is because in the wrong hands, a powerful leader can lead a group in what they wouldn't normally do individually.

**Travis:** Yes, but everyone else is doing. It's that, "Would you jump off a bridge?" thing. You know? It's peer pressure. It's group—uh, group think! If you want a good example of this, I always think about this when you see, like, a line of people waiting for a thing and they're getting really frustrated. And it's moving in, like, inches, you know? One person moves forward, and someone will move forward and the person behind them won't move forward—

**Teresa:** Oh, yeah.

**Travis:** —and everyone behind them will get, like, angry?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Even though nobody's going anywhere, right? But the thing to do is step forward. "Why aren't you stepping forward? We're all supposed to be stepping forward, what are you doing?"

**Teresa:** We need to ready our minds for this.

**Travis:** I know.

**Teresa:** We do.

**Travis:** 'Cause we're goin' to Disney for vacation... ugh, you know what? Let's talk about crowd etiquette, and what we can do, 'cause we have a ton of questions that we can get to—

**Teresa:** Well, I—hold on.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I didn't want to leave us with such a bleak...

**Travis:** Oh, okay! Then say something nice.

**Teresa:** Okay. There is a doctor named Dr. John Drury, and in his TED Talk at Sussex University—

**Travis:** It's a pretty good doctor name. Oh, wait. Is he British?

**Teresa:** Dr. Drury? I don't know.

**Travis:** 'Cause Drury is a very good British doctor name.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** It is. He believes that the idea that a crowd is inherently violent is mistaken. So, what he says is that this idea of the madness that's created by the crowd, like I said, isn't inherently violent. It can actually be viewed as a power of collective identities.

And statistically speaking, if you analyze a lot of crowds, the incidence of violence is so low. And it's probably because what a crowd needs in order to demonstrate violence is a target.

**Travis:** Hmm.

**Teresa:** So it won't—it won't spontaneously become something like a riot, but once you have crowd versus crowd—

**Travis:** Or crowd versus authority, or crowd—yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah, right. That's when—when there is the presence of the other is when the violence happens. Also, the idea that he... he thinks that it's a form of collective—not only, like, individuals, but intelligence, especially in the internet age, where—and I think that this makes a lot of sense when you're talking about, like, dismantling stereotypes, where everybody has a voice.

You can't—we now find that because everybody can comment, everybody has an equal footing, things like maybe false information can be sussed out a lot easier. You find that people in, like, comments sections often seem to take sides, right?



And that's not always a bad thing. It can lead to better discussion, it can lead to more information, things like that.

And so really all you have to do is shift the mentality, shift the focus of the group, in order for it to lead to engagement and strengthened relationships and more information being shared and things like that, where it becomes less of this idea of mob mentality and more community.

**Travis:** Oh, that's nice.

**Teresa:** Which are very similar ideas, but the connotation of the word is completely different, right?

**Travis:** Yeah. I also think that when you say "community" it values individual, the strength of a group of individuals, where mob mentality seems to say, like, "Get in line and think the same way." Like, a crowd full of individuals versus just an anonymous clump.

**Teresa:** Right, but if—so, like, if we go back to the Venn diagram idea and we say "crowds" at the top, right? We have the two circles of "mob mentality" and "community," and they overlap a lot!

**Travis:** A great example of this that I still think about is one of the most positive things I've ever seen. So, when we went on the JoCo Cruise this past year, we set up for this big land concert where all the bands set up, and the headliner was They Might Be Giants. That was, like, the big headliner of the concert, and just before they were about to go on, it just started pouring rain.

And it was an outdoor, open air concert, and it was like a deluge. They could not continue. So they had to break down the concert, and everybody had to, like, start heading towards the ship. So there was, what? Probably 2,000 soaking wet—

**Teresa:** I was already on the ship, so don't look at me—

**Travis:** You were already back on the ship.

**Teresa:** —[through laughter] for confirmation.

**Travis:** There were, like, 2,000 people, soaking wet, waiting in line to get back through security back on to the boat, and they were all in great spirits, to the

point where as the crew and the band came hustling through, moving instruments and equipment and stuff back onto the boat, everybody cheered for them, you know? Like to say, "Thank you for trying," and we ended up putting the concert on on the ship, and everybody loved it!

And it was like this coming together of, as you said, community, right? Where it so easily and understandably could've been about frustration and disappointment, but instead everybody, like, made the choice to be positive and work together and support each other, and it's one of the most, like, inspirational things I've ever seen.

**Alison:** Not to get too dark, but I think after 9/11 saw that.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Alison:** Like, a lot of people suddenly felt like a community, whereas before we were just these disparate individuals.

**Travis:** Absolutely, yeah.

**Teresa:** Woo hoo, crowds!

**Travis:** Crowds can be good. Now, we're gonna say our thank you notes to some sponsors, and then we'll be back with your questions.

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hello, my friends! It's me. It's Travis. I'm recording this at a separate time than when we recorded the other thing. You probably might've picked up on that, since I'm the only one here, and Alison and Teresa aren't, and I could give you some funny story about why they're not here, but we recorded this at a different time. It's not important. I'm gonna tell you what is important, and that's our sponsors for this episode!

First, we're sponsored by Quip, which... listen. We've talked about it before. I love Quip. I found myself recently—I went on, like, an overnight business trip somewhere and I left my Quip toothbrush at home and had to use the toothbrush that was provided for me by the hotel.

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Also, we want to say an incredibly special thank you to our researcher Alex Rause. Without her, this episode would not have been possible. She is absolutely incredible and we are so grateful for her, so thank you, Alex.

[music plays]

**Dave:** Hi. I'm Dave Hill, from show business. And while I'm not from Canada, my grandfather, Clarence Vincent Blake Sr. was, and he wouldn't shut up about it.

My grandfather moved on to that great penalty box in the sky way back in the 80's. Still, all these years later, I can't help but wonder. What do we really know about Canada and its people?

Which is why my friend Chris Gersbeck and I decided to make So... You're Canadian.

[record scratch]

A brand new podcast from the Maximum Fun Network, on which I attempt to get to know our neighbors to the north, one Canadian at a time.

Coming to Maximum Fun, August 27<sup>th</sup>. And I'm not... [Canadian accent] sorry.

[music plays]

**Speaker One:** Listen, I'm a hotshot Hollywood movie producer. You have until I finish my glass of Kombucha to pitch me your idea. Go.

[slurping noises]

**Ify:** Alright! It's called Who Shot Ya? A movie podcast that isn't just a bunch of straight white dudes. I'm Ify Nwadiwe, the new host of the show, and a certified BBN.

**Speaker One:** BBN?

**Ify:** Buff black nerd!

**Alonso:** I'm Alonso Duralde, an elderly gay, and legit film critic who wrote a book on Christmas movies!

**Drea:** I'm Drea Clark, a loud white lady from Minnesota!

**Ify:** Each week, we talk about a new movie in theaters, and all the important issues going on in the film industry.

**Alonso:** It's like Guess Who's Coming to Dinner meets Cruising!

**Ify:** And if it helps seal the deal, I can flex my muscles while we record each episode.

**Speaker One:** I'm sorry. This is a podcast? I'm a movie producer! How did you get in here?

**Drea:** Ify, quick! Start flexing!

**Ify:** Bicep! Lats! Chest!

Who Shot Ya? Dropping every Friday on [Maximumfun.org](http://Maximumfun.org), or wherever you listen to podcasts!

[music plays]

**Travis:** Okay. Our first question is from Kate. Kate asks:

"For navigating crowds, say at Disney, is it rude/counterproductive to hold hands, and then make your way to your destination? Is it okay for three people, but not six?"

**Teresa:** Well... okay. So, what I want to mention here is, at that point, it's about speed.

**Travis:** And Kate does specifically say, "Like a chain," so I imagine... not—not across.

**Teresa:** So, one person poking the hole through the crowd, right, and then the next people following through that line I think is fine. I think it goes with speed and urgency, right? You need to stay calm. You need to say "Excuse me" if you can, just so that people know that you're coming up, maybe, behind them.

But I think that if you go nice and slow, and don't expect to, like [holding back laughter] run anybody over red rover style—

**Travis:** Yes. Do not—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —hey. Do not red rover.

**Teresa:** That can be a very effective tactic.

**Alison:** Also, don't do this on roller skates.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Yes. Don't do it on roller skates. I will say—so here—okay. Here's Travis McElroy crowd top tips. Number one: move with purpose. It doesn't have to be fast. I don't think you need to run, right, in a crowd. That's bad, right? People pushing and hurrying is a good way for people to get knocked down or worse, right?

**Alison:** Yeah.

**Travis:** But move with purpose, right? If you know where you're going, move forward.

But the number one most important, this is the *most* important, is awareness, right?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** This is the difference between—

**Teresa:** Don't throw your elbows around, for sure. [laughs]

**Travis:** Right! This is the difference between, like, 21 year old Travis and 35 year old Travis, is awareness of your surroundings, but also awareness of other people. I've had people, like, not look where they're going, almost crash into, like, baby carriage, like, baby stroller, which is frustrating.

But also, like, there are people in wheelchairs. There are people with canes. There are people on crutches. There are people on scooters. Like, you have to be aware—there are children, for God's sake. Like, if your just looking straight ahead—

**Teresa:** Who will think of the children?

**Travis:** Who will think of the children?!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Alison:** They're our future!

**Travis:** The children are, thank you, Alison! Thank you for having the bravery to say it.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, but you need to have that awareness, because that's what makes the experience better for everyone. You know, if everyone is making sure to stay out of everyone's way, everyone will have a better experience.

**Alison:** Yeah. So does this mean put the phones away?

**Travis:** I think—here's the thing, though. We run into—now there's, like, apps that give you a map of the park and schedules on it.

**Alison:** Right.

**Travis:** I think it's all about... if you're going to be the one on the map, you can't be the one in the front of the line, you know what I mean? Like, you're the navigator at that point, so you need a driver at the front.

But this goes—this is a great question. This is for Katie. Katie asks:

"What's the best way to "pull over" in a large crowd to stop and check your phone, take a picture, look at a map?"

And I think Katie has already touched on the best answer, which is, "pull over."

**Alison:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Right, move towards the periphery, the edges.

**Travis:** And I will say that this is something I especially try to keep in mind as I'm pushing a stroller. I'm taking up even more space, right? So, like, if we have to stop, I'm gonna try to get over by some benches or something. Also 'cause I like to sit down.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Do you ever run into that? Like, what's your—what do you do, when you have to check your phone, Alison?

**Alison:** Um... well, I know—I just have to say, I know we're not talking about driving, but literally pulling over when I need to do something on my phone when I'm driving and I have one or two kids in the car with me is a new thing that I've been doing, because I used to be very bad about texting and driving.

And especially just 'cause I have a terrible sense of direction, so I'm always needing to use Waze on my phone, and I used to be someone who would just, like—you know, I would start driving and then I would type in where I'm going and find it, and now—it's just so much simpler to literally pull over.

So, yeah, if I have the stroller with me and I need to check my phone, I just—I try to tuck into an area that's out, you know, on the side.

And it's not just out of respect for everyone else, it's also for my own safety, so that I won't get bumped into.

**Travis:** Yeah, absolutely. So you don't, like, fall over.. I don't know, into a pond or bush or something, you know.

**Alison:** That's right. I don't want to fall into a pond with my child!

**Travis:** No, of course not! I would also say, uh, specifically for the map, take as much time as you need once you're over to the side. Take as much time as you need to figure out exactly where you're going, and then go, instead of, like, looking briefly, having to stop in 10 yards to look again.

**Alison:** Right.



**Travis:** A Stitch in Time, as they say.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Okay. This is a question from Allie.

"Advice on how to maintain some kind of personal bubble in crowded areas, without actively throwing elbows, which is totally un-Shmannerly?"

**Alison:** [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** Um... one of the things that I found as a suggestion is use your—maybe a backpack or your handbag, or whatever you have with you, to help you take up space, because there are certain areas like, say, on the subway, where one should take off their bags and put them, like, on the floor between their feet or on their lap.

But in a crowded area that you're trying to navigate, you can use those parcels to your advantage. And I'm not saying, like—again, don't, like, throw your stuff around, but you get a little extra space with a backpack or a handbag or something like that, just because people don't want to run into you, and that's a good way to passively encourage people to part a little bit for you.

**Alison:** Yeah. It's like if you see a bear, you want to make yourself as big as possible.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Yes. Here's the thing: I was kind of holding back my answer, right? 'Cause I'm a fairly broad-shouldered person who just naturally takes up a lot of space, so it's a lot harder for, like, me to get squished in.

That said, I do often find myself feeling very passive in a crowd, where if I feel someone kind of start to enter my space, I'll, like, twist my shoulders to give them more room, and pretty soon I've, like, given away all of my room?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Where if I didn't twist my shoulders, if I just stood there, I would keep my bubble. Now, this is what I'll say, though. 'Cause I'm big into the personal bubble in a crowded area.

I have realized that if I want to maintain the amount of space that I am comfortable with, it means I'm probably not going to be able to get as close to the front as I would like.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** So I am willing to sacrifice being closer to the front of whatever the crowd is to have a little bit more room, a little bit more maneuverability, an easier time getting out, getting to the bathroom, getting to concessions or whatever, so I just tend to stay towards the back, more.

**Teresa:** And I am willing to sacrifice my view of the festivities to stand directly behind you, and bask in your bubble.

**Travis:** That's fine. Hey—

**Teresa:** I do that a lot. [laughs]

**Travis:** —you're allowed in my bubble anytime, my love.

**Teresa:** 'Cause I'm only 5'2", and—

**Travis:** And I am 8'6".

**Teresa:** No. But you are at least a head taller than me.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** And I recall we were in a piano bar in New York, and it really is... so close. Packed in like sardines, 'cause everybody wants to be at the piano, singing, and you know, everybody's drinking, and personal space kind of shrinks in that way.

But I found that if I was standing directly behind you, either facing you, or even back to back with you, [through laughter] I had so much more room!

**Travis:** Yeah!

**Teresa:** And the crowd... the crowd just—you were like an umbrella for me. It was really great.

**Travis:** And also, when you did that, I wasn't afraid of people sneaking up on me—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —which is nice. So, thank you for—

**Alison:** Now see, what I'm wondering though is, Teresa, why wouldn't you go in front of Travis, because then your view would not be blocked by him.

**Teresa:** Um... why would I not—

**Travis:** 'Cause no one wanted to stand behind me.

**Alison:** Hm.

**Travis:** People were trying to cut in front of me left and right.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Alison:** Oh, oh, oh, I see. Got it.

**Teresa:** Right, because people wanted to be—

**Alison:** She was in your wake.

**Teresa:** —yes. People wanted to be in front of Travis, so they could see and they could do things, but I—I know that a piano is a—is a—[laughs] is an audible form—

**Travis:** Yes. As is singing!

**Teresa:** —as is singing! So there's nothing, really, to see, except the movement of the fingers on the keys. So, I was perfectly content to be behind him in his little umbrella space.

**Alison:** Smart.

**Travis:** That is often the math I will do, of like, "Is there a benefit to being close to the front?" You know what I mean? Like, for example, if I was trying to crowd toward something and there was, like, a limited number of things we're getting, sure! That makes sense, right? But if you're on, like, a ranked audience where you can see the stage just as easily 10 rows back as in the front row, maybe it's better to be in the 10<sup>th</sup> row!

**Alison:** Yes.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Maybe that's fine!

Uh, this question is from Samantha, and I hope you two have an answer, because I do not. Samantha asks:

"I hate confrontation. How do you handle a line cutter?"

**Teresa:** Oh boy.

**Alison:** Hmm...

**Teresa:** Uh... so, this is one of the things that I say a lot. Inside Shmanners for you, Alison.

**Alison:** Okay.

**Teresa:** You have to decide how much it's worth to you. Because if it is, say, a line at an amusement park where everybody's gonna get on, right? They're not gonna stop it just in front of you. That one person in the extra car, like, it doesn't matter. All you have to do is calmly remember that them being in front of you is just a drop in the bucket to everybody else in front of you.

But, if it is, like Travis said, if it's a first come, first served type of thing, where, like, the first 50 people in line get whatever it is that's happening—

**Travis:** Like if you're at a Black Friday thing—

**Teresa:** Right, sure.

**Travis:** —or if you're thinking about, like, movie tickets or theater tickets.

**Teresa:** I think that once you decide that it's worth it to you, if you are close enough to speak to the person without yelling, I think that is when you can interfere, and say, "Hey, man. We've all been waiting in this line, and for you to jump in front of us—it's not cool. Don't you understand how... how it makes us feel when we've been waiting here, and you just got here?"

Something like that, but you need to be close enough in proximity, because... [laughs] I mean, we were talking about mob mentality a little earlier. If you start this fight...

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And it sounds like a fight, that you're yelling at someone, like, "[gruff voice?] Hey, what are you doin'? Get outta here!"

**Travis:** It'll escalate so quickly!

**Teresa:** Right. That's what we don't want. If we're not into confrontation, I guess if that floats your boat.

**Travis:** Don't—hey, there's no need for that! Here's—oh, can I make a suggestion?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** This little passive aggressive maneuver. "Oh, uh, the line actually starts back there."

**Teresa:** Uh-huh.

**Travis:** Right? 'Cause then it's like, "Oh, you didn't mean to. Oh, what a—what a misunderstanding we've got, here!"

**Teresa:** But again, you need to be close enough to the situation. They need to be two or three people in front of you. If you—if you're in the back of the line and you see someone cut at the front and you yell, "[gruff voice] Hey! Line starts back here! Hey!"

**Travis:** "[gruff voice] Hey!"

**Teresa:** Then, uh... then things could go south quite quickly.

**Travis:** You could also do this. If somebody cuts, then you cut in front of them.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And if they get mad at you, you say, like, "Hey! Ah!" And then they cut in front of you, and pretty soon, you're at the front of the line.

**Teresa:** That's—that's not how this works.

**Alison:** I had an incident at the DMV. It was, you know, as the DMV usually is, an extremely, extremely long line. But when you finally got to the front, there were, like, 10 chairs.

And the person, uh, like, further in line—there was an empty chair ahead of me, and all of a sudden this older lady sits down in the chair. Like, cutting in front of everyone, and she said, "They told me to go to the end of the line."

And I said, "I think the end of the line is o—" 'cause she went to the front of the line—

**Travis:** Which is *an* end of the line.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Alison:** Yeah, just not the one that was, uh, meant by the person who told her. So she's like, "They told me to go to the end of the line."

And I said, "Oh, this is the f—you know, I think they mean that end."

And then she plops down and she goes, "You don't mind, do you? I just can't handle this line."

And I said, "Uh, none of us can handle this line."

But I didn't do anything about it, and I sat there, and I fumed about it, and I'm still irritated. But that was a real, like, "I don't quite know how to handle this."

I was... unpleasant toward her. I mean, in my own passive aggressive way, I let her know that I wasn't thrilled with this, but I also was like, "I—this is not my fight, really, and it's just one extra person."

**Teresa:** And that's—yeah. I mean, I think that you did exactly the right thing! You made that split second decision of, "How much is this worth to me?"

**Travis:** Yeah. I will also say—um, listen. I try to be really Shmannerly, but when I am an old person, am gonna cut all kinds of lines.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Because my time is very valuable to me at that point.

**Alison:** Mmm, yeah.

**Travis:** Also... I would say that, like, I'd probably done a lot of stuff. I've worked pretty hard. I've contributed a lot to society at that point. It's *my* turn to cut in line. Wouldn't you rather see an older person cut in line than, like, a young kid with a backwards cap and a skateboard?

**Alison:** Yes.

**Travis:** I'm saying, who would you rather be cut in line by?

**Alison:** Yeah, yeah. I'd rather, like, Betty White cuts in line than Avril Lavigne. That's the young person with the baseball cap that I've decided just is cutting.

**Travis:** I would like to check in on Avril Lavigne, though. So, if she wanted to cut in line, I have a lot of questions for her.

**Alison:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Um, speaking of questions, I've got one last question here. This is from Eli.

"Any idea how to politely get through a crowd that is going the opposite way that you're going?"

**Teresa:** Oh, man. Swimmin' upstream!

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um...

**Travis:** Two magic words, Eli: "Excuse me."

**Alison:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Certainly. I think that's a given, but do we think that Eli should go through the center, or through the sides?

**Travis:** Uh, I say the si—

**Alison:** [simultaneously] Center.

**Travis:** Ohh!

**Teresa:** See? I knew that this would be the thing.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** This would be the thing.

**Travis:** Why do you think center?

**Alison:** For some reason, I feel like it's gonna be easier, actually, and I don't know why. But, like, I'm figuring—okay, just to go back to the concert, like, let's say everyone's leaving and you left your, I don't know, phone in your seat or whatever and you gotta go back. I just—because I think people—here's what I think.

People think that the sides are gonna move faster, so you're gonna be encountering more resistance if you try to go up the side.

**Travis:** Ooh. Okay. See, I said center originally, but now I think my actual answer is, you just gotta look for openings. I don't think any correct—that's how I move through conventions, is just, like, if I see... you know, it's like changing lanes, right?

**Alison:** Right.



**Travis:** It's like, "I need to get around these people. Oh, here's an opening, I'm gonna change lanes. I'm gonna move forward 'till there's a safe passing distance." That kind of stuff.

I think you just need to do the same thing, 'cause listen. When you're moving through a crowd, it's not everyone's job to walk at your pace. It is *your* job to make sure *you* don't run in to people, and the way that you do that you do that is by awareness, and looking for those openings, so that is how I would move through to get back.

Also, say "Excuse me," just repeatedly, every time. 'Cause even if you say "Excuse me," by the 10<sup>th</sup> person you get to, they probably didn't hear you say "Excuse me," and now they just think you're rude!

**Alison:** Now, do you also say "Sorry"? 'Cause I know that oftentimes people apologize too much, but I think I would be, like, leaning pretty heavily on "Scuse me, sorry, scuse me, sorry, sorry, scuse me, scuse me, sorry."

**Travis:** Oh, yes. Absolutely. Yes. Also, turn a little sideways!

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Don't just walk straight forward. Make your profile smaller, so it's easier to scoot between people.

**Teresa:** That's why I think sides, especially in a venue that has walls, where you could kind of, like, hug the wall and sidestep.

**Travis:** And shimmy down the wall. Maybe jump over some trash cans and do some parkour? Maybe swing from a sconce?

**Teresa:** Only if you have one of those webshooters.

**Travis:** Yeah! If you have a webshooter and you could swing from a sconce? Eh?

**Teresa:** That'd be great.

**Alison:** You know, yes. Definitely make use of any sconces or, uh... things on the walls. You know, I'm gonna change my answer, because I think—now I'm actually thinking—if I'm imagining a theater, I'm thinking the side, you might be able to scooch best on the side.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Well, 'cause you can put the wall at your back. See, that's why I was saying side, 'cause you can, like, get against the wall, and now you're not trying to weave between two people or more. You're trying to, like—you just have one person kind of going around you.

**Alison:** When Greg Fitsimmons and I—that's who I host Childish, my parenting podcast with—when he and I—

**Travis:** Namedropper.

**Alison:** [wheeze-laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Alison:** Did I drop the name of the podcast, or his name? Both.

**Travis:** Both! [laughs]

**Alison:** Uh, yeah. A double namedrop! Uh, when he and I were, like, thinking of segments, and also when we were just trying to figure out what our podcast was gonna be, he has suggested Codependent Crossfire, because we both have a habit of starting with one opinion, and then we hear the other one out, and then we're like, "Oh, you know what? You're right."

**Travis:** [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Alison:** Like, the opposite of really strident, right wing radio. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yes.

**Alison:** But anyway—

**Travis:** This is just very easygoing. Like, "What did you say? Oh, okay, yeah! That's a good point!"

**Alison:** Yeah. "Uh, you know what? Actually, yeah."

So anyway, you guys just codependent crossfired me, 'cause I started by saying you go down the middle, and now I've changed, and I'm thinking you should go down the side.

**Travis:** Well, we've done it again. Another guest converted.

**Alison:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you, everybody, for the questions you sent in, and hey, Alison? Tell us a little bit about Childish, where we can listen to it, what you guys talk about on it, where people can listen, all that stuff.

**Alison:** I will! So, it's on everywhere you get podcasts. It's called Childish. It's Greg and me. We talk about parenting, we talk about marriage, we talk about relationships, we talk about—'cause we both deal with depression, and so we talk about that. And just sort of the experience of trying to be reasonable, well-adjusted adults in this crazy world.

And we also take questions from listeners, and we have a segment called "Explosive Diary," which we sometimes do, where we read from our diaries, and we also make fart sounds—

**Travis:** Oh, I see.

**Alison:** —to introduce the segment, 'cause we're very mature. I have two very young kids. He has two teenagers, one of whom is getting ready to leave in, like, a week or something.

So we come at parenting from different vantage points, and it's just a lot of fun. We have a lot of listeners who don't have kids, too. You definitely don't need to have children.

So, wherever you listen to podcasts, Childish. Our website is [Childishpod.com](http://Childishpod.com), and I'm not sure when this show will be airing. Will it be airing before or after September 3<sup>rd</sup>?

**Travis:** This'll be coming out this week.

**Alison:** Oh, wonderful! Um, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, we are doing our very first live show, and our guest is Andy Richter, so if you go to [Childishpod](http://Childishpod.com)—

**Travis:** Oh, wow!

**Teresa:** Wow!

**Alison:** —yeah! We're super excited about it. So if you go to [Childishpod.com](http://Childishpod.com), you can find a link that'll take you right to where you can get tickets. It's at the Comedy Store out here in LA, in the Belly Room of the Comedy Store. Tickets are just \$5.

And then also, check out Alison Rosen is Your New Best Friend! Which, Travis, you've been a guest on. Teresa, you have to come on that show.

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** You do need both. I think I've been on a couple times at this point.

**Alison:** Yes, you have!

**Travis:** Uh... we're best friends.

**Alison:** That's right. [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, yeah! And I also want to say thank you to Sahara. Sahara, I hope I'm pronouncing your name correctly. It might Sahara. If it's—I'm sorry. Either way—um, but I appreciate—this was the topic suggestion that Sahara sent to our email, [Shmatterscast@gmail.com](mailto:Shmatterscast@gmail.com). If you have ideas for episodes, specifically, right now, we need a good Orlando topic! So if you have a good Orlando-related topic, please send it in to [Shmatterscast@gmail.com](mailto:Shmatterscast@gmail.com).

Go check out all the other amazing shows on [Maximumfun.org](http://Maximumfun.org). That is our podcast network. There's a ton of great ones over there.

I'm going to be at Dragon Con, this weekend! So, you can check out [Travismcelroy.com](http://Travismcelroy.com) for my whole Dragon Con schedule, including Q&As, photos, signings, and more!

Let's see. What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Well, we always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found.

Also, thanks to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, and Twitter is where we put out the call for all those listener questions that you heard, and you can follow us at @shmannerstcast, and submit your own questions when we release the topics.

Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for our Facebook cover.. banner thing. [laughs] I still don't know what that's called.

It's a beautiful picture for the fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners, which you should join if you love giving and getting excellent advice from other fans of Shmanners.

**Travis:** And one last—once again, thank you, Alison, for being on the show. And absolute pleasure. It didn't feel crowded at all.

**Alison:** Thank you so much for having me!

**Travis:** Oh, it was nice.

**Alison:** Now, if I—can I throw out my socials?

**Travis:** Yes!

**Alison:** Because I definitely base my self-worth on my number of followers, so, always looking to get that up, especially on the Childish accounts.

**Travis:** Absolutely.

**Alison:** Childishpod on Twitter and Instagram, and then I'm AlisonRosen on Twitter and Instagram as well.

**Travis:** Perfect.

**Teresa:** Wonderful!

**Travis:** And that's gonna do it for us! Join us again next week!

**Teresa:** No RSVP required.

**Travis:** You've been listening to Shmanners...

**Teresa:** Manners, Shmanners! Get it?

[theme music plays]

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