

## Shmanners 211: Prom

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**Travis:** Uh, uhh, I was just wondering if you—if you'd do me the honor of, uhh, of letting me escort you to this podcast?

**Teresa:** Of course! 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 youuu?

**Teresa:** Doin' okay. Y'know. Kids. Life. The dishes that never end.

**Travis:** Oh... I know. Ugh.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** My pickup truck. My old dog. My sad song. My gee-tar.

**Teresa:** Oh. You don't have a pickup truck, though. Or a guitar?

**Travis:** Yeah, that's true. Okay. Or a sad song. I have a happy song in my heart.

**Teresa:** You do?

**Travis:** Hey, let me ask *you* a question.

**Teresa:** Okayyy.

**Travis:** Now, this is gonna seem like it's outta nowhere... but what were your proms like?

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** We're talking about prom.

**Teresa:** We're talking about proms. Um... I have to say—

**Travis:** I guess, actually, before we get into that, we should say... this is kind of loosely in honor that a lot of people – I would say most schools, if not all – have had their proms cancelled.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Oof.

**Teresa:** It's uh... [sighs] It is a—what I want to say is... proms are great, but not that great.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** But if you were looking forward to going to yours, I'm sorry.

**Travis:** My senior prom was... bleh.

**Teresa:** Yeah?

**Travis:** We'll talk about it. So, what was your prom experience like?

**Teresa:** Well, I went to both junior and senior prom, and I had a lot more fun at senior prom than I did junior prom. And let me tell you why.

**Travis:** Please.

**Teresa:** Most of my friends were in the grade below me. Uh... I got—okay. Not most of my friends. A lot of my friends were in the grade below me. Um, and so, at my junior prom, there were a lot of people who were in the grade above me. Right? 'Cause it was their senior prom. And so, it wasn't like, as much of a fun party time. Right?

But with the other one, I knew so many more people. I had more things to do. More people to talk to. So it was more of a party atmosphere, where the first one was just like... me and my date, and like, the couple of people that we went with, and like... it was just... it was so much more fun to think of it as a group hang.

**Travis:** Yeah. So I went to three proms, 'cause as a sophomore, I went with a junior, I believe? Maybe a senior.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** And that was pretty fun. Got to go, uh... I sort of knew my date. It was the kind of thing where it was like, my friends, who were all like, in grades above me were going, and they wanted me to go, so they had this girl ask me. And she was nice! We got along great.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Uh, that is probably, if I could find the photo, I will post it in the Shmammers Twitter. 'Cause that is the one... you've probably seen it, where I was very tan, and I was wearing like, a collarless shirt, and I had like, my jacket slung over, leaning against the...

**Teresa:** Ohh, yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah. I looked like a big ol' goober.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But—and then, my junior prom was very fun. I went with my then girlfriend. And then my senior prom... said girlfriend... I'd been trying to break up with her for a while.

**Teresa:** Oh yeah.

**Travis:** And when I say that, I don't mean I hadn't gotten up the courage to break up with her. I mean, I had said, "I want to break up," a couple times, and she said, "No." And so, we stayed together for a little while longer.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And that happened like, three times. Um...

**Teresa:** Is this the dance where you guys had the show?

**Travis:** Yeah. So that was the other part of it, is...

**Teresa:** Yeah, tell that story.

**Travis:** Um, so I was in Bye Bye Birdie at the time, which my dad was directing, and it ended up being that one of our performances was going to conflict with prom. So, we all just kind of resolved not to go, 'cause it was like, I was Birdie, and my friend Jonathan was Albert, and his girlfriend slash my friend Autumn was Rosie... like, it was a bunch of stuff.

**Teresa:** You were the principle cast.

**Travis:** Yeah. And so, we just like, weren't going to go. But then our dad—my dad rescheduled it, um, so it was like a matinee, so we'd still go to prom that night. And so like, my mom made dinner and everything... but we were just so tired!

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Bye Bye Birdie is a very exhausting show when you are those three characters. Um, and so—

**Teresa:** Did you guys do an after prom? Is that anything that your school did?

**Travis:** No. So, here's—the rest of that story is, we went to prom, and after like, 45 minutes, the three of us were like... we want to go to bed. We want to go home.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, and my... my... I hesitate to say girlfriend; though, she so, I guess, technically still was at that point, was trying to make a very big deal out of it. Because like, basically, we had agreed for some reason that like, after prom, we were going to break up.

**Teresa:** Oh, well, you do...

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** ... funny things when you're young.

**Travis:** And so like, after, I think, like, an hour, like, "We're gonna go." And she was like, "But, but..." And it was like, a whole thing. And it—it was just not... it was not unfun.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** But much like a lot of things when you are young – and now, I still do it, too – but like, you build up all of these expectations.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And then you go, and you're like, "I... ehh..."

**Teresa:** We'll talk a little more about expectation building, um, a little later.

**Travis:** I will say, though, across the board, I always had way more fun at homecoming. I always thought homecoming was way less pressure, way less of a big deal...

**Teresa:** Yeah. I mean, it doesn't have the same kind of social connotation that a prom does these days.

**Travis:** Right. And like, everyone can go, and...

**Teresa:** Right. Um, how did you sort out the expense of prom? 'Cause that's gonna be something that I really want to talk about through this.

**Travis:** I, asterisk, paid, and that asterisk is, my parents. [laughs]

**Teresa:** Ahh, I see. I see.

**Travis:** I had no money! I had no job!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Well, I did have summer jobs. Um, so, prom was one of the things that I set aside money for. Not for like, hair and makeup or whatever, but... I thought about it enough to buy my dress on sale the fall before, because proms are usually in the spring. So I would buy it on sale in the fall, um, and... my deal—and like, I did my own hair, my own makeup.

The deal for me was, I would buy the tickets, and my date would buy dinner.

**Travis:** Um, I think, barring that first—my, uh, sophomore when I went with a junior, both times, I went with my then-girlfriend. I think the same person both times. I'm almost positive. My junior prom, for some reason, is very vague to me. I can like—

**Teresa:** Well, with a story like that for your senior prom, it probably just—

**Travis:** Really stands out.

**Teresa:** —scooted the other one out.

**Travis:** But I think she and I were together at that point, 'cause we were together for a little over a year. So... yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Okay.

**Travis:** Um, and so, I think both times, because it was my girlfriend, like... I paid. But I think she drove. I think that was—'cause she did have a car. That might've been the deal. Anyway, it doesn't matter.

**Teresa:** It doesn't. Okay.

**Travis:** I was a different person then.

**Teresa:** [laughs] I'm just saying that these are some of the considerations that go into prom today. Um, so... there are pretty much two schools of thought, as far as today's prom. There are the people who go all out, right? Limos, getting their hair done, big, like, princess style dresses, tuxes, boutonnieres...

**Travis:** Parachuting in.

**Teresa:** All that kind of stuff. Like—

**Travis:** Not to mention the promposals.

**Teresa:** That, we'll definitely get to a little later. Um, and... y'know, it's a big, like, money to do type thing. Right?

**Travis:** Oh yeah.

**Teresa:** And then, there's the other school of thought, where this is basically an excuse to look cute and have fun with your friends. Maybe you buy – like me, you buy your dress on sale, you buy it at Goodwill. You guys go to like, I don't know, like, IHOP or whatever. Waffle House is available. Things like that. And then, you go and have your party.

**Travis:** Where did I go for di—I don't remember. I don't remember anything. Ever.

**Teresa:** [laughs] And so, what we have throughout the history of prom is this kind of like, flip flop of ideals. Um, so, prom started as a concept in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it wasn't held in like, the high school gym, right? Prom is short for promenade, which was actually an event for college students in the northeast of the United States.

It was the modern equivalent of like, a debutant ball, right? And we've talked about those. These terms, prom and debutant ball, can pretty much be used interchangeably at that point in history.

And y'know, a quick recap – debutant ball is pretty much a young lady's coming out party, right? In her community.

**Travis:** And that is like, they are now in society. These are all, like—if you don't know what we're talking about, right? 'Debutant ball' to 'coming out' to 'in society.' Like, yes, but what does that mean?

**Teresa:** It means that these young ladies were now declared 'eligible.' Right? And they were supposed to meet all the young beaus that would vie for their attention, and vice versa. You would—the debutants would vie for the best beau's attention. And it was like... y'know, uh... it was a way of marrying rich. Right? Because the rich could afford to do it. The rich could afford to go. The rich wanted to marry the rich.



**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Um, and in order to make it so that your debutant ball showed off how rich and eligible you were, you had things like... gowns, and decorations, and catered food, and... y'know, all this like, sort of thing where like... you are putting on the display of your dowry, eventually.

**Travis:** Yeah. Look what a good match I am because of how rich my family is.

**Teresa:** Exactly. So, here enters prom, which was originally called the democratic debutant committee.

**Travis:** Okay...

**Teresa:** Because it was the idea that prom was for everyone.

**Travis:** Everyone can debutant at once.

**Teresa:** Exactly. Um, so, they were thrown by the schools, because that was kind of like, the uh, the even—like, the—what do I want to say? Evening, but like, leveling factor.

**Travis:** Leveling the playing field. So wait. Prom is the school uniform of debutant balls.

**Teresa:** Kind of!

**Travis:** Right? So we don't have to worry about labels, and whose family can afford what brands.

**Teresa:** At this point.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And so, middle class men and women who might not be able to afford this formal ball, um... it was thrown for graduating college students. So, you still had the same rules and like, dress codes, and... but it could be a little bit less fancy. But remember, at the time, you were still kind of fancy, if you could afford to go to college.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? So then, in the 1920s, that's when high schools began to introduce proms to upperclassmen. And it was meant to, y'know, kind of be almost like a play pretend. Y'know? For these young men and women to like, play house almost.

**Travis:** Okay, this is a weird question, but it has just occurred to me. Is that why there's the... demarcation of the age at which you attend prom? Because like, a lot of states, the age of consent, like, how old someone can be to marry, like... they have to be a certain age, so you can't do it until you're a junior. Is that why? Or is it just like...

**Teresa:** I think that that... it's convenient that that's the way that it happens, but it was more about like... everyone—you were considered, y'know, you had a curfew. You didn't have a car. You didn't have a way of making money. Like, you couldn't attend prom, because you didn't have the means, more like.

**Travis:** Okay. Okay.

**Teresa:** But like I said, this was kind of like a play pretend for these upper class high school students to have like, their own... let's have our ball! Let's be kings and queens for the night! Y'know, that kind of thing.

**Travis:** Yeah. Which I think, to some degree, is probably still true, right? Of like, that was always the thing I enjoyed most about like, homecomings and proms, was like, we're gonna go to the restaurants, order dinner, it's a fancier place...

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** We're dressed up, and like, we get to pretend to be adults.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. And this is when the prom, the high school prom, really started to like, come into its own. Again, like you said, full blown parties and dinners and bands, and... y'know, all this kind of stuff. And prom itself, the idea, became so popular, that during the great depression, some schools actually completely cancelled their proms, because they didn't want the poorer students to be psychologically wounded by their inability to participate.

**Travis:** Oh wow.

**Teresa:** So like I said, it was about the economics of the prom, right? The parties, the bands, the dinner, the gowns, all that stuff.

**Travis:** I do, actually. I find that kind of, uh, very commendable. That idea of like, the whole point of this is that everyone can be included and have fun and we don't want to make anyone feel excluded, even if they are not actually excluded, but excluded because of their circumstances. I think that that is...

**Teresa:** It's a great sentiment, but in practice, did not work.

**Travis:** Oh no.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, because enter the 1950s. Um, it was post-war party time. Right? We've talked about this whole, like, suburban boom, and the middle class, and all that stuff. And so, a new market meant that—sorry, a new consumer meant that the market would rise to meet it. So y'know, advice books, and formal dress shops, and car services, and flower shops, and...

**Travis:** It is also, right now, occurring to me – and I think that this is, uh, an acknowledgment of my own privilege – is just now occurring to me that, if we're talking about like, pre-'60s, pre-'70s... that we're also going to be talking about, like, segregation. Y'know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Like, we're talking about these proms, and like, oh, it's fun for our... white kids to be having fun.

**Teresa:** Exactly. So, I was gonna go through the decades, but let's take this little side step here. Um... so, here's the thing, right? Uh, technically, in 1954, schools were supposed to integrate.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Before then, high schools especially, were no longer like, neighborhood delineated. They were race delineated. And so... [clears throat] Prom was actually not an educational activity. So, even in the '60s and '70s, high schools held segregated proms. And so, before desegregation... the idea of a prom meant different things to different races.

Um, the black communities, even the Jewish and the um... what do I say? Latinx communities... it was more of a kind of like, church basement deal. It was more like a... like a party, but it didn't have as many of the trappings.

**Travis:** It was not as much pomp and or circumstance.

**Teresa:** Pomp and circumstance, exactly. Whereas the white communities really did model their proms after these debutant balls. And, in fact, even like... um, the idea of a ticket, right? A lot of these socioeconomic stratas were priced out of even attending a prom, even if they could. Because if you hold a prom in, say... a museum, or an aquarium, or y'know, any place that, y'know, you have to pay for the space... that adds to your ticket.

If you're gonna have a photographer, that adds to the ticket. If you're gonna have a prom committee with decorations, they need money. Like, all this stuff. So, even if you did have a prom at your school that you could technically go to, it was still mostly for rich white kids.

**Travis:** Yeah. Mm.

**Teresa:** So, let's backtrack a little bit to the '80s. Um, prom had become such a phenomenon through the culture, um, in the '80s and '90s, because of the new teen movie genre. Right?

**Travis:** Oh yeah! Pretty in Pink, and Sixteen Candles, and...

**Teresa:** Sixteen Candles, She's All That, even Mean Girls has like a prom central theme.

**Travis:** Yeah, but that wasn't the '80s.

**Teresa:** No. I mean, but... I said '80s and '90s. Mean Girls was a 2000s. Anyways.

**Travis:** It all runs together, baby. We're old.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I am very excited to talk more about this, but first... how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Here in Cincinnati, we have so many restaurants that we just adore. Local places that are important to us, places staffed by people that are important to us, and I've been worried about them during this time. But thanks to DoorDash, you can continue to support the restaurants in your community that you love safely. There are thousands of restaurants open for delivery on DoorDash that need your patronage now more than ever.

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Many of your favorite local restaurants are still open for delivery. Just open the DoorDash app, select your favorite local restaurant, and your food will be left at your door.

Right now, our listeners can get five dollars off their first order of \$15 or more, and zero delivery fees for their first month when you download the DoorDash app and enter code 'Shmanners.' That's five dollars off your first order and zero delivery fees for a month when you download the DoorDash app in the app store and enter code 'Shmanners.' Don't forget – that's code 'Shmanners' for five dollars off your first order with DoorDash.

Staying connected is now more important than ever. I think we all know that, right? We're all separated, but still connected. Our lives are still intertwined. And that is, thanks in large part, to the technology that we've developed to allow us to stay in contact with each other, and that's one of the reasons I love NextDoor. Because NextDoor is helping by offering a great way to keep in touch with your neighbors and get local information from your community.

Like, there are so many ways that our neighbors can help us. Ways you might not even know. And we just needed an easier way to connect with them. So, NextDoor is a free app that connects you to your local community so you can talk to your neighbors and tap into trusted, local knowledge right from your phone. NextDoor is in every neighborhood in the US, and neighbors are already working together to build stronger, safer, and happier communities all over the world.

So, what are you waiting for? The app is free! Go to [NextDoor.com/Shmanners](https://NextDoor.com/Shmanners) to sign up and see what's happening in your neighborhood. Be sure to use the link from our show to sign up so they know that you support our show. That's [NextDoor.com/Shmanners](https://NextDoor.com/Shmanners).

[music plays]

**Jesse:** Hey, Max Funsters. It's Jesse Thorn. This week, on my public radio interview show, Bullseye, I'm talking with Tina Fey and Robert Carlock about

creating Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt, 30 Rock, and also just kind of... why they're the best at everything.

**Tina:** There was a window of time where we would just go to awards things, and pick up our prizes, and party with the people from Mad Men.

**Jesse:** You can find Bullseye at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Just search for Bullseye with Jesse Thorn.

[music fades]

**Teresa:** The media titles and all of—I mean, you can't throw a stick and... what is it? You can throw a stick?

**Travis:** No, you can't throw—

**Teresa:** You can't throw a stick without hitting...

**Travis:** Yes, there it is.

**Teresa:** A... [laughs] Hitting some, uh, media. Video media about...

**Travis:** Yeah. You got Footloose.

**Teresa:** ... the prom.

**Travis:** You got... other ones.

**Teresa:** [laughs] They're everywhere. Just trust us.

**Travis:** Trust us!

**Teresa:** [laughing] Okay. Um... some fun little fact on proms. Susan Ford actually hosted her 1975 senior prom at the White House, and is still the only first kid to have ever done that. Um, they—

**Travis:** That's interesting.

**Teresa:** Yeah! They held it in the east room.

**Travis:** I bet that's a logistical nightmare!

**Teresa:** Yeah. I mean, it really couldn't be done today, is the thing. It really just couldn't be. Um, another presidential thing – president Kennedy rescheduled a thousand dollar a plate fundraiser in 1963 because a local school had booked the Beverly Hilton for their prom on the same night. So, he was like, "Hey, you guys go ahead and do your prom. It's so important to you."

**Travis:** That's nice! He probably didn't say it like that. That made it sound like a little bit like, "Oh, *do* your prom!"

**Teresa:** No, I was—no, I was trying to do an impression.

**Travis:** Okay, try it again? Let me hear it one more time.

**Teresa:** No, I'm not gonna do it again now.

**Travis:** [in a Boston accent] "Uhh, do your prom." No! [laughs] "Eyy!"

**Teresa:** No, that's not it at all! [laughing]

**Travis:** "Eyy, it's me! Eyy, I'm John. F Kennedy, I'm president here! Eyyy!"  
Nope.

**Teresa:** No. We've talked about, uh, some of the history now. Let's go into that promposal thing.

**Travis:** Yes please.



**Teresa:** It is definitely a 21<sup>st</sup> century, uh, addition to the whole thing. Um, and if you don't know what it is, it's where students go to elaborate, and sometimes upsettingly public lengths, to ask each other to prom.

**Travis:** Listen... don't do this.

**Teresa:** Again, search YouTube. It's everywhere. Everything from things like, uh, leaving rose petal trails to people's doors, flash mobs...

**Travis:** Flash mobs, to springing open locker doors to spell out—here's the thing.

**Teresa:** Filled yards of balloons, chalk board declarations, um, even there's one where they interrupt a kid's Spanish class with like, a mariachi band to ask them. Yeah, it's a lot.

**Travis:** Here's the thing I will say. And perhaps—Teresa and I have been together for over a decade now. And... I know both of us would not want this. Uh...

**Teresa:** No, we would not.

**Travis:** This is not our style at all. So, after a decade of relationship, it sometimes becomes hard to remember that there are some people out there who would like to this kind of thing. But I think that this is an example of – and I think we've talked about stuff like this before – where I wonder how many of these people are doing it... especially, frankly... and y'know what? It wasn't that long ago that I was 18. I mean, it was.

**Teresa:** I mean, it was. [laughs]

**Travis:** It was 50% of my life ago. Half of my life ago when I was 18. But... I know, y'know, how excited you can be and everything. But I don't know that every 18 year old is being this thoughtful to think, is this something I want to do because I think that this person will like it? Or is this something I want to do because I want to do it?

**Teresa:** Exactly. Yeah. I just... [sighs]

**Travis:** Because what if you do it, and they're like—and they wanted to say no? 'Cause, okay, one... best worst case scenario, you embarrass them, right? But worst worst case scenario? They don't want to say yes, and now they feel put on the spot, and they are unhappy. Right? Like...

**Teresa:** Um, and also, the idea of a promposal, uh, is a pretty big, um... what do I say? Reinforcement of gender norms.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Because it pretty much resembles, like, a marriage proposal, doesn't it? It's kind of a way for these youngins, especially maybe if they live in a very, um, religious community, or—

**Travis:** Or just conservative.

**Teresa:** Or conservative, or especially abstinence only educational systems, um, where this is kind of a—this is a big deal, because it's, uh... like I said, it's like a play pretend marriage proposal.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Another thing that the promposal, and y'know, proms in general... they haven't really caught up to—

**Travis:** And I do want to say, there—oh, maybe you were about to say this. But it's not that they couldn't be, like... y'know, gay friendly or lesbian friendly.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** But...

**Teresa:** But they haven't caught up to that yet.

**Travis:** That is, it is not—it's not like... it is not like, as common. Y'know, I'm sure—listen, I'm sure you could find some really adorable promposal, y'know, like, gay couple, LGBTQ+ couples out there. And it's great, right? But that is not necessarily what people think of when they think of it, y'know what I mean? It still is not, perhaps, the norm that it should be.

**Teresa:** Right. Um, that—

**Travis:** Then, I'm saying that... but I don't like big prom proposals. So I don't know that it should be the norm, period.

**Teresa:** [laughing] Well, proms in general, as late as 2011, um... plenty of schools didn't even let same sex couples attend prom together. Um—

**Travis:** Which, we don't curse on this show, but if we did, I'd be cursing right now.

**Teresa:** And they also weren't allowed to dress as they pleased. If someone who, uh, wanted to wear a tux, um, was...

**Travis:** We had a question about that.

**Teresa:** Oh, you did?

**Travis:** Yeah. Um, the uh... Tubie Kid asked, "How do you wear a tux as someone assigned female at birth, or a dress as someone assigned male at birth, without getting in trouble or causing a scene?"

Listen, I am a parent now. And I would say this to my daughter, if she were asking me. I think that this is a circumstance where I would let you get in trouble. I think it would be worth getting in trouble for this. I would have your back.

I don't know that your parents or guardians would do the same, but I think that there are things that you get in trouble for, because it is a wrong thing to do. And I think that there are things you get in trouble for because the

other person is wrong. And I think that this would be a circumstance in which you might get in trouble because the other person is wrong.

But... if you want to go to prom, and your prom experience will be defined by... y'know, remembering whether you wore what mattered to you or not, and if you went with someone that mattered to you or not... I would support you in that. Just as your internet dad. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs] The last five years have been a really good, uh, steep uptick in the acceptance at these sort of events. So, unless your school has an express statement against it, um... which I say, maybe, you should change that. Um... no, I'm gonna say, you *should* change that.

**Travis:** You should change that.

**Teresa:** No maybes about it. Um, wear what you want. Whatever you like.

**Travis:** I agree.

**Teresa:** Uh... so then, some more modern prom etiquette. Um, the promposal, like we said... maybe it's fun for you. But here's the thing – everybody can ask everybody. Guys ask guys, guys ask girls, girls ask girls...

**Travis:** Nonbinary people ask nonbinary people.

**Teresa:** Nobody cares.

**Travis:** Or, go by yourself.

**Teresa:** Do what you want. Um, as long as you're gonna have some fun, right?

**Travis:** That's the statement I think that needs to go right out the window, of like...

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Maybe you want to go with a friend. Maybe you want to go aromantically.

**Teresa:** Go in a group. That's fun too.

**Travis:** Yeah. Go for it. Who cares? It's about you having fun, not about other people judging you!

**Teresa:** But if you do get asked by someone you'd rather not go with... let them down easy and right away.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** None of this, "Mm, I'll think about it, maybe, I'll tell you..."

**Travis:** "No thank you."

**Teresa:** All that stuff. None of that. There's no need to hurt anybody. It's supposed to be fun, right? Unless they're aggressive about it, and then you should...

**Travis:** Then it's a thing. But I think it also is like... this is another thing that has taken me long into what I would consider my adult years, to start wrapping my head around this, too. But I don't think you need to give them an excuse.

You don't have to be like, "Uh, no, and it's because, uh, I had already talked with this person, and I'm waiting to hear..." Just say like, "Oh, thank you so much for asking, but no." Like... I don't think—and if they ask why, say like, "I think you're great, but I'm not interested in going to the dance with you."

**Teresa:** Perfect.

**Travis:** You don't need to explain yourself more than that.

**Teresa:** Um, and... here's another one. Talk about all of the money stuff up front. Because these events do cost money. In fact, there was a Canadian study that said, the average teenagers spend over \$800 on prom.

**Travis:** Whoa! That's way higher than I would've guessed.

**Teresa:** Really?

**Travis:** Yeah. I mean, like... my parents paid for my rented tux, and I think gave me, like—

**Teresa:** How much do you think your parents paid for it, though?

**Travis:** Well, not even that, though. 'Cause like, I don't think we ever rented—I think, maybe, for that sophomore one that I went, we rented a limo. But I don't think I ever rented—I think it was just like, tux, tickets, and dinner. So maybe \$350, \$400, would be my bet altogether. But I—like I said, it was 50% of my life ago, and I forgot what day it was today. So...

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um, so, y'know, talk about this kind of stuff so that everybody has the same expectations, and there's no awkwardness, and it's all taken care of already.

**Travis:** Can I take that one step further?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** Ronald asked, "My date spent the entire night drinking in the school parking lot, and then complained that I didn't spend any time with her. Was it rude of me to ditch her at the after prom beach party?"

So, I think... it was not—well, I don't know. It wasn't rude, as far as I'm concerned. But I think, also, while you're discussing money before you agree or while you're planning, I also think it's important to discuss expectations.

Are you the kind of person who wants to spend the whole night dancing? Are you the type of person who wants to go and then hang out, like, sitting at

tables, talking with your friends all night? Are you the type of person who wants to go and leave early? Are you the type of person who wants to show up halfway through and spend most of—like, I think all of those things are something you should figure out ahead of time, 'cause it might be like, your date wants to dance all the time, and you don't want to dance, and that's awkward.

**Teresa:** Yeah, maybe—and talking about it beforehand gives you the opportunity to maybe find a more like-minded person.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** How you want to spend your time. And I think that if you, um... if you found yourselves separated because of what you wanted to do, I don't think that that's rude, necessarily. I think that... if um, if the two of you wanted to spend time together, you could've found a way to do that, and it's a two way street.

**Travis:** I think as long as that's an expectation, y'know what I mean? It's like, if you went with someone, and they're like, but—you like, went with your best friend, and your best friend is like, "I want to spend the whole night dancing," and you're like, "Cool, I want to hang out with our other friends sitting here at the table." And it's like, okay, cool. We'll meet up, y'know, from time to time, and it'll be totally chill.

And since Ronald introduced the idea of drinking, I will now... be... once again, the internet dad, and say... don't drink and drive. Don't drink and make bad decisions. And listen, I know how that makes me sound. But the thing is, in high school, and college, and middle school, all those years... peer pressure is a real thing.

Bad decision making isn't necessarily because you're young and stupid, but oftentimes, because you're young and inexperienced, and you don't know the full ramifications, the full extent of how far those ramifications can reach. And sometimes, you will make decisions thinking that you are fully thinking it through and fully aware of what you are doing, but the problem is that you don't know... necessarily, how bad something can get.

And so, I think it is important that you make responsible decisions. I'm not saying don't have fun. And y'know what? I'm also not saying, if you want to have a beer at an after party or whatever, go for it. Well—listen, if you're of legal age or whatever.

**Teresa:** Yeah, that's—I think we have to say that. Do we have to say that?

**Travis:** Yes. But I think that it is important to have DDs. It is important that you are being responsible. That you're not drinking and driving, and you're not putting yourself in dangerous situations. All of those things. We love you.

**Teresa:** And I wanna say that, if you want to have fun at prom, you want to remember it, right? At least for a little while, until you're uh, old farts like us.

**Travis:** Exactly.

**Teresa:** Um, so... and alcohol is a way to make those, uh, those memories a little fuzzy.

**Travis:** Yeah. [pause] Okay, so! I think on that note, don't drink and drive, be safe, make good decisions, we trust you, but... also, be careful.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** We're gonna wrap it up! Thank you so much for listening. And once again, I'm so sorry, everyone, that so many things got cancelled this year, be it graduation or prom or all those things.

**Teresa:** Sooo... if you want, if you wanted to have a fancy time, and you bought fancy things... if you want to get dressed up in those and send us a picture, you can tweet us, @ShmannersCast, and we'll retweet as many as we can, and we'll tell you how beautiful and cute and fun you are, and we will, um... y'know, make it so that you can at least get a little thumbs up. Hearts from your friends.



**Travis:** Uh, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Yeah?

**Travis:** Do you think that you could find some pictures of you from prom?

**Teresa:** I think I could find one or two.

**Travis:** Yeah. 'Cause I'm pretty sure I can find the one of me overly tan, wearing sunglasses and posing. Maybe we can find another one of yours and post those on the ShmannersCast as well. That's @ShmannersCast. You can email us, [ShmannersCast@gmail.com](mailto:ShmannersCast@gmail.com). Uh, if—

**Teresa:** That's where we get all of our, um, suggestions for this.

**Travis:** That's right! And we also tweet, uh, looking for pictures on our Twitter account. Our—ha, looking for pictures. I guess we're doing that, too. But looking for questions, when we have topics that take questions.

Thank you so much to our researcher, Alex, for researching this, and for helping us write copy for it. We could not do it without you. Go check out all the other amazing shows on MaximumFun.org. If you want to see all the other McElroy projects, you can go to McElroy.family. What else? Who else do we thank?

**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. We mentioned that, @ShmannersCast.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. Go ahead and join that group if you want to give and get excellent advice from other Shmanners fans.

**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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