

Shmanners 140: Debate

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Travis: Point: this is a podcast.

Teresa: Counterpoint: it's *Shmanners*.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I am 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: You know... I wasn't looking forward to Thanksgiving, but I think I am, finally. It's soon, so maybe I was just too far out?

Travis: This—okay. No, here's the thing.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Here's what you do.

Teresa: What do I do?

Travis: This is—this is one of my favorite things about Teresa. She is like a bell curve of excitement, but, like, kind of a reverse bell cu—an upside-down bell curve.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Where, like, she gets really excited way out, right? And then between that time and really close to the event, she gets kind of anxious about it. And then when we get, like, right up to the event she's like, "Well, now I'm excited again!"

Teresa: Yeah. No, you're right.

Travis: It's what happens—like, if we're going on a trip, or a big event is coming up or whatever. It's always that.

Teresa: Yeah. It is. Except, this year I am kind of really gunnin' for Christmas. Um, I—

Travis: No, I know!

Teresa: —I asked you—

Travis: She—you have been champing at the bit—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —I have—I have had to, no joke, like, physically stop Teresa from putting up Christmas decorations before Thanksgiving. And normally I wouldn't mind, but we're hosting Thanksgiving this year, and I just can't allow it! I can't allow—

Teresa: Right, but, like, this is—this was not, like, a super awesome year for, like, anything in the world. And so, like, maybe we need a little Christmas.

Travis: Well, we can have a little Christmas at Thanksgiving. I made brown butter bourbon!

Teresa: [singing] Don't care how! I want it now!

Travis: We've been watching a lot of *Willy Wonka*.

Teresa: It's one of Bebe's favorite movies.

Travis: She likes the candy movie.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, here we are.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: You know, here's the thing. We're gonna talk about debating.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: This week. And the thing is, it can take on many different forms, and really I think we're going to constantly keep kind of repeating the same kind of point. Which is, I think most days there—like, when people think about debate, one, I would say the majority of the time what they're actually talking about is arguing.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Um, and then there is, like, the structured debate, that is, like, what you think of in, like, political rounds, or philosophical, or, like, school speech and debate. And then there's, like, a debate you might get in with your friend group about, like, "What's the worst movie of all time?" That kind of thing.

Teresa: Sure. But the thing about debate that *I'm* really gonna stress is... in debate, there are rules that both parties follow. So, a lot like—like a *Harry Potter* duel, right? Everybody knows the rules.

Travis: You're doing a lot of head work right now.

Teresa: Sorry, sorry.

Travis: A lot of—no, it's fine—

Teresa: [mumbling]

Travis: —"A lot of rules!"

Teresa: There are—everybody knows the rules, and the reason that the debate or the duel works is because people follow those rules. And so when they're

arguing on Facebook, that's not a debate. Because you haven't agreed on the rules.

Travis: If I could make a different analogy... I think it's like the difference between, like, a fencing competition and a sword fight to the death.

Teresa: Sure, yes.

Travis: You know what I mean? Like, when you're in a fencing competition, like, you get penalized for doing things wrong, and there's judges, right? Versus, like, you have a sword and I have a sword and... whatever way it happens, I'm just trying not to be the one who ends up dead.

Teresa: Yeah, got it.

Travis: Like, it's a very different—

Teresa: Did you think my *Harry Potter* duel was not, like, relatable enough? Or, like—

Travis: No, it was very good! It was very good. It just didn't have a... counterpoint. Like, I [crosstalk]—

Teresa: Did it have too much head movement?

Travis: No, you could've said that it's like a *Harry Potter* duel versus, like, when you're fighting Voldemort.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Right? You need to compare and contrast.

Teresa: I see. I got it now.

Travis: You need a two point thing.

Teresa: Hey, speaking of high school debate...

Travis: Uh-huh? Did you do it? Wait, hold on.

Teresa: I did not. I did speech. My—

Travis: I did speech as well.

Teresa: —my older sister did debate, though. Which, when you think about it, makes a lot of sense. Um, because it is a highly cerebral context, and you have to be impeccably organized.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, I remember going on debate—speech and debate tournaments with my sister. Um, you know, I was on one side of the bus with the speech kids, and she was on the other.

Travis: You had to sit on separate sides of the bus?!

Teresa: No, but—

Travis: Or just it shook out that way?

Teresa: No, it shook out that way.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Because the debaters always went to the back so that—

Travis: To prep.

Teresa: To prep! 'Cause they had to conference. Um, but they just, like, would roll in with files upon files, and stacks and stacks of all this stuff that they had prepared in case of any kind of, like, rebuttal they hadn't memorized already for.

Travis: Yeah. You have—like, you have to be able—because, like, if someone brings up a point that you do not rebut, then, like, they score points for that.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Even—even if it's, like, an absolutely bonkers, like... point, then it's like—like, for example, I remember—

Teresa: You have to say that it's bonkers.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: If you don't address it, you lose points.

Travis: I—so I did not do debate, but—I did speech, but I practiced debate with the debaters. Where, like, basically my job was to just, like, think as outside the box as I could—

Teresa: And try and rattle 'em, right? Yeah.

Travis: Yeah! And, like—and so they—it was—it was that kind of, like, uh, obstacle course kind of training. And they had, uh—the topic was, like, weapons of mass destruction. And I was, like, "handguns." And they were like, "What?" And I was like, "Look at all the handgun deaths everywhere a year. Like, you could consider a handgun a weapon of mass destruction in great numbers."

And they were like, "Uh—" [through laughter] and, like, that kind of thing. Or, you know, like—

Teresa: Well, again—so what I was gonna—I'm gonna go through that. One of the things that the—the commonalities between debate teams is they understand the role of fallacies, and what you just used was statistical fallacy.

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: Um, and so, like—you know, you wouldn't even really have to say, "That's really dumb because the amount of handguns doesn't count, blah blah blah blah."

All you would have to say to counter that point is, "Statistical fallacy."

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Because we all know the rules!

Travis: Correct. And that's the thing is you see that a lot now—it's kind of that, like, bringing a knife to a gunfight. Not to keep referencing guns. But that idea

of—I see a lot, especially in social media, where someone is trying to say, like, "Well, that's a slippery slope argument. It's a straw man fallacy."

These—these fallacies—and the other person doesn't care that they're using fallacies.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And it's, like, you're trying to argue with an—it's—ugh. Another analogy.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's like the redcoats versus the, like—

Teresa: You're so analogous today!

Travis: It's the redcoats versus the US rebels, right? Where it's like the Americans were, like, hanging from trees and hiding in bushes and swamps while the redcoats are, like, marching in formation.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it's like, "Well, you're not—you're not doing war by the rules!"

Teresa: Right.

Travis: That's a lot of what I see people, like, trying to debate stuff. Now—and that is something I wanted to address ahead of time, because—so, just right off the bat, if someone is, like, trying to argue against, like, people's basic human rights or, like, the validity of someone as a person or anything along those lines—anything that is, like, specifically attacking or belittling or any of that—I can't curse. But that *stuff*—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —like, those people aren't debating. Like, that—that—it is—I think that too often now people, like, try to throw in the face, like, "[mockingly] Well, you need to hear both sides, and you need hear me out."

When, one, they're not willing to do the same—

Teresa: That was also some great neck movement, by the way.

Travis: Thank you. When they're not willing to hear out both sides. But two, like, you don't—listen. I'll be the first to tell you. You don't need to hear out both sides. You don't need to do that, because we are not in a high school speech and debate competition.

Teresa: Alright. Speaking of high school speech and debate... uh, it was founded, um—and it was called The National Forensic League—in, uh, 1925.

Travis: You know, I did it for many years. I have no idea why it's forensics. Like, that doesn't have—like, I think of forensics like CSI stuff.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. It has to do with the root of the word.

Travis: Oh, really?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I didn't know that.

Teresa: Um, so the na—the first national tournament was held in 1931. I guess they needed those six years to, you know, teach everybody. Um, but then, when the Great Depression hit—this was one of the things that you could... [laughs quietly] do for free. [laughs] And so it didn't really hinder the membership growth at all.

They, uh, reached 400 chapters that year! That's pretty awesome. Um, they did, however, have to suspend the national tournament in 1942 due to World War II—

Travis: [simultaneously] World War II?

Teresa: World War II, correct. Correct. Um, except they did continue with student congress, because, uh, FDR really thought that it was important to continue that. Um, and so he wrote them a beautiful letter of recommend—of commendation. There it is.

Uh, so they did continue the student congress. Did you do student congress?

Travis: No.

Teresa: I knew people who did.

Travis: That doesn't sound, mm, fun?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, that's the thing is—and I—listen. That's not for me to say, like, if you did it I think that you are wrong or whatever. Same with, like, a Model UN kind of deal.

Teresa: Right, yes.

Travis: Now, as an adult, I look at that and I'm like, "I wish I had done that." But, like, if you had told me, you know, like, when you're 14, 15—when I was 14, 15, like, "Go do student congress," I'd be like, "Er, no thank you!"

Teresa: I had friends who were in it, and it really took a very specific type of person to be able to go and do that, because not only do you have to be, uh, well versed in whatever kind of resolutions you're doing, you also have to be great at extemporaneous public speaking.

Travis: Well, see, I'm good at that!

Teresa: You *are* good at that! Um—

Travis: You know, I never did Extemporaneous? I never—as a speech competition—

Teresa: That's another speech competition.

Travis: Yeah. I never did it. Like, and I think about that now and I'm like, "What—what—what was I thinking?!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Ugh.

Teresa: Um, and... they resumed—

Travis: In case people are wondering, I did HIDI, which is Humorous Interpretation, Dramatic Interpretation; where you do, like, a scene—and I think it has to have at least three people in it, and one person does all the parts. I did Duo, where it's two people doing a scene together. I did Prose, uh—Prose Poetry. Um, where, you know, you do readings of poetry. I think I did Shel Silverstein. Um, because I'm basic.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And, uh—what else did I do? Um, I did the After Dinner?

Teresa: Now, we didn't have that category in Ohio.

Travis: You didn't have After Dinner?

Teresa: No.

Travis: That was just, like, a prepared humor speech.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Uh, our categories were a little different in Ohio. Um, I did... let's see. I did... Duo. Um... and did okay. But, like, Prose Poetry was really kind of my jam. Um, and so I specialized very quickly into that.

Travis: What was your Prose Poetry choice?

Teresa: Um, well, I did two years of Prose Poetry. Um, in one I did, uh, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* but the—it was the one where the dwarves... it's—it's, like, uh... I can't—can't describe it. It's in modern language, kind of fairy tale deal?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um, and the other one I did Kurt Vonnegut. Um, the... one where they—they, like, make everybody the same by giving people chains and... what was that called?

Travis: Okay. That's not *Cat's Cradle*, is it?

Teresa: No.

Travis: *Player Piano*?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Is it... *Bird in the House*?

Teresa: [exasperated] Hold on!

Travis: I made that one up.

Teresa: *Harrison Bergeron*!

Travis: I've never heard of that before in my life.

Teresa: Installment of "Teresa Googles It." Well, it's a satirical and dystopian science fiction short story.

Travis: Okay. Man, why didn't I do Ray Bradbury?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Kickin' myself! Can I go back in time—I've always said that if I could go back in time, I would, of course, replace myself—okay. I wrestled in middle school. I was very bad. I was very scrawny. If I could go back in time, I would freeze time, I would move 13-year-old Travis out of the way, I would replace himself with 35-year-old Travis—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —I would slam the other kid, and then I would freeze time again, and I'd put 12-year-old Travis back, and then I'd go, and they'd be like, "What just happened? He hulked out!"

But, maybe what I should do—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —is do that back in time for—for, uh, speech Duo.

Teresa: Isn't that what *Never Been Kissed* is about?

Travis: I don't think in *Never Been Kissed* she teleports back in time and replaces herself, kisses a young man, [through laughter] and then teleports back forward in time.

Teresa: [laughs] Maybe that's a different movie.

Travis: Yeah. I've only seen that once, but I'm pretty sure that's not what happens.

Teresa: Okay, we digress. In 1947, the national tournament returned! Um, and then it steadily grew throughout the 50's and the 60's. Um, up until... the 19—uh, 1975, where they celebrated their golden anniversary! Pretty fun, right?

Travis: Golden anniversary is...

Teresa: 50 years.

Travis: 50 years.

Teresa: Uh, of working on—on the same college campus, any—anyway. It was started on Ripon College. Anyway. Um, so... you know, over time, the rules have changes slightly. The way that points are done and things are adjudicated has changed. Um—

Travis: Did you ever judge speech and debate competitions?

Teresa: I did not.

Travis: I—when I was in school in Oklahoma, I went and did one at—I think Norman High School is the name of it, and I judged—I judged, of course, the speech part of it, and did, uh—I think I judged HIDI. It was really interesting to be on the other side. I wanted to give everyone first place. 'Cause I'm... nice.

Teresa: You're—you're not supposed to do it that way.

Travis: I mean, I know! I *didn't* do it that way. I j—

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: —I gave 'em points or whatever, but I just kept thinking, like, "They're all trying so hard."

Teresa: Aww.

Travis: "Oh, bless their hearts."

Teresa: You are so tender.

Travis: I know.

Teresa: Um, but one of the biggest changes recently has been, uh, in 2010 they officially allowed computers to be used, including tablets and things like that, in policy debate, Lincoln-Douglas debate, public forum debate, congressional debate, as well as extemporaneous speaking.

So, before that it all had to be, like, paper files and things. Um, but with the addition of computers—I mean, I can see how that is good for teams, because you can hold infinitely more. It's easily searchable.

Travis: You can also, like, Google Docs share stuff with each other to keep your notes in, instead of, like—

Teresa: Yeah. And I—but I don't know if they're allowed to do internet searches. They—

Travis: Prob—I would have to assume not.

Teresa: I think that they might have to already have the information they're looking for in the hard drive. I'm not sure. I didn't see.

Um, but it does seem a little bit less intimidating to watch some—like, that was part of the game. I know for my debate team—

Travis: Oh, *definitely*.

Teresa: Where they—you know, these files—

Travis: They'd prop open, like, a briefcase, and, like, their accordion folders and, like—

Teresa: Exactly, exactly. These files that you're keeping, once, you know, you roll down the hallway with them, and the other teams are supposed to look and go, "Oh my gosh, they've got so much prepared!" Like, all this kind of stuff.

But with a computer, that's kind of lost, I think. Just my thoughts.

Travis: Um, so we have a bunch of questions that we touched on, but I think we'll go deeper into them. But first... how about a thank you note to our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hey. You've tried Roundspace. Now try Squarespace.

Teresa: What?

Travis: What? Well, you know how Roundspace is how people used to build websites, but it didn't work on mobile platforms and it didn't have, like, e-commerce functionality, and the templates were, like, really ugly and boring... and, like, all that stuff? Well, someone said, "You know what? I'm sick of using Roundspace. It's time for Squarespace."

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And Square—yeah! Squarespace, you can build a beautiful website. You can sell your products and services of all kinds. You can promote your physical or online business. You can announce an upcoming event or special project, and more! And here's the thing—

Teresa: So everything that was wrong with Roundspace—

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: —is now... good.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: In Squarespace.

Travis: Absolutely. Because Squarespace has beautiful, customizable templates, created by a world-class designer—[mumbling under his breath] unlike Roundspace—that have powerful e-commerce functionality, so you can sell things online—[mumbling under his breath] unlike Roundspace—and analytics that help you grow in real time, built-in search engine optimization, nothing to patch or upgrade ever, and 24/7, award-winning customer support. And the thing is, Roundspace only had 1/3, not award-winning customer support.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, like, one hour a day for three days randomly a week, you might be able to get a hold of somebody. So, make it stand out with a beautiful website from Squarespace. Go to [Squarespace.com/shmanners](https://www.squarespace.com/shmanners) for a free trial, and when you're ready to launch, use the offer code "shmanners" to save 10% off your first purchase of a website or domain.

Teresa: Well, I'm sold. Roundspace, get outta here!

Travis: Roundspace is out! Roundspace is old, and Squarespace is hot! Hot or not? Roundspace? Not!

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: That's a miss!

Teresa: Alright. [through laughter] *Shmanners*—

Travis: Squarespace is a hit!

Teresa: Hey.

Travis: Mm-hmm?

Teresa: *Shmanners* is also supported in part by Zola! Uh, Zola is a really great one stop shop for all of your wedding business.

Travis: All of it.

Teresa: Um, and their aim is to make it stress-free. So, wedding planning with free wedding websites, dream wedding registries, affordable save-the-dates and invitations, and even easy-to-use planning tools are all at your fingertips at Zola.com, where they have over a hundred beautiful wedding website designs that you can choose from to fit your couple style. And—so, one of the great things about Zola is their—their—the way that they have kind of streamlined—

Travis: Integrated.

Teresa: —integrated the registry, where you can do the gifts right there from Zola. They have so much stuff to choose from, and at really great price points all over the map. There really is something for everyone there, and they do the thing where you can, like, share.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: I love that. I *love* that.

Travis: It's the best thing. You know, because, like, that's the thing. Especially in this day and age where, like, people live together before or even, like, live on their own before they get married. It's like, "Well, I have... forks. What I *need* is, like, a new TV, but I feel bad asking people to buy me a new TV."

Teresa: Exactly!

Travis: Well, this way, like, five of your guests could go in together to get that TV. Or, like, a camera for your honeymoon or something like that.

Teresa: Indeed. So—

Travis: Or just help you pay for your honeymoon! You know? The honey-fund is—it's always helpful.

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

[house music plays]

Dave: Hi, I'm Dave.

Graham: Hi, I'm Graham!

Dave: And we're two house DJs who have been trapped inside our drum machine.

Graham: We love it here, and we'd love if you stopped by and visited us every week—

Dave and Graham: *On Stop Podcasting Yourself!*

Dave: Here on Maximumfun.org.

Graham: We're just a couple of doofuses from... Canada?

Dave: And listen to our show or perish.

Graham: [laughs quietly]

Dave: *Stop Podcasting Yourself.*

Graham: On Maximumfun.org.

[house music plays]

Speaker One: Hey, Kira! So, Max Fun Con tickets go on sale this Friday, November 23rd at 11 AM Pacific, and I'm trying to write a promo.

Kira: Okay! So, what do they need to know to look forward to? Inspiring classes.

Speaker One: Live podcast tapings.

Kira: Stand-up showcase.

Speaker One: The s'mores party.

Kira: Making new friends.

[door opening]

Speaker Two: Don't forget about the dance party!

Kira: Oh, and it all takes place on a beautiful mountaintop.

Speaker One: Okay, got it. Anything else?

Kira: Well, if we missed anything, they can find all the details at Maxfuncon.com.

Speaker One and Kira: And we'll see you in June!

Speaker Two: [distantly and out of sync] And we'll see you in June!

[audience applauds]

Speaker One: I think that went really well.

Kira: I think that was really good, too. I really think that was—

Speaker One: Yeah, that sounded good.

Speaker Two: [distantly] Great job!

Travis: Okay. So we've talked about speech and debate. What about, like, debate. How do I... debate.

Teresa: Okay. So, here's a brief list of do's, things that are pretty common sense but is good to remind yourself.

Try and stay calm. The—the emotional escalation leads to hurt feelings and arguments. If you're doing a de—if you are debating with someone, you wanna

keep things calm and rational, okay? And in that way, you need to have evidence-based facts, okay?

If you are citing something, it always helps to have, like, real, uh, like, stuff behind it, instead of, like, "Oh, I h—I heard this," or blah, blah, blah. If you—if you're really serious about this, having facts with you, in your brain, even, is a good way to go.

Travis: Now, here's the thing. Like, if you hear that and you're like, "What—how do I do that? Like, if I'm just at a bar?"

This is why, like... I—the best piece of advice that I think I can give in regards to debate is, like, nine times out of ten you should not do it. Like, this is something where, like, if you know your friend feels like—and you want to—for—great. Schedule a time and do it.

But, like, three drinks in to Friday night at a bar is not the time to launch into an impromptu debate. Because it—it will... I think inevitably lead to an argument. Um, and—and that leads to hurt or upset emotions.

I would also say to Teresa's point, if you are debating someone and you feel yourself getting upset, especially if you feel like the other person is, like, trying to make you upset, walk away from it.

Teresa: Yeah. Get out. Um, another tactic that you can use is to ask questions. Try and draw out, um, what they are trying to say. Um, because sometimes these, uh... you might be really calm, [laughs quietly] but if the other person is leading emotionally instead of logically, these questions can help sort that out.

Travis: I've also found that—and I—God knows, I don't debate people on social media anymore, because I care about my mental health. But, um, I have found that a lot of times, what people who are trolling and just trying to upset you—they want you to talk so they can poke holes in your arguments and make fun of your arguments and upset you, but if you say to them, like, "Why do you feel the way you do? Why do you think that? Why is that?"

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: They rarely have—they'll say stuff like, "[mockingly] Well, if that's how your gonna be."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And it's like—sometimes, like, that—when we talk about picking battles, that's kind of what I usually think of. Not, like—not, like, someone is threatening your life; and I mean that in every way you can; or, like, they are insulting to who you are or you need to stand up for yourself. But more, like, "No, I really feel like you just wanna make me feel bad, and there's nothing I'm going to say that's gonna change your mind... so I'm just gonna walk away from that."

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Uh, the next tip is to appeal to higher values. Use the commonality that humans share. Um, something like the idea of, you know, "Wouldn't—wouldn't you want to leave the world a better place for your children?"

Something that we can all get behind increases the dyna—the—the commonality in your, um—in your conversation.

Um, I also wanna say, this seems like a given but you need to listen to the other person. It's really hard to have a debate and not try and think about the next thing that you're gonna say, um, but really listening not only shows compassion, but it also makes it so that your reply builds on what they have said.

Travis: Right. Because that's the thing too, of, like, if you're really trying to change hearts and minds, you have to respond to them.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: You have to say, like, "Listen, I totally understand why that's a concern for you, but if you think about this way..." like, instead of just saying, like, "Okay good, you're done talking. Now *I* can talk."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Um, that's a thing that if you've never done speech and debate in—in, like, high school structured stuff, or even college—like, you don't choose what side you're on in the debate.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: So, like, a lot of people—it really—I think that's another thing that people run into in, like, casual debates, just, like, you know, hanging out with people, is sometimes if you're really invested in something, it can make it really hard to debate it.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Because it's really hard to listen to someone be wrong about something that you really care about, and it's really hard to separate emotion from it at that point. It—I don't know. This is a little bit of, like, old man Travis tellin' you, like... "[gruff voice] You know, we don't have a lot of time on this Earth, and to waste it bein' upset at folks who are just tryin' to upset you... well, gosh. I just don't know."

Teresa: That leads in very nicely to another point. Try and look for a win-win situation. We talked about this in our negotiating episode. [under her breath] Please go listen to it, rate, review, subscribe. [normal volume] Anyway, um... it's—it's really hard if you think about a fight, right? Like a boxing match or something. There has to be a winner. But in a negotiation, compromise is—is available!

Travis: Yeah. That—so I wanna jump into the questions now, because this ties into this. @icedfrappe asked:

"How do you politely excha—yours—explain you need to step away from the debate because it's getting too personal?"

And I think, to Teresa's point, at any point you can say, "You have given me a lot to think about. Thank you, and, you know, let's... let's call it."

Teresa: "Let's leave it there, now."

Travis: Right? Like, instead of saying, like, "I'm done with this!" Right? Like, saying, like, "Wow, you've given me a lot to think about. I think I need to take a break." You know, like, that kind of thing.

Teresa: "Pass the cranberry sauce."

Travis: "Pass the cranberry sauce."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um... this is from Jessica.

"How do you deal with someone who only listens if you have proof or resources available on hand?"

Um, well, on the one hand, especially with, you know, internet and smartphones and stuff these days, I think if it's something like you know exactly where it is or you—like, you can say, like, "Give me one second." Pull it up.

That also might give you a chance to, like, take a breath, and then to take a breath. But I also think it's fine to say, like, "I don't have it on hand right now, but I can find it for you later."

Teresa: Or maybe this is something that would be better served as, like, an email exchange.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Where you can, um, you know, share your sources, provide links, things like that. And this also will give you the time to, you know, construct your arguments better. So maybe a good idea would be to say, "You know, I am not prepared to—to deal—to, like, discuss this thoroughly. Let me have your email address and I'll get back to you."

Travis: Um, this is from Katie, and it's incredibly relatable for me.

"What should you do if you're debating with someone, and halfway through you realize that you're wrong?"

Now, Katie, if you're addressing me, then it's probably that I have just realized that I have been arguing a point that is not just—not, like, "Oh, you know what? You're right, and you've changed my moral mind." But more that I have been arguing something that is just... factually incorrect.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I remember once when I was young, like, a young teenager—like, I said something like, uh, that Saint Patrick's Day was a Scottish holiday. It's not. It's based in Ireland. Um, that's where that's from. And, uh, I think I tried to argue it for about three minutes before I realized that I was wrong. So I doubled down—

Teresa: [through laughter] Oh no!

Travis: It was just a mistake. Just a mistake.

Teresa: Um, I think that that is a really great thing—not doubling down.

Travis: No!

Teresa: Uh, conceding a point. And you could say, "You know, I never thought about it that way. Thank you for—for sharing that."

Travis: Especially with someone who you enjoy discussing things with and talking about things with. Like, establishing—and I know it seems backwards, but establishing, like, credit as, like, someone who admits when they're wrong—

Teresa: Absolutely.

Travis: Like, that's—that's a good thing to do! In general, it's a good thing to be someone who admits when they're wrong. Just as a general rule of thumb.

Um, this is from Amber.

"What's the most respectful way to handle a debate that's going in circles when the other side keeps going back to the same points you've already addressed?"

Teresa: Um, I think this is... you know, when you find yourself in this kind of cyclical argument, this is a good time to do like Travis said and say, "You've given me a lot to think about. Um, pass the cranberry sauce."

Travis: "Pass the cranberry sauce."

Teresa: You know—[laughs] so, like—

Travis: "We're having mashed potatoes. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for being there. Pass the turkey."

Teresa: [laughs] Um, you—you spending your emotional energy continuing to debate the same point over and over... is that worth it? I don't think so.

Travis: See, okay. To that same point, Christopher asks:

"How do you keep a little—level head when debating with frustrating people?"

And I think that it—one of the things that I have learned is that in my life, there are people whose thoughts and opinions matter to me. And those are the people who, if there is something that I think they are fundamentally, like, on the wrong side of, it is important to me to invest the time and energy to talk to them about it, understand why they feel the way they do, and try to change their minds.

But there are also people who... like, what they think... doesn't matter to me. I mean, whether they—however you wanna phrase that for yourself, if that feels callous.

Like, some rando stranger on Twitter who's trying to, like, get my hackles up—like... I'm not going to invest the time there. You know what I mean? But, like, a coworker who I think is fundamentally a good person who doesn't understand why what they're saying is wrong, whether factually or morally, that's someone that I'm going to invest the time in.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And so it's not to say, like, don't get in debates and arguments with people because it's too stressful. But it's more of, like—you know, if you've—another analogy. Think of it like spending your money. You know what I mean?

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: Is—is it worth it? And maybe it's expensive, but it's totally worth it. Versus, like, buying a piece of crap that's way overpriced, you know? And there's also, like... [sighs] there's something about—so, for example, like, if it's a philosophical debate about, like... I don't know. Like, for example in *The Good Place* they have a lot of these.

Teresa: Oh yeah!

Travis: Right? That kind of thing. Like, man, I will get into that all day long. But, like, if somebody tried to debate with me that, like, women don't deserve respect or whatever? Like, no! We're not gonna debate this! Because in debating it, I am acknowledging that you might have valid points. So instead it's like, "No, I'm gonna tell you why you're wrong, [holding back laughter] and then I'm gonna walk away."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, this isn't a debate. It's an intervention. And, like, that's a different thing altogether.

Teresa: Okay. Back to the question. Some practical things that you can do: make sure that you're breathing, okay? Because the absence of breath creates pain, and the pain is emotional as well. Continue to breathe. Take deep breaths. Slow down your own speech. Try and take the—you know, take the physical things that you can do that deescalate an argument. Like I said, breathing. Um, slow down your speech. Lower your tone. And try not to be condescending while you do it. But when emotions are running high, pitch also goes high.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And the last thing I would suggest is sit down.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: If you are standing and debating, again, this can make the—make things just escalate. Sit down and try and relax your body, and your mind will hopefully follow suit.

Travis: And I—and I also think, like, this is another one of those cases of, like, the polite thing to do is to say the thing out loud. Right? So, like, if they're being frustrating, you don't need to say, like, "You're being frustrating." But I think it's okay to say, like, "I feel like we just keep coming back to the same points again and again, so maybe it's time that we call this."

Or, for example, this question from someone whose username is Sataneatmyshorts.

"How do I tell someone that their opinion involves not granting basic human rights to marginalized groups and isn't a fun debate for me, it's tiring and disturbing to talk to them?"

That! Like, that's the thing is, like, if someone is doing that, I think it's well within manners and etiquette to be like, "This is an exhausting topic for me because I feel like you're ignoring the fact that this is not granting basic human rights to marginalized groups, so I am not interested in debating this."

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Right?

Teresa: I—I'll agree with that.

Travis: Right? Like, that's—it's—that is, I think, perfectly polite. Um, this—

Teresa: Um, I wanna mention on this thread that I ran across a wonderful article with concrete, like, "You can lift these words. They are in quotes for you to use" examples of how to talk about things like racism to your family. Um, I want to recommend it. It's on Harper—sorry, Harper's Bazaar Magazine online.

Um, and it is an opinion piece by Rachel Elizabeth Carle—Cargle, sorry.

Travis: Can you spell the last name?

Teresa: C-A-R-G-L-E. Um, and it is called "How to talk to your family about racism on Thanksgiving."

Uh, we will link it in our, um, in our podcast description. And, like I said, really great article. And they give concrete things you can actually say.

Travis: Um, so... uh, let's see. Couple more here. Um, this is from Semisharkish.

"How do you call someone out for debating based on opinion rather than fact?"

I think depending on the topic. So, for example, like, if you were having a debate about, like, the best horror movie, that's inherently opinion based, right? If you were having a debate about, like... I don't know. See, it's hard for me—there are some things—like the most effective form of government, right? Like, that could

be a very fact-based—if you're a learned person who knows about those kinds of things. But I think unless you're actually sitting down to have a debate with someone about it... it might easily turn into opinion.

I think that's it. Is, like, if you find yourself in the situation where you recognize that the other person is arguing based on opinion rather than fact, maybe... in your mind, take a step back and figure out if you're actually in an opinion-based debate rather than a fact-based debate. And, like, operate from there.

Teresa: Sure. I think this is also a good—a good time for you to ask questions about what they are talking about. In the way of, like, "And what makes you say that? Where did you hear that?" Um, you know, how—how does—not just "How does this make you feel?" But "Where—where did you learn about this? What is... you know, what's an example? What's your experience?" Things like that.

Travis: And—and that's the thing, is because sometimes, what someone really wants to do is talk about their own thoughts, right? Like, they say they wanna have a debate, but really... they just have opinions that they want to share. You know what I mean? And—and so—one last question here. This is from Whales. W-H-A-L-E-S, so I have to assume this person's a representative—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —speaking for..

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

"How do you handle someone who elevates any conversation which contains disagreement to a formal debate?"

One, I can say—I think that sounds exhausting.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Um, and I think if I were you and this was, like, a friend of yours, I would say, like, "Hey. That's exhausting." Like, it's okay for us to disagree on, like, what's our favorite episode of *Frasier*, right? Everyone knows it's the episode

where Niles runs up and down the stairs 'cause the power's out and the elevator's not working, and he delivers a great monologue.

But if you feel differently, that's okay. It's fine. Who cares?

Teresa: If you feel that *Frasier* was a really boring show.

Travis: Whoa! Okay!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Huh! A weird thing to learn eight years into our relationship, but alright.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Wow!

Teresa: Um, I think that you can... first of all, sometimes things just end in a deadlock. They end in a stalemate.

Travis: Sometimes people disagree.

Teresa: You just disagree. And if this is something that continues to come up and you just don't want to do this debate, you can just say, "I disagree."

Travis: Here's a great—this is a great example. Like, classic, you know, sittin' around, havin' a conversation question. Cake or pie, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: There is no conclusive... end to that. Right? The fun of it is, like, how many different counterpoints can we bring up of cake versus pie, right?

Teresa: Like, does ice cream cake count as cake? It says cake.

Travis: Does cheesecake, right? That kind of stuff.

Teresa: Does cheesecake?

Travis: Cheesecake is a custard. It's like—right? That is a great example of a debate, right? Versus, like... I don't know. Like, "What you said hurt my feelings."

"Well, let me explain to you why what I said is okay."

That's an argument.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: That's not—that's not a debate. And—and so I think that, like, if somebody's like, "What, you thought the movie was good? Let me break down point by point—" I think it's okay to say, like, "Hey, I actually don't wanna do this. I liked the movie, and I'm fine with the fact that you don't like the movie. Let's just leave it there."

Teresa: Yeah. Absolutely.

Travis: Speaking of leaving it there, that's gonna do it for us this week.

Teresa: [laughs] Nice.

Travis: Thank you! Hey, everybody! Have a pleasant holiday. And I also wanna say, if there are people in your life—and maybe this is—I didn't mean for this, but maybe this is a really germane episode for some folks—where, like, you know you're headin' into the holidays... like, throughout the rest of the year, and you're going to encounter *that* person who always wants to, like, arguebate with you. I think it's okay to, like, "Not this year." Like, if you don't want to... if you want to, go for it. But if you don't want to... don't! Don't. Just take it easy. [holding back laughter] You have my permission.

Teresa: Alright. Thanks for that.

Travis: You're welcome. This is your dad, Travis—

Teresa: [snorts]

Travis: —saying it's okay to occasionally just—and maybe that's it. Oh, this is a thing—I'm going to make a suggestion. In the game of *Urban Shadows* that we based the *Adventure Zone: Dust* on, there's this game mechanic where everybody has a card with an X on it. And if a subject is brought up that is

problematic and upsets someone at the table, they can just hold up their X card, and the players at the table change the—the topic to something else, right?

Teresa: Hm.

Travis: You don't have to say, like, "This is why it upsets me. This is—" right? And, like, you don't have to, like, raise your hand and interrupt the thing. Maybe if your family knows that they have a bad habit of getting into arguments and you all don't want to, maybe pass out some note cards with some X's on 'em, and implement the same rule! Just a suggestion.

Teresa: That's interesting.

Travis: A thing you could try. Um, so go check out all the other amazing shows on Maximumfun.org. They're all incredible and you'll love them. That's a Travis McElroy guarantee!

Um, we have up at mcelroymerch.com on the merch company DFTBA, we have some beautiful pins. Uh, that's, like, a really cute dove talking to a really cute deer that says "Hello, my dove." "Hello, dear." Um, and you can find the same design on a really nice t-shirt that was designed by Kate Leth.

Uh, that is at mcelroymerch.com. Um, what's—

Teresa: Tell 'em about the newsletter.

Travis: Oh, right! We're—we're doin' McElroy Mail newsletter thing now that contains all the information about all of our various projects and upcoming things and all that rigmarole.

Ooh! Speaking of Thanksgiving and upcoming projects, it is time once again for another episode of *Til Death Do Us Blart*—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —where me and Justin and Griffin and our friends Tim and Guy watch and review *Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2*. We do it every American Thanksgiving, and will do so for the rest of linear time, because when we die we have chosen our replacements, and they must legally take over the show from us and keep it going forever.

Um, and so that will be out this Thursday, um, and you can listen to it. I mean, I guess—it's called *Til Death Do Us Blart*. Um, and there's only three other episodes right now, so if you haven't listened to it before, go check it out!

Uh, what else, Teresa?

Teresa: Well, we always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Um, also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our beautiful thumbnail art on Twitter, and you can follow us on Twitter @shmannerstcast.

Um, also, thank you to Keely Weis Photography for a beautiful cover—what—banner? Whatever—what is that called?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Uh, for our fan-run Facebook group which you should join called *Shmanners Fanners*.

Travis: Uh, and that's gonna do it! Uh, join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required!

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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