

Shmanners 144: Ask Shmanners: Holiday Edition

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Travis: Teresa, I sold my pod to get you this cast.

Teresa: I sold my cast to get you this pod!

Travis: How ironic! 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: I'm doin' good. I'm—you know, this time of year, it's a marathon, not a sprint.

Travis: Oh, that's so true, Teresa. That... is so... true.

Teresa: So I'm, you know, chuggin' along.

Travis: You know, it's—we're gettin' near. We've got the Candenights show coming up this weekend, and then it's all Christmas, Christmas, Christmas for us. [through laughter] We got three Christmases coming. We got the McElroy Christmas—

Teresa: Yep. When you said "Christmas, Christmas, Christmas," it's true.

Travis: We got McElroy Christmas in Huntington, we've got our home base Christmas with us and the babe, and then doing a Wellman—Wellman Christmas after that. There's a lot, folks! [holding back laughter] This may be the last of us.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We might use it all up. No, no, no. We'll of course be coming back.

Teresa: No, no, no, no.

Travis: Uh, but you know, it is, as you said, this time of year. And at this time of year—we've done a lot of holiday episodes in the past, which, if you are so inclined, I would recommend going back and looking through.

But, you know, at this time, there's a lot more kind of scattershot advice that people need. Very specific, um, that maybe wouldn't cover a whole episode, so we thought we'd do an ask *Shmanners* episode and try to cover a little bit more of the nitty gritty, as they say, of the holidays!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: This first one comes from Carson:

"I absolutely hate telling people what I want for Christmas, even when they ask. Is there a way to give gift ideas as opposed to sounding like Veruca Salt when friends and family want to know what I want?"

Um, I—let me start—

Teresa: Well, let's—let's tell our—let's tell our perspectives on gift-giving, vis a vis our family traditions.

Travis: Vis a vis, synergy, back and forth—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —um, I—I—so, my family does do lists, but the lists are more of, like, a loose guideline of, like, if you can't think of anything else, here's a list. Especially now in, like, our adulthood. Christmas becomes a lot more... this sounds so crass, but it's super fun. I don't do a good job of selling it. It becomes more of a test?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Of, like, how well...

Teresa: it's a competition, really.

Travis: Yeah! Of saying, like—

Teresa: Who's gonna win Christmas by giving the best gift.

Travis: Right!

Teresa: Not *getting* the best gift.

Travis: No, no, no, no.

Teresa: But the winner is the one who *gives* the best gift.

Travis: What you're looking for—

Teresa: The one thing that the person who receives it would never have thought of for themselves—

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: —but absolutely loves and needs.

Travis: Correct. Like, last year Justin and Sydnee got me a bidet. A bidet attachment seat for the toilet. Never would've thought about it, but it's perfect and I love it. That kind of thing. That's what you're aiming for. Um, you know, that's not to say that anyone's ever, like, disappointed to say, like, "Oh, you got me something off my list." But, you know, the list is more of, like, "Yeah, I think that works. That's good." You know, we *do* lists. It's just not—it's not a strict guideline.

Teresa: Well, see, growing up in *my* house, everybody made lists, and those are the things that you expected to get. If you didn't get those things, then you *were* disappointed, because my mom was kind of like the behind the scenes orchestrator of all of the Christmas lists.

So, I mean, other than herself, she always knew what everyone was getting, 'cause she kind of, like, doled them out—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: —so that everybody made—so that she made sure that everybody got what was on their list. Um, because that's, you know—that was the way that we did it.

Travis: Yeah, and it—so, here's the thing, Carson. I would say that, one, if somebody asks you for a list, you don't sound like a Veruca Salt if you say, "This is what I want."

Like, that—it's like if somebody says, "What do you want for dinner?" And you say, "Surprise me." And you're like, "Okay, that doesn't—"

Teresa: [holding back laughter] "That doesn't help."

Travis: "—no, what do you *want*?" And so I think somebody asking, especially if it's somebody who doesn't like "the hunt," quote, unquote, like the McElroys do, then really you're doing them a favor. You're doing the right thing by saying, "Here's a list."

Teresa: And I think that ins—you might—you could also take a different approach and express your interests.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: So, in the way of—you don't wanna say a list, but maybe you're big into golf now.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so you say, "Hey, I've been really getting into golf. I'd appreciate maybe some books or accessories or something. That'd be great."

Travis: Or even, like, more general than that. Like, me and Justin and Griffin have taken to telling each other, like, experiences. You know, like classes or spa treatments or anything like that. Stuff that—

Teresa: Like zoo membership or something.

Travis: Yeah, stuff like that that's like—you know, I wanna be able to *do* stuff. I don't necessarily need things. That kind of general thing. But give 'em some kind of guidelines to work with, some kind of place to start, is always appreciated.

Uh, this next question is from Beckett.

"What's the etiquette on gifts for your significant other's parent, particularly if you are on a fairly tight budget and they are not?"

Teresa: So, the thing about this is when there's, like, discrepancies as far as budget goes, um, you don't have to spend a lot of money to get something that's very thoughtful and heartfelt, and I think that, you know—

Travis: A framed picture is always a great way to go.

Teresa: That is something, you know, of a—of an experience that all of you shared together, right? You know, you went on that really great, uh, trip to the lake, and you took a great picture and you wanted to have it framed. Great! That's a really heartfelt thing that doesn't cost a ton of money, um, especially homemade gifts.

Travis: Like baking.

Teresa: Baking.

Travis: Like baking treats for them or stuff like that is always good.

Teresa: Um, you don't—

Travis: In general—

Teresa: —you don't have to spend a ton as long as you think of something, you know, really nice for them.

Travis: I will also so, and I do—I do understand the pressure, and I'm going to go out on a limb and say that they are not these people, though I do acknowledge that these people probably do exist—but I would say the good

chance is that the people you're giving presents to aren't looking at it like *The Price is Right* and thinking, like, "Okay, well that's \$20 from them, and I spent \$80, so I *lose*."

Like, I—I don't *think* that's happening. A lot of the pressure—

Teresa: I hope it's not happening.

Travis: Yeah. And if so, hey! Who cares about getting presents for those jerks?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: No. um, I do think that a lot of the stuff that we... feel worried about during the holidays, especially in regards to, like, gift-giving, is all self-imposed.

Teresa: I agree. Absolutely.

Travis: This feeling of guilt or expectation that we put on ourselves of, like, are we doing enough? And I fall into it too. Like, Teresa has to talk me down a lot when I feel like, "Oh, I'm not getting enough for these people."

And it's like, that's not what this is. This isn't about, like, "Well, I got them four presents and I only got them three, eugh, they're gonna be so mad!"

Like, that's not... how that works.

Teresa: Right. And, one of the things that I try and—and expound on every year is the idea of a gift. Excuse me. [coughs]

So, when you give someone a gift, it's not something that a person *deserves*, right? 'Cause that's more like a paycheck? [laughs]

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: For services rendered? What—what you have to really try and internalize is the giving of the gift is something extra, on top of your wonderful relationship that you have, and so *I* receive a gift, I feel overflowed, right? That's a happiness that happens, not the gift that, you know... I don't ever feel like—

Travis: It's the receiving of the gift, not the gift itself.

Teresa: Exactly. That's what I was trying to say. Um—

Travis: I mean, this is what—when people say "It's the thought that counts," right?

Teresa: That's what they mean.

Travis: That's what it means. It means "You thought of me, and that's what matters. Not what the gift is." You know what I mean?

A lot of people use it in a joking way of, like, "Well, you tried..." But it's more of, like, "Hey, you thought of me and got me something at all, and that's what matters to me."

Um, this question is from Kathleen.

"Just how rude is it to excuse yourself from a family dinner if you just can't take it anymore? More or less rude if you get in your car and go home?"

Teresa: Um... if you find that you must get in your car and go home, give an excuse. Say you don't feel well.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, and not feeling mentally well is—

Travis: Not feeling well.

Teresa: —is not feeling well!

Travis: There you go.

Teresa: So there's no need to explain that you're not physically ill. Um, but getting up from the table [holding back laughter] completely silently and leaving will probably, uh... you know, make more problems than it solves?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So some kind of excuse of you're not feeling well usually does the trick.

Travis: Yeah, and this is—it's not just rude or not rude. Like, would your—you know, whatever the other guests are, family, friends, whatever—would they prefer you stayed? Probably, right? But, like, that doesn't mean you can't excuse yourself if you need to. So I don't think it comes down to rude or not so much as it's like, if you need to, you should.

Teresa: You know what? This is something that I haven't done in a while—mostly because I haven't been to many parties... but when I was younger, uh, let's say college years, something that used to happen to me a lot is I would get overwhelmed at parties.

Travis: Yeah, me too.

Teresa: And I would usually, you know, be comfortable enough with the host of the party to say, "Can I go lay down in your bedroom for 20 minutes?"

And, you know, usually that would do the trick. So I could excuse myself, say "I'm tired" or "I don't feel well," or even if, like, it's not a sit down dinner where anyone would notice where I was gone, I would just ask to go lay down for a few minutes, and sometimes that's all you need.

Travis: Um, this question is from Tys, uh, or maybe... Doug. I don't know. I'm trying to determine based on their username/handle. It doesn't matter. This question is from, I bet, a very cool person.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "I've always been really bad at expressing enthusiasm. What's a way that I can make sure my friends and family know that I appreciate the gifts they've given me without sounding fake?"

And let me say, cool person, you and I are in the same boat. This is another thing—to go back to what we were talking about earlier, when I was a kid, what I was really bad about is, like, I would ask specifically for a present or put a present on the list, and I'd get it... and I would sit there thinking, like, "Oh, yeah, I asked—thank—yeah, thank you for this thing that I asked for—"

Teresa: "Why yes, of course, mother and father!" [laughs]

Travis: "—ah, check mark, yes, great," right? And there wasn't a lot of surprise. So in a lot of home movies... gosh, little Travis is overacting his butt off. I was like, "[bombastically] Ahh, wow!" 'Cause I was trying really hard—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —to convey enthusiasm [holding back laughter] in a way that was so insincere.

I think the key—what I have learned is replace, in your head, the idea of enthusiasm, with sincerity.

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: Right? Of, like, it'd be—it's much better to give a sincere thanks rather than trying to show how excited you are about the gift. 'Cause, like, that's the thing. Especially now as an adult, I get things all the time that are very cool, but it would be very weird if I was like, "[gasps] A new wallet! Wahhh!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? Like, that's a weird thing. But instead of saying, like, "Aw! Awesome! I really needed one of these, thank you so much. This is great."

Teresa: One of the other things that you physically do, because I am really good—I'm really into, like, the physical manifestation. Even when I was an actor, I was a very outside, physical, makes the inside feel.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um, is when you get your gift, really look at it inspect it, try and open it. You know, if it's a smelly thing, smell it. If it's a—

Travis: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Teresa: Like, if it's a toy, take it out of the package. Like—

Travis: Experience it!

Teresa: —experience it, and let the other person watch and enjoy you enjoying your gift. So that's something—so, like, you know, put those earrings on or whatever, so that they can see that you enjoy it.

Travis: Right. And you know what? If, in the moment, you're kind of taking it in, it never hurts to, like, later say, like, "Hey, I just wanted to say thank you again for this. This is great."

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: You know what I mean? Like, that—I think that that would go a long way. Um, this is from Foster.

"If you and a friend celebrate different holidays this season, should you give them a gift related to the holiday *you* celebrate or the one *they* celebrate, assuming theirs involves gift-giving?"

Teresa: Um, I thought about this for a while, and I think that you should give someone a gift in relation to the holiday that *you* celebrate.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um, because it is your celebration, and I wouldn't expect anyone to give me a Christmas gift who didn't celebrate Christmas. It would probably, um... it would make me feel awkward about it?

Travis: I don't wanna make them celebrate my thing.

Teresa: Right, exactly. So you can give a gift and celebrate that person in the way that you are accustomed to celebrating. So—so do it on your terms, and it will definitely be appreciated.

Travis: The one kind of caveat I would give to this, um, and I'm assuming because Foster asked this question that this is not an element at play here, but if you, like, are doing kind of a, for lack of a better term, like, cultural exchange holiday thing of, like, "I'd love to learn more about yours, and you learn more about mine," and that kind of thing, then yes, that would be a much different situation than just, like, "I got you a Christmas present."

Like, yeah, totally. You know what I mean? I think that would be the way to go. I—I don't know. I completely agree with you, I guess is what I'm trying to say.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, this is from Sharkwitchy.

"The holidays are a time for hugs from extended family, but I'm very uncomfortable with touch and I barely let me mom hug me. How do I deal with this? Is there a polite way to say I don't want a hug?"

Teresa: Um, I think what you—I would suggest that you find some sort of physical signal to replace "hug."

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because people want to greet you, um, or they even—maybe they wanna say goodbye, even. Um, so, like, who's the guy that always does the fist bump?

Travis: That's Howie Mandel.

Teresa: Howie Mandel!

Travis: Right.

Teresa: That's, like, his thing, right? He doesn't hug, he does the fist bump. Um, there's high five, there's handshake, there's—there's even—I don't know, maybe you'll find a special wave or something? Something physical so you can let the other person know you acknowledge them.

Travis: Yeah, and I think also to that same point, especially if you know that your extended family is inclined towards hugs, you gotta take lead on it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: If you're goin' for the handshake instead of the hug, right, you have to walk for—you know, you have to greet them with your hand out. Right? And I would also say this. So, I was thinking about this, and we talk a lot about on this show when it comes to, like, what—how much do I tell other people?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like, how much do you want to invest? How important is this to you? And I would say if this is family and you knew you were gonna see 'em multiple times, what you're really asking about is, do I want one up front awkward moment, or lots of little awkward moments *forever* from now?

Teresa: Mmm.

Travis: And I would say if this is your family, like, aunts, uncles, whatever, I think you should say, "Hey, yeah, I'm not—I'm not really a big hugger. But I'm so excited to see you," right? And, like, it's gonna be weird for a second—

Teresa: Right, for a second, but that will save the weirdness for later.

Travis: Right, and now they know. And you know what? I will also tell you, I have had friends and people who have said to me when I go for a hug, like, "I don't really hug," and in that moment, yes, I feel like, "Oh no, I've done something wrong and I've upset this person."

Teresa: But you haven't.

Travis: But then, in the future, when I see them... like, I have seen friends that I have been with, and they run into people, and that person will get a hug, and in my head I'm like, "They don't like hug—" like—you know that thing where, like, I *know* this about this person. It has allowed me to better interact with them in a way that makes them more comfortable, and people like making other people more comfortable. So I think in the long run, saying it, ripping that band aid off, is the way to go.

Um, this question is... let's see. Hm, hm, hmm—this is from Ken!

"Who am I obligated to buy gifts for in terms of extended family at Christmas? Grandparents would make sense, but cousins? Aunts? Uncles?"

Teresa: Okay. Let's—

Travis: I can name other family member—hold on, I can go on—

Teresa: No—

Travis: —uh, nieces? Nephews? Yes to nieces and nephews.

Teresa: Okay. Let's—

Travis: Travis says yes.

Teresa: —unpack this question, first of all. The word that I wanna focus on is "obligated."

Travis: Yeah, I knew that would stick in your craw.

Teresa: Because, um... I believe that you should not feel obligated to give anyone presents. If you feel obligated to give someone a present, mmm, is it really a present? I don't know.

Travis: Hmm. Hmm!

Teresa: I don't know!

Travis: Hmmm! *Is* it?

Teresa: But—

Travis: Is it a present? We'll have to go to science on this one. Science?

Teresa: Science?

Travis: Science says "No."

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: I checked with science.

Teresa: Where is science?

Travis: [holding back laughter] To my left.

Teresa: [through laughter] Okay.

Travis: Oh, sorry—that's the printer.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Go on?

Teresa: Um, so my short question is, you should give presents to whoever you want to give presents to. My long answer is... if you anticipate a gift exchange—

Travis: Mmm, mm-hmm. That you might get, like, surprised.

Teresa: That you might—you might *receive* something from these—from someone else, you may find it is easier for you to be prepared if you have gifts for them as well. Now, this has happened where I've visited different families on Christmas, or in the holiday season, and what happens is... I may have given a gift, or brought, like, a host gift or something, and maybe they didn't know I was coming or didn't anticipate the exchange at this moment, and so I didn't get anything. But you know who doesn't feel weird about it? Me! I don't feel weird about it, because I understand what gifts are.

Um, so... if you have a large gathering and you're not sure about getting *everybody* gifts, maybe combine families?

Travis: Mm-hmm?

Teresa: Um, so instead of getting a gift for your aunt and her significant other and their children, maybe get a family gift for them.

Travis: Yes. Also—and I think we've talked about this before—um, if you, in this situation, were like, "Ooh, but I don't know if they're planning to get me something."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like, I've been in that situation before. Things like gift cards—you know, it's easy to have a gift card in an envelope in your pocket, in your bag, whatever, and then if you don't give them out, now you've got some gift cards to use. Or, like, bottles of wine, um, assuming the person drinks wine, or, you know, stuff like that. Stuff that's, like, maybe not necessarily super personalized—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: —but stuff that, like, "Oh, thank you so much! And I got you this—" that you have something—

Teresa: Again, baked goods are a really good thing.

Travis: Correct, yes.

Teresa: Um, like I said, though, this is—that advice is if you anticipate a gift exchange. Um, please spread the word, spread the gospel of what a gift actually is. Um, and—

Travis: There shouldn't be a gift economy.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: There shouldn't be the, like, "Ah, I give you this in exchange for this." Like, I think we talked about this when we did our favors episode.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Where just, like, you shouldn't do someone a favor expecting something in return, or at that point it's not really a favor. You know, it's an exchange.

Teresa: But you should receive a favor and try to give them a favor, too.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: You know? That's the thing. That's the thing. So both—both things are correct.

Travis: But I would also say, one last tip. If you're feeling like, "Ooh, I don't know that I'm going to get a gift from this person but I want them to feel included." Cards are always nice.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: You can send a holiday card or, like, I don't know, if you wanna do photos or that kind of thing. But you can always just, like, get a card and say, "Thinking of you! Happy holidays." And send it to them. Boom.

Teresa: Boom.

Travis: You've made them feel cared about. Okay, we're gonna take a quick break, uh, to say a thank you note to some sponsors, and then we'll be back with more of your questions.

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week we're sponsored in part by Squarespace. I know—listen. Folks? I have talked about Squarespace til I was blue in the face. I know. But it's great. I love it, it's easy to use, I'm, like, staring at Teresa and I don't know why. Have I told *you*, Teresa, specifically, about Squarespace?

Teresa: You certainly have.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: You've told me all about, uh, buttercupisaverygoodgirl.com, which you made on Squarespace!

Travis: I did. And I was just thinking, maybe you could, like, start a Squarespace page to, like, tell people, like, "Gifts are not an economy!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And that kind of thing, I don't know. But if you want to, you could use Squarespace to turn your cool idea into a new website, showcase your work, announce an upcoming event or special project, and basically whatever you could use a website for, you could do it with Squarespace, because they have beautiful, customizable templates, they have powerful e-commerce functionality that lets you sell things online, they have built-in search engine optimization, analytics to help you grow in real time, and 24/7, award-winning customer support. It's amazing. Squarespace is great. So, make it stand out with a beautiful website from Squarespace.

Go to squarespace.com/shmanners for a free trial, and when you're ready to launch, use the offer code "shmanners" to save 10% off your first purchase of a website or domain. That's squarespace.com/shmanners.

Teresa: And if you need a template for your beautiful, beautiful website, on Squarespace, please go to buttercupisareallygoodgirl.com—

Travis: [Buttercupisareallygoodgirl](https://buttercupisareallygoodgirl.com)—

Teresa: [Buttercupisareally](https://buttercupisareallygoodgirl.com)—oh—

Travis: —I'm sorry, [buttercupisareallygoodgirl](https://buttercupisareallygoodgirl.com) takes you to dark web?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I don't want people to do that. It's scary down there. Just—

Teresa: A *very* good girl.

Travis: [Buttercupisareallygoodgirl.com](https://buttercupisareallygoodgirl.com). Um—

Teresa: We need to make one for Lilly!

Travis: Well, my older brother stole the domain lillyisareallygoodgirl.com, but I'll work on getting that back from him.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right now, it redirects, I believe, to his Twitter page.

Teresa: [laughs loudly] *Shmanners* is supported in part this week by Zola! Zola takes the stress out of wedding planning with free planning websites, your dream wedding registry, affordable save-the-dates and invitations, and easy to use planning tools!

They have over a hundred beautiful wedding website designs to choose from that fit any style, and the Zola store has the widest selection of gifts at all different price points, so there's something for every guest to give.

Here is the thing that I really liked about Zola, is it's a one stop shop. So you have your registry, you have your info, you can order gifts and invitations—like, all of that stuff that you could spend days tracking down other places is available right at your fingertips, *and*, speaking of their gift-giving website, uh, registry thing, um, they have one of those "split the gift" options, so if you're—if you want to contribute towards a larger gift, you are welcome to do that with many other guests, and you don't have to orchestrate it yourself, 'cause they will take all of the planning on that end.

So, to start your free wedding website and also get \$50 off your registry on Zola, go to Z-O-L-A.com/shmanners.

[scanning through radio stations]

Griffin: —come back to WKEP at Night. Up next, looks like we've got a PSA from local forest ranger Duck Newton.

Duck: Do I start now, or—

Griffin: Yeah. Uh, lean in, Duck.

Duck: [louder] Yeah—sorry. Um... okay, I wanted to address the unfortunate situation that... okay. [sighs] Listen. Two people, good people that I and a lot of y'all have known our whole lives are dead. Torn to shreds by—

Ned: [dramatically] A savage, bloodthirsty beast that defies human comprehension! If you'd like to know more, stop by the Cryptonomica, Kepler's premier museum of the macabre, just off highway—

[mic thumping]

Duck: Come—[sighs] come on. We just wanted to warn y'all—to—to beg you. If you see one of those things out in the forest, don't fight. Don't scream. *Run*. Run as far as you can.

Aubrey: Duck, it's almost midnight. Listen, folks. If you see anything, please go to thelamplighter.org and let us know, and get behind a locked door tonight.

Griffin: Anything else we need to—oh! They're leavin'. Okay, well, that's thelamplighter.org and... stay safe out there, Kepler.

[music plays]

[scanning through radio stations]

Oliver: Hello, Maximum Fun! I am Oliver Wang; scholar, journalist, DJ, etc.

Morgan: And I'm Morgan Rhodes. I'm a music supervisor who loves stilettos. We host *Heat Rocks*, a music podcast where we talk to influential artists and scholars about the albums that changed their lives.

On our most recent episode we had the chance to talk with none other than R&B legend Macy Gray about one of her favorite albums, *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* by... [chuckles] Yeezy.

Oliver: We get *deep*, talking about everything from Kanye's *College Dropout* days, all the way up to his most recent shenanigans.

Macy Gray: I just think it's weak, and I don't think he has to do that, and I was just disappointed.

Oliver: So, make sure you, dear listener, are subscribed, 'cause you definitely do not want to miss this conversation.

Morgan: *Heat Rocks*, every Thursday, right here on Maximum Fun.

Travis: Okay. This next one is from Tanner.

"Here's one that's come up amongst my friends recently. If you give someone a wrapped gift before Christmas and know that you won't see them Christmas Day, should they unwrap it right then or save it for under the tree?"

Teresa: Okay. My inclination is to say unwrap it right then, because then I can say thank you in person, which I think is always a lot—I mean, it's a lot easier for

me. I don't have to write a thank you note. Because if you open it outside of their presence, under the tree, when they aren't there, then you should write a thank you note.

Travis: Yeah. I also think, um, this depends on what the friend says, you know? Like, if they hand it to you—I think it's always fine to say, "Do you want me to open it now or wait?" You know? Like, that's usually what I say if someone hands me a present. It's like, "Do you want me—" and the answer is almost always, "Yeah, go ahead!" You know? 'Cause they wanna see you open it and experience it.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, 'cause that's the good part.

Travis: Right. Um, the one exception to this, I would say—because what you're asking, Tanner, is if somebody hands it to you—is if you get mailed presents, like we get present from, like, out of town relatives—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I would say, those go under the tree. You know what I mean? 'Cause—

Teresa: Right. Well, and that—my theory still holds.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Because they are not delivering that gift in person.

Travis: Uh, this person is from—I'm gonna say Tara? Because their username is Tarable, but spelled with T-A-R-A, so I'm gonna say Tara, and it's a fun play on words.

Travis: "If you don't like a gift, what's the best way to make sure they don't get you something similar again without being rude by saying you don't like it?"

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: This is a tough one in general. 'Cause, like, the idea—even—I always feel bad, like, if somebody gets me, like, clothes that don't fit and I have to say, like, "Oh, it doesn't fit!" Or something like that.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: I always feel bad. You know, people will sometimes include a gift receipt or something, and even then I feel bad. I just feel bad.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, you know, this is something that I find happens at a certain age. Where when you are younger, maybe you collected something. You collected, I don't know... porcelain cat figurines. And so people knew that that was something that you would appreciate, to add to your collection. But there comes a time when you kind of grow out of that. You know what I mean?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Where I don't need any more porcelain cat figurines. In fact, I can't display all the ones I have. Um, and so please don't get me any more. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, but I think that that—I think that that's actually not... a bad thing to say, but not in—

Teresa: Mm...

Travis: —but not in that moment.

Teresa: Okay. Yes.

Travis: I think, you know, you open the present in December, "Oh, great." And then the following November, I think it's okay to kind of send out, like, a "Thank you for all of the great... cats in the past," or whatever. "But this year, I have to ask—you know, I'm running out of room, so let's focus more on... blah blah blah." Right?

And that—because that way it doesn't necessarily make it seem 100% targeted at this person.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Um, or—and that—even if it *is* targeted. If you said, "Hey, Aunt Debbie. You know, that sweater last year was great. I just wanted to give you a heads up. I am full up on sweaters this year. Um, but what I *would* love is something like this."

Teresa: Yes. I think that is the next step. The next step is to offer suggestions of things that you *would* enjoy.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Instead of another porcelain cat figure, um, might I have some colorful boxes—

Travis: Right.

Teresa: —[through laughter] to put all these figurines in? [laughs]

Travis: And then throw them away. Um, and this is a thing of, like, even—even a, like, competitive, "the hunt" gift giver like myself, it's still more important that the person enjoys it. Like, I would rather get someone an incredibly obvious present that they asked for right off their list that they love and really need than a super creative present that they don't care about.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So I think when it comes down to it, like, saying, "And I would love something like this," or "I would—oh, this year this would be great." That kind of thing. And you know what? Here's another—oh, I'm gonna give away a big secret here. One of the—well, there are many wonderful things about having a partner, but this could work with your significant other or a relative or whatever, a friend—

Teresa: Alright, alright, get to it. What is it?

Travis: —and that is—

Teresa: I need these secrets.

Travis: —that is to have them act as your go between and say—like, I might say to Teresa, like, "Oh, that gift that Aunt Debbie got me—ugh, this is what I want her to get me this year."

And then Teresa would text them and say, "Have you gotten anything for Travis yet? He has been talking about blah, blah, blah, blah, blah."

Teresa: Hmm!

Travis: "Would you want to get that for him?" Right? So that way it doesn't seem like it's coming from me, so I don't have to feel bad saying "Hey, get me this thing!" But, I do still end up getting the thing I want from the person.

Teresa: Do you think that I could, um, tell your whole family not to give you any more toys? Do you think—

Travis: No. I don't think you could do that.

Teresa: No.

Travis: I don't think you could stop my dad from getting me toys.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Maybe if you, like, locked his door, like, boarded it up.

Teresa: [laughs loudly]

Travis: But even then he has Amazon! Um—

Teresa: I know. [laughs]

Travis: This question is from Violetta.

"Someone specifically asked that I not get them anything for the holiday, but I already had bought something by the time they told me. Am I still good to give it?"

Teresa: Um... [pauses] if you find that you can't possibly save this present for another time and you must give it to them—you know, sometimes this happens when you live far apart, where you order a present, maybe, that's being delivered to their home, and you've ordered it before they tell you, "I don't want anything."

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: I think that as long as you ex—I think an explanation is okay. Saying, "Well, I found you something already that's already en route—"

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: "—so please enjoy, and—"

Travis: "Don't feel obligated to give me anything in return."

Teresa: Yeah, "Don't feel obligated to get me anything. I saw this and thought of you, and it's yours."

Travis: I also think that this is another thing we talk about a lot. There is a difference between, "Oh, you don't have to get me—oh, uh, don't—no, don't get me anything!" And, like, "[serious tone] I do not want to exchange presents this year. I can't—you know, I—I'm in a place financially where I won't be able to and it would make me uncomfortable if you got me—"

Like, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Like, they're two different things. And so I would say if this person has—has, like, sincerely, legitimately asked not to exchange presents, don't give them anything.

Teresa: Yeah. Save it for another time.

Travis: Um, I mean, that said, also you are the best judge of the relationship, and I think if you can honestly say to the person, like, "I know you said not to get you anything but, like, I'd already ordered this customized, personalized shirt for you, so, like... you know, I'm—sorry I got you a present!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, this question is from Hannah.

"I have some friends coming over for Christmas and I've never hosted before. What do we do if we annoy each other or get bored? For context, this is also my first winter Christmas, so back home if we annoyed each other we'd just go outside for a swim or sunbathe."

Teresa: Well, that would be fun, right?

Travis: No—what?

Teresa: What?

Travis: That's not Christmas!

Teresa: Hey—

Travis: Well, okay.

Teresa: It's not the—it's not the Christmas that *you* have experienced.

Travis: I should say, it is not *my*... Christmas.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] I'm sure it—okay. Let me put it this way. I'm sure it *is* fun. But also, what's important is I'm not a big swimmer in general, so it's not like I'm judging other people. What I—you know what, Teresa? You're right. What I should say is, "I don't know that I would enjoy that experience as much as, say, taking a nap. But—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "—that's okay."

Teresa: Okay. Um, so I think that it's a lot easier to disperse yourselves after any kind of gift exchange, because then people have the things that they got as gifts to kind of, like, play around with? Um, but, like—

Travis: I love hosting. Can I give some tips?

Teresa: Oh, sure, sure, sure-sure-sure.

Travis: Okay. Here are some hosting tips. One: have separate areas, right? So you might have a drink station over here and have, like, the snack station over here, and have, like, a TV showing a holiday movie over here. And so that way you give people kind of—almost subconsciously, places to move to if they find

themselves annoyed by somebody else, or feeling antsy and something to do, right? Like, "I'm gonna go get a drink, oh, and now I'm moving into your snacks, and—" it gives a natural flow to the party.

Two: there are lots of really great—um, I wanna say party games, but that makes it sound like, you know, beer pong or whatever. But I mean, like, board games, box games that you can buy. There's one called Roll For It! that is super straightforward. All you do is it's—you know, you flip cards and the cards show different combinations of dice, and each person takes turns rolling dice trying to get that combination to collect the card. It's a really great party game, 'cause you don't need to, like, strategize or focus until it's your turn. So it's kind of a good, like, split off the part of your brain that would get bored while you can sit there and talk with each other. Something like that works.

Um, you know, plan event— There's party crackers. You get those crackers? That's—"Oh, let's all do the crackers!" Right? Having stuff to do breaks up that kind of thing. Also... take naps! Naps are great!

Teresa: [laughs] Naps! Naps are great!

Travis: Naps are great!

Teresa: Um, and just because it's cold weather doesn't mean you *can't* go outside. You know, you just have to be prepared for it. Nothing's better after, like, a big heavy meal than puttin' on your winter coat and goin' for a walk, things like that.

Travis: Mm-hmm. Take a thermos full of mulled wine, perhaps, if you want?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So be it!

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, so you can still go outside. Um, you can also—so, there are some activities that don't even require cooperation, like, puzzles. That's one of the things that, um, as children my sisters and I used to do, and we didn't have to talk to each other.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: [holding back laughter] In order to do the puzzle.

Travis: And listen, if all else fails... *Muppets Christmas Carol*.

Teresa: Everybody loves it!

Travis: It's a go-to. It's got good songs. [sighs] I would say it's my favorite Muppet movie.

Teresa: I would too. Mine too.

Travis: Uh, one last question here. This is from Jeeves.

"I've cooking Christmas dinner for my household. Is it Shmannerly to invite folks to start eating after I put the food on the table, but still have a few things to do in the kitchen before I join them? Or should I join them as immediately as possible and tidy up later?"

Teresa: I would say the second one. Have fun with whoever you're hosting. Um, and maybe when everyone's done, they'll help you in the kitchen! So—

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: —like, you know. A few things can wait. The dishes will still be there after dinner. Um, and so, you know, enjoy yourself, and hang with your friends.

Travis: And like I said, I—I love hosting, I'm going to be cooking, uh, for—for Christmas Eve, morning, and Day—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —and part of the joy of cooking for people is watching them get to enjoy it, you know?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: You know, being there. And so don't rob yourself of that because the plates were dirty. You know what I mean? Like... let yourself have the moment of, like, "Ah, this is what I have provided for my friends."

And, if this is a concern, I would also say—I was inspired by my friend Kelly during Thanksgiving of, like—Kelly, if there is a free moment between moving a dish to the oven, waiting for it—you know, she is washing things as she goes. So that—the idea being that by you're done, you've kind of, like, coincided the finishing of the meal with cleaning at the same time as you're going.

Teresa: Right, okay. I was confused for a second 'cause I was like, "That's the exact opposite, uh, advice as I just gave," but you were talking about cleaning *while* preparing.

Travis: Yeah. So, like, "Okay, well, I've got some down time while this simmers, this bakes, and, you know, this boils. I've got five minutes. Okay, I can go ahead and start soaking the plates in the sink."

Teresa: Right, okay.

Travis: Um, so that's gonna do it for us. First and foremost—hey, before I let you go—not first and foremost, because this is the end of the show!

Teresa: This is the end!

Travis: *But*, I wanna say that this is maybe the most important piece of advice we'll give on this whole episode, and that is to be safe during the holiday season. Uh, one, don't drink and drive, but two, know that other people are not as smart as you and maybe not as careful, and they might drink and drive, so be careful out there, because you are important, and you being there and being here and being with us is the best gift that you can give anyone this holiday season, so please be careful out there.

Um, and you know what? Do your best, also, not only to be physically careful of your health but mentally healthy, you know? If you need to take a break, if you need to step away from a conversation, if you need to call someone, call a hotline, call a friend, whatever, and talk to somebody? Do it, because you are important, both physically and mentally, emotionally, spiritually, all of these things.

Teresa: All of those things! All the above is important.

Travis: Go check out all the other amazing shows on Maximumfun.org. They are all incredible. I am big fans of them, and I think you might be too.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: If you wanna see all the other McElroy projects, you can go to mcelroy.family. Um, it's a hub website for all that stuff. Um, and hey, if I might make a couple gift recommendations, I don't think it's too late—see if you can find a copy of *The Sawbones Book* on Amazon, or maybe Barnes and Noble or, who knows, in your local bookstore. If you have people in your life that like comedy and like weird medical history, or just like good books, you should get them that.

Or—and/or—and/or both, get the graphic novel version of *The Adventure Zone*. Book One is out now, and you can preorder Book Two, *Murder on the Rockport Limited*, coming this summer. Um, go to theadventurezonecomic.com and you can pick that up there, and if you want to pick up some merch items, you can go to mcelroymerch.com. There's some fun *Shmanners* stuff on there, and a whole bunch of other stuff you should check out.

Teresa: Cute little lapel pins. I really do like them.

Travis: Oh, they're so cute. Uh, Teresa, what else do we normally say here?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. We also like to thank Keela—sorry, we like to thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, and Keely Weis Photography—I kind of conflated the two there earlier—

Travis: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Teresa: —um, for our Facebook cover banner. Um, and we have a Facebook group, which is totally fan-run, called *Shmanners Fanners*. You can join them, uh, to, you know, get and give some good advice! And you can also follow us on Twitter @shmannerscast, and, uh, please do continue sending in suggestions. We have some really great ones on the horizon. Um, at—you can send those to... shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Travis: Nailed it!

Teresa: Did it!

Travis: Alright. Well, that's gonna do it for us. So, 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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