

Shmanners 210: Finishing School

Published on May 15th, 2020

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Travis: Might I say, you are charming!

Teresa: No, I'm *finished*.

Travis: 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: [pauses and inhales] You know... [sighs]

Travis: That was a deep intake of breath!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That was a deep—you know, some people can say a lot with a sigh.

Teresa: Mmm?

Travis: My wife? My wife?

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Can say a lot with an intake of breath.

Teresa: Well, so here's the thing...

Travis: Mm-hmm?

Teresa: Right?

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Um... Gosh, it's really nice when a baby sleeps.

Travis: Yeah! So I was talking with Justin... uh, I always talk with Justin and Griffin and Dad.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Uh, about—

Teresa: Yes, because all of them have had children. Or currently have children.

Travis: Dad had kids? [sarcasm] And so uh, we were talking—I was talking about like, baby Dot has not been sleeping great, and Justin's like, "How old is she?" And I was like "Four months." And he said, "Oh, it's that four month sleep regression!"

And then he started laughing, 'cause he has an inside joke with Sydnee, that if you Google, like, "baby won't sleep" plus age, you will find someone saying, "Oh, it's that two month sleep regression."

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: "It's three month sleep regression."

“Oh, it’s that five month—Oh, it’s that 18 month sleep regression!”

Teresa: Well what if—okay. He is correct, in the way of, uh, the four month sleep regression can occur anywhere from two weeks old to uh, six months old. [laughs]

Travis: Right, so it’s—[stammers]

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: It’s babies just don’t want to sleep sometimes!

Teresa: [sighs] Yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Which, she slept okay last night.

Teresa: She did and I am—I am feeling refreshed. Uh, in fact, I—juber-ent. Jubilant. I’m feeling jubilant.

Travis: And you know what? None of this has anything to do with the topic, this week! [laughing]

Teresa: Well, but—but it does a *little bit*.

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: It does a little bit. Um, not for—for Dot, but for me. I feel like I am my best self, when I have had adequate sleep.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I’m not a happy person, when I don’t get sleep. I’m not a joy to be around.

Travis: Okay. I disagree.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I think you're always effervescent.

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: Uh, always a joy. Always, uh, a bright shining light in this ever gloomy world.

Teresa: Well, uh—and the reason that this has something to do with our topic... our topic is finishing schools, where women were groomed to be the light in their husbands' lives.

Travis: Well, I'm just gonna go ahead and say, "gross."

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Um, but also, I'm *very* interested to learn about this, 'cause this is one of those things of like... I don't know, this might be... it's always weird to say "a generational thing," because like finishing schools, I don't think, have been uh—at least not a popular thing, for a while?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But it definitely is like, one of those things that I have heard about. Like, I've *heard* people say "finishing schools." And I have no idea what it is, but I'm wondering if there are people listening who are like, let's say 25 or under or 20 and under, listening who are like, "I've never even heard the term."

Teresa: Okay. Well, so, historically speaking, finishing school was the place where affluent young women were taught social graces and etiquette. Okay?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, and it got this name, because it was probably the final step in education that they might have had. Um, it was where you finished all you'd need to learn! [laughs]

Travis: Ugh... Okay.

Teresa: Yes. Well, so uh, I mean... A lot of the stuff that we talk about, as far as like... the language of our society, is what they learned, um... But it really had to do with um, you know, being, quote, "a well-bred young lady," right?

Travis: I see.

Teresa: The—the richness of it, definitely is a uh, is a factor.

Travis: Which is why, like... you know. In middle school, you learn about your middle! [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You learn about your belly a lot!

Teresa: No, but one could say that your cotillion experience was a kind of finishing school.

Travis: Oh, it was very much that. Like, this is what I—I would say I'm a well-bred young lady, in that, like I—you know, here's the thing, though. [laughs] I don't know if I've ever gone in depth uh—I think I've talked about my cotillion experience, but it was like... where they teach you, you know, table manners and like pulling chairs out for people, and like, you know, asking someone to dance, and how to do various dances and stuff. But I *remember*...

Teresa: Mm-hmm?

Travis: Uh... Mallory, who was my cotillion date. And I'm really excited that

I remembered that name, 'cause I'm really bad with names. Mallory, if you're listening, hello. Um, and the other couple we were sitting with, was *I think* Jamie Sullivan, who you've met...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And *maybe* my friend Chilton? That might be true. Anyways, uh, like we just sat at the table goofing off.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like I remember, playing with our dinner rolls and like, I think at one point like, dipping fake leaves into water? I can't remember what it was, but we were not... behaving well! [laughs]

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: The dance part, I think was probably what everyone was gunning for. 'Cause like, you got dressed up and took really awkward photos, and then like, um... The parents would like, sit on the stage and watch the kids dance?

Teresa: Mm-hmm?

Travis: That's weird.

Teresa: Real weird.

Travis: All weird.

Teresa: Um, and you're right. I mean, it sounds pretty silly. Um, but the whole thing was that the etiquette of the time period in the 19th and 20th centuries was so specific...

Travis: Mm-hmm?

Teresa: Um, it was—it was a lot like our Victorian dinner party episode.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: [close to the mic in a muffled, old timey advertisement voice] Go back and listen to that, if you haven't listened to that. It's really fun.

Travis: It is—it is, really fun. I don't know why Teresa just became an old-timey phone operator?

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: But it was really fun, you should listen to it.

Teresa: I thought it was funny!

Travis: No it was funny, but it's—[starts imitating the tone of her old-timey voice]

Teresa: [imitates Travis imitating her]

Travis: [still in old-timey voice] "Can I get Virginia, 5361, please?"

Teresa: Um... And so, what this did, was it—it was almost like you needed a certificate to say, "Yes, I can marry well."

Travis: Oh. So this is like an actual qualification that someone might look for?

Teresa: I mean, a little bit! If you attended Finishing School, it gave you higher marital status, just by being able to say "I attended."

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: Like, you know. Like an Ivy League school would.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: At some point. Um, so it was—it was there to help prepare women of a certain social status, socio-economic status...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, for every social situation imaginable, to make them the best hostess, wife, um... arm-candy.

Travis: Crime-fighter.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No?

Teresa: No crime-fighter.

Travis: Dang.

Teresa: Um, the domestic partner, all kinds of thing that they could be.

Travis: Cage fighter?

Teresa: Mmm, no.

Travis: No? Huh! Okay.

Teresa: I'm not saying you didn't... You—you *couldn't* cage fight, what I'm saying is—

Travis: They probably had fight clubs in the basement, after-hours. You're probably right.

Teresa: It wasn't *officially* on the curriculum.

Travis: Ahh, it was an extracurricular!

Teresa: They, uh—these Finishing schools were kind of like boot camps, uh, specializing in how to get your man—

Travis: Oh wait, can we go back—

Teresa: Ahead in the world.

Travis: Can we go back to when we were talking about cage fighting? And then also, how to get your man? This'll work!

Teresa: Okay. Alright, I'm ready.

Travis: It's—it's where *Mortal Kombat* got the phrase, "Finish him!"

Teresa: Ahh!

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: That—I mean, listen—

Teresa: Vid—video games.

Travis: That was a long walk, for a short drink of water, but...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's—hey, listen – I don't have a lot to bring to this episode.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: I'm doing my best, out here.

Teresa: So, you would undergo training, on how to entertain your

husband's colleagues and friends, in a way that would lead an advancement to his career, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: So, this is the whole—you had to know how to behave when the boss came over for dinner.

Travis: Yeah, that old trope from like, TV shows. Stuff like, "The boss is coming! What are we gonna do?"

Teresa: Right! And the finishing school would tell you what you're gonna do. Um—

Travis: Is that still a thing, by the way? I mean, I'm my own boss, so my boss is over here for dinner all the time. But is that a thing—

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Where like your boss comes by and is like, "If—if you burn the roast, I'll never get that promotion!" Was that *ever* a real thing?

Teresa: I mean, certainly you want to impress someone who has uh, their thumb on your future, right?

Travis: I guess so... That just seems like such a we—I guess back in the day, it was like, "Yeah, listen, a lot of people can do this job, but do I wanna hang out with you at like, social functions and shit?" I—I guess that stuff.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I guess that makes sense.

Teresa: And speaking of things that we've seen on movies and TV, uh, that whole book-balancing-posture-thing?

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: That's real!

Travis: Really? What if you just have a really lumpy head? Huh?

Teresa: Well, here's the thing. Um... Anyone can really balance a book on their head.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: While they do stuff. It's about the rest of your body, what—what your posture is doing, while you do it. You can slump in a chair, and keep your head still enough to—to balance a book. So it's not—it's not really about the head, you know what I mean?

Travis: And listen, folks... I've seen Teresa balance books on her head. She is *not* making this up. She's good at it!

Teresa: I am good at it!

Travis: Yeah! She has a nice, flat head!

Teresa: [laughs] Um, so not only was it kind of the social things, it—the bodily things, it was also penmanship and grammar.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Cause you had to be able to write those fancy invitations we talked about, right?

Travis: [pauses] You know what's interesting about this, so far to—well, everything. But, what is specifically interesting to me right now, is like... Maybe this is where the generational thing comes in? Because this sounds like something that a—a subset, a large subset of like, our parents' generation would believe that kids should still have in some form, today.

Teresa: Yeah, well don't *you* think that they should have it in some form today?

Travis: Eh, not—not in these terms. I mean, like... That's the weird thing, right? 'Cause the—I think something that we've learned on this show and discussed over and over again, is that like... By the time a new generation becomes adults, the things that the previous generation adults think are important, is really not that important anymore, right? Like, when—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: When we were kids, like cursive writing was like, a big thing?

Teresa: It's true.

Travis: That's *nothing*, now!

Teresa: And they keep telling—they kept telling us that "Oh, in high school, you're gonna have to write everything in cursive!"

Travis: Right.

Teresa: And then they wanted us to type everything.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: And then in high school, there were like, "Oh in college, they're gonna expect your writing to be legible!"

Travis: No, but by that point—

Teresa: And then they wanted us to type everything!

Travis: Computers were such a thing by that point that they were like, out the door. I mean, same with like, math, you know? It was like, everybody, everybody needs to learn to do like, up into algebra, and stuff—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it's like, you know nowadays with the computers and cal—everybody has a calculator in their phone?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And like, most jobs *do not* require you to do algebra all that often. Geometry? Still very important. Everyone should learn geometry. That's just spatial relations, folks!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But like—

Teresa: Algebra and calculus are very job-specific.

Travis: Right. And so I think that that's it, is where I'm sitting there, I'm like, "Oh yeah! Posture's important." Like, is it? Is it as important as I think it is?

Teresa: I mean, I think that it—nowadays, it's not important about the way that you would judge someone by their posture, but the way that health and wellness is pervasive, in—in its—at least our western society. If you don't have good posture, you're gonna be in pain a lot.

Travis: See, but here I'm—okay. Not to keep going off on my own experience, but I remember...

Teresa: That's what this show is about.

Travis: That's true.

Teresa: I teach you about manners, and you talk about your own experience.

Travis: And I talk about whatever. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Uh, in middle school, we had home ec classes, that were split—

Teresa: Right?

Travis: —split into two groups, right? One group of the home ec classes was like sewing, laundry, you know, like, keeping home-stuff, you know?

Teresa: Mm-hmm?

Travis: And then the other half was like, cooking and kitchen stuff. And... Like, I wish, one, I had taken that way more seriously, when I was a kid.

Teresa: Yes!

Travis: That was—you know what? I don't know if I've ever told you this story, but that was like the one class that I ever got to choose—accused of cheating in.

Teresa: Really?

Travis: Because I finished my cross-stitch pattern so quickly, that the teacher was like, "Your mom did this." And I was like, "No!" 'Cause what the teacher did not know, or believe, after I told her, is I'd been cross-stitching for like six years at that point.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: 'Cause my mom taught me when I was a kid. And that—well, I was still a kid. But when I was like seven, I started cross-stitching. So I like, whipped through this, like, wolf's head howling at the moon pattern in like four days, and she was like, "Your mom—your mom did this!" And so she

made me do another one, and I was only allowed to work on it in class. And I finished it in like, two days, and she was like, "Okay, fine."

Teresa: Yeah. "Okay, fine!" [laughs]

Travis: But like, the cooking class specifically is like, I should have paid more attention! I should have paid more attention to these things. Like, that is something that I would s—

Teresa: But you're—you're learning now, I mean—

Travis: I mean, for now, yeah.

Teresa: Quarantine—even before quarantine, it's been really great, your cooking.

Travis: But now, quarantine has given me time to perfect things I was already kind of good at?

Teresa: Hey, actually, let's be, uh—let's be—

Travis: Self-isolation.

Teresa: Self-isolation, because let's be specific with our language. None of us are sick.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: We're not in quarantine. We're self-isolating.

Travis: But, I—I think that that is something that I would stand by, that every child would benefit from.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But maybe not in middle school? Maybe that that's something like...

Like, in high school even? Of just like, “Hey, you know what this is good for? To impress a potential partner!”

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: “So... let’s work on that!”

Teresa: Here are some things you would learn in finishing school, to impress your potential partners.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Um dancing, music lessons, embroidery, French, the correct way to serve and prepare tea, proper ways to address nobility, the language of flowers and fans, and conversation topics. Sounds like a lot of the stuff that we cover! [laughs]

Travis: Yeah! Very much so. I—I will say, I think while embroidery is a great hobby and noble and anyone who does it is great, that might not be as essential now as like, sewing a seam.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Sewing on a button. But I assume that the reason you’re learning embroidery is, at this point in the person’s life, they were expected to know how to sew—

Teresa: Yeah, I think so.

Travis: —on a button, and like, sew a seam. Like, that was not—that was basic stuff, and this was—

Teresa: Right, and this was the flourish.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: The finishing, if you will.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, also—

Travis: I do like that they were taught French. That's cool.

Teresa: Well, here's one of the reasons why French was so specific, is because a lot of these finishing schools were located in Switzerland!

Travis: Huh!

Teresa: And Switzerland is renowned for its private finishing schools, most of which are nestled near Lake Geneva. Um, and a lot of the citizens there are multi-lingual! You could practice—

Travis: And finished!

Teresa: And Finnish! [laughs] No, finished—

Travis: No, they're finished! [laughs] They might be Finnish—no that's Finland?

Teresa: Um... uh, let's see, there were native French speakers, there were German speakers, there were English speakers. So, there were a lot of—a lot of things that you could learn and practice, in addition to other arts and literature. Maybe German, if you're feeling fancy?

Travis: Okay. See, this is surprising to me, 'cause right up until this point, I have been thinking about finishing schools as like... you know, a local, like woman-taught—a group of ten women, at the community center, these things.

Teresa: Okay. This is something that we will—I'll talk about a little later, the distinction between finishing schools and charm schools.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I think what you're thinking of is charm school, and we'll talk about that in a minute, but first I want to go through a couple of the, uh, the popular... Switz... Switzerland... Is it Swiss? No.

Travis: Swiss—yeah!

Teresa: Swiss?

Travis: Swiss.

Teresa: Uh... [laughs] Swiss Finishing Schools.

Travis: Yes! But before we do that... How about a word from some other Max Fun shows?

[theme music plays]

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[adventurous music plays]

[several people chattering in the background]

Speaker 1: These are real podcast listeners, not actors!

Speaker 2: Hey! Thanks for coming. Here's a list of descriptors. What would you choose describe the perfect podcast?

Speaker 3: I mean, vulgarity.

Speaker 4: Dumb. Definitely dumb.

Speaker 3: And like... er, right here. This one. Meritless.

Speaker 2: What if I told you there was a podcast that *did* have all of that?

Speaker 3: [gasps in shock]

Speaker 4: No!

Speaker 2: *Jordan Jesse Go*. And it's free!

Several People: *Jordan Jesse Go?*

[scattered applause]

Speaker 3: [whispers] *Jordan Jesse Go!*

Speaker 1: *Jordan Jesse Go*: A real podcast!

[music ends]

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[deep and futuristic bass line plays]

Speaker 1: Strange planets, curious technology, and a fantastic vision of the distant future. Featuring Martin Starr.

Martin: So, we're going on day 14. Shuttle still hasn't come.

Speaker 1: Aparna Nancherla.

Aparna: The security system provides you with emotional security; you do the rest!

Speaker 1: Echo Kallum.

Echo: Can you disconnect me, or not?

Speaker 1: Hari Kondabolu.

Hari: I'm staying.

Speaker 1: From *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Geoffrey McGivern.

Geoffrey: Can you play Cyndi Lauper's 'Girl's Just Want to Have Fun'?

Speaker 1: It's... *The Outer Reach*: Stories from beyond.

Speaker 2: Now available for free, at MaximumFun.org or anywhere you listen.

[music ends]

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Travis: Okay, tell me about these popular Swiss finishing schools!

Teresa: Okay. Well, the—the two most popular um, would probably be Brillantmont, founded in 18—

Travis: Brilliantman?

Teresa: Brillantmont.

Travis: [pauses] M'kay.

Teresa: Uh, founded in 1882, which is offering—which offers what's called a "grade 14," or a graduate year, of kind of cultural studies. Um also, the Chateau Mon-Choisi.

Travis: Ooh! Ooh, look at you! That is a good—that is a good pronunciation!

Teresa: Thank you! Thank you, I practiced. Founded in 1885, offered a similar program. It taught social graces to everyone from Romanian princesses, to Hollywood actresses.

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: In fact...

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: There are some, uh, historical figures who attended Swiss finishing schools. Namely Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall.

Travis: Uh-huh?

Teresa: Anne-Marie, of—Queen Anne-Marie, of Greece, and even Princess Diana.

Travis: So, okay... Back when you said they were taught how to like, interact with nobility?

Teresa: Mm-hmm?

Travis: My first thought was like, "That's seems a bridge too far!"

Teresa: Nope!

Travis: But you—this is like for people who were actually going to interact with nobility!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: That was not like just—[sighs] Okay.

Teresa: Totally! Okay, so now we are gonna talk about finishing school versus charm school.

Travis: Oh! Around what period of time, was like, finishing school a thing? Like, up until "blank," was it a thing?

Teresa: Um... So, probably...

Travis: 'Cause you're talking about Princess Di, so that's gotta be like... At least, 'til what? The '80s?

Teresa: Okay... Um, for—for nobility-adjacent, especially in Europe, it continued throughout the '80s, and even the '90s. There are still finishing schools today.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Which again, I'll talk about later. You're jumping ahead!

Travis: Sorry! I'm just so fascinated!

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, but probably the second wave of feminism in the 1960s is when finishing schools moved out of the—the commonality, especially in the United States.

Travis: Okay. So, what is the difference between a finishing school and a charm school?

Teresa: Okay, um... So we've talked about how finishing school is kind of—it's an away-camp, almost? It's part of like a boarding school education, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So it's the—the very last step of that. Um, and it's strictly for really upper-class ladies, or, quote, "polite society." Um, and the whole idea is, it fills your gap between the end of schooling and the beginning of your marriage. Right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, it's—it's that kind of preparatory, uh, period. Um... But charm

school is different, in the way that it's an American invention, and—I'm sorry. It's a U.S. invention.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And um, it's more about teaching working and middle-class people manners, instead of preparing them to be like, lords and ladies, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, so you might go to Charm School in the '40s, if you were a working class girl and you wanted to be a secretary, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, so it would teach you to be "more employable," "more approachable," um, how to—

Travis: All these are in quotes, I assume.

Teresa: All these in—yes! Yes. [laughs]

Travis: [laughs]

Teresa: How to answer the phone, how to take a memo, all that kind of stuff.

Travis: So, the—it—charm school seems a little bit more about elevation?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Right?

Teresa: I mean, they're *both* about elevation.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: If the—if you go to finishing school, you hope to marry up, still.

Travis: Yeah. Yes. But that seems like, polish. Right?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Like where—where charm school seems like something where it's like, you might actually, like, raise a class-level, because you went to charm school? Like you're gonna go from like working class to like... being someone's secretary, right? And like, maybe even move up the ranks of like, better life and everything. Potentially.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Yeah. I would argue that finishing school did something similar.

Travis: Fair.

Teresa: In just a less... Let's—let's say, less socio-economic way.

Travis: Oh uh, sorry. My point, to be clear, my point was like it was a like... When you said it was a U.S. invention, that makes sense to me, 'cause we're a very bootstrap kind of company.

Teresa: Oh, okay. Okay.

Travis: So—er, country. And so, it seems like—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] Yeah. It's—

Teresa: Freudian slip!

Travis: Mmm! It seems like something that would be offered of like, "Hey! Pay us for this, and it might help you advance in life!" Right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Like, where the finishing school seems a lot more, for lack of a better word, elite? Where it's just like, "No no, you're lucky to come here! We're not just like, looking for people to pay us for this service."

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Okay, I get it.

Travis: It's like—yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. I understand now. And the—the cool thing is, modern finishing schools are almost a—an amalgam of finishing and charm schools.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, The British Butler Institute has one that they've set up, uh, for males, actually. Um, whereas historically, finishing schools were—were for women. These schools educate on things like building relationships, communication, confidence, body language, self-image, and personal representation. I think that's pretty cool! That's—that's some good, positive masculinity traits.

Travis: Sure. Sure. I—I will say, with very little deviation from the description though, you do get into like... some more toxic, like, "How to carry yourself like a dude!" You know? But I don't think that's it.

Teresa: I mean, I don't think that's it either. Um, The Washington Post did a study in 2013 on what makes workplaces successful, hypothesizing that employees with strong STEM skills – science, technology, engineering, and math – uh, would be at the top of the list. Turns out... Not so.

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: Uh, modern charm schools who—that would, um... would focus on these “soft skills,” um, things like communication, empathy, listening, things like that? Were *really* what companies hired, fired, and promoted. Right?

Travis: This is—okay. So this is... This makes complete sense to me. In a way. Right? Because in a world—[action movie trailer voice] In a world... [laughs]

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: No, and—and... I—I have done hiring for companies before. Now granted, these were like retail employers, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So, it wasn't like, highly specialized jobs or anything. But, what I came to find out was like, you know... A lot of people are qualified for a position, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: It is when—especially in—in this economy? When you put up a qualif—like, a... Position that requires certain qualifications, right? The people with those qualifications jump at it.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? So, if everyone's qualified for the job, then the actual determining factors are, like, how someone does in the interview, eye contact, answering. Do they seem confident? Do they seem like someone you'd want to work with? Do they seem—like, all of these things.

Teresa: This is very reminiscent to our actor training.

Travis: Yes!

Teresa: Where, um, everybody who auditions is great.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Everybody's talented. They wouldn't be doing it, they wouldn't have a resume if they weren't. So a lot of times, directors and casting people look for someone who they want to hang out with!

Travis: Right. I—I will never forget, uh, one of our professional... like, acting classes—Like, preparations for professional work.

Teresa: Ooh!

Travis: Which seemed like a tongue-twister. Unnecessary, to me. But uh, we had like a guest speaker, who was—

Teresa: We just called it audition prep.

Travis: That's way better. Uh, we had a guest speaker who was a casting director, and he basically said like, "Everyone is a good actor; it's about who you wanna hang out with after you wrap." Like, at the wrap party.

Teresa: Yeah, totally!

Travis: And it's like, I think about that all the time. Right? It's like, if you are qualified, super great. But, if you're qualified and like, you're not making eye contact during the interview, and you're not, like—if you don't seem fun? I—that shouldn't—

Teresa: Or confident.

Travis: Or confident, or whatever.

Teresa: Or—or at least, personable.

Travis: Right. Which, why—why it makes sense, of like—and don't get me

wrong – STEM skills are so important! [laughs] But if this is—this coming from the guy who just said, “Who needs algebra?” I get that.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: But—

Teresa: We’re assuming that you’re qualified for the position, first! [laughing]

Travis: Right. It’s like, I get why these “soft skills” might oft be overlooked.

Teresa: Indeed! So, um... It turns out, that these manners and respect, and—and “working into society” are more important now than ever! Uh, kindness, respect, and social graces are statistically linked to happier work environments, higher paychecks, and even better quality of life.

Travis: Yeah, so I think that if you... removed all of the, you know... misogyny and sexism stuff, of like... “to catch a man—”

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, kind of deal, and like you know, all that stuff. I think the idea of the importance of... I mean, it’s why we do this show, right? Etiquette is important!

Teresa: Absolutely! I guess you all... [uses her old-timey operator voice] should keep listening to our podcast!

Travis: Once again, I don’t know what *this* is.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: But I like it! Don’t get me wrong.

Teresa: Well now—now it’s a reoccurring thing!

Travis: I mean, I like it.

Teresa: I want to keep doing it!

Travis: Okay. I like it. Don't get me wrong, just don't know what it is.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But like, this idea of like, I think that it is... you know, the pendulum swings, right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Is, for a while, it's like, we're so focused on manners and etiquette that we're not educating on like, education. And then, we're so focused on education, that we're focusing on like, test scores and that, and not focusing on like, teaching them to be good human beings.

And if we can somehow land square in the middle, where it's like, yes, education is important, but education should take on many forms of like, not just teaching them, like... how science works. Which is important, but also like, how to be a good person who's not a real jerk. You know? I feel like—

Teresa: I can get behind that.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Kind of like, Mr. Roger did!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Kind of like how Mr. Rogers was like, "I'm gonna teach you about creativity and how things get made. And also, how to not be a jerk!"

Teresa: Here are some quick and dirty tips, so that you can look like—

Travis: [Action-Movie Trailer announcer voice] “Teresa’s Quick and Dirty Corner!”

Teresa: —you went to a Swiss finishing school too!

Travis: Oh, please.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That’s my dream.

Teresa: [laughing] Okay. A lot of this, we—we talk about constantly. Uh, we have separate episodes on a lot of these things. Table manners are very important. Um, not the kind of stuffy, uh... manners that we—we may have spoken about in the Victorian age. But things like... make sure that you are aware of the table setting. Right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Things are on the table for a purpose. Um... You have different, uh—you know, different forks, different spoons for different courses, and things like that. Nothing is ever on accident. Uh, you could probably even tell what might be served, by looking at the utensils.

Travis: I’m also gonna throw my own two-cents here, and remember that... Table manners doesn’t just have to do with like, how you cut your food, and how you treat your plate. It also has to do with like, conversation?

Teresa: Absolutely!

Travis: Making sure that everyone’s included, that you’re asking questions and not just telling stories, that you’re looking around and not just directing everything to one person, all of these things.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Um, same with, uh—you should be precise in your language. Things like um, “bon appetit” are really not in vogue at the moment. You could say “Please en—”

Travis: “Let’s chow down!”

Teresa: “Please enjoy.”

Travis: “Dig in!”

Teresa: Um, and instead of saying pardon or sorry, excuse me is a—is really a catch-all. Uh, especially if you are—if you are... [fancy voice] Dining in society... [regular voice] Um, there’s no need to say where you’re going. So, a lot of people say, “I need to use the restroom,” when in fact, all you have to say is, “Excuse me.” They never need to know what it is you are doing.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um... And it—you know, just in general... Etiquette isn’t about being a snob, or alie-ating people. Alienating people, excuse me. It’s about confidence building.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: It’s about navigating in society.

Travis: That’s the word I was gonna use, navigating!

Teresa: Navigating. It’s about—it’s about being, you know... Being hip to the common language, so that we can all... [sighs] We can all just get along!

Travis: That’s the thing—

Teresa: That’s not just about getting along, but you know what I mean. How we—

Travis: We s—We say it all the time, right? Is like, etiquette is not about judging others, it's about being your best self, so that you feel good in the interactions, right? So that you walk away, saying like, "I felt good about that. Like, I think that everybody had a good time. I had a good time." Like, there—I'm not walking—

I mean, for me personally, it's helped me not walk away thinking like, "Did I embarrass myself? Did I say something dumb? Did I talk too much? Did I interrupt too much?" All of these things.

Teresa: Exactly. Um, you want to have a welcoming energy, a... a um, a general kind of knowledge, and—and self-assuredness, and this is what modern finishing schools and charm schools would provide for you.

Travis: Sounds good.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: We should start our own finishing school.

Teresa: I don't have time for a finishing school, I have a four month old.

Travis: Fair enough. And a three and a half year old! Who is—we're just really coasting on her. [laughs]

Teresa: She is—she is so easy at this point. She's the tops.

Travis: She's great.

Teresa: She's a great kid! [laughs]

Travis: Alright, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much for joining us. Uh, if you enjoyed this episode, please share it! Please tell somebody about it, say, "Hey, I think you'd really enjoy this."

Uh, go check out all the other amazing shows at MaximumFun.org. You can also check out all the other McElroy products on McElroy.family. I meant to say McElroy projects, and I said McElroy products?

Teresa: Maybe you meant to say productions!

Travis: Maybe that, it still works. Uh, you can also check out merch at McElroyMerch.com. Uh, let's see, what else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. You can Tweet at us and follow us on Twitter, @ShmannersCast. When we take questions for our, uh, our episodes, we will post those ahead of time, and that's where we get our questions from.

Um, thank you to Bruja Betty Pin Up Photography, for the cover banner of our fan-run Facebook group. Um, if you would love to get and give excellent advice, that's the place for you. 'Shmanners Fanners' is the name. Um also, this topic was suggested by our research-writer, um... and all around great gal.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Alex. Um, but if *you* would like to suggest a topic, you can email us, shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Travis: And though it may be implied, let's just go ahead and say it – thank you, Alex, for helping us with this episode!

Teresa: Thank you Alex! Great idea, great writing, great research.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us, so 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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