

## Shmanners 256: Group Chat

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**Travis:** LOL.

**Teresa:** WTF?

**Travis:** JK! IS!

[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:** Do you get it? I-S, like, "It's *Shmanners*."

**Teresa:** Yes. Yes.

**Travis:** Like if it's *Shmanners* was some kind of cool chat speak.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Then it would be IS.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Get it?

**Teresa:** I get it.

**Travis:** Yeah. Okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Hi, everybody! Welcome to another episode. We're, uh, sitting here. It's a little bit rainy outside.

**Teresa:** Yeah, which I am actually very grateful for. I have some serious seasonal allergy trouble goin' on, and the rain really helps. The moisture attaches to the pollen and pulls the pollen down to the ground with the raindrop.

**Travis:** And smothers it.

**Teresa:** Well, no. I mean, it goes on the ground instead of up my nose.

**Travis:** Oh, okay. Okay, cool.

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** But that's not what we're talking about. This isn't—what? This isn't Bill Nye!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Nope.

**Travis:** This is *Shmanners*!

**Teresa:** It sure is.

**Travis:** We're talking about group chats.

**Teresa:** Um, I wanted to go down memory lane just a little bit.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** With the group chat. I did not really start with a group chat until I got an iPhone.

**Travis:** You never did, like—was there—was there group chat capabilities in AOL, in IM?

**Teresa:** There was, but I was not permitted to enter a chat room. I was allowed to do instant messaging, but you could only have two people, right?

**Travis:** Yeah. Now, I think it is important for clarity's sake...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** I do not think about a chat room as a group chat.

**Teresa:** Oh, really?

**Travis:** And there's a very—for me, and maybe this is a, um—

**Teresa:** It's an important step in the history of group chat.

**Travis:** Oh, definitely!

**Teresa:** Okay, okay.

**Travis:** Definitely it is an evolution to it.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** But when I hear "group chat," for me it has more of a specific of, "These are people preexisting in the group, who now we have built a chat specifically for us to talk about it."

**Teresa:** Oh, like joining a channel on a CB radio.

**Travis:** Yes... sort of. No, the opposite.

**Teresa:** No? The opposite?

**Travis:** Because with a chat room, right? Or something like that, it's an online community of people where it's a—something, a community of people, right? For sure. But the thing that connects them all is that chat, right? As opposed to, me and my friends are working on this assignment for school, and so to stay in contact with it, we will create a chat to discuss it, and that is our group chat for that project.

**Teresa:** Hmm.

**Travis:** So we were already connected beforehand. We are not strangers coming together.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** We share a connection, and so we have built this chat to quickly share messages betwixt each other, instead of having to relay them to everybody one by one.

**Teresa:** Man, you know what? Group chat would've been awesome to have for group projects in school.

**Travis:** I mean, that's what a lot of people use them for now. Not just school, either, like, work.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I mean, if you are, like, on a committee, right? People use it for that all the time. It's not just memes.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But a lot of it is memes. Um—

**Teresa:** Well, I didn't get a cell phone until my second year of college.  
Um—

**Travis:** Yeah. And you didn't get a *good* cell phone until your second year of dating me.

**Teresa:** [laughs] That's true. I had a flip phone. No, I had a slide! I remember that.

**Travis:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I remember it, too.

**Teresa:** Uh, but—

**Travis:** I believe you kept saying, "Why would I need a smartphone?"

And I said, "C—countless reasons!"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** It is one of the greatest advances in technology of the modern age!  
The ability to have access to every piece of information in existence,  
wherever you are!

And you're like, "No, I'm fine." [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs] I was fine, and now I'm ruined.

**Travis:** Oh—[stammering] Well, that is one way to look at it!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** So, uh, that would've been great. Instead, we had to, like, figure out a time all together to, like, get together and, like, do it... IRL.

**Travis:** Well, that was—I mean, listen. Yes, in real life, yes.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** You are so proud of yourself. That it is a thing—

**Teresa:** BRB. [laughs distantly]

**Travis:** Okay. Be right back, but you're still sitting here. Okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** AFK, away from keyboard? See, this is the thing. As we've talked about—and I'm sure we'll talk about the history here in a second, 'cause that's what we do on the show.

**Teresa:** That is.

**Travis:** But it is hard for—as you mentioned, like, chat rooms for example, right? For it all not to bleed together, because the way we have communicated using technology influences each other so much. 'Cause, like, when we talk about, like, text speech, right? AFK, LOL.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Like, these are things that, like, work—like, that you connect to cell phones, right? But that I also connect to, like, online RPGs, that I connect to chat rooms, that I connect to AOL IM, that I connect to these things, right? They didn't just come into existence for cell phones.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** But I—man, I think about all the times that I had projects in school that, like, I didn't know the person's, like, phone number, and they weren't in the phone book, so I was like, "Well, I guess I'll see `em tomorrow at school!"

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, before we start on the historical portion, I would like to thank our friend Maeve for emailing in this suggestion. Thank you, Maeve.

**Travis:** I wanna know—you're on some—are there any group chats that are especially close to your heart right now that you're on?

**Teresa:** Oh. Well, I have—I have two group chats always running at this point. I have the MSLMSLaMs.

**Travis:** Yeah, with you and Rachel and Syd.

**Teresa:** Yeah. And then I have my friends here in town, Maggie Lou and Kelly.

**Travis:** Yes. Uh, my—me and my friends, Bob and Bradbury, have a group chat that has been going for many years now, uh, that we have changed the name of many times. I believe, currently, the name of said group chat is Belushi Boys.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** For a long time it was Beagle Boys, and then Inside Boys, and now it's Belushi Boys. Because we, for some reason, became very fascinated that Jim Belushi had opened a marijuana selling company. And for some reason, in, like, three days, each of us became aware of it at different times, and then it was like, "Did you see this?"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And, like, then we just talked about it a lot, until the name changed. So, let's talk about the history.

**Teresa:** Yes, yes. Back—back to the topic at hand.

**Travis:** Way back to ancient Egypt...

**Teresa:** Umm...

**Travis:** The first time three people got together and talked.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** And they said, "This is a group!"

**Teresa:** So, what we're gonna talk about is instant messaging technology.

**Travis:** Hmm!

**Teresa:** Okay? And probably, the first multi-user operating systems, like the compatible time sharing system...

**Travis:** The what?

**Teresa:** It is a—it's a computer messaging system that dates back to 1961. Um, it was created at MIT, and it allowed 30 users—up to 30 users to log in at the same time and send messages to each other.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** But, like... it was, like, kind of, um... you had to be in the club. You couldn't just sign up for it.

**Travis:** Ah, so like old school Facebook.

**Teresa:** Kinda, yeah. Um—



**Travis:** I also bet that we're using the term "instant" there fairly loosely? 'Cause I bet there was a slight delay. I bet there was a little bit of beeps and boops that had to happen between you hitting send and it reaching the other person.

**Teresa:** Yeah, probably.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** In 1965, the system had hundreds of registered users from MIT and other New England colleges. Um, and like you said, it wasn't exactly instant, but it was—

**Travis:** All the messages had to go through pneumatic tubes!

**Teresa:** —it was—[laughs] No.

**Travis:** No. Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** [through laughter] It didn't.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, it was your great-great-grandfather of AIM.

**Travis:** You know, I'm willing to bet, just with what I know about the reception of new technology that even at—so, four years, right? And now there's hundreds of people on it. I bet that there were countless examples of people saying, like, "Yeah, but why? We have phones. You can just call—" You know that that was like, "Oh, a hundred people? You know who's connected to the telephone? Everybody. Come on! What is this?"

And nobody appreciated how important it would be to GIF sharing.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, the first instant online chat system was created in 1973, um, at the University of Illinois. It ran on the PLATO system, which was the first generalized computer-assisted instruction system.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, okay. So, it's one—it's, like, one of those gigantic... box computer things, right? Um—

**Travis:** I'm sorry. One of those giant box computer—you mean like one of those things where we think about, like, it takes up the entire basement?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Not just like, "You know, like a big..." [laughs]

**Teresa:** No! Not like a tower for a modem.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** I'm talking about, like, the full room type deal.

**Travis:** This is really fun, 'cause Teresa is not the technological one of us, and I'm worried that I will watch her run into a mental wall at some point in this.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But so far, doin' great.

**Teresa:** So far, pretty good. Um, and so this is where the first online communities—this was where, like, the digital business was housed, in this PLATO...

**Travis:** System.

**Teresa:** System.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, began to pop up with email, discussion forums, multiplayer games, and chat rooms. So by the 70's, this was, like, full speed ahead, right?

**Travis:** So you never did chat rooms, right?

**Teresa:** No, I was—I'm a, um—a millennial, so...

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** ... I remember a time before the internet. Um, and so, my parents were very wary. Um, we were not allowed to go into chat rooms. I was only allowed to add people that I knew their AIM username. So, like, I had to ask people at school, "Hey, what's your username?" So I could add them to my trusted people list.

**Travis:** And listen, you smile at that now. You cringe at that now. Everybody did that.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** It was—it was the, "What is your number?" Right?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** 'Cause we didn't have phones, right? Like, ugh. Now, I—my family was a bit of an early adopter, I guess. I remember—I can't remember when it happened, but I remember my uncle coming and setting up a computer for us, fairly young for me. And I remember going into chat rooms that were, like, pure, pure, pure—like, they were chat rooms that, like, you logged on the internet and went straight to. Like, there was no World Wide Web.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** You know. Like, you just went straight to 'em. And the one that for some reason sticks out to me was the chat room was themed like a tavern, like a fantasy roleplay tavern.

**Teresa:** Ohh.

**Travis:** And so, like, you went in and, like, as people chatted they were, like, you know, a barbarian or, like, a troll or, you know, a magical... you know, a magic user. And, like, that was the whole chat, and it was all in, like, the little—like, you could see, you know, the bits making the letters, like the squares making letters.

**Teresa:** Oh yeah! Um, so the—[laughs] the chat system I think you're referring to is affectionately called the Talkomatic. Um, and it could accommodate five people at once, and the messages would all appear character by character as they were being typed. It was very popular among PLATO users, and this is where Brown and Woolley—they were the people at the University of Illinois—uh, where they created, like, the world's first chat room.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So then, by the 1980's, chat rooms were flourishing, because of Dialcom. So, Dialcom was in 1979, and then in 1989, they were using Broadcast, which is a Mac extension.

**Travis:** Right. I don't know why I said "Right." I didn't know that before you told—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I don't know why I was trying to act like I knew that. I didn't know that.

**Teresa:** So, in the beginning, these computer systems were pretty only much available on college campuses, much like Facebook.

**Travis:** Yeah. I don't know if everybody remembers this. Facebook, you used to not be able to create an account unless, one, you had a college-based email account, and two, your college was, like, doing it.

**Teresa:** Right, participating.

**Travis:** Like, your college was involved in Facebook.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, yeah. Um, so the first dedicated online chat service that was widely available to the public was, uh, the CompuServe CB Simulator in 1980.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, so the idea was, like I said earlier, like it would work like a CB radio where you would have your username or your handle, and you'd type your message through the computer instead of speaking it in your car radio. Do you understand?

**Travis:** Yeah. You know, I was about to say that I think that this generation won't have the memory of, like, perfectly crafting their AOL Instant Messenger name.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But then I remembered that Twitter exists, and Tumblr exists, and Reddit exists, and everything exists. And Instagram, and TikTok. They've

definitely spent some time crafting the perfect username. I don't know what I was thinking.

**Teresa:** Definitely. Um, and—

**Travis:** What was yours? What was yours?

[pause]

**Teresa:** I bet... it was T-dash-S-A something something something.

**Travis:** I had a couple. One: Travis Unbound.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Because... a play on *Prometheus Unbound*, I guess? I don't know. Uh, and another one was... ugh. [laughs] Was, uh... [sighs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Weird Spiff was one that I used a lot.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Yeah. Yep. Yeah, I know!

**Teresa:** I don't know.

**Travis:** I don't know!

**Teresa:** Um, so here it is, finally. The father, we'll say—if we started with great-great-grandfather, we're up to father, which is, uh, ICQ, which was an Israeli company. And then, AOL bought it, and they turned it into... AIM.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And this was, like, multi-user chat, file transfers, searchable directory. Like, all this kind of stuff that, you know, we... thought was, like, the tip top of technology at the time.

**Travis:** Now, at the time it was. Right? Because that was the thing. There was a time, folks... younger folks may not remember this.

**Teresa:** Buddy list. That's what it was called.

**Travis:** The buddy list. And there was a time where TV shows—I specifically remember watching on Nickelodeon, who I think were, like, way—either owned by, like, AOL, Time Warner, or something along those lines. But they would put at the end of the show, like, the search terms that you would search on AOL to find out more information. Instead of, like, a website, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** It was, like, "Just search 'blah blah blah' on AOL for more information!" Right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And that was, like, the way that they were telling you, like, to find out about it. It was very integrated into, like, daily life at that point.

**Teresa:** So, this is where we start getting—creating user profiles.

**Travis:** Uh-huh. Away messages.

**Teresa:** Yeah, away messages.

**Travis:** Oh boy.

**Teresa:** Icons that began to evolve into emojis.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** Um, and by 2005, it was dominating the game. It had over 53 million users.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** That's a lot.

**Travis:** That is a lot, and we're gonna talk more about group chats, and keep going, and then do some questions. But first, how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** This week, we are gonna write a thank you note to, in part, Function of Beauty. I have many goals. I have already accomplished most of them, if I'm being honest at this point.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Uh, I'm the world's fastest person. Um—

**Teresa:** You got that EGOT.

**Travis:** I got that EGOT, twice. I got two—I got EGOT EGOT. Um, but the one that I'm constantly—that unattainable I'm always reaching for is beauty goals, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Specifically hair goals.

**Teresa:** Hashtag #hairgoals.

**Travis:** Because it's always the next step, right? That was until a found Function of Beauty, and now I've completed that goal, too. Because Function



of Beauty is the world leader in customizable beauty, offering precise formulations for your hair's specific needs.

First, take a quick but thorough quiz to tell them a little bit about your hair type and your hair goals, such as lengthen, volumize, oil control.

For me, uh, the color treatment is part of it, wanna make sure I don't wash out my hair, that thing. Um, and every ingredient Function of Beauty uses is vegan and cruelty free, and they never use sulfates or parabens. You can also go completely silicon free.

Never buy off the shelf just to be disappointed ever again. Go to [functionofbeauty.com/shmanners](https://functionofbeauty.com/shmanners) to take your quiz and save 20 percent off your first order. That applies to their full range of customized hair, skin, and body products. Go to [functionofbeauty.com/shmanners](https://functionofbeauty.com/shmanners) to let them know we sent you, and to get 20 percent off your order. [Functionofbeauty.com/shmanners](https://functionofbeauty.com/shmanners).

**Teresa:** *Shmanners* is also sponsored in part this week by Sunbasket! Um, there are so many choices at Sunbasket. You can go paleo, vegetarian, lean and clean, Mediterranean, all of that jazz is all covered. And here's the newest thing. The newest—

**Travis:** [gasps loudly] The newest thing?

**Teresa:** —the newest craze.

**Travis:** The newest, coolest, latest thing? Go on.

**Teresa:** Sunbasket's fresh and ready meals.

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** They're just 8.99, and they're good for your body, good for your budget!

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I mean, food... is great for your body.

**Travis:** Yeah. Food's good for your body, and not spending a ton is great for your budget. Okay, I—it makes sense now.

**Teresa:** Exactly, exactly. Now, you could get some, uh, organic fresh produce if you want, hormone free, antibiotic free, sustainably sourced seafood—there are tons of choices in these meals, and here are just some of the delicious fresh and ready options available.

Braised beef curry with jasmine rice, shrimp paella, uh, pappardelle with spinach—I mean, like—

**Travis:** All kinds of stuff.

**Teresa:** All kinds of really great—mm, delicious, hungry—uh, stuff. So—

**Travis:** I'm not hungry. I ate a donut right before we recorded.

**Teresa:** A donut.

**Travis:** Yeah, I know. It's 3:45 in the afternoon. I don't know what's wrong with me.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Right now, Sunbasket has a limited time offer where you can get 90 dollars off, and four free gifts across your first four deliveries, including free shipping on the first box when you go right now to [sunbasket.com/shmanners](https://sunbasket.com/shmanners) and enter promo code "shmanners" at checkout. That's [sunbasket.com/shmanners](https://sunbasket.com/shmanners), and enter the promo code "shmanners" at checkout. This offer expires on 4/13.

[piano music plays in the background]

**Jo:** Hi! I'm Jo Firestone.

**Manolo:** And I'm Manolo Moreno.

**Jo:** And we host *Dr. Gameshow*, a podcast where listeners submit games, and we play them, regardless of quality, with a dozen listeners from around the world.

**Manolo:** We've had folks call in from as far as Sweden, South Africa, and the Philippines.

**Jo:** Here's an example. Uh, Yesterdog, where players must sing a Beatles song but throw in the word "dog" and dog-related terms like... give an example, Manolo?

**Manolo:** Yeah. [to the tune of "Hey Jude"] Hey dog, dog dog dog dog bone.

**Jo:** Oh. [laughs quietly] Okay. *Dr. Gameshow* has new episodes every other Wednesday on Maximum Fun. Check us out!

**Manolo:** Ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-check us out!

**Jo:** Nice.

[music and ad play and end]

**Travis:** Okay. When last we left off, AOL IM was at the top of the game.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And I assume they stayed there forever.

**Teresa:** No. Everybody had to get on this bandwagon. You've got in 1998, Yahoo launched Yahoo Messenger.

**Travis:** Oh, right, right, right.

**Teresa:** And then Microsoft had MSN Messenger, later rebranded Windows Live Messenger.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Um, and then—so, like—and—[sighs] we're just gettin' started. In 2000, Jabber hit the scene.

**Travis:** Oh boy, okay.

**Teresa:** And now, you could go for—uh, here's the thing. 2002, iChat for Mac. And then they launched an app compatible to AIM in 2011, iMessage. So now, a user could send unlimited messages to almost any Apple product.

**Travis:** Okay. See, yeah. I'm—I'm remembering this, because most of those, nobody did. [laughs] Like, I—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —I only remember them in, like, reference, right? But, like, the thing is, there was that gap, right? Between AOL IM and smartphones.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Right? So, like, there—I think that AOL IM would probably still be what it was then if they—if that had come out more. Like, you know what I mean? Like, I think Twitter is what it is now because Twitter started as smartphones were, like, becoming a thing.

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** So they kind of grew together, and it became that thing, right? Where I think AOL IM was just about a decade too early.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And kind of missed that window.

**Teresa:** Uh, speaking about missing the window, MySpace then offered an instant messaging and group chat capability. Um, Skype has a group chat capability. Obviously Facebook Messenger, um, Facebook Chat, you can do WhatsApp, all of these things.

**Travis:** Even now Twitter, you have DMs and you can DM groups. I mean, you could extend that to, like, Slack. You could extend that to, like, Discord now, you know what I mean?

**Teresa:** So, as of 2018, 45 percent of Americans said that they were actively engaged in a group text which they responded to at least once a week.

**Travis:** And that was 2018.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** We're in 2021 now, a year into coronavirus pandemic. You know that number is higher, right? You know that that ability to communicate with each other, uh, without meeting in person, in a group setting, uh, without having to get dressed, right?

**Teresa:** Exactly. [laughs]

**Travis:** You know that number is higher.

**Teresa:** And like a lot of things we talk about on *Shmanners*, the pendulum swings both ways. So, "Oh my gosh, this is amazing!" Of course plenty of people started criticizing the new slang and text language, saying it was an affront to the English language. Um—

**Travis:** Which is BS, because the English language is, one, ever-evolving. Um, it is not a set in stone thing. And two, what you're talking about is, like, the words we used to use, and there are lots of words we used to use that are horrible and should not be used anymore.

**Teresa:** Certainly.

**Travis:** So to act like your language was better because it was older is wrong.

**Teresa:** Right. Um, and again, the idea of, like, "Who are your children talking to?" That was one of the big things in my house, my parents' house. Um, you know, in the early 2000s, there were popularity of shows like *To Catch a Predator*, right?

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Um, internet safety has gotten a little better since then but, you know, there's a lot—there are just as many downsides to instant messaging. Um, the internet in general creates this anonymity that—

**Travis:** Yes, that is true, yeah.

**Teresa:** —that's the thing. You can be whoever you want to be online, and if you can do a image search, you can put anybody's image on your profile picture. Like, you know, we have—we have this kind of unspoken trust of people when we meet them online, that—

**Travis:** Maybe *you* do!

**Teresa:** Well, I mean—

**Travis:** I don't!

**Teresa:** What I'm saying is, we hope that everyone enters into the contract of, "This is a real person." But, you know, catfishing is also something that people do.

**Travis:** That is true.

**Teresa:** And *To Catch a Predator* was, like, the whole thing of, like, setting up a fake profile, right?

**Travis:** Yeah. But I think—okay. I'm not gonna downplay that because, like, people use the internet to prey on people for sure, right? Um, but I also think that there is a lot of, uh, the same thing that we see—like, we've talked before about how people point to, like, smartphones of, like, "Well, now people don't talk anymore." It's like, well, yeah, but you can find pictures of everybody looking at a newspaper on a train and not talking to each other.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** It's like, the internet did not create predators. It just gave a new outlet. And I think that any time that there is a new technology or a new something, right? Security is always behind it, right? We create the thing, and then we have to figure out how to make it safe. Look at cars, look at power tools, look at anything, right? We create the thing first, and then when it's put into the hands of people, only then do we realize how dangerous it is, and we have to go back and make the thing safe.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** So it's not like before the internet, children were safe, and then the internet came along, and oh no, now everyone's in danger. And I think one of the things that kind of made that especially scary for the internet is, technology can often be harder for people—especially something that is, like, so computer-based—harder for previous generations that were not raised using it to understand.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And, like, man, seeing that now, especially—both Bebe and Dot are so good at using phones. [laughs] Like, Dot can swipe through—she has been able to open my phone from lock screen. I don't know how! I don't know how—

**Teresa:** How is she doing that?!

**Travis:** 'Cause she's just a prime leet hacker! I don't know!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But, like, I get why it is scary, like, for parents in, like, '98, 2005, like, that area, to be so scared. But I think also a lot of it is, like, people got so scared that they just didn't engage with it. Um, and that makes it extra scary.

**Teresa:** Um, so—

**Travis:** That's just my little rant about the internet, yeah.

**Teresa:** That's your little rant. But I wanted to talk a little bit about how the pandemic has affected group chatting. Um, there are two sides of this coin, you know, like we said. The pendulum swings.

The first one being that some people are—in an interview in the Washington Post, there was an arti—sorry, the interview was about the mental health of people who are using the group chats. And, you know, on one hand, it's a great way to stay connected.

Um, on another hand, there are so many people using so many different, like, chatting apps. You've got, like, U&Me on text, and then somebody else in a Facebook Messenger group, and then the Slack channel, and then, like, there's just so many notifications coming all the time.

And... being constantly technically available is something that people are struggling with. Um, I mean, even if your boss has your phone number, right? They can text you after work hours.

**Travis:** Well, yeah. Being too available, but also—like, I would say the other side of that too that we see a lot is the frustration that comes when someone *isn't* immediately available.



**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And it's like, "I called you three times!"

Like, "Yeah, in five minutes!"

**Teresa:** "Yeah, I was in the shower!" Whatever.

**Travis:** "Yeah, my phone was on the counter, I was upstairs! Like, calm down, Doug!"

**Teresa:** We're always encountering these things. But...

**Travis:** Do you know what I would be interested—

**Teresa:** Oh.

**Travis:** —to see in the long run?

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** The impact of texting in the long run on the English language, and not in, like, the changing of, like, you know, LOL, and that kind of thing. But one of the things with written, right? Is you lose inflection.

**Teresa:** Yeah, totally.

**Travis:** You lose delivery, right? And so I wonder how, as more and more people have adopted written, like, you know, typed-out text, and we've had to adapt the way that we talk so it's clearer what we're saying.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Without that inflection. How that is, like, subtly changing just construction of sentences, word choice, grammar, that kind of thing, because we're striving to be better understood, like, on the screen, rather than

spoken out loud. I'm not saying it's a bad thing. I just think that that is going to, like, have an effect on the way we choose words, you know, in our communication.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. And another side of all of that, of, you know, constantly available, so many different chat apps, all that kind of stuff, is that, um, people working from home now, who used to work in offices, are kind of, like, driving this, like, multiplatform chatting.

**Travis:** Oh yeah.

**Teresa:** Because there used to be, like, an office chatter, like, a low kind of hum throughout an office that, if you're in your one bedroom apartment, doesn't happen anymore.

**Travis:** I mean, even if you're in a six bedroom apartment, if you're the only person in there...

**Teresa:** [laughs] I guess that's true.

**Travis:** It doesn't matter how many bedrooms you have. It's empty. It's empty. That is why, like, I—we use Slack, um, you know, for McElroy stuff. And being able to just pop in and be like, "You see this? Eh, what—what—look at this wild TikTok!" Right?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Right.

**Travis:** Is, like—that is, I think, an important—that's a thing that people need. I think that ability to say, like, "Hey, this isn't business-related at all, but look at this monkey huggin' this puppy!" [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs] Now, let's get down to it.

**Travis:** Oh! I thought—okay.

**Teresa:** Chatiquette.

**Travis:** Chatiquette. Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, here are a few things that I would like to enter into your chat lexicon.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** What, uh—this is one that Maeve asked directly in her email.

"If you're put into a group chat, you don't know people too well, are you allowed to swear?"

Short answer is probably not. Um, if you don't know those people very well in your group, you don't know—I mean, like, if you're just put into that group chat, you don't have the flavor yet, the feel in the chat room, right? Um, and it's never a bad idea to ask if you could use colorful language in a chat.

**Travis:** Yeah, especially, I think, if it's—if it's, for lack of a better word, professional, but that could be school, that could be work, whatever. I think that if it is a friend thing, and your friend was like, "Hey, I want you to meet these people!" Right? Um, because I think people are meeting more and more through chat things, right? Instead of in person. I think at that point, you know, be your best behavior self.

**Teresa:** Yeah, totally.

**Travis:** Yeah, you know what I mean? Like, your, like, getting-to-know-you self. Don't—don't censor yourself so much that it's not you anymore.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** But, you know, make a good impression.

**Teresa:** Um, so another good point is to, uh—if you have a side conversation that is quickly developing into just, like, a—a two person convo, take it to your text instead of the group chat, um, because... [sighs] It's a

little disheartening to look at your phone and see that you've got, like, 30 notifications, and it doesn't apply to you at all.

**Travis:** Yeah. That—there was a question from Jillian.

"Is it okay to make a separate, smaller group chat with people from the original, or is that rude?"

I think in that scenario, or if it's something that, like—say there's ten people in the chat, and this is something that only pertains to four people, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Like, yeah, go for it, right? Now, don't do it to exclude people!

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Right? Because then—I would always assume, right? The rule of thumb is, if one of the people from the original conversation saw this other conversation, would they be upset, right? And frankly, if you all had to make plans because you were dropping garbage off at the dump together or whatever, it's like, "Yeah, please don't include me in this."

**Teresa:** [laughs] And quality over quantity. Just because you can put, like, 25 people in an iMessage or whatever group chat, doesn't mean that you should.

**Travis:** That is a good rule in general, uh, when you are creating—be it a in-person hangout or an online chat thing, is it is easier to add people later than to try to remove people who aren't fitting in. And I—I—I'm the type of person that I want to invite as many people to the party as possible, uh, mostly because I feel bad not inviting people. I want them—I want everybody to feel like they are welcome somewhere.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Um, but, like, that doesn't always make sense for something like this, where it is about—like, we are connected through this thing, so we're having a chat about it.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Like I've said, my—the group chat that I use the most is me and two other people, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Because it's, like, the three of us are the ones mostly planning, and adding people to it would inherently change the, like, conversation.

**Teresa:** Here's another couple ones. If you're starting a professional group chat, or even, like, a large family group chat where people might not know each other, it is the host, the starter of the group chat, the one who puts it together, to explain what it's for, and to invite everyone to say their names so that you can put the name in with the number that you're receiving, uh, so you're not just getting what feels like a bunch of random people talking and not being able to figure out who said what.

**Travis:** You should also, if you are the host and putting it together, ask if people are okay being in a group chat. Because, as you said, it will put their phone number in their group chat if you're doing it through—you know, through a phone, through a phone number. And not everybody wants to share their phone number around.

**Teresa:** Exactly. Um, be mindful of the time that you text people in the chat. Uh, we have several friends on the west coast, and we are Eastern Standard Time right now, that we try not to contact before noon our time, because that's nine AM their time.

**Travis:** Uh, I have a question here that I wanna get your take on.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Harrison asks, "If you come into a chat with something to share and announce, but someone just posted something equally or more important a few minutes ago, should I wait to post my thing until later?"

**Teresa:** I would say you can wait until everyone has offered their, like, attaboys, their congratulations, all that whatever it is. Or, um, their condolences, or—or whoever—whatever it is. Wait for everyone to respond to that piece of news first, and then add your piece of news.

**Travis:** And, I mean, also read the room, you know? If it is a condolence scenario, you don't wanna roll up and be like, "Yeah, that—aww, I'm so sorry. Also, I bought a new car!" Right? Like, that is not the right time to do it. I think—you know, make sure you do acknowledge their thing. Um, and, you know, don't try too hard to make it seem like you're not one-upping them, right? Like, you don't wanna be like, "Well, now I feel weird doing this, but—" Right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Just, like, say it. That's why you have the group chat, to share the thing.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Um, let's see. Okay. So, I got kinda two here that tie in to each other. Kristen asks, "Is it possible to send too many GIFs in the chat?"

And then Rue Barbara asks, "How do you politely ask someone to chill on the memes, GIFs, jokes?"

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay. Um, well, so what usually happens is, one person sends a GIF, and then everybody responds in a GIF, and then that train has left, okay? Then we go back to talking. So, if someone only responds... [laughs] Only responds in GIF, I think that it's okay that you can, like, point that out and be like, "Only responding in GIFs now, I see." Or something like that.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** So that you can—you make it more like "we all take our turn" kind of thing.

**Travis:** Well, and the thing is, is, as we talked about earlier about the loss of inflection and stuff and delivery, you need to make sure you don't know—I mean, for them, maybe they think it's a bit. You know, maybe they, like, think it's part of the joke, and they don't realize that it's getting a little bit annoying. That's me, all the time. You know what I mean? Where I think that that is the bit. I think that that is the game. Um, so I would say if you want to reach out to—if you wanna say, like, "Hey, cool it." I would do that separately and privately, right?

**Teresa:** Oh yes, of course.

**Travis:** You don't—because, I mean, inherently in a group chat it's in front of other people if you call 'em out, right? So being able to say, like, "[quietly] Hey, I think that's enough GIFs for now."

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Right?

**Teresa:** Follow the rule of congratulate in public, critique in private.

**Travis:** Yeah. Um, let's see. If you're in a group chat for some—this is from Kayla.

"If you're in a group chat for something professional, when is the right time to leave when you are no longer doing that job?"

**Teresa:** Oh. Um, say—okay. So, say you have a specific committee for a specific project. When the project is completed, you say your goodbyes.

**Travis:** Yeah. "Hey, everybody! Thanks—" if you're, like, doing it—you know, you're—it's a work chat and you quit or get fired, say, like, "Hey, it's been so

wonderful talking to everybody. Have a great time! Talk to you later." And then leave the chat. Right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Yeah. I would say, like, when the thing comes to a close.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Its logical conclusion.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** But I do think it is important to say goodbye.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** And not just leave.

**Travis:** We got one more here from Olive about that. Olive asks, "Is it rude to leave a group chat without saying goodbye, if you haven't talked in there for a bit? Specifically if it's people you don't know that well. People have told me it's rude, but I don't get it."

**Teresa:** Um, I think that there is a statute of limitations on this. If you haven't talked in, say, a week, and it seems clear that you are no longer a part of the conversation, I think it's okay to just leave.

**Travis:** That second part I think is the tricky thing. Of, like, I think that there are very definite scenarios in which you might not have talked for a week, but you are still part of the conversation, right?

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** So if it's, like, for planning a thing, or a group of friends, and they like having you there and you haven't talked for a while, and you think, "It doesn't matter. I haven't said anything in a while."



But they wanted you—you know what I mean? Like, you feel like part of the group chat and you're leaving. I would still say goodbye. You know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Like, that, to me, is why I would say goodbye in that scenario, is—

**Teresa:** So it's more about the relationship, I think.

**Travis:** Exactly, right.

**Teresa:** Yeah. I would have to say that, like, there have been several, like... for example, I hardly ever check my Facebook Messenger. And if I get added to a group chat on Facebook Messenger, I don't feel bad just, like, leaving.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** But I do think that if it's a smaller group, or if it's, like, iMessage or whatever, you can say, "I can't handle all these notifications. I'm out." But leave—like, okay. If you and your SO are on the same chat say, "I'm out, but Travis is gonna stay in, so..."

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** "We'll still get the info."

**Travis:** Or, you know, at the very least, just something like, "Hey, folks! Gotta leave the group chat. Thanks so much! Bye." Right? I don't think you need to explain why. I don't think you need to do any of that. But, like, at least that way no one can say you're being rude.

Speaking of not being rude, we're going to say goodbye now, because that is going to be the end of our episode. We wanna thank you all so much for being here, for joining us. We wanna thank Max Fun, our podcasting home. Uh, go check out [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com). We have some really cool new merchandise over there for April, uh, including a Farm Wisdom pin from old

*My Brother, My Brother, and Me*, and that's our pin of the month, and it benefits the AAPI Civic Engagement Fund, which supports efforts by local community-based organizations to combat violence and hate.

We've also got a new *Adventure Zone* shirt over there in black and tie-dye. Uh, so go check that out. Speaking of *The Adventure Zone*, you can preorder *The Adventure Zone: Crystal Kingdom*. It comes out July 13th, but preorder it now at [theadventurezonecomic.com](http://theadventurezonecomic.com)!

Go check out all the other McElroy shows and projects at [mcelroy.family](http://mcelroy.family).  
What else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. We also thank Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, and that's where we got all of our great questions, listener-submitted questions this week. That is @shmannerscast.

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

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