

Shmanners 235: Zoom Parties

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Travis: It, uh—

Teresa: No—

Travis: No, it— sorry, you—

Teresa: You go—

Travis: No— okay, you go.

Teresa: It's Shmanners.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you've been listening— you've been listening to? You *are* listening! What? You're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: [laughs] It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear. Are you— are you alright?

Travis: Well, technically, you *have* been listening to Shmanners. We've been going for several seconds now.

Teresa: I suppose.

Travis: [grumbles] [laughs] It's been... recently, Bebe started making that noise and calling it the Hulk noise. I think it's 'cause, "Hulk smash!" So she goes... [grumbles]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's her equivalent of it. Anyways.

Teresa: Oh boy. Hey. Hey, y'know what?

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: I think... you need a break. Let's... let's take it down. Let's take it down just a little bit.

Travis: There's been a lot going on. I don't know if everybody knows this?

Teresa: Well, y'know what... you do. So...

Travis: We don't need to talk about it?

Teresa: We don't need to talk about it.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Let's have the, um, the Bob Ross of podcasts today, and just be... so chill.

Travis: It's funny you should say that, because we're talking about a topic which I do not find chill.

Teresa: Oh, really?

Travis: At all. I have lots of feelings about Zoom meetings. Now, let me—can I give a little bit of context, here?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Now, much like in the Batman, the Dark Knight movie, some of you all have come to the darkness. I was born in the darkness.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I've been doing Zoom calls for a long, long, long time. And before that... so, Justin and Griffin and I...

Teresa: Oh, that's right. You used to record and Skype, right?

Travis: Right. So, we, uh... since the beginning, we have been doing Skype, uh— well, I should say, back in the beginning, we did Skype as our means of recording. So, we would do a Skype call, and each record our own audio locally.

So, we have been dealing with lag, and over talk, and bad connections, and everything since 2010. And then, also, because Justin is still in West Virginia, Griffin is in Austin, Texas, and I am here in Cincinnati, Ohio, um... if we need to have like, meetings with people in places, they're always, like, video chats, using whatever...

Teresa: Whatever app you may, uh, require.

Travis: Exactly. So, we've been doing this a long time. And first and foremost, folks, let me tell you: if you came to video chats in 2020, you don't know how good you got it!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, comparatively. Um, but it is... [sighs] So let me tell you why it's especially frustrating for me, these Zoom calls.

Teresa: Okay. We're gonna call them... parties.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Zoom parties.

Travis: As someone with...

Teresa: Video parties.

Travis: Sure. As someone— video conference parties.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, as someone with ADD, a lot of my coping mechanisms for conversation in real life have been built off of body language, and like, realizing, like, “Oh, this person has been trying to say something, and I have been like, cutting them off,” or like, seeing them shift around, or... everything, right? And in Zoom calls, even with video, a lot of that is a lot more difficult.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And also, uh, I don't know if this is— I know that this is a common, uh, thing with ADD, but is not necessarily universal. But it's, uh, sometimes being overwhelmed by too much sensory input. And for me, that tends to be if everyone is like, talking at once. Um, and so, what ends up happening is, either it's overwhelming, or I just completely shut it out.

Teresa: Okay. So... let me give you some hot takes.

Travis: I was on a Zoom call once with like, 30 people trying to have a party.

Teresa: Yeah, that's too many.

Travis: [inhales sharply]

Teresa: So, first of all, before you throw a Zoom party, you should make sure that everyone has, like... the app. And knows how to like, use it. Um, it's recommended that you use a laptop or a webcam instead of your phone, but you can use your phone.

Travis: If you're gonna use your phone, though, you need to make sure that you like, set it down.

Teresa: Yes. I would suggest that, yes.

Travis: Don't be walking around holding your phone. Ugh. Make people sick. Give 'em motion sickness.

Teresa: Um, so, you can even set people up with a trial account. Uh, just, y'know, to make sure that all of your guests can access the party. And you said, 30 people is too many.

Travis: Too many.

Teresa: So, fewer guests than you would probably invite to a regular party. But... y'know what that means? You get to have more parties!

Travis: Sure. Sure.

Teresa: Also, Zoom, uh... Zoom meetings are usually about an hour. That's what the app does, usually, right? So you could even have several parties on the same night, if you just wanted to like, park in front of your computer.

Travis: What would you cap— for you, personally. This is not saying like, this is a universal answer. But what would you cap the number of invites to your Zoom party?

Teresa: Seven.

Travis: Seven including yourself? Or is that eight total?

Teresa: Eight total.

Travis: Eight, uh, windows total.

Teresa: Yes. I think that it divides the screen very nicely. I think that, um, you can handle eight in turn pretty well. After you get past eight turns, it starts to feel like... they're never gonna get to me, right? It's like going through— it's the difference between playing a board game, a full board game, and just going down the whole class in an alphabetized way. Right, y'know?

Travis: Yes. If I may, perhaps a way to think about it is, rather than, uh, the comparison being Zoom party to like, real life house party, perhaps instead think of it as, Zoom party to sitting around a table at a restaurant. Right?

Teresa: Sure, yeah.

Travis: So like, eight people around a table. Conversation is going to happen with all eight talking to each other. The problem is with a Zoom call, and I think the thing that makes it not a one-to-one comparison with a house party, or even like, any kind of like, meat space real life party, is you can't have the breakout conversations. It can't be like... oh, you mentioned this movie. Have you watched blah blah? And it's just like, me and one other person talking about the show.

Teresa: Now, if your app does have the chat function, and you are comfortable, like, splitting your attention, a couple of— you could break off into the chat.

Travis: Yeah, but it's not the same as like... y'know, when you have people pair off to have a conversation in a regular party.

Teresa: Oh, of course. Of course it's not the same.

Travis: Y'know, and that's where I think it's— in the party I was in with like, 30 people, 30 windows, someone would say something that I was like,

"I would like to hear more about that." And we were already like, onto something else.

Teresa: Yeah. A couple of other things you can do to prepare. Wouldn't it be fun to send out invitations?

Travis: [laughs] Sure, Mom! That sounds great!

Teresa: [laughs] You could send little e-card invitations to your Zoom party.

Travis: Sure. You're cute. You're very cute. "Wouldn't it be... hey!"

Teresa: [laughing] Wouldn't it be fun?

Travis: "Here's a wild idea. Invitations! And maybe, uh... some snacks!"

Teresa: Yeah! Bring your own snacks!

Travis: Oh, I meant like, send snacks.

Teresa: Everybody can— oh, we're gonna get— we're gonna get to this, about how to— how to entertain yourself while staring at a computer screen.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But also, before you start, do make sure that your connection is well, uh, connected. [laughs]

Travis: [laughs] Landlines are better. Or, sorry, Ethernet is what I mean.

Teresa: Ethernet is better.

Travis: Is better than Wi-Fi, if you can.

Teresa: If you can.

Travis: Because here's— here's the thing, folks. Sometimes, even if your Wi-Fi speed is very high and beefy, it doesn't mean it's always steady, right? Because sometimes, it can be like, choppy while still— like, if you do a speed test on your phone or laptop or whatever, it can show high speeds. But that doesn't mean a continuous stream like an Ethernet cable does.

So, sometimes, even with good Wi-Fi speeds, you can get like, those chunky lag moments, where it's just like, oh! Suddenly, you lost a little bit of the Wi-Fi for a second, and now it's back. And that can make it kind of jerky. Herky-jerky, if you will.

Teresa: Um, so, after you've set up the Zoom business stuff...

Travis: Oh, can I make one other note?

Teresa: Oh, sure.

Travis: Good lighting.

Teresa: Mm, yeah.

Travis: Because if you are like, completely in shadow, it's spooky. [laughs]

Teresa: Use that selfie ring.

Travis: Yeah. I have several. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs] Um, so, Kat Tenbarge of Business Insider...

Travis: Oh, yes.

Teresa: ... recommends that you stagger the arrival times on that invitation, so that not everyone gets into the Zoom room at once and crowds the connection.

Travis: Ohh!

Teresa: I think that's a very good tip! Um, obviously, as the host, you would have to be hosting first.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: But if you stagger the arrival times, you can just let everybody in one at a time. It also gives you the opportunity to introduce people who may not know each other.

Travis: Yes. And also, as the host, gives you a chance to have like, some one on one time with each guest as they come in, to make it feel like everybody got, uh, y'know, to talk to you.

Teresa: Um, and you were talking about the differences, obviously, between a regular party. Now— and a Zoom party. The thing is, like, we still want to create that kind of conversational atmosphere. So, ice breakers are always a great idea. Now, you can't do the physical ice breakers that you may have done at a party, but you can still—

Travis: Like Twister, or...

Teresa: [laughs] You can still talk about things that are, y'know, a little more inane, right? Like, your Zoom background. Like, oh, "Why'd you choose that Bikini Bottom background?" Right?

Travis: Now, let's talk about Zoom backgrounds for a moment, 'cause we got a question about this.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And I'm going to look it up so I can say the name of the person who asked the question.

Teresa: Uh, one comment on Zoom backgrounds. So, the arrow next to the stop video button in the left corner is what lets you choose a virtual

background from, really, anywhere on the internet. And you can customize it to be silly, or cool, or whatever you want. You can make your own wallpaper, even, if you wanted to do that. You can often— there's the capability of filters, and emojis, and stickers, and all that stuff.

Travis: Emojis? Um, Yana asked, "Virtual backgrounds? Yay or nay?"

So... I think, for a party, it's a little bit more okay. Where if it's like, a business call... ehh, maybe not.

Teresa: But I mean, the library background is very nice.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: General office-type background is also good.

Travis: Here's what I will say. If it is a party, um... y'know, keep in mind, keep an eye towards how distracting your background is. If you do something for a joke, which, don't get me wrong, man. I've seen some really wonderful, uh, Zoom background jokes. I've—[laughs] I've pulled off some of my own.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But I think once the joke has landed, right? Like, don't leave it up. Because what you don't want is for somebody else to be like, telling a story, or like, y'know, it being their moment, and everybody keeps looking at your weird Borat background or whatever.

And so, I think like, just try not to be too distracting. But I think if it's a fun background, y'know, or just like a nice background, or a pleasant...

Teresa: I've even seen people, quote, "travel" together on Zoom, where you can— you can start out in your home, and then find a Zoom background of you in a plane, and then you can— at the beach!

Travis: You love this. I am— I am watching—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You are loving this.

Teresa: Um...

Travis: That is a very exciting idea to you, I can tell.

Teresa: I want to talk about music as well. It is not a good idea to play music in your home, right? But there are some different things that you can do, uh, to like— there's a couple of different apps that you can use to play music through the Zoom. Right?

Um... what else? You should encourage people to, um, gather their snacks or drinks or whatever it is they need, their coffee. Ugh. See, she's on the table over there.

Travis: Oh no! Your coffee is too far away!

Teresa: Um, before they sign in. And... it's a perfect opportunity to dress up! Everybody's looking for opportunities to dress up, right?

Travis: Once again, that made you so happy!

Teresa: I'm so excited! So, alright. Here's the thing.

Travis: Oh! I do want to know what the thing is, but first... how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

Travis: We've got two kids. That's not what the ad— that's not the ad.

Teresa: I was gonna say. Is it— is it about kids? Are we buying kids?

Travis: Well...

Teresa: No.

Travis: No. That would be wrong. And we're not selling kids, either. But we are feeding kids. And here's the thing...

Teresa: Yes. Constantly! They just have to eat all the time!

Travis: They eat every day! Sometimes... three times a day! Can you believe it?

Teresa: Dot's a baby. She eats more than three times a day.

Travis: I know. And y'know what? In this day and age, in this modern age, there will come times where you open your refrigerator, you look in your freezer, you check in your cupboard, and you say, "My kid's not gonna eat any of this."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Or you say, "I don't want to make any of this. I'm so tired." Well... don't worry, folks, because DoorDash is here. And not only can you feed yourself— and maybe you don't have kids. That's fine. Lots of people don't. I'm not here to judge if you don't have kids. You can still feed yourself and continue supporting restaurants in your community safely, 'cause there are thousands of restaurants open for delivery on DoorDash that need your patronage now more than ever.

So support your favorite restaurants! It's the app! It's an app! You know about apps? It's short for application. Right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And you find this application on your phone. Right? So, put it on your phone.

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: And then, use the application to order the food you want from the restaurants you want, and then the food will be left safely outside your door, because they have a new contactless delivery drop off setting. It's that easy, folks. And if you don't know how to get an application on your phone... ohh. I— that's not in the copy, so I'm not gonna try to explain it. You gotta go to a store... [laughs] Okay.

Teresa: [laughs] No you don't.

Travis: 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.

Teresa: Shmanners is also supported in part by Billie!

Travis: My friend Billie?!

Teresa: Nooo.

Travis: A different Billie.

Teresa: Billie.com!

Travis: Wait, why isn't Billie supporting us? Hey, Billie.

Teresa: Maybe Billie does. You never know.

Travis: Mmm... okay.

Teresa: Uh, Billie.com...

Travis: My friend is Billie Piper, by the way. I don't know if I mentioned.

Teresa: That's your friend?

Travis: Yeah. My close, personal friend, actor and songstress, Billie Piper.

Teresa: Billie has recreated everyday essentials by delivering premium razors and high-performing body care directly to you! No pink tax, no visiting the drug store, and no breaking the bank.

Travis: I will say, man... once again, to mention this modern age again, anything that keeps me from having to go to the store... I love supporting local businesses, but the idea of going to a drug store when it can be shipped to my home? Thank you, yes please.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: And pink tax is when... if I remember correctly, a business or organization says, "This product is for womens, and so, because it's for womens, we're going to charge extra moneys for it."

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: Ahh, nailed it.

Teresa: You can get their starter kit at MyBillie.com for just nine dollars! It includes a razor, two refillable blades, and a magnetic holder to keep your razors safe and dry in between uses.

Travis: I love magnets. How do they work? Nobody knows.

Teresa: [laughs] I— I, too, like to use my razor when I do in the shower. So, the magnetic holder comes in very handy, so that you're not droppin' and steppin' on it.

Travis: Mm, indeed.

Teresa: Um, I also really like their shave lotion. It smells very nice. It is very luxurious.

Travis: Ooooh!

Teresa: So, you can get started by going to MyBillie.com/Shmanners to get the best razor you'll ever own. And the best part is, the starter kit is just nine dollars, plus free shipping, always. Go to MyBillie.com/Shmanners. MyBillie.com/Shmanners.

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[music plays]

Benjamin: The Beef and Dairy Network is a multi-award-winning comedy podcast here on Maximum Fun, and I would recommend you listen to it. But don't just take it from me – what do the listeners have to say?

Speaker 1: I would rather stick a corkscrew inside my ear, twist it around and pull out my ear canal like a cork than listen to your stupid podcast ever again. Please stop contacting me.

Speaker 2: Hell would freeze over before I recommended this podcast, The Beef and Dairy Network, to anyone.

Speaker 3: Not in a million years. Actually, scratch that – make it a billion years. No, how long's infinity?

Benjamin: That's the Beef and Dairy Network podcast, available at MaximumFun.org, and at all good, and some bad, podcast platforms.

Speaker 1: Disgusting.

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Travis: Okay. Before the break, you were about to tell me what the thing is. What is the thing?

Teresa: The thing I am most excited about... Zoom parties are the perfect opportunity...

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: ... for theme parties!

Travis: Oh boy. This might be the most excited I've seen you talking about any topic ever on this show.

Teresa: Well, think about it. So, if you were gonna have, like, like a costume party, right?

Travis: Right. Fancy dress.

Teresa: Fancy dress.

Travis: If you're in the UK.

Teresa: You would have to think about, what is the, um... what's the weather gonna be like there? Are we gonna be inside? Are we gonna be outside? Do I need to—

Travis: How comfortable of shoes?

Teresa: How comfortable of shoes are we gonna have? Are we gonna like—is it like a dancey party? Do I need to make sure my costume, like, y'know, can withstand it? But with a Zoom party, you basically just have to costume yourself from the waist up, and you can use whatever you have in your home. And since you don't have to move, it could be precarious, or silly! Right?

Travis: Yep. Yep. She's right.

Teresa: You're not as excited about this as I thought you would be.

Travis: She's right. Well, no, I mean, here's the thing, right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, I— I am excited about it. But I, uh, did a lot of, uh, costume theme parties in college. And I got a little burned out on them. [laughs]

Teresa: Ohh, well. I mean, you could mix this up. You could also do a Zoom scavenger hunt, right?

Travis: Well, now, if we're talking about things you can do...

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Can I pitch out some ideas?

Teresa: I would love to hear it.

Travis: Okay. Because we got asked, um... let's see, bup bup bup ba... ooh. One of the questions was from V, and V asked, "What kind of parties work best in a Zoom format?" And I'll tell you. Uh, something that your parents do, that I think is a great idea...

So, uh, Teresa's parents are members of a wine club. And so, what they do now, 'cause they can't meet in person, is whoever is like, running that monthly meeting or biweekly meeting or whatever, will portion out in little mason jars, like, portions of the wine they are tasting.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, tastings.

Travis: And then, leave the box of those things on the participants' porch. And then, they'll do Zoom, uh, parties to do the tastings and discuss the wine that they're tasting. Brilliant.

Teresa: Yeah. You can do that with wine tastings, you can do it with a dinner party. Everyone brings their own dinner to the dinner party. And, y'know, when you're drinking or chewing, you can mute your own mic, which is a plus.

Travis: Another thing you can do... now, this takes a little bit more, uh, audio video expertise. But if you're confident in it, you can, uh, watch a movie together. You'll need to do like, a screen share to watch the movie together. But you can like, watch the movie or TV show together, right? So that way, you're all like... and this is honestly where I think it works best.

Tybee and I, my friend Tybee, um, we don't get to see each other. She is in LA. So, normally, we don't get to see each other anyways. And now, especially, because there's no traveling. So she and I routinely do, like, movie nights. For some reason, it has worked out to be somewhat bad '90s movies that we both love.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So we've watched like, uh, Cutthroat Island, which is terrible. Uh, and... this is not a bad movie, and I'll stand by it, but like, Rocketeer. Like, these kinds of things, of just like, "Hey, what's a movie you haven't seen that I like, and vice versa?"

Um, and it's nice, because it's like having that experience together, but you don't have to... and this is where I love it... fill the time.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: You can also do that with like, streaming games.

Teresa: Streaming games. You can do it with, um, anything. You can use Roll20 to make D&D very easy.

Travis: Well, yes. Yes. I'm a big fan of that.

Teresa: Among Us is another big one lately.

Travis: Oh yes, absolutely.

Teresa: Animal Crossing. You can have a little party in Animal Crossing.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, also, another idea... a murder mystery party!

Travis: Mmm, oooh!

Teresa: Um, so, really, all you have to do is just Google a murder mystery dinner script or whatever, and hand out the parts, so that you can play your game of a murder mystery.

Travis: A murder most foul!

Teresa: What I was talking about earlier, this scavenger hunt idea, you could use it for make a costume of whatever is to your left. Right? But you can also do it, um... so like, the host makes a list of things for the guests to find in their house. Like, examples – something that smells good. Um, your weirdest sock. Or y'know, something like that, right? And then, the host will set a timer, and everybody runs away to go and get what they have. And when the timer is over, they present their findings.

Travis: Mm!

Teresa: Like a little bit of a show and tell, which is another idea. You can share a recipe. You can talk about, uh, your holiday decors.

Travis: Now, you have got me, uh, thinking of another question for you. And that question comes from... babababa... okay! Uh, from Will, "If it's not an informal event, which, if it's a formal event, and you're not actively participating, should you leave your camera on if you're going to eat dinner, do house tasks? Always found it awkward, distracting from others."

So, I— I will— if it was an informal event, right? I will often, y'know, wash the dishes or clean the kitchen while I'm talking to people. Like I said, Tybee and I, when we do like, y'know, some kind of video phone chat, I'll talk to them while I'm cleaning up, just like if I was hanging out with them. Right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But what if it's like, more of a formal party?

Teresa: Like, for example, you are zooming in to watch a wedding or something. Um—

Travis: Right. Or even just like, a birthday party.

Teresa: Or a birthday party, I guess.

Travis: I don't think it has to be formal. I think maybe what Will means is like, it's more structured, of just like, "This is a birthday party. This is a dinner." And not just like, let's hang out.

Teresa: I would say that you do— if you leave the camera area, you need to turn it off.

Travis: Yeah. And if you're bustling around in the camera area, too, like... y'know, putting away dishes or whatever, I do think it's polite to, at the very least, mute your microphone so that other people can talk. But muting your camera would probably be a good way to go, too.

Teresa: Right. Um, another idea – you could do a book club.

Travis: Oh yes.

Teresa: In the same way that you do the wine tastings. Um, and here is one that, uh, Alex, our research assistant and writer, suggested – a PowerPoint party.

Travis: Huh.

Teresa: Now, listen to this. This is the first I'd heard about it. Um, what you do is, so, you screen share on your Zoom, right? And you do, like, a presentation. Like a PowerPoint presentation. Um, and you do have to make parameters, right? So you have to set a time limit usually. Um, and also, make sure that... it's like, entertaining. It's not just like, a business thing. [laughing]

Travis: Well, that's a thing we do— uh, we've done on the JoCo Cruise, and I've done at Woodstock, of like, the fake TED talk.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Where it's just like— I made up this— I did one, uh, on this year's JoCo Cruise. I had to remember what year it was. Ugh. And um, it was just... about ten minutes of me introducing myself without ever actually getting to the actual talk.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: It was very funny, and I stand by it.

Teresa: Here are some of her favorites, from her Zoom PowerPoint birthday party. "Species of bears, rated from most vicious to most cuddly."

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Uh, "Why Sokka from Avatar: The Last Airbender is the perfect man."

Travis: Hm.

Teresa: "Why Garfield made-for-TV holiday specials should be categorized as classic and timeless cinema." Um, and, "Why crabs are the perfect animal."

Travis: Okay. I thought it was just gonna end with, "Why crabs?"

Teresa: "Why crabs?" [laughs]

Travis: Why crabs?

Teresa: Listen, if that's what you like...

Travis: Um, I have a question here from @HockeyYelling. "Is it rude to ask that just one person talk at a time? When multiple people are speaking, the sound overlaps and I cannot understand any of them." I totally get that.

Teresa: Absolutely! Ask it! Don't like— don't like, get it all bundled up inside and be upset. Especially if you're the host, that's one of the really great things that you can do, is lay out kind of the ground rules. Um, you could discuss muting while you're eating. You could discuss, um, trying not to do any over talk. Like, I wouldn't suggest you go as far as, make it a classroom with people raising their hands or anything. But if that's what the game you want to play, why not, right?

Travis: Oh, trivia night. That would be another good one, if the host did trivia.

Teresa: That would be a good one.

Travis: Now, here's what I will say, @HockeyYelling. I think it is perfectly reasonable, and right, to encourage everyone not to over talk and try to let everyone have a turn talking. I don't think it's something that you can like, fully control. I think that, y'know, a gentle reminder from time to time, like, "Hey guys, remember, no over talk. Let's be careful." But I think like, being too strict about it will kind of kill the vibe.

Teresa: Definitely. Um, I would encourage you to remember to try and speak in paragraph form. Um, the back and forth is really hard on Zoom, so try and construct an entire thought, and then, be quiet, so that other people can comment.

Travis: I also think, if you want to structure it a little bit more, if you're hosting, I think saying like, "And to make things run a little smoother, I'm gonna kind of act as a moderator for the conversation," could be very helpful to say like, "Now, I noticed, Julie, you were trying to say something?"

Teresa: That is great behavior for a host, even in RL.

Travis: Yes, indeed.

Teresa: One more suggestion from Alex, and um... of course. Of course, a performance or cabaret is amazing!

Travis: Oh, yes. Obvs.

Teresa: I mean, so, here's the thing, right? People are doing this all over the internet right now. There's even like, a comedy club that is called The Nowhere Comedy Club, which is started by some comedians that wanted to work, even though they couldn't tour, right?

Um, it's turned into a whole big thing with like, Mike Birbiglia, and Nikki Glaser, and all those kind of people, right? Maria Bamford does it a lot. All this stuff. And you could make your own, like, performance party. Everybody does their own little trick, or sings a song, or does a dance, or like, those TikTok dances.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: I'm doing it right here.

Travis: Oh my god, you're the cutest mom in the world.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I love you so much. I wish you were a cool young person like me.

Teresa: [laughs loudly] So, no matter what you decide to do in your Zoom party, there's no reason it can't be as fun as a real life party.

Travis: Okay, a couple more questions before we wrap up.

Teresa: No, I'm gonna say...

Travis: Oh!

Teresa: In-person party.

Travis: It is a real life party.

Teresa: It is a real life party!

Travis: It's not happening in your dreams. It's real life!

Teresa: It's real life.

Travis: Um, this question is from Jordan. And it kind of touches on something we've already been discussing a couple times, but I want to drill down on it. Jordan asked, "How do you politely stop someone from dominating conversation on Zoom?"

I think what I would do, um... y'know, if it's someone like me, I am aware. I know what I'm doing. So if someone is like, playfully says like, "Travis. Let someone else talk." Right? I get it. I understand. It's not gonna hurt my feelings. But what you *can* do is, rather than make it about that person talking too much, make it about the other people not talking enough, or not getting the chance to talk, I should say.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And if you see someone like, say, me, who is like, the first to answer every question, right? Or like, going, "Oh, that reminds me of my story!" Right? Say like, "Okay, wait, hold on. We'll get back to that. What were you gonna say, Steve?" Y'know, "Oh, y'know what? We haven't heard from Adam in a while." That kind of thing.

Teresa: Right, yeah. So, the— one of the charming things about being a good host is, you kind of are the moderator, even if you haven't declared yourself the moderator. Um, and so, I think that it's a... it's a thing where— [sighs] What am I trying to say? You, as a host, are playing the role of the host...

Travis: You're at the head of the table.

Teresa: You're at the head of the table! You're so good with turn of phrase.

Travis: Thank you. Thank you.

Teresa: You're at the head of the table. Your responsibility is to direct the discussion. And we've talked about this in, uh, dinner parties, where everybody turns to the left, and they talk, and you like, couple up.

Travis: Yeah. The coupling up part is important, or else everyone's trying to go left and talk to the back of the other person's head.

Teresa: [laughs] You're right. You're right. Couple up.

Travis: Yes. Um, let's see. One more question. Ummm... let's see... okay. Is it— this is from Willoughby Dobbs. "Is it appropriate to check your phone if you feel your attention waning?" And I think that this is kind of an all... we can extend it out, because one of the things that happens with Zoom that I don't necessarily think is exactly the same in real life, or in person...

Teresa: In person.

Travis: ... is because you have the camera, you can't really shift your focus as much. And this will happen sometimes, where if you're looking at the monitor, which I am now, and the person in the right hand talks, I'm not looking at the camera. And so, because of that, I'm not, quote, "looking at them." Right? Whereas, if I'm looking right at the camera, I'm not seeing the person talking.

So, it can be very— I get distracted very easily. And so, I can end up like, looking like I'm not paying attention, when really, I'm listening, and I'm seeing them, but maybe I'm looking at my phone, or doing all these things.

I think my personal opinion, as someone who worries about looking distracted, I try even more to stay locked onto like, the monitor, and pay attention to that. But it is why I recommend things like movies, gaming, having activities, so I don't have to just like, stare at a monitor for two hours.

Teresa: Um, we talked about this a little bit when we talked about conference calls like this. Uh, it's very hard, as a human, to not look at yourself when you do a video, or you can see yourself in like, your phone or whatever. Um, so, do your best to try not to look at yourself, and you can use a lot more physical cues than you normally would. I mean, I know it seems like you're like, a bobble head or whatever if you just agree, agree, agree. But it lets people know that you are listening to them.

We do this in the podcast all the time. Like, I'm looking at Travis. He is agreeing with me. He is nodding his head, even though he's not speaking. Um, and so, that's a good habit to get into, to try and keep not only other people, uh, sure that they're being listened to, but also, so that, y'know...

Travis: To stay engaged.

Teresa: To stay engaged, so you don't get bored.

Travis: Y'know, speaking of virtual events... we've got a My Brother, My Brother, and Me live stream!

Teresa: Whaaat?!

Travis: Yeah, we're doing a live stream show! A virtual live show, if you can believe it. And our opener, Sawbones... have you heard of this, folks? Folks, you heard about this one? Sawbones? It's a marital tour of misguided medicine? Uh, starring Justin and Sydnee McElroy?

Uh, this is gonna be November 21st at 9pm Eastern time. Tickets are just ten dollars, and you can get those tickets at Live.TheMcElroy.family, and come hang out! It's gonna be, I don't know, weird and fun and silly? And everything a normal live show is, tonally, but with the added mystery of us having never done it before.

Teresa: [laughs] And from the comfort of your own home.

Travis: Exactly. And the comfort of your own pants.

Teresa: Or no pants.

Travis: Or whatever. Y'know, that's your business. I will be wearing pants, 'cause I'll be on camera. Uh— well, maybe. Depends on how I position the camera.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, also, we've got some new merch. The pin of the month this November is the Void Fish from The Adventure Zone, and it's a sizeable pin, which I think is absolutely gorgeous. It benefits the Loveland Foundation, which is committed to showing up for communities of color in unique and powerful ways, with a particular focus on black women and girls.

We also have a Steven the Goldfish keychain by Kate May. That is also from The Adventure Zone.

Teresa: Bebe loves all that goldfish stuff.

Travis: She does. I have several of them, and she enjoys all of them. Uh, we have a— well, we don't, but Sawbones has a vaccine bumper sticker that benefits the Immunization Action Coalition, which works to increase immunization rates and prevent disease, and it also facilitates communication about the safety, efficacy, and use of vaccines. All of that and more at McElroyMerch.com.

You can preorder the McElroy how to make a podcast book, called Everybody Has a Podcast (Except You). It's available for preorder now at TheMcElroyPodcastBook.com. You can get it in hard copy, e-book, or audiobook. It comes out January 26th.

Teresa: I wrote several paragraphs.

Travis: Indeed. You can also preorder The Adventure Zone: Crystal Kingdom, which is book four of our graphic novel series. You can go to TheAdventureZoneComic.com, and that comes out July 13th, 2021.

Alright, Teresa. 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. We also thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. That's where we got all of these lovely listener submissions, as far as questions. @ShmannersCast.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for our cover picture of the fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. You can join that group if you love to give and get excellent advice.

Speaking of advice, please do send us your topic suggestions!

Travis: Oh, indeed.

Teresa: To ShmannersCast@gmail.com. We're still taking idioms. We'd love to make another show of, specifically, non-US idioms. And... Alex reads every single email, so... say hi to Alex.

Travis: Hey! Thank you, Alex! Hey. This is a big thank you to Alex. As I mentioned in the ads, we have two kids. And that makes it more and more difficult to prepare the show ourselves, so getting that help from Alex, um, y'know, we couldn't do it without her.

And, let me also just say, just 'cause it's worth mentioning whether it's the MaxFunDrive or not... we would not be able to bring Alex in and pay her for

the amazing work that she does if it wasn't for your support! So, thank you to everybody who, y'know, supports Max Fun and Shmanners. We really appreciate it!

Teresa: Yes, thank you! You can support us more if you would like, by rate, review, and subscribing on iTunes. And y'know, tell a friend.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us. You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: Join us again next week.

Travis: Oh! You've been listening to Shmanners. Wait.

Teresa: What? No, you say—

Travis: Oh no!! You've been listening to Shmanners. Join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

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

Teresa: [laughs] We really botched that one, didn't we? Manners, Shmanners. Get it.

[theme music plays]

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