

Shmanners 342: Read and React – Peter Post and Dorothy Draper

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[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? Why, you're listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: I like to mix it up.

Teresa: Uh, yeah, I hear that.

Travis: Make sure the energy is fresh.

Teresa: Definitely.

Travis: Make sure it's as fresh as a newborn baby?

Teresa: Hmm...

Travis: Nope, that's not it. I don't think people refer to newborn babies as fresh. Like, you wouldn't—like, if someone just had a baby and you walked in to see 'em you wouldn't be like, "Look at that fresh baby." [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Hot off the presses."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: What are we doing today? This is a different format.

Teresa: Yeah. We're starting a new... series? Series within in our show.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Well, so in the great tradition of multiple episodes discussing weddings, right?

Travis: Sure, and we've done our series of, uh... what is it? Sayings. That's not what they're called.

Teresa: Idioms.

Travis: Idioms, yes.

Teresa: And many others that kind of, like, piggyback around each other, right? Off each other.

Travis: You know, how have we done a series about idioms and never talked about that it's one letters off from idiots? Do they share a root word.

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: But it's so close to being the same!

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Okay...

Teresa: Anyway. Um, we're gonna start a new one. We're tentatively calling this Read and React. Because...

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: ... that is what we are going to do. [wheeze-laughs]

Travis: I think we can find a snappier title, maybe?

Teresa: Read and React isn't snappy enough?

Travis: Or like, Between the Lines. Something that's a more play on word instead of just... the two nou—or two verbs that we will be performing.

Teresa: They both start with R, so...

Travis: I guess that... that's a good point?

Teresa: It's alliterative.

Travis: It is alliterative. Okay. Alright. I—tentative.

Teresa: Tentative. [laughs quietly]

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, because over the years that we've been doing this show, I have amassed quite a collection of etiquette books.

Travis: And you won't let me hollow them out to hide things in.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: They're big, thick, hardbound books. They would be perfect. You know where people aren't gonna look for, like, cool things? In the Emily Post guide, right? I'm just saying! Think of all the cool things I could hide—and it's not important.

Teresa: Not important. Because not only do I find them places, people send them to me, which is amazing. And I—

Travis: You've gotten them for presents at Christmases and birthdays.

Teresa: We've gotten them for presents at Christmas. Because once you tell your family that you like something, they give you all of that thing.
[laughs]

Travis: Yeah. That's true. That's why they keep giving me pictures of myself. [laughs quietly]

Teresa: No, they—

Travis: 'Cause I like myself.

Teresa: Well, no, they don't. That's—

Travis: People do, though. People do send me drawings, yeah.

Teresa: Fans do, because they like you, too.

Travis: So you're saying my family doesn't like me?

Teresa: I'm just saying [laughs] that they are not, uh... they're not supporting that particular habit.

Travis: They're not feeding the beast. I get it. Okay.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, and of course some of them are older editions of books that I already have. Um, I really like when we go to, uh—go to different places, see if anybody has, you know, like—when we were in Pigeon Forge one time I looked to see if there were like, I don't know, like a Dolly etiquette book or something like that.

Travis: Oh my god, that would be so good.

Teresa: That would be so good. I didn't see one on that trip.

Travis: I guarantee, though, she's written something that we could talk about. We should do a bio on her. It's wild. But—

Teresa: Anyway.

Travis: What I like about this is also, we should go ahead and credit, because you might be thinking like, "Oh, this is different, so what did Alex do this time?" Alex helped us go through these books and say, like, "Here are some great passages for you guys to discuss."

Teresa: Because with children now, I don't read books cover to cover like I used to.

Travis: Well, you do if they have, like, *Vampirina* in 'em, or *Bluey*.

Teresa: [laughs loudly]

Travis: Or, uh, a lot of rhyming nonsense words.

Teresa: Right, yeah, yeah. I'm more—

Travis: Stuff about monster's new underpants.

Teresa: I'm more of an—

Travis: Cover to cover.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I've seen her do it in one sitting, folks. It's incredible.

Teresa: I'm more of an index reader these days, if there's something that I want to go straight for, I use that. But, um—

Travis: Well, and the other difficult thing is frankly when we're researching things, so if you want to find out suppose about a topic, you got the internet right at your fingertips, right? Where it's so much easier to deep dive a specific topic than to just read a whole book to see if there's something in it.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Related to these episodes. So rarely do we get the chance to go in depth on these books that we've been sent. So this is an opportunity to do that.

Teresa: So, a couple of the books that I have in front of me, in my lap, are kind of like, um, like a general introduction into some etiquette. The first one that I am going to read excerpts from is by Peter Post of the Emily Post Institute. *Descendant*—

Travis: [simultaneously] And I'm betting Post family, yeah.

Teresa: Yes, of Emily Post. And he's written several books, particularly he also wrote *Essential Manners for Men*, identifying as a man himself.

Travis: I think I've read that.

Teresa: You probably have.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: We might have it somewhere.

Travis: And let me also say, uh, unintended bonus for those of you at home with ASMR, uh... capabilities? I don't know. Lots of page turning in this one! Ooh.

Teresa: Lots of page turning.

Travis: Delicious.

Teresa: And so I am going to be reading from *Essential Manners for Couples*.

Travis: Okay. That—ooh, that's perfect! 'Cause I don't know if you know this...

Teresa: We are!

Travis: We are a couple.

Teresa: We are a couple.

Travis: A couple a weirdos.

Teresa: He obviously also thanks his wife, Trisha, for coauthoring this book, if not in particular words, definitely in their shared experiences.

Travis: Hmm. Does he credit their son, Fence? Fence Post?

Teresa: [sad trombone noise]

Travis: [sad trombone noise]

Teresa: Okay. Um, so here... here's what I would like to read for you today. Consists of the three principles of etiquette. Now, I would like you, before I read it...

Travis: [pained] Ooh!

Teresa: ... of what Peter Post says are the three principles.

Travis: Okay. The three principles. Um...

Teresa: You know, if you could just—just how about—how about one? You tell me one principle, you think, of etiquette.

Travis: Is there something there that basically sums up, like, the do unto others as you would want them to do unto you?

Teresa: Absolutely! That's the first one!

Travis: Boom. Now let me see if I can get the second one.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Um... uh... when in doubt, kindness.

[pause]

Teresa: Sure, sure.

Travis: But that's not one of 'em, is it?

Teresa: That's not really one of them, because—

Travis: Okay, what are the other ones?

Teresa: Okay. So, consideration.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Right? That was the first one, right? Respect, and honesty.

Travis: [hisses loudly]

Teresa: Is what—

Travis: Ohh, that's a tough. Two of 'em I've got down. I respect people to a fault. Um, I'm so worried about doing things wrong, as we've discussed in this show many, many times, the idea of there being a procedure that one is supposed to follow, and me not knowing it, is one of my biggest anxieties. Considerate? Yeah. Oh, this guy? Top notch. [high pitched] Honest? Honest? [unintelligible mumbling]

Teresa: [laughs] You have been known to fudge the truth.

Travis: Well, this is actually one of the trickiest things of, like, talking to our kids about honesty. Is, like, wanting—when you are explaining a core concept thing to kids, you gotta be careful not to go into the, "You know, unless things happens," all the conditional statements. And it's so tempting to be like, "It is important that we are always honest... unless it's gonna hurt someone's feelings, or unless it's like, 'I don't have to tell you!' That kind of thing. Don't be pressured into telling someone something you don't wanna—" you gotta leave that out.

Teresa: Yeah, gotta leave it out.

Travis: So you just be like, "Honesty is important." [pained noise]

Teresa: Okay. So... let's talk about consideration first. Peter Post writes:

"Consideration is understanding how other people are affected by whatever is taking place. To be considerate is to show empathy for those around you. Consideration above all requires thinking before acting. In order to consider the effect of your actions, appearance, and words on your significant other, you'll ask yourself: how's he going to feel or react if I do that? It's when you just go blindly ahead and do something without thinking that you are not showing consideration, and stuff is likely to hit the fan."

Travis: Now, that, yes. Absolutely. It's obviously important. Secondarily to that, though, if you fail to consider beforehand, try considering after hand. It's not as good...

Teresa: It's not as good.

Travis: ... it's not as good, but it's still better than never considering at all. And if you're hearing that and you're like, "Yeah, I do that." Do you do it when you're in line for, like, an amusement park ride? Or when you're walking around a big crowded place? Are you thinking about the people behind you? 'Cause I tell you from my life experience, you're probably not. Just statistically speaking from the people I've been stuck behind in a thing, you're not thinking about my experience behind you at all.

Teresa: I think relationship has to do a little bit with this, right? Because what you're saying is you're not considering those people, because maybe they're not within, like, your bubble of the relationship that you want to have with people, right? So I would—

Travis: I don't consider them. I'm saying I want them to consider me.

Teresa: I see.

Travis: It doesn't need to be two—I don't care about them.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But I would like them to consider my experience. I would also, uh, actionable advice here from someone who's been married for a hundred years. It's not just considering, like, bad stuff before you do it.

Teresa: Of course.

Travis: It's also like, you know what—for example. In my love language I like to give gifts, right? I like to do things for people. And sometimes you have to think about like, okay, great. Will they be embarrassed that I spent too much money on this? Will this be a thing that they don't actually need and it's just gonna clutter up a shelf in their house? Is this the service they actually need me to provide, or is there a better way I could express my love for them by, like, helping them—like, for example you might be like, "I bet they'd love a surprise." Would they?

Teresa: Would they love a surprise?

Travis: Really consider if they want a surprise or not! 'Cause Teresa and I do not care for surprises.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Do not like it. I think we've talked about this before on the show.

Teresa: We've definitely talked about this.

Travis: I need to prepare myself for something bad and something good. I need to be ready for whatever happens next, even if it's the best thing in the world. If I'm like, "Well, I wasn't planning on putting this energy towards hanging out with cool people today. Why have you done this to me?" [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [laughs] That's a great example. Um, and in that way he goes on to discuss in the book as an example... inviting someone over, right?

Especially if in, like—and in the world of this book, we're talking about married hetero couples. If your—if your husband invites your mother-in-law over, even if you have a great relationship with your mother-in-law, it's important to consider, like, the parameters of the inviting-over, right? If you invite someone over immediately, is your significant other going to figure—like, figure in cleaning house, or being available? Or, you know—you know, the example that he gives is... "I invited my mother over for lunch when I actually could have taken a second to put her on hold and say, 'Can my mom come over for lunch?' And then my wife says, 'Hmm, I'm not ready for lunch. We were just gonna do, like, catch as catch can. How about dinner?'"

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Instead, right? That's the really great example he gives.

Travis: Even if it's just like giving them a for—'cause sometimes plans aren't like, "I was gonna go out and do something." Sometimes somebody has been like, "You know, it's been a long day, and I just kind of want to sit on the couch and, like, not talk to people and watch a movie or whatever." And so then if you're like, "Oh, by the way, my friend's coming over in an hour." It's like... it doesn't disrupt some important plan I had, but I was not gearing up to be social tonight.

Teresa: Right. One of the ways that we do this is we have a shared Google Calendar.

Travis: Correct. Correct.

Teresa: [laughs] And, I mean, that definitely doesn't cover every, like, last minute impulse decision, right? But we try and for example teach Bebe about the second thought, right? The first thought is, "Ooh, I want this." And the second thought is, "Hmm. Should I A, ask permission? B, think about dinner's in 20 minutes?" Or, you know, all that kind of stuff.

Travis: Okay. We've spent 13 minutes talking about the first principle in the first passage we're reading.

Teresa: Well, I mean, but also intro.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Okay. The next one...

Travis: R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

Teresa: That's right. Find out what it means to... Peter.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: "Respect. Respect is recognizing that how you interact with another person affects your relationship with that person. Then choosing to take actions that will build and enhance the relationship as opposed to injuring it. Respect helps us decide how to choose to act towards others."

Travis: There you go.

Teresa: Um, I do want to take just a second and pull out the idea of, um... of tone police, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: That's not what this is. We're not saying to have this as your core, like, manners and respectability, right? We're not saying we give you carte blanche to be the tone police. That's not what we're talking about.

Travis: No. I think that this is more like if you're considering it from your—and tell me if I'm interpreting this incorrectly. But I would think of this more like, imagine you have two friends, right? Friend one is very comfortable with you two kind of razzing each other and, like, that's just the way you communicate.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And friend two does not like to be given a hard time, and wants a little bit more, like, grace and understanding if something—if they do something wrong. Right? And it's understanding of like, okay, great. This

way this relationship interacts is like, we give each other a hard time, but at the core of it is love, and we know that, and we're comfortable with being that way. And in this relationship, it is a different kind of vibe where this is all about, like, love and affirmations and support, and that's how we show each other we care about each other. And I should not razz friend two in the same way that I razz friend one because that would injure the relationship.

Teresa: Exactly. That's exactly right. Um, in practical application, that's your and I's relationship, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: You and your brothers are perfectly fine when someone, for example, misspeaks, right? You can take that word that is misspoke and run with it and have fun and volley it back and forth and play games with each other. That is not a game that I enjoy playing with you. And so in our relationship if one of us misspeaks, that's not something that we—that we play with that way.

Travis: And listeners of this show might be like, "But I've heard Travis do that." Yeah, you're right! [laughs]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, it's definitely—it's not always easy to switch that gear, but it is a thing.

Teresa: That's true.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: But that's something that we work on in our relationship, because we respect each other that way.

Travis: And that's the only thing. Other than that—

Teresa: That's the on—that's—uh. [laughs]

Travis: We're at 99.9% at this point. So close.

Teresa: The example that he gives in the book is about a husband and wife that... he has left the tickets at home for their outing later. I think they're going to a show. And they're at the restaurant, and she's upset. She thought she put them in her purse, but now at the restaurant looking in her purse she can't find them. She realizes she's left them on the table at home. And the husband in the example doesn't say anything poorly about her, doesn't razz her about "Ohh, you always forget!" Or whatever it is. He just says, "It's okay. We live five minutes away. You stay here, enjoy your drink. I'll run back and get 'em."

Travis: Yeah. And I think that that is a very... uh, gracious example. I think that, like, the thing that I try to think about—the way I think about it is, like, there is a big difference between just, like, laughing at and laughing with. There's a big difference between frustrated at and being frustrated with.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Right? When you are in a relationship, it's not always your responsibility to not get upset when something goes wrong, because the other person [crosstalk]—

Teresa: Because the situation is obviously frustrating.

Travis: So it's okay for both of you to be frustrated, right? But it just as easily could've been you that forgot the tickets, right? And it's like, this situation is very frustrating, and we're allowed to both be frustrated, right? And sometimes it's just saying, like, "I want you to know, yes this is frustrating. It's not your fault. I'm not frustrated at you. I'm just—this is frustrating, but we can deal with it."

Teresa: Exactly. Um, in this particular example that he gave, he says that this is a—an interaction that he witnessed at the restaurant, and actually said to the couple, like, "That was one of the most amazing things I've ever witnessed." Apparently he was seated very close to them at the bar. [laughs]

Travis: Oh, I don't care, Peter. I would never talk to another couple in con—even if it was a good thing, the idea of being like, "Hey, you guys totally nailed—" I would never. Because when I'm having a conversation with someone, I forget that everyone else exists.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And you butting in is gonna make me be like, "Wha—oh! We need to leave right now."

Teresa: Aww.

Travis: "Someone has observed me."

Teresa: [laughs] Is that why you stop chewing when I look at you while you're eating?

Travis: Correct.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I do not—I like to—I like to perform. Do not like to be observed. There's a big difference.

Teresa: [laughs] It's a running joke. It's very funny.

Travis: A joke, yes.

Teresa: Joke... this last one he talks about is honesty.

Travis: Okay...

Teresa: [singing] Honesty.

Travis: Now, listen. I don't know what he's gonna say.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I will preemptively say honesty, as far as open communication, is great. Unfettered, unbridled honesty can be as destructive as lies.

Teresa: Of course. And that is definitely touched on.

Travis: Oh, good.

Teresa: He writes: "Honesty is being truthful, not deceptive. There is a very important difference, too, between benevolent honesty and honesty that is cutting or unkind."

Travis: There you go.

Teresa: "'I have a problem with that' is a very different thing from 'That's a stupid thing to say.'"

Travis: Ooh!

Teresa: "Honesty ensures that we act sincerely, because sincerity matters. Have you ever listened to a politician speaking and noticed that while he sounds ever so convincing, on some level you simply don't believe him?"

Travis: This is a thing I have noticed a lot in the world, uh, currently. And probably throughout time. But currently—

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: —where people will be like, "I'm just being honest." And it's like, no, you're being blunt. You're being hurtful. You're not being honest. You can speak your thoughts in an honest way without being blunt, without being—

Teresa: Isn't there—there's a great, like, quote. A mean quote from *Glass Onion*, right? Where, um, he talks about how... that one character... I haven't seen that movie. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah, no. You brought it up and I was like, "Wow!" Okay, keep going.

Teresa: But I've only seen the meme.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It's, um...

Travis: Benoit Blanc?

Teresa: Yes. And, uh...

Travis: Howard Norton.

Teresa: No, the blonde.

Travis: Kate Hudson.

Teresa: Kate Hudson, yes. Where she's like "I'm a truth teller, and people just don't understand that. Like, they don't like it." And he says something to the effect of like, "This brand of honesty is not about truth. It's about hurting people."

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That's the difference.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Is like, there are people where... I guess the way to—filtered honesty is the best way you—I like to think about it as like, I can be honest and say what I'm thinking, while also choosing my words very carefully and choosing what I want to make my point about. If that makes sense.

Teresa: Right. So he goes on to say, "For a relationship to thrive, actions, appearance, and words need to be grounded in sincerity. The minute you are insincere, your significant other will see right through you. And then you'll have to strive that harder to recover."

The example that he writes is about getting somewhere on time. When you say "We have to be there at 7, so let's leave at 6: 30," but your pattern of behavior is you're never ready at 6: 30. Right?

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: So that kind of interaction repeated over time makes your words insincere.

Travis: I would also say it goes the other way, 'cause this is a thing, once again, as long as we're talking about couples, that I have had to work on. Where it's like, I have said "Well, we need to be there at 7, so we have to leave at 6: 30." And then at, like, 6: 20 I'm, like, hovering and going like, "I mean, do you—hmm. We can—" and it's like, "Well, you said we were leaving at 6: 30. But what you really meant is, 'I would like to leave no later than 6: 30, but the earlier the better.'" But I didn't say that.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And that kind of thing is like, okay, well, you weren't... you didn't say the actual thing, and then you're getting mad that the person didn't read your mind.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And you know what we should do right now?

Teresa: Yeah?

Travis: A word from some other Max Fun shows.

[theme music plays]

[music plays]

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[music and end end]

Travis: Okay, tell me about this second book.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I remember us buying this. We bought this at the Green Briar?

Teresa: We did! We did. This is by Dorothy Draper, who very famously decorated the Green Briar in her now known as, like, maximalist style.

Travis: Didn't we do a biography on her?

Teresa: We did, we did. Um, very quickly, she's kind of like known for matching pattern with pattern.

Travis: Yeah. Big patterns and a big pattern. Not necessarily, like, the same pattern—it's not the same pattern.

Teresa: Oh no.

Travis: It's like big flowers, and then like, checker—you know, a big checkerboard floor or something, right?

Teresa: Right. So like when I—at this latest visit, we went and I bought some napkins that were on sale. Um, and I thought "Well, what would Dorothy do?" And the truth is, she would do four different patterned napkins that all go together as kind of like—like a—not a matching set, obviously.

Travis: yeah, but like, complimentary set.

Teresa: A complimentary set, exactly.

Travis: Easier to replace individual napkins, too.

Teresa: It's true.

Travis: Smart one, Dorothy.

Teresa: So I ended up with a big flower pattern, and a smaller flower pattern, and a gingham check, and then a plaid that all have very similar color palettes. Not, like—they're not all the same colors, but the green in this one relates to the green in that one, and the pink in this one relates to another one, and so, like, that's her whole big thing. Because, like, her home obviously was decorated like this, but she was very famous for her kind of, like... partyscapes?

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: Right? And the book that I have in front of me is called *Entertaining is Fun!*

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I mean, I agree.

Teresa: Yes. Um, one of the things that she goes over is, uh, your party personality.

Travis: Hmm. Mine's like a hummingbird.

Teresa: Is it? How would you describe that hummingbird party personality?

Travis: So... only in that I flit from group to group and I'm like, "Everybody having a good time?" [crosstalk]

Teresa: Ohh, okay.

Travis: "Is this going well? Is this going well?" But I like to have everything set up when people come, and have stations and everything, and then I am very much a "Make sure you talk to everybody, make sure everybody's having a good time" kind of person. That, I would say, is my deal.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Uh, and then when the party's done I'm a big bear who's like, "Get outta my cave!" And I scare everyone away.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. So, um... she illustrates that there are several different party personalities. Not by, uh—

Travis: Not by animal.

Teresa: —animal. Exactly. But she goes through and talks about how there are lots of different ways to throw a party. From, like, an intimate gathering, right? Or she says that her personal favorite is a gala. [laughs quietly]

Travis: Okay! Not—I'm not throwing a lot of those.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Personally. I'm not even 100% sure I could find a gala-suitable venue, given a year's notice. But okay.

Teresa: Yes. Um, so... from her book, she says: "If you feel like doing any one of things things—" she's referring to a gala, a dinner, a...

Travis: Soiree.

Teresa: A soiree.

Travis: A cocktail party.

Teresa: A—a picnic.

Travis: Uh, a fondue. Uh, a tasting. Uhh...

Teresa: A themed party.

Travis: Murder-mystery.

Teresa: Bridge party.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Anyway.

Travis: Where you're on a bridge.

Teresa: "If you feel like doing any one of these things, or something original and entirely different, do it. Don't put it off till you've bought a new car, or have more money or a bigger house, or until you know more people. None of these are valid excuses. They're alibis."

Travis: Ooh la la, okay! Huh.

Teresa: "Stop alibiing," which I didn't know was a word.

Travis: I don't think it is!

Teresa: "Give yourself the sort of party you long for right now."

Travis: Now, Dorothy. If I may speak to you privately for a moment, I love the concept of, like, "If you want to do this, do it." You are missing out on the aspect of maybe I want to throw a gala, and I have no monies.

Teresa: [laughs] Yes. Um... so the first thing, she says... "To have absolutely clear in your own mind, is why you are giving a party at all. Is it to impress or compete with someone else?"

Travis: Sometimes.

Teresa: "That's a sorry sort of send-off for any party."

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: "The game of keeping up what Joneses never works. No matter how hard you try to win, there is always another Jones around the corner with newer, faster, bigger car, who belongs to more clubs, or has a bigger house and can give more elaborate parties. Cut your parties to fit your own figure, and they will suit you. Because they suit you, your friends will be suited, too."

Travis: As Ben Folds put it, "There's always someone cooler than you."

Teresa: [laughs] She has a lovely demonstration—illustration, I should say—of different seating patterns, right?

Travis: This is my—this is something I get hung up on, by the way. Of, like, how the chairs face, where they're positioned, what—[laughs] I realize now that this makes, uh... how this makes me sound. But what—what of the party—you know, here's the snack table. Here's the drinks table. Here—where are chairs in relationship to those zones? And is there a conversation zone? Is there an area for people who want to get away from conversation [mumbling] and just want to chill out for a moment? [breathing heavily]

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: My party planning can get real sweaty. Real sweaty, real fast.

Teresa: So she has one she's labeled normal group, which is a couch facing a coffee table with chairs on either side. Then she has a party group illustration, which takes that configuration and adds two side tables to either set of armchair, and two extra chairs. She calls that a party group, because as she is adding more areas, she is focusing in on... these two couples can talk to each other this way, and then this can be a couple, and then we have three on the couch and, like, really setting up those zones like you were talking about, right?

Travis: Now, I notice she doesn't have a lot of bean bag chairs... in there.

Teresa: No bean bag chairs.

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: Hmm, that's not really her style.

Travis: Missing out! We have—so we have this thing. It's not really a bean bag chair. It's like a big furry poof.

Teresa: [through laughter] Oh yeah.

Travis: That's like—it looks like a curled up polar bear that's just like, "Whoa, be careful." The dogs love it. And so whenever we have parties and people go to sit on it I'm like, "Ooh... " in my head I'm like, "Should I stop them? 'Cause that white furry thing is also covered in dog fur. I don't—it's fine! Uh, it's fine! Don't worry about it!"

Teresa: I vacuum it occasionally. It's fine. The kids love it too.

Travis: The kids love it. Who doesn't love a big—it's big. It's great.

Teresa: And then for—

Travis: It's also overstuffed, so it's firm as all get out.

Teresa: [laughs] And then for larger parties she suggests nests, she calls them, of tables and folding chairs.

Travis: See, I call them zones, but yes.

Teresa: Hmm, yes. Indeed. Um, and so one of the things that she recommends is place cards. Uh, if there is any sort of, like, sit-down, expected everyone at the same time...

Travis: Yeah. You don't wanna do it for, like, a Miller and a cocktail party. You don't wanna be like, "Todd, this is where you stand. And Susan, I've put you over here in the corner. [laughs quietly] You know what you did."

Teresa: And she goes on to talk about if you play bridge, right? It might be important to you to have a very, like, serious bridge game, and so don't try to party at the same time as your bridge game. Um, if you want to have a party around bridge, have the party first and then settle into your bridge game instead of the other way around. If you're musical, she says... [laughs] she says, um... this was at the time of radio as a form of, like... of, uh, entertai—party entertainment. She suggests everyone sitting on cushions or rugs around the radio.

Travis: Bean bags.

Teresa: Bean bags... weren't invented at this point in time.

Travis: What?! Get out! I thought they were, like, Ancient Egyp—[choking?]

Teresa: I don't know about that.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And then if you live in the suburbs, she says you may have a difficult time, um, making a party feel special, because your neighbors are always milling about together.

Travis: Ugh. Tell me about it.

Teresa: But she goes on to say, "If you love to give parties, you will find ideas for them in all sorts of places." And she talks about how she once attended a party where they rented a barge.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: On the river. And everybody met at the dock and got on the barge, and on the barge they had a friend who had been asked to sing arias for the evening.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: They floated down the river on the barge to an already set out picnic dinner, and then returned on the barge to coffee and hot chocolate.

Travis: Now, let me tell you, this sounds lovely. But when you say barge, my mind immediately goes to, like, a trash barge. A coal barge. A shipping container barge. And I'm like, "Okay? Is it nice?"

Teresa: It's a long, flat boat.

Travis: Sure. I know the concept. I'm just saying that I don't know that I've ever said, "Look at that beautiful barge." It's just not what I think of when I think of barge.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. And so she wraps up her party chapter by...

Travis: Explaining what puking rally is.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: [laughs] I don't wanna explain that.

Travis: No! We're not going to explain it, she does! "[posh voice] And if you play flip tub, be sure... "

Teresa: [laughs] She says, "Well, why don't I do any of these things? Why don't you?"

Travis: I don't know where to get a barge?

Teresa: "Do you tell yourself that your house is too small, and not planned for entertaining? Or that your budget won't let you? Nonsense! Those aren't excuses." We're back to alibis, here.

Travis: Now, hold on. I would say "I don't have enough money to throw a party" is a perfectly good reason to not throw a party.

Teresa: "There are the promptings of that will to be dreary psychologists tell you about. It's that little imp locked away in your subconscious that is teasing you into believing that it's too hard, too expensive, or too much bother to give party."

Travis: [crosstalk] I hate that imp in my brain.

Teresa: I think that the important thing that she's saying is... and she goes on. She means, as she goes on. "True, it isn't easy to entertain in a house with a dining room that's a tight squeeze for six. Yet it can be done delightfully. Or what about that stretch of smooth lawn under your apple tree."

Travis: [muffled snorts]

Teresa: "A tea kettle with a... "

Travis: I'm sorry. I just didn't consider having a party under my apple tree.

Teresa: [wheezes] "A tea table with a purring kettle would look charming sat there." I think, like I said, she means, as to go on, to say that a party is anything you can make it into, right?

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Several people together having fun, eat, drink, games. All of that—that's all a party. And I think that she says that—the next heading is Capitalize on What you Have, right?

Travis: Okay. So instead of saying "I can't throw a party because I don't have enough space, I don't have enough [unintelligible]." What she's saying is, instead of saying I can't do it, instead say "So how do I make it work?"

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: I want to throw a party, and here's what I can do. How can I make that work?"

Teresa: Exactly. Um, different examples she gives is if you live in a tiny apartment, maybe you have a rooftop that you can go to and throw a party on. If you have a stretch of beach out your house, or down the street, or somewhere near that you can all meet together, and why not have a beach party, or a clam bake? Or, you know, find a—"

Travis: Maybe your neighbors are out of town and they have a pool.

Teresa: [laughs] Find a park that you can all meet together at. Maybe it's a restaurant. Like, you know. And she does say that you should go to the restaurant the day before, and talk to the proprietor, but I'm not sure that's something that people do these days.

Travis: Especially a day before. Make a reservation to do it. [crosstalk]

Teresa: Just make a reservation I think will be fine. And so I really find it rather inspiring, right? To read this chapter. First of all, all of her examples of beautiful parties, she's either been to or heard about.

Travis: Listen, yeah, we all want to go on a barge for a party. We love barges. I get it. But not all of us have access to barge budgets.

Teresa: That's what she's saying. She's saying a party can be made anywhere, right? And it doesn't have to be a huge gala. It can be an intimate

gathering. It's about the way that you approach the evening that makes it a party.

Travis: I do think, though, it is important on the invitation that you make it clear whether it is a barge or a non-barge party.

Teresa: [through laughter] Okay.

Travis: Yeah? Because you want to make sure expectations are set. Because maybe they weren't expecting a barge and they show and up and be like, "I had not prepared mentally for this."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Or they show up mentally prepared for a barge and there's no barge, and they're like "Well, now I have to—this is gonna take me 30 minutes to come down from the rush of endorphins I had at the idea of being on a barge." So just make it clear. You can do it above the RSVP. Just, like, no presents necessary. Barge not included.

Teresa: [through laughter] Okay.

Travis: Right? Something like that.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: So, I want to say some thank yous to first of all you, my wife.

Teresa: Hmm, thank you!

Travis: For both being my wife and putting up with me.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I want to say thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom we would not be able to make this show. I want to say thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we would not be able to make this show. And I want to say thank you to you for listening. We could maybe make this show

without you, but why? Like, I don't think we would. But we could. But we wouldn't. Um... let's see. Make sure you check out all the merch at mcelroymerch.com. Um, you can check out basically everything McElroy-related if you go to mcelroy.family. That's our website that has links to basically everything we do. You can check it all out there. What else, Teresa? Who else do we thank?

Teresa: We thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Check out *Khan the Musical*. He wrote that too.

Travis: Coming soon, I imagine.

Teresa: Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, check that out today. If you would like to suggest a topic or maybe a book?

Travis: Even if it's just a passage from a book you own that you want to, like, scan or type out or something, like, send it to us.

Teresa: Obviously include the author information, please. Um, but you can email us, shmannerstcast@gmail.com. And, uh, your topic suggestions, your idiom suggestions. Make sure you say hi to Alex, because she reads every single one.

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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