

Shmanners 208: Video Conferencing

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Travis: Oh, you—[crosstalk]

Teresa: Oh—you—no—

Travis: —no, sorry—

Teresa: —m—my—

Travis: —no—

Teresa: —am I gonna—

Travis: —no, I—

Teresa: —I—

Travis: —you know what? I'll go. 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: So—

Teresa: Thank you.

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: Thank you—

Travis: Me?

Teresa: —and all of you.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: For your patience last week.

Travis: Yeah, we're gonna put out two episodes this week. We didn't put put up one last week. Uh, just—Teresa was under the weather.

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: Uh, and so we had to hold it off. Uh, but she's feeling better now, and rather than just skip a week we thought, "You know what? Let's make this, like, a special two week, uh—two episode week, rather."

Uh, especially since the episode we're gonna cover today is a bit of a special one.

Teresa: Yes. It's been—it's been all over the—the Facebook group.

Travis: Everyone has requested this, to the point where I don't think we could, like, name who requested it if we tried, 'cause everyone wants this one.

Teresa: Everyone wants this. Um, and we're gonna do our best. Travis has a lot of real world experience—

Travis: I do.

Teresa: —and—

Travis: I feel a little bit like Bane, in—in *Batman*, uh, the *Dark Knight* movies, where it's like, you know, "You—you came into the dark, but I was *born* into it."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I've been doing—'cause, like, I work from home, and I work primarily on the internet, and I—I live in Cincinnati, uh—

Teresa: Oh, and we're talking about video conference etiquette.

Travis: Yes, video conferencing. And—and so, uh, Zoom meetings, uh, are nothing—

Teresa: FaceTime.

Travis: —nothing new to me. FaceTime, um—so, here's the breakdown of all our experience. Uh, Bebe has lots of cousins that she loves to talk to, and I talk to my brothers and my Dad a lot, so that's FaceTime.

Uh, and Zoom meetings—this is a thing 'cause, like, none of us—me, Justin and Griffin and Dad, none of us, like, live in LA or New York or Chicago or whatever, and so whenever we have to take a meeting about something, it is a Zoom meeting. And for, like, Skype and stuff, well, Justin and Griffin and I have been using Skype since we started recording, so, like, a decade now?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Uh, and I've done plenty of video stuff, and I have a lot of experience about it. So this is gonna be, uh—

Teresa: You have a lot of experience. *I* have a lot of thoughts.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, this is gonna be different from a regular episode, because we can't really talk too much about the history of this, right?

Teresa: I mean, it's within, uh, the 20th century, obv.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, because—

Travis: 21st.

Teresa: Ye—

Travis: What year is it?

Teresa: —the 21st. No!

Travis: I got this so wrong.

Teresa: The—it started in the 1900—1990s, right?

Travis: Sure, yes. But in, uh, the turn of the century?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: How come whenever people say "turn of the century" they always seem to be talking about, like, 1899 to 1901? [laughs quietly]

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: What about now? It's not important.

Teresa: I don't know. The turn of the millennium.

Travis: Turn of the m—the new willenium.

Teresa: We found it.

Travis: Okay. But yeah. So, it's—we've done an episode about, like, telephone etiquette—

Baby Dot: [babbles]

Travis: —so that's more of the history of it. We're joined, uh, by Baby Dot, of course. Baby Dot, uh, who's getting just bigger and bigger. Oh, she's so tall. She's six feet tall now!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Which is weird. Uh, and she's now just, like, nodding at me and smiling. So we, uh, have just a bunch of questions that we are going to, uh, attempt to answer. Um, so—

Teresa: So it's like an *Ask Shmanners*, but it's about just the one.

Travis: Yes. It's all about, uh, video conferencing, teleconferencing—well, teleconferencing— isn't that just like a big phone call?

Teresa: That's a group phone call, basically, but.

Travis: Yeah. Okay, here we go!

Teresa: Still, still a lot of these rules apply, I think.

Travis: This is true. Um, and so also, as long as we're saying a bunch of these rules apply, we're going to talk in terms of, like, Zoom or Skype or whatever specifics, but if you are doing video conferencing on anything, I think these will apply.

Uh, so this is from krissmnasi.

"If your pet is being loud while you're talking, what's the best course of action? Do you continue to talk despite the meowing, barking, tweeting, etc? Or do you pause your conversation to quiet them? Should you keep the pet out of the room altogether? What if they're louder alone?"

Pet noise.

Teresa: Okay. Pet noise. This is something we're familiar with!

Travis: And we're dealing with right now! Our puppies are playing right next to us.

Teresa: Um, so the last thing that you wanna do is completely ignore it and don't say anything until it gets to the point that's obvious. Right? So what you can say is, "Oh, I'm outside, there's some pretty loud birds."

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right? Or, "My cat's in my office with me."

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Or something like that, so people know where the sound is coming from. That takes the whole thing out of it. Then, if someone says, uh, "Can you please put your cat out of the room? I can't hear you very well."

Great! That is something that you can absolutely do, and you can take the time to do it. But if they say "What is that *noise*?" Then it gets awkward, right?

So if you have dogs in the recording area, like we do, then, uh, you—you just take a second to acknowledge that, uh, interruption, and then you can do whatever the group of you decides is best.

Travis: I also think that this is, uh—uh, so, two thoughts on this. One, perception, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like, our dogs were just, like, playing tug-of-war quietly with a toy, right? And to me I'm like, "Ugh, that's so loud," right? But there's no way that, like, somebody listening to this recording is like, "Oh, I can't hear them over those dogs!"

Now, it's different if the dogs were, like, barking, right? Like, that gets loud, right? That's a thing. So don't—if your cat is meowing across the room, it's probably not distracting anybody, unless it, like, becomes a persistent thing. Uh, at which point, as Teresa said, I agree. It's time to say, like, "Excuse me one second, I think my cat needs food," or whatever.

The other thing is context, right? If this is, like, a call with a friend, just say, like, "Sorry, my dog's barking." Right?

If this is, like, a business meeting, mute your—I'll talk about mute in a second, but mute your call, go over, see what the dog needs, and come back, right?

Say, like, "Excuse me for a second." Do that. Now, if this is, like, a livestream or performance thing, which a lot of people have been doing, if you're, like, live broadcasting—I don't know, playing, like, Dungeons and Dragons or something,

then I would say you need to plan accordingly. If you know you have, like, a dog that barks, keep 'em in a different room or something, right?

Teresa: Or keep treats with you to keep them quiet.

Travis: Yes, exactly. Play with them a bunch before you start recording so you've worn 'em out. All of that stuff.

Baby Dot: [babbles quietly]

Travis: Yes. Now, let's talk about mute for a second.

Teresa: Isn't there a mute question?

Travis: There is. Um, let me find it—here we go. Uh, this is from Kat—no, see, now here's the weird thing. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Sometimes when I paste people's questions into the doc, right? I do it without format. And so if people put little pictures, little emojis in their thing, it looks like—

Teresa: Oh, right. Yellow heart, purple heart. Yeah.

Travis: It reads as "Kat, yellow heart, circle, purple heart, black heart, Friend." So I don't know what of that—I'm gonna go with Kat Friend.

"How do you politely ask someone in a loud environment to mute themselves when not speaking, especially in a big class setting?"

Um, there—we have other ones too, but—so, the thing about it is—

Baby Dot: [babbles quietly]

Travis: —there's a lot of people that have different schools of thought on that, but I will give you my—

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: —my rule of thumb. If it is, uh, three or less people on the call, I do not leave myself on mute when not talking, right? Because chances are, if it's three or less people, they are calling to talk to me. This is a call we're having.

And so the, uh, amount of which I would have to switch back and forth and probably miss, you know, switching it back or forth, uh, to the point where I'm talking and no sound is being heard—the chances are very high of that.

Now, once you get into four or more, especially if it's a group call, uh, like a conference meeting or a classroom thing or—you know, if it's people, like, having a, like, happy hour with friends and there's, like, ten people on the call. I think you should leave yourself on mute until it's your turn to talk, especially since sometimes people have, like, microphones that, like, will kick on if they pick up certain sounds or, like—I don't know. You know, whatever.

And you don't want to interrupt somebody because you coughed and they're like, "Wait, were you g—what—what were you—sorry—" And I was like, "Oh no, sorry, I just... my wife walked in the room and I said hi." Right?

Teresa: So the thing about the mute function, right? Is it, um, really necessitates that you take the conversation in turns, right? So, unlike a normal conversation where you might say one or two sentences and the other person jumps on that, and then you're talking, you really need to think about life in paragraph form, right? So—

Travis: That's beautiful.

Teresa: Oh, thank you! Uh—[laughs] Blushin' a little bit over here. Um, so when you've finished your paragraph form there, um, that's when you allow other people to speak. So you have to make sure that you are giving them the floor, if you will, um, so that—muting your side of the conversation is you delivering that floor to them, right?

Travis: Yeah. And—and also, the other thing to remember is when it comes to, like, microphones and, like, being in a—a video conferencing, or even teleconferencing or a recording, anything where there's a microphone right in front of your face, right? We don't get the, uh, spacial difference, right?

So imagine you're in, like, a lecture hall, and there's a teacher standing at the front giving a lecture, right? They are projecting, they are at the front of the room,

everyone's facing them. Someone in the back of the room politely coughs. [coughs quietly] Right? It'd probably go unnoticed by everyone who's not within, like, a two foot radius of them, because most of the focus is on the teacher talking.

But when you're in an audio, like, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, everyone is right in front of the mic. Everyone is basically standing on the stage at the same time, facing each other. So the littlest thing, even a polite cough that activates the microphone, is going to get attention, right? And can interrupt the thing.

So, making sure that you have it muted so that way you're also not worried about it is a good way to go. And I would also say, along those same lines, if it is a lecture especially, turn off your video, too. Like, you don't wanna distract people with you, like, cou—or whatever, or—

Teresa: Well, that's another—another question, right? Um—who sent that in?

Travis: Yeah, I guess we'll get to that in a second. Uh, I will also give one more piece of advice. If you are going to do, like, a group chat, happy hour, party kind of thing, I would say, uh, to save everybody's ears from melting off, uh, and brain from melting, have it be, like, a, "We're gonna go around, you know, and say what we've been doing today." Or, you know, "I've been watching this show. What are your thoughts, Jeremy? What are your thoughts, Susan?" Rather than—

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: —yeah. Rather than have it be everyone trying to talk at once, 'cause that would be no fun. That's just a cacophony.

Uh, Cat asks:

"If I don't have an office or desk space, where is an appropriate setting for a virtual meeting?"

Teresa: So, um, there's also—a little later, I think there's a question about, like, Zoom backgrounds. And I'm gonna loop this in together.

I think that as long as the Zoom background looks like it could—like it could be, like, a real place that you are right now—

Travis: That's from Jay.

Teresa: That's from Jay.

Travis: Jay asks, "How do we feel about fun Zoom backgrounds?"

Teresa: I think that, uh, depending upon obviously who you're speaking with, um, it could be, you know, uh... library shelves behind you?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: That's perfect.

Travis: A blank wall is also fine.

Teresa: A blank wall is fine. I mean, I think that a lot of people, uh—gosh. There's this Twitter account that's rating the rooms that people use and talking about how it's nice to have a little color, it's nice to have something visually interesting, but doesn't, um... [pauses]

[dog noises in the background]

Travis: That's our dogs. See?

Teresa: [laughs] We're doing it.

Travis: Now you can hear our dogs.

Teresa: Um—

Baby Dot: [babbling quietly]

Teresa: —visually interesting, but isn't distracting. Also, um, you know—

Travis: Books. Books are always good.

Teresa: Books are always good!

Travis: That's that—I just saw New York Times did a series of I think online articles, but it was, like, analyzing celebrities bookcases behind them to see what books were on the shelf. So that's a thing. I think that the answer is, like, if you—if this is, like, a meeting, you don't want to draw attention. Like, this is—you know, inobtrusive, right? Where you want a blank wall or a bookshelf or something.

The thing about fun backgrounds, which Jay asked about, is I think that that is fine if you're, like, hanging out with friends or whatever. Sometimes I use 'em when, like, we have a weekly meeting, me and Justin and Griffin and our Dad and, like, Amanda, our business manager. And I'll throw one up because I think it's funny. Mostly it's the poster from Mordecai.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, and that's great. But I don't leave it up the whole time, and I—what you don't want is for it to be distracting.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: You don't want it to be a thing that's like, "I wish they hadn't done—" You know what I mean? So it's one thing if it's like, "I put up a background to have a background so that you didn't see my dirty bedroom."

I think it's another where it's just like, "Look how funny this is."

Teresa: And you can pick out a nice background for that, you know? There are very nice interior backgrounds that you can find, um, that look like maybe—

Baby Dot: [babbles loudly]

Teresa: —oh, yeah! That look like maybe this is my house. I—I subscribe to the Instagram, right? The Instagram life, where if you can't see it, it didn't happen.

Travis: It didn't happen.

Teresa: Right? So find—find the best corner of your house, whether that's—I mean, maybe it's a closet. Who knows? Um, find the best place and make that place look nice.

Travis: This question is from Kat. No! I just did that one. This one's from Emily.

"Do I have to wear non-pajama pants if you only see my top half?"

Here's the thing—

Teresa: Again, Instagram rules!

Travis: Well, no, I disagree.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And here's why. Because we got a lot of this, and I know everyone is, like, joking about this and asking about this.

I will tell you my rule. As someone who works from home, and as someone who does a lot of these things, oftentimes the only person you have to, like, convince that you are business-y is yourself, and I think that's important.

Do you *need* to wear other than pajama pants? No, of course not. But for someone like me who easily gets distracted and who it's hard for me to get in the right frame of mind, setting myself up for success by, like, getting dressed and clearing off my desk so there's not, like, toys and stuff to play with.

And, like, also—man, this is so important. If you're on your computer, which you probably are if you're doing your conference like this, close everything but the tabs you need. 'Cause man, it's so easy to start looking through Twitter while someone's talking. And then you're like, "Sorry, what were you saying?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So I think setting yourself up for success by giving yourself, like, the right frame of mind and being business-y will make it easier for you to do business, make you feel more engaged. That's—that's how I feel. Uh, do you *have* to? No, of course not!

Teresa: If it's not on camera, it doesn't exist. [laughs]

Travis: Yes. Uh, this is from @honeygoblin.

"If you're in a group call and you need to leave the room, what's the best etiquette? Just leave and return quietly or excuse yourself or what?"

Teresa: Um, so what we're trying to do when we're making these group calls is we are trying to imitate life the best that we can. So, uh, my suggestion is to quietly excuse yourself. No need to tell people where you're going. Um—

Travis: "Excuse me, I'll be right back."

Teresa: Perfect. Um, any of that stuff is just fine. Just like you would normally.

Travis: Yes. What you don't want is for someone to be like, "And what do you think T—oh, oh, they're—okay. They're gone."

Teresa: "They're gone."

Travis: Um, this question is from Christopher.

"Is it okay to eat while on a group call, specifically a class or program meeting?"

I think that this is okay... if three things are true. One: you are muted. Two: your video is off. And three: you are not in a kind of call where you might at any moment be asked a question. Right?

Teresa: If you are simply observing—

Travis: Right.

Teresa: —then as long as you're not obtrusive with your eatings, right? Because you've muted and you're, uh—

Travis: They can't see you. And it's not gonna be like, "What do you think... Jones?"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: "[imitates talking with mouth full]"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You guys remember that commercial with the peanut butter sandwi—
"[imitates talking with mouth full]"

Teresa: Oh, yeah!

Travis: You remember that, got milk? Oh, that was great.

Teresa: Yeah, that got milk.

Travis: Okay. Um, this question is from Scott.

"How early should you be for a Zoom call?"

This is—listen. This is—

Teresa: Tell me about your practical, real-world experience on this.

Travis: Well, here's the thing. I am the type of person who is early, if I can, for everything. This is for two reasons. One: I don't like being late. I think it sets me up to be off for, like, the whole thing, you know? If I'm late, then I'm thinking about, like, "Oh, they're so mad at me!" [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, and it also—like, I like to be early to be, like—give myself time to prepare and all that stuff. That said... I think that there is a certain weird feeling—'cause it's different than, like, being early in a conference room and somebody walks in and you stand up and like, "Oh, hi." Right?

Whereas if you're just sitting on camera and they click in, and you're just, like, there? It's like if somebody walks into a room and you just appear in the room.
[laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And so I—I don't think that there is anything wrong with being the first one in a Zoom call, right? I'm not saying, like, "Be fashionably late!" But be ready that, like—what I suggest? Leave your camera off. Until somebody clicks on, and then if they come on you can be like, "Oh, hi!" And then—

Teresa: You can say hello, exactly.

Travis: —and then turn your camera on. Uh, but, like, small talk, you know? That's—this is—especially right now, people are starved for small talk. And even me, who—I've talked about on this show many times, I am not wild about small talk. The, like, "Uh, the weather, huh, and how are you? Oh, crazy weekend." Like—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —but this—I am hungry for it now, so I think it's totally fine. That's what small talk exists for.

Teresa: Right. Um, I'm gonna say that if—if you can categorize how early you are in a few minutes, and I don't know what that means for you—does it mean two? Does it mean five? If you can say, "I've only been here a few minutes." Then that's cool.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, but a few, especially for me, is less than ten, right? Um, because that becomes the new unit, after a few. So if you can do that, that's fine.

Baby Dot: [crying]

Travis: Uh, we're gonna answer a bunch more questions. But first, how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

Travis: We wanna give a thank you note this week to Billie. *Shmanners* is sponsored in part by Billie. Billie has recreated everyday essentials by delivering premium razors and high-performing body care directly to you. No pink tax, no visit to the drugstore, no breaking the bank.

You go to mybillie.com to get their starter kit for just \$9. Now, that includes their award winning razor, two refill blades, and a magnetic holder that keeps your razor safe and dry in between uses. And Billie is out to change more than just the way you shave. They've released three completely clean, must-have products to add to your routine: lip balm, dry shampoo, and face wipes. So, stock up.

I'm tellin' you, folks. These razors are cool looking. They're ergonomic. They're easy to hold. And I know that that sounds like a thing people say, but it's true. And the—the shave stuff—[stammers] it smells great! The shave lotion smells great. I'm a fan of it, and I think you will be too.

So get started by going to mybillie.com/shmanners to get the best razor you'll ever own. And the best part? The starter kit is just \$9 plus free shipping, always. Go to mybillie.com/shmanners. That's M-Y-B-I-L-L-I-E .com/shmanners.

There's a lot of uncertainty in the world, but you know what's not uncertain? The importance of good dental hygiene. That's right, folks. I'm talkin' about Quip. Why am I talking about Quip? Is it because I love Quip? Is it because I love their toothbrushes? Is it because their toothpaste is my favorite flavor on Earth?

Well, that's part of it. But it's also 'cause, you know, they sponsored us in part this week. But it's also because I think you should try Quip. I think you will like it. Because brushing your teeth is important, but so many of us use old, worn-out, bristle toothbrushes that are ineffective, and frankly, ever since I started using an electric toothbrush, I am never going back. Because the Quip electric toothbrush has timed sonic vibrations with 30 second pulses to give you a dentist-recommended two minute routine, and there's even a sized down version designed for kids!

Now, pair that with Quip's anti-cavity toothpaste, in mint or watermelon, and you'll get all the ingredients teeth actually need and none they don't.

And, the Quip brush head, toothpaste, and floss refills are automatically delivered on a dentist-recommended schedule every three months for just \$5 each. It's a friendly reminder that when it's time to refresh and stay committed to your oral health, and shipping is free.

So, if you go to getquip.com/shmanners right now, you can get your first refill free. That's your first refill free at getquip.com/shmanners. That's G-E-T-Q-U-I-P.com/shmanners. Quip: the good habits company.

Travis: Okay. This next question comes from Lisa.

"When there are a lot of people on the same call, how do you speak up without interrupting? Even with cameras on, my whole class seems to be talking over each other constantly because we aren't getting to queue as to who wants to speak next."

This is very difficult.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: This is a thing that me and Justin and Griffin, uh, have recorded *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* for ten years without video. Um, and so we—we talk over each other a lot, and—especially—I am a bad listener, so that's another problem.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: The thing is is you are absolutely correct, Lisa. You lose a lot of the, like—"[inhales]" the—it's what in theater my—my theater teacher said, and probably lots of people always called, like, an inspiration breath, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Travis: Of, like, "[gasps] [stammers]"

Teresa: It's an indication that you have had a thought that you need to express it.

Travis: And you can see it on someone else's face. Like, "Oh yeah? Like—" and we—we tend to, when we're in a room with each other talking, cede the floor to each other, uh, subconsciously, right?

When we see someone's body, like, engage, and they take that breath and, like, "Oh," they make eye contact with—all these things that we do. And you're right. On a video call, it's very easy to miss all that stuff. That's why, um, sometimes, you need to raise your hand.

Teresa: [laughs loudly]

Travis: Is—like, I know it feels silly! But, like, raise your hand. Or say, "I have something to add when you're done." Right? And that way you're not interrupting

them. You're gonna let them finish their point, but you have basically just, like, called dibs on being the next thing.

But this is also why, if this is a problem, what I would recommend—and really, this—okay. So, in this specific circumstance, when it's like a classroom setting, I think you should reach out to the teacher privately and say, like, "I think there needs to be, like, a moderator of some kind who says, like... 'I—I think the next person to answer was this, and this—' like, somebody who's actually guiding the conversation."

Teresa: And you can do this a little bit while—before a moderator, by saying someone's name while you are addressing them.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Um, so it says, "Travis, what do you think about this?" And then everybody recognizes that Travis has been asked, so Travis will answer first, and then he gets to call the next person.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, you can also do this if everyone, um—if the visuals in your app that you're using match up, you can just go down the line. Like, left to right, top to bottom. And everybody answer in turn that way. Um, if it's, like, people who want to speak, obviously.

There's an interesting psychology to the whole video chat thing. Um, and—and the reason is, people inherently are not... are not, um—what do I want to say? Automatically looking at everyone else.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Something about seeing your own face on the screen—

Travis: It's distracting!

Teresa: —is distracting! Because you tend—

Travis: Because you're just so beautiful. And you're like, "Look at me!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Look at me there. Glorious!"

Teresa: Your eye naturally goes to your own face. Um, and so you really have to work very hard to look at the other people, or even look at the camera. I'm—I'm torn about this. But at least—

Travis: Well, we're gonna talk about that in a second.

Teresa: —not look at yourself. It's very difficult. And the more people that are on the screen, the harder it is for your eye to remember to look at other people.

Travis: And this is—this is just a good rule of thumb in a discussion setting in general, but this is something that I have worked on almost my entire life. Which is making the decision of, "Does the thing I want to say need to be said to further the conversation, and to add something, and to whatever? Or do I *want* to say it to prove how smart I am, or to get a hand on the ball, or to seem like I'm contributing?" All of those things, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Travis: And, like, because that's the thing. I could say anything about anything all the time, right?

Teresa: And do.

Travis: And I do.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And so, especially in a circumstance like this where it, like, can easily become just noise on noise on noise is, like, really making the decision of, like, "You know what? This person before me already basically made this point. And, like, I don't... I'll wait my turn." You know?

I'm not saying that you should be afraid to say something, or hold back a good point because you're afraid that it's gonna make too much noise. I think it's just more of, like, everybody can ease off, like, 5% and wait a second. Uh, and see, you know, if they need to.

Uh, this question is from Ian.

"Is it better to look at the lens, or to look at the video chat window where you can actually see the person?"

Teresa: Okay. So, here's the thing. Uh, I don't know if—I mean, of course. Maybe everybody didn't see this, but it was marked on our calendars, was the *Parks and Rec*, um, reunion special.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Right? And that was all done via one of these apps, right? The Gryzzl app. Um, and you see in the video, in the episode, everyone is looking at the camera, because it's a TV show.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: And if they weren't looking at the camera, and we were looking at the TV show, it would look weird. But that's not what happens in real life. That's—that's TV. That's something where I'm putting on a performance, right? So if you're doing, like you said, like a livestream, look at the camera.

Travis: Yes. Or if you're doing a meeting where you're the one talking. That's a performance, baby!

Teresa: Yeah. But if you are just talking—like, I talk to my Mom every few days. I look at her and she looks at me, and nobody really looks at the camera because if I'm looking at the camera, I can't tell how she feels about what I'm talking about.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You know? So that—that kind of conversational exchange doesn't happen if we're looking at the camera.

Travis: Well, yeah. So, for the last, you know, two months, Tybee and I have been doing, like, movie nights. Mostly, for some reason, watching weird 90's, like, action movies? We've watched *The Phantom*, *The Rocketeer*, *The Shadow*, *Cutthroat Island*, and—oh, there was one other one. Uh—uh, that—no, that's it so

far, I think. But we don't watch each other watch the movie, you know? We have the cameras set up like we were sitting next to each other watching the movie.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: We're not, like, staring at each other. You know what I mean? And—and so—also, to go into that—so, like I said. To Teresa's point, if you're doing a performance or a presentation or something, look at the camera. And when you're listening, look at the screen.

Um, now this is from @number420dad. [quietly] Nice.

"If—if it's a casual video chat, is it okay to start doing other things like cleaning, etc, like I would do if it were just a phone call? Or is it rude to not sit there with the person the whole time?"

Teresa: Okay. So, here's my thought about this. There is an app that our family has been using called Marco Polo, where it's not really a conversation, but it is a video message. And I feel, at that point, you *can* do other things, because the, um, other person is, like, receiving this letter from you, right?

Um, but if you are FaceTiming with someone, I think it's important that you at least make it so that you are paying attention to them. And, you know, I have kids. I'm doin' other stuff.

Travis: You have kids?!

Teresa: [gasps]

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: Where are they? No, here's one. The other one's outside.

Travis: No—okay, there's one there. Okay, okay, okay.

Teresa: [laughs] And, um, people know that I'm—I'm juggling things a lot. But if I set it up so that I am walking around the room, I'm not really listening.

Travis: Right. Well—[stammers] here's—I will disagree with you slightly.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Which is, I think if you are calling someone to talk to them—like, FaceTiming someone to talk to them, right? Talk to them.

If you were doing, like, a hangout—like, you know, this is a little aimless, this is a little like we're just gonna spend some time chatting with each other—I think it's okay to, like, set up your computer while you clean and, like, hang out. You know what I mean? Like—

Teresa: Okay, so it's about relationship.

Travis: Well, yeah, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I have plenty of friend—like I said with Tybee, watching movies. Or if, like, I was hanging out with Bradbury—like, we wouldn't spend that entire time locked in one on one talking, right?

Teresa: I guess you're right. Like, I have often set up the phone on the ledge, uh, in front of me, while I feed Dot, and talk to my Mom.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: So I think it just has to do with, like, the purpose of it. But, like, if I called someone who I hadn't talked to in forever and then, like, started cleaning, I think would be, like, "Why did—why did you call me?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Right? But if it was just like, "Hey, I miss you. Do you wanna hang out while I clean the kitchen?" Right? Like, "Sure, yeah, go for it!" Right? Like... or like, "I'm gonna be baking, you know, a cake. Do you wanna hang out while I bake the cake?"

Like, I think that that is perfectly normal. I think it's an expectation setting thing.

Teresa: So that's probably what it really is, is the expectation for the call.

Travis: And I wouldn't do that if it was, like, a... non-social thing, non-casual thing, which, like—so, this question is from, uh—from Maria.

"Is it okay to knit during staff meetings on Zoom? I listen better when I knit, but I never know whether people find it rude."

So, here's the thing, Maria. Um, if you're on video and you're—and it's visible that you're knitting, no. Um, here's the thing, though. Because—I—I have just said "Here's the thing," like, six times in the last two seconds. But here is the thing.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: The—'cause this is something I ask myself about, because I—I think that I am—I can focus better when something else is happening, but the question you have to ask yourself is, are you *actively* focusing better, or just not getting as distracted? If that makes sense.

So, like, if there is an episode of *Bob's Burgers* which I've watched a hundred times on TV while I'm on a call, right? I can focus—actually focus better. But if there is an episode of TV that I'm actually interested on, I'm just not feeling the need to do something else, but I'm not really paying attention to the call.

So I think that if it's a staff meeting, and you're not on video, and you are actually actively listening better because you're giving your hands something to do, I think it's totally fine. But I wouldn't do—I wouldn't, like, read a book while I was, you know, on a call. Or play a video game while I was on a call. Something that I'm actually engaging with and paying attention to. Because then you are not paying attention to the call.

Teresa: Right. And I also agree with the video off, because if it's not on camera, it doesn't exist.

Travis: Sure. Um, and, like—'cause that's the thing, is if it was a real business meeting, you'd probably be doodling or something. Like, I would, you know? I remember doing staff meetings at Best Buy every week and, like, I would have a notepad angled towards myself, nodding, while I was, I don't know, drawing that cool angular "S" that everyone drew in middle school?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So finally, from bizzie b:

"How do you end one? Like, when the conversation dies down and you're ready to go but you don't want to seem rude."

You just end it. Right? Like, this—

Teresa: This is the whole thing, right? This is—this is, like, the conversation, the art of conversation that seems so elusive, because we've made it that way. And it's really not. Um, if you have—if you feel like the conversation is over, it's easy enough and not rude to say, "That's all I've got for today."

Travis: "Does anybody else have anything? No? Okay! We'll talk later. Bye—" like, the thing is, is... be me. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I like ending conversa—like, I am not bad at it. I am never afraid to. Um, 'cause sometimes the conversation's done. And I know that that can be especially tough when it's, like, a social call where it's just like you're talking to a friend and, like, the conversation's clearly done, but neither person wants to be rude.

So if that's the case, I recommend saying, like, "Hey, do you wanna talk again Wednesday? Cool! I'll talk to you then. Have a great day." Like, so that way it seems like you are setting up a continuation later and not saying, like, "Never talk to you again, Bob. Bye-ee!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, I also think, along those same lines, setting a time. Of saying, like, "Let's have a call from 5 to 5:30." Right? Now there's a built in window. All of those things. But—

Teresa: Or even, if you don't set up beforehand, you can say, "Uh, I gotta go make dinner. It's almost six o' clock."

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Or something like that, right? So it's not like, "I don't wanna talk to you any more."

It's like, "We have lives that we need to continue to live, and thank you for speaking with me."

Travis: Right. In my experience, when you—when everyone feels the momentum of the conversation ending, I've never done the, like, "Okay, well, uh, if there's nothing else—does anybody have anything else? Okay, great! It was great talking to you, thank you." Like, I've never worried that I was offending everyone. If anything, I feel like a hero.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I feel like everyone's going, "Okay, great, cool. It was done." Especially in this day and age where we have, you know, text messaging and emails and all these stuff. If there was anything else that they remember later, if there was any additional things, they have a hundred ways of getting in touch with you. It's not like the olden days where it's like, "Oh, I forgot to write that in my letter. It'll be another two weeks before I find out the answer!" Right?

Like, you don't have to do the, like, "Anything else? Is there anything else? Can anybody think of anything? Oh, what were you gonna say?" Like, don't fill the time. Nobody likes that.

Speaking of, that's gonna do it for us this week!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, thank you so much for listening. And like we said, we'll have another episode up Friday. Uh, this is a special two-episode week. Thank you so much for your patience. Um, go check out all the other amazing shows on Maximumfun.org. They're all incredible. If you want to check out other McElroy projects, you can go to mcelroy.family. Uh, let's see.

Teresa: Some cute merch on there!

Travis: Cute merch on there! Uh, if you wanna go directly to merch, you can go to mcelroymerch.com. Uh, 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, thank you to

Keely We—sorry, Bruja Betty Pinup Photography, for our Facebook banner. Um, that's a fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners Fanners*, and that's where we got, um—I mean, I got inundated with this idea.

Travis: But in a good way. In a positive way.

Teresa: In a good way! In a great way. Uh, the masses, they called for it. Um, so join that group if you love to get and give excellent advice. Also, thank you—

Travis: It's called *Shmanners Fanners*, by the way. That's the name. I don't think we said the name.

Teresa: No, I said it.

Travis: Okay.

[pauses]

Teresa: Okay. [laughs] Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, where we get all of our question submissions. That is @shmannerscast. If you would like to suggest a topic for a show, you can email us at [hesitantly] shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Travis: Got it! And I think that is—oh! Thank you—well, I was gonna say thank you to Alex, but this was all questions. But you know what? Still. Thank you, Alex, for your support.

Teresa: Thank you, Alex.

Travis: You're great. And that's gonna do it for us. Join us again next time.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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