

## Shmanners 21: Apologies

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**Travis:**

Hey, Teresa, I apologize for not thinking of an intro.

**Teresa:**

I forgive you.

**Travis:**

It's Shmanners.

[theme music plays]

**Travis:**

Hello, internet, and welcome to Shmanners. I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

**Teresa:**

And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

**Travis:**

And you are listening to Shmanners.

**Teresa:**

It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:**

For ordinary occasions. We're getting so good at that, baby.

**Teresa:**

Thanks.

**Travis:**

We're really nailing that. Teresa?

**Teresa:**

Yes?

**Travis:**

I have so much to apologize for in this life.

**Teresa:**

[laughs] Don't we all?

**Travis:**

So much, so many things I've done. Things I'm not proud of. Things I am proud of, that I should probably still apologize for. Things that I'm mildly okay with. [laughs]

**Teresa:**

[laughs] Things that you're maybe too proud of, that you need to apologize for being so proud of.

**Travis:**

Who knows, Teresa? There's so many different factors. I've—

**Teresa:**

Well, I've read your Twitter feed. So, yes.

**Travis:**

Uh, I'm sorry.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

Are you talking about my awesome jokes on Twitter? Because I will never apologize for those awesome jokes.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

I do feel like, now that you mention Twitter, I do feel like in today's, um, like, social media and Facebook, that I do feel as though the apology is an art that people really lost the grasp of. That people feel like they know that they're apologizing, but the wording is, like, that's not an apology. Or there's a lot of, "Sorry, not sorry," kind of stuff going on.

**Teresa:**

Yeah. Well, and I think that so much of a, of a really good apology has to do with tone. And tone really isn't something that is conveyed very easy through 140 characters. [laughs]

**Travis:**

Yeah. I mean, you're right. But I also think there's a lot of, like, people wording it like, "I'm sorry you got offended."

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

Which is not an apology.

**Teresa:**

Which, I think that we'll talk about later.

**Travis:**

Okay, great. So, before we get into the nitty-gritty of today's apology etiquette, can you give me a little bit of the history on it?

**Teresa:**

Absolutely. Well, I ran across a really great joke while, uh, researching this.

**Travis:**

Oh, oh, goodness.

**Teresa:**

[laughs] The—

**Travis:**

A joke, you said?

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

Please, go on.

**Teresa:**

A funny.

**Travis:**

Ooh.

**Teresa:**

That probably the first apology was from Adam to Eve about her making him eat the apple.

**Travis:**

Oh, "Sorry about that whole apple thing?"

**Teresa:**

That's the joke, [laughs] yeah.

**Travis:**

Okay. Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha.

**Teresa:**

Um, but, for reals, anthropologists believe that they have found the earliest preserved record of an apology, um, in a 17,000 year old cave painting.

**Travis:**

Oh, goodness.

**Teresa:**

In, I believe, Lascaux, France.

**Travis:**

And it says, "Sorry I forgot to turn the dial on the dishwasher to let you know that the dishes were dirty and not clean."

**Teresa:**

[laughs] Uh, no.

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

'Cause it's a cave painting. It—

**Travis:**

Sorry I killed your Sabertooth tiger. [laughs]

**Teresa:**

It actually depicts what looks like a fairly sad or dejected male, um, apologizing—

**Travis:**

Aw.

**Teresa:**

... to his female companion for failing to bring back food for dinner. It might be a hyena or a mastodon or, you know, I mean, those cave paintings are old and not, like, realism, so... [laughs]

**Travis:**

Okay. So, here's what I'm imagining that these anthropologists and you are proposing. This cave dude—

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

... failed to bring home a side of mastodon mutton, and was like, "Honey, I'm s—" and she, or, "Honey, I didn't..." And the wife was like, the cave wife was like, "I don't know this feeling, 'cause we don't have words for it, but I feel fire in my stomach." And... That's anger. And then he was like, uh, "How do I make this right? I know." [laughs] And then he drew it on the wall, and the woman went, "Okay. I forgive you. I don't know what forgive is, but that's definitely what I'm feeling right now."

**Teresa:**

Well, odds are that the painting was not made as a real time apology, but more as a chroniclization of—

**Travis:**

Ah.

**Teresa:**

... what happened.

**Travis:**

It was not like an I'm Sorry card that he painted on a wall? This was like, "I apologize, and everyone has to know about this." [laughs]

**Teresa:**

Right. Right. Not like that.

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

It was probably just, uh, an occasion in their lives that this cave dweller decided to paint.

**Travis:**

To be fair, if I invented apologies, I would also want to chronicle it. I'm right there with this guy, it's like, "You'll never believe, so someone had fire in their belly—"

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

"... and I made it better. Everyone must know."

**Teresa:**

So, I mean, other than that, apologies have just been happening. There's lots of letters that are recorded from famous people, there's—

**Travis:**

It does feel, it feels like... I'm like, some of the stuff where we talk about, like, the fan etiquette, you know? Or, like, sending a Thank You note, it feels like an apology is, it feels so inherently human—

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

... of, like, someone got mad at you, like, you're either going to, A, get mad at them back or, B, be like, "I did something wrong, and I hope you don't feel bad about it anymore." And then in, what would change is, like, the language you use to convey that emotion.

**Teresa:**

There's a couple of famous apologies. Here's one from Benedict Arnold.

**Travis:**

[laughs] "Sorry for everything, Benedict. Hey, America. Whoops."

**Teresa:**

[laughs] Um, it's kind of a, it's like a, "Sorry, not sorry."

**Travis:**

Uh-huh.

**Teresa:**

Almost.

**Travis:**

Uh-huh.

**Teresa:**

Yeah. So, uh, he sent word that the expressions that... he applied solely to the Duke of Richmond's public conduct, and that he meant nothing in any respect personal to his grace's private character. So, he was like, "I'm real sorry that I said some bad stuff about you, about the stuff that you did, but I didn't mean it for it to be about your character?"

**Travis:**

I was, I was commenting on what you did, not who you are. When I said you were acting like a jerk, I didn't mean that you were a jerk, just that your behavior was as a jerk might.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

Yeah, that's definitely, "Sorry, not sorry." No, no, no, you misunderstood when I said you were bring a jerk.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

I'm sorry that you misunderstood.

**Teresa:**

Um, this seems very a propos. Uh, here is one about, uh, from Eliza Hamilton, widow of Alexander Hamilton.

**Travis:**

I've heard of him.

**Teresa:**

Have you?

**Travis:**

What do I know him from?

**Teresa:**

Hm.

**Travis:**

Hamilton, Hamilton, Hamilton. How do I know that name?

**Teresa:**

Um—

**Travis:**

Oh, he's on the monies.

**Teresa:**

So, this was, uh, had to do with the fact that, um, uh, James Monroe tried to, um, visit her, and he was one of the people who was probably not on the side of Alexander Hamilton.

**Travis:**

Gotcha.

**Teresa:**

With the whole Federalist Papers type deal.

**Travis:**

All of that stuff.

**Teresa:**

Right. Um, so, she writes, "Mr. Monroe, if you have come to tell me that you repent, that you are sorry, very sorry, for the misrepresentations and the slanders and the stories you circulated against my dear husband, if you have

come to say this, I understand it. But otherwise, no lapse of time, no nearness to the grave makes any difference.

**Travis:**

Boom.

**Teresa:**

Ooh.

**Travis:**

Eliza dropping the heat. I love that. I especially love the use of the word, "Repent."

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

Uh, because as, like, a southern Baptist raised child, um, and that's one of the things that I think is very interesting about the concept of, like, apologies and, "Sorry," 'cause one of the things about repent is that there's a connotation to it that I both admit that I had done something wrong, and intend not to do it again.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

You know? Not just like, "Yeah, sorry," and then I'm gonna do it again three days later. Like, my intention is, I repent my behavior, I don't intend to do it again.

**Teresa:**

Exactly. Yeah. So, I mean—

**Travis:**

Also, just, what a good burn. "No distance from the g—" Like, no time passed, like—

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

... you did a thing. Like, you either apologize or you will go away.

**Teresa:**

I mean, and they have—

**Travis:**

Eliza, you BA.

**Teresa:**

They have a long history, uh, Alexander Hamilton and Monroe. So, like, apparently, they nearly fought a duel and Hamilton called Monroe a liar. Monroe—

**Travis:**

Oh, man, I really misheard you. I thought you meant Eliza and James Monroe almost—

**Teresa:**

Oh, no.

**Travis:**

... fought a duel, and I was like, "Excuse me?"

**Teresa:**

No, no. Alexander.

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

And, uh, Monroe called Hamilton a scoundrel and challenged him.

**Travis:**

Ah!

**Teresa:**

And that was talked out of by Aaron Burr, who actually was like, "Y'all—"

**Travis:**

How do I know that name?

**Teresa:**

"Y'all don't need to fight."

**Travis:**

Uh, ain't the time for that now, I'll see you again in five years.

**Teresa:**

Right. Um, so, you know, when he came over to her house, she was probably like, "Are you gonna apologize?" And he was like, "Apologize for what? Everybody does bad stuff." And she was like, "Nuh-uh, not in my house. Bye."

**Travis:**

Yeah, apologize or bye-bye.

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

I love that. What else you got?

**Teresa:**

So, uh, here's the next one, Charles Darwin.

**Travis:**

I've heard of him, yes.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm. Got a letter from an F.A. McDermont.

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

Who said, "If I am to have the pleasure of reading your books, I must feel that at the end I shall not have lost my faith in the New Testament."

**Travis:**

Ooh.

**Teresa:**

"My reason to writing you is therefore to ask you, to give me a yes or a no to the question, do you believe in the New Testament?"

**Travis:**

Interesting.

**Teresa:**

So, this F.A. McDermont was like, "Listen, I'd really like to read your book, but I don't wanna have my own, uh, values put into question. So, I'm not gonna read it unless you tell me that you're cool with Jesus."

**Travis:**

Uh-huh. And so, then what did, uh, what did old Chuck Darwin say?

**Teresa:**

"I am sorry to have to inform you that I do not believe in the bible as divine revelation, and therefore not in Jesus Christ as the son of God. Yours faithfully, Charles Darwin."

**Travis:**

Uh, I like it. You know, it's to the point. He answered honestly, he didn't... he— here's the difference, here's what I like about that response, not necessarily in the content—

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

... but in today's, like, society, if someone were asked that question, you know there would be so much hemming and hawing and, like, "Well, what do you mean by... And I would say... And you know it's up to..." And for Chuck to just be like, "I don't, man."

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

"I'm gonna be honest with you. Sorry. I don't."

**Teresa:**

Well, I mean, with a letter like that for McDermont, you get the feeling that they kind of wanted Darwin to like, be kind of ashamed about the fact that this didn't fit in with the religion and maybe kind of shame him into saying something other than yes or no.

**Travis:**

You know, now that you mention it, sure, totally.

**Teresa:**

I mean, even though Charles Darwin was probably certain that saying, "No, I don't believe in the New Testament," would make it so this person would never read his book and probably disagree with him completely, even though he'd never read it.

**Travis:**

Now, but tha—okay. Here's the thing though, I think that falls under a category of apology that's more, like, "Sorry you feel that way." Like, this is definitely like, "Sorry, I don't." It's not like, "I am sorry that I don't." It's, "Sorry that you're going to be upset that I don't," you know what I mean? Like—

**Teresa:**

Well, and he... I mean, he never says, "Sorry." So, it's not a, "Sorry, not sorry," in, like, a traditional sense. [laughs]

**Travis:**

Yeah. From the archaic, "Sorry, not sorry."

**Teresa:**

Okay. Let's move on. Um, I'd like to talk a little bit about the Japanese.

**Travis:**

"In the Japanese style," as Griffin might say.

**Teresa:**

In, as Griffin McElroy might say, the Japanese style of apology.

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

Um, I am not going to be able to say what they are in Japanese, but, um, there seems to be three levels—

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

... of, "I'm sorry." Um, one for, like, "My bad." Like, just a kind of, "Sorry."

**Travis:**

Can you just take a shot at the pronunciation of a phrase?

**Teresa:**

No. Absolutely not.

**Travis:**

Can I do it?

**Teresa:**

No.

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

The next one is a, is a formal, more formal, "Very sorry." So, like, you might use that more in a, in a business associate type of idea.

**Travis:**

Okay. So, like a professional, "I'm sorry."

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

Not like, more formal like... I'm trying to describe it under, as I would say it, like, the first one seems like, oh, I bumped into someone, you know, in a crowded room and, like, "Oh, sorry. Sorry." And then the second one sounds more like, "I didn't get my job done, we are not familiar with one another, like, I don't have a personal emotional relationship with you, but I still need to apologize to you."

**Teresa:**

Sure. Yeah, that sounds like a good distinction. And then the last one is, "I have no excuses for what I've done." Like, the ultimate sorry.

**Travis:**

Oh my goodness. Like, unforgivable. Okay.

**Teresa:**

So, like, if you were asking an excessive favor and you knew that it was excessive, you would probably precede it with that, "I have no excuses for what I've done," type of apology.

**Travis:**

Or, like, if you ran over someone's dog.

**Teresa:**

Sure.

**Travis:**

I mean, one of those two circumstances. That pretty much covers all apologies, doesn't it? A big favor or you ran over their dog.

**Teresa:**

Yes. So—

**Travis:**

[laughs]

**Teresa:**

Um, the whole thing about, as Griffin would say, the Japanese style, is apologies are often done preemptively, and they're done for, um, the idea of causing inconvenience.

**Travis:**

Interesting.

**Teresa:**

So, um, just so often as, like, you hear Canadians might apologize as the person who's been bumped into... 'cause you were talking about if I bump into somebody—

**Travis:**

Uh-huh.

**Teresa:**

... you would say, "I'm sorry," but we have this kind of ideas that Canadians are so polite and they say sorry a lot for things that are not their fault.

**Travis:**

Oh, it's like the stereotypical Canadian, yeah.

**Teresa:**

Right. Like, they would say, "I'm sorry," to you, if you bumped into them.

**Travis:**

Uh-huh.

**Teresa:**

It, uh, it seems very likely that that's the same idea of the Japanese culture.

**Travis:**

Wait, so, this sounds a lot more like you would say, like, "I'm sorry to ask, but could I have a ride to the airport?"

**Teresa:**

Yeah. Kind of like that, yeah. Because I think... And we've talked about this before with the idea of, "Thank you."

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

In the Japanese culture, where it's the idea of inconveniencing someone or owing a debt to someone. Or it— it's just a— a very polite ov— almost overly polite, where it becomes more, like—

**Travis:**

I've heard it, I've heard it said, uh, instead of polite, think of it as obligatory.

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

Of just, like, it's not so much about politeness, so much as it is the— this is the, like, set of rules that you follow.

**Teresa:**

In the same way where you say, "How are you?" "I'm fine, how are you?"

**Travis:**

Yeah.

**Teresa:**

No matter if you're fine or not.

**Travis:**

Yes.

**Teresa:**

Yes. This kind of convention.

**Travis:**

Exactly, convention—

**Teresa:**

Yes.

**Travis:**

... rather than, like, politeness out of, like, "I'm a polite person," but more like, "No, this is just what you do."

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

This... Yeah. And that said—

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

... neither one of us has been to Japan, so, like, what do we know?

**Teresa:**

And because it's a culture where the social strata and interactions are, they're almost impossibly complex.

**Travis:**

Yeah. David Sedaris has a great, uh, he talks about learning Japanese and that idea of, like, and if you're talking to this person, you say this. Now, if

they're older than you, it's this way. But if they're older than you and a different set of... like, there's factor upon factor, upon factor, that determines your interaction with somebody else.

**Teresa:**

Right. So, let's talk about our, as Americans, apology.

**Travis:**

Well, we don't. [laughs]

**Teresa:**

Well, okay, okay.

**Travis:**

We're America, we can do whatever we want. Is that what you mean?

**Teresa:**

No.

**Travis:**

Oh, okay.

**Teresa:**

Um, so, the idea of, quote, "The perfect apology," I don't think really exists, but here are some guidelines. It should be done promptly.

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

Although I say that there really is no statute of limitations on apologizing, if you still feel bad about it, you should probably say you're sorry at any point.

**Travis:**

Yeah. Better late than never really applies in that circumstance, you know what I mean? Like, I don't know that there would ever be a circumstance you would run into in which not apologizing—

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

... would be better than apologizing.

**Teresa:**

Right. So, it should be done promptly. I'm not suggesting that if you both are still, you know, high on adrenaline or whatever, you can't take a cool down period. But—

**Travis:**

I take back what I just said. I can think of a circumstance.

**Teresa:**

Ookay. [laughs]

**Travis:**

The one circumstance I can think of is if everything's cooled out and nobody's upset about it anymore, and it's not at all an issue anymore whatsoever, and you want to make it an issue again because you still feel guilty about it, and you need absolution from the other person, then it could be weird if you're like, "Listen, I know you said, uh, that you forgave me or that you let it go or whatever, but I need to hear you say it." Like—

**Teresa:**

Well, but that... I think that that situation implies that you've already said you're sorry.

**Travis:**

Very true. Even if it's by not... Even if it's through unspoken means, there's been amends made.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

Yeah, okay. Great, great, great. You're right.

**Teresa:**

Um, I would say that you, there are some steps to take in your apology. You need to know what you've done wrong, and then admit it. You need to show remorse and ask for forgiveness, yeah? These are all like, [laughs] kind of no brainers, but, and then—

**Travis:**

But y— you say that, honey, but I do think that in— in today's society, especially the online community, that people don't understand the difference between the intention and the words and that and, like, that just saying, "I'm sorry," doesn't always cut it. That idea of, like, know what you did wrong?

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

That's huge if you don't know that that's important. You know? The difference between, "I'm sorry," and, "I'm sorry that I did blank," is a huge difference, you know?

**Teresa:**

Well, you need to know what you did wrong.

**Travis:**

I've learned this from you.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

Like, no joke, I was really bad at apologizing. I was w—... because I w— I always did the, "I'm sorry you feel that way."

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

Or, "I'm sorry you got upset." You know?

**Teresa:**

Which is not a real apology.

**Travis:**

No.

**Teresa:**

Um, and then—

**Travis:**

'Cause that's basically just saying, "I'm sorry I got in trouble."

**Teresa:**

[laughs] Well, and then, in a perfect world, you would offer to fix what you've done wrong. And I'm not saying that it needs to be a monetary thing, but it needs to be somewhere where you, um, you offer to meet the other person halfway.

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

Whether it's that your dog ruined their flowers and you're gonna pay for their flowers, or if it's that, um, you said something terrible on the internet and now you're going to, uh, FollowFriday them.

**Travis:**

Or you're gonna tell people to listen to their show.

**Teresa:**

Right. Um, and you really shouldn't say it if you don't mean it. And I know that we tell people to apologize, you know, children, when they steal toys or whatever from another child, but if you, if you really don't mean an apology right when you're going to say it, you can take the time to think about why you mean it. You should say it and you should mean it. So, if you need a second to really think about why you need to mean it, that's okay.

**Travis:**

I have got an absolutely magical, magical concept, that you inspired within me, that I would like to share with everyone, but I'm going to do it after a word from another Max Fun show.

--

[The Greatest Generation theme song plays]

**Speaker 1:**

Hi, are you a fan of Star Trek: The Next Generation? Well, that's weird, because it's a corny show. But my friends Ben Harrison and Adam Pranica do a lovely podcast about it. It's called The Greatest Generation, and it's on

MaximumFun.org. I thought that this podcast was a bad idea, but I was wrong. Please listen to The Greatest Generation on MaximumFun.org.

--

**Travis:**

We got a lot of questions, and I think a lot of people wonder about that, like, I'm sorry you got upset. Right?

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

When you don't know, here's the thing. I statements are so much more powerful than You statements. Like, okay, think about the difference between this, "I'm sorry you got upset."

"I'm sorry I didn't think about your feelings before I acted."

**Teresa:**

Second one is so much better.

**Travis:**

Right? And you're basically saying the same thing. "I'm sorry I upset you," versus, "I'm sorry you got upset."

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

Like, you don't have to say, "I... " For example, if you had an intense argument with somebody about, like, your political opinion versus their political opinion, you don't have to apologize for feeling the way you do about politics. But you can apologize for not taking their feelings and opinions into account when you said your thing, you know?

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

"I'm sorry, I didn't think about the fact that other people are allowed to feel other ways. I'm sorry I didn't leave myself open to other concepts and

ideas." Without actually apologizing for, "I'm sorry I like the candidate I do."  
Or, "I'm sorry I don't agree with you."

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

You know what I mean? Like, there is a way to do that apology without being flippant and insincere with it.

**Teresa:**

Exactly. And you really shouldn't give an excuse—

**Travis:**

Yeah.

**Teresa:**

... attached to an apology either. Like—

**Travis:**

That's a tough one for me, I'm real bad at that.

**Teresa:**

... if you did something and you did a bad job, you shouldn't say, "I'm really sorry I did that but it wasn't my fault, because blah, blah, blah, blah, blah."

**Travis:**

Yeah.

**Teresa:**

Or, "But I couldn't help it."

**Travis:**

You can't couple an apology with an excuse, 'cause you're letting yourself off the hook.

**Teresa:**

Exactly.

**Travis:**

So, you're not really sorry, you're blaming other factors. Uh, that's a tough one for me, 'cause I always want people to understand why I did the thing

that I did. So, I'll say like, "I'm sorry I did that, but I was tired, but it was late."

**Teresa:**

None of that.

**Travis:**

Like, no, you still did it. Your actions still happened.

**Teresa:**

Right. Um, and even with an, "I'm sorry," it doesn't erase what happened, right? So, you shouldn't expect miracles and you shouldn't expect complete and absolute forgiveness right away. Um, because I've actually seen a really great meme on this where you break a plate, and you're sorry that you broke the plate, but it doesn't fix the plate.

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

So, it's not something that if you, if you say, "I'm sorry," it's not immediate.

**Travis:**

And sometimes—

**Teresa:**

You need to give the other person time to really think about what it is that they want to do going forward.

**Travis:**

And, you know, it's not always a, uh, even if you glue the plate back together, it's just not as strong as it was before. That idea of, like... So, say you were supposed to give someone a ride to the airport. You completely forgot, you completely spaces, and they ended up missing their flight because you didn't show up to pick them up. You can't reasonably expect them to trust you at the same level to pick them up for a ride to the airport next time.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

Like, you can't be offended if they don't ask you next time. Because, like, even if you repair that friendship, there's still that crack that's always gonna be in it.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

So, I feel like we're hitting on a lotta topics that people have asked about. So, let's just get right into questions. If you haven't listened before or if you didn't know, every week we'll post what the subject of the episode is gonna be, and you can Tweet at us or email us or Facebook us, if you have questions. Um, oh, this is a tough one. Are you ready for a real curve ball?

**Teresa:**

All right. I'm ready.

**Travis:**

This is from Heather. "What do you do when your apology isn't accepted? You make a mistake, recognize it, apologize, but friend won't forgive."

**Teresa:**

Um, I think that there's a difference between forgive and forget. Um, and you can be forgiven without the person forgetting about it, which is harder. Um, but if you feel that you really aren't forgiven, uh, that's really in their court. You know, you can't force someone to forgive you. So, once you've said your apology and you've been really heartfelt, all you can do is wait.

**Travis:**

Yeah.

**Teresa:**

And it's really, it's really sad. Um, especially if they were good friends before the incident. But you can't, you can't make someone forgive you.

**Travis:**

And you wouldn't want to. Like, as much as it seems like, "Well, I wanna convince them to forgive me," like, no you want them to forgive you.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

Because it's never gonna be as real if you convince... just like if someone convinces you to say, "Sorry," it's not as sincere. It's not as good.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

Um, this question is from... Well, we talked about this a little bit, but this is from Rini. Um, "How do I apologize for unintentionally hurting one's feelings without sounding the unpopular, "Sorry you feel that way?"" and I think I statements, like we said.

**Teresa:**

Yeah, yeah. I mean, we talked about this a little bit. Even if you didn't mean to hurt someone's feelings, the actions that you took could hurt someone's feelings, and you can apologize for that. "I'm sorry I hurt your feelings."

**Travis:**

Yeah, "I" statement.

**Teresa:**

Exactly.

**Travis:**

Not, "I'm sorry your feelings got hurt."

**Teresa:**

Exactly. Um, and you don't have to back away from your ideals, if that's what you're apologizing for. Uh, I mean, hurting their feelings, is what I'm saying. So, sometimes it's just, it's just the best thing to say that you're, "I'm sorry I hurt you."

**Travis:**

Uh, let's paint an example. If I didn't know you and I said to you, "I think meat is murder and meat is disgusting." And you said, "My father is a butcher, and that's how he put me through college." I don't have to sit there and say, "Oh, I'm sorry that I don't eat meat," but I can say, like, "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't, I didn't think to, like, take into account other people's lives. And I made it in, like, a very concrete statement without allowing..." You know, all that stuff. But, like, I can feel bad that I hurt your feelings without feeling bad that I feel the way that I do.

**Teresa:**

Correct.

**Travis:**

So, that would be the example I would give. I don't know why... I love meat. I don't know why—

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

... I picked that in particular. But, like, that's a good idea of, like, you can still feel the way that you do and also feel bad that someone got hurt by the thin that you said. You see it all the time.

**Teresa:**

Exactly.

**Travis:**

Okay. Next question. Um, oh, this is also from Rini, and a good follow-up question. Uh, "What should I say to accept an apology? "I accept your apology," feels formal, but, "It's okay," is often met with, "No, it's not.""

**Teresa:**

Um, I think that you can say, "Thank you," certainly. Uh, you can also say, "I appreciate your apology." Uh, you can also say, uh, "Let's let bygones be bygones." That—

**Travis:**

"It means a lot to me to hear that." Or—

**Teresa:**

Any of those, yeah.

**Travis:**

But I understand, 'cause I think, "I accept your apology," feels like you're taking their resume. You know, it feels—

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

... very much like... And also, "It's okay," the person's right. If it was okay, they wouldn't be apologizing.

**Teresa:**

Exactly.

**Travis:**

Like, it's not a switch like that, it's not, like, I apologize, oh, now everything's okay. Be like, "Thank you." The, "I needed to hear... " "Thank you," is the like, "Thank you."

**Teresa:**

Yeah. I said that.

**Travis:**

I know. I was agreeing with you.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

You are right, I guess I should say. "Thank you," is great. Um, this is from Charlotte. "How do I train myself to stop saying sorry for things where an apology isn't necessary? I tend to over apologize."

**Teresa:**

Um, uh, we talked about this earlier, that this may be a cultural thing. Um, and I know that we have the stereotypical vision of, um, Canadians being highly apologetic, as well as—

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

... um, Brits being highly apologetic.

**Travis:**

Well, and also, Amy Schumer has that great sketch where, like, all the women are like, "Oh, sorry, sorry. What were you... Sorry, sorry." [laughs] uh, like, on stage, yeah.

**Teresa:**

Right. That is a great sketch, Amy Schumer. Um—

**Travis:**

If you're listening, thank you.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

Come on the show, please.

**Teresa:**

So, uh, you know, in our own culture, women tend to apologize a lot more. Um, and I think that the best thing that you can do to try and train yourself out of that is the I statements again.

**Travis:**

Yeah.

**Teresa:**

I feel, I want, I need. All of those things make it so that it's harder to say, "Sorry, but could you do this for me?" When you say, "I need you to take out the trash."

**Travis:**

I had a really bad verbal tick for a long time, where I would say like, "Could you do me a favor?"

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

When what I really meant was, "I need you to do this."

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

But I felt bad being that direct about it.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

But, like, nobody's fooled by that. I think that, like, with any verbal tick, the key is to, like, notice when you're doing it... Step one, notice when you're doing it. Step two, figure out why you did it when you did it. And then step three, replace that behavior with a different behavior.

**Teresa:**

Exactly.

**Travis:**

Um, this is from Katherine. Uh, "Is an apology gift - flowers is the common example, but could be anything - a good idea? Or does it come off more like a bribe?"

**Teresa:**

I don't know that I've ever been presented with an apology gift and felt like it was a bribe. Um—

**Travis:**

Yeah. And you see that lot in, like, movies in cartoon, where the husband comes home with, like, a box of chocolates and flowers like, "Forgive me."  
[laughs]

**Teresa:**

Right. And as, and as long as the apology—

**Travis:**

I don't know why I sounded like the character from the room in there.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

"Oh, Lisa, forgive me."

**Teresa:**

As long as the apology is sincere, I don't think it's, uh, bribery.

**Travis:**

And I think it's the other per—like—

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

... if the person likes getting flowers when they get apologized to, you give them flowers.

**Teresa:**

Sure.

**Travis:**

'Cause it's the other person that you're trying to make happy.

**Teresa:**

Um, and I think that it's especially true when you offer to replace something. That's kind of, like, the culmination of the apology. "I broke this for, I broke this of yours, I would like to replace it," when you give it back to them, that's not a bribe, that's what you said you would do.

**Travis:**

Um, this week's episode, by the way, and I'll mention it again in the wrap up, uh, the idea of apologies was, uh, suggested by Jeff Porter, which is great, because I never would've thought of this, and it's a very rich episode topic. And Jeff asked the question, "What if I said something that I later realized could be insulting, but I'm not sure if it was taken that way?" I think everybody's been there, where they made a joke—

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

This happened to me the other day. I made a joke and then later was like, "Oh. That might've been... I meant it like this, but I didn't say the second part of the sentence that makes it clear I was joking. Oh, no."

**Teresa:**

Um, if it's really important to apologize to you, if it makes you feel better to apologize for something, I would say go ahead and do it, but with the way

of, "Listen, the other day I said something that I would like to explain more, especially if it hurt your feelings."

**Travis:**

Is there anything awkward or weird to, like, starting an apology with, "I realized it could have sounded like I was saying blank, and if it came across that way, I apologize. What I meant was blank."

**Teresa:**

I think that that's perfectly acceptable as long as you do a better job of [laughs] explaining yourself the second time. You really shouldn't try and dig your hole deeper.

**Travis:**

Oh, no, no, no.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

I also think this is the kinda thing where... I don't wanna sit here... because I— I'm worried that what I'm about to say is gonna sound like I'm saying, "You don't have to apologize, ever." But what I mean is, that as someone who does this all the time, sometimes something like this can happen where in your head you start to cycle it over and over again in your head so much, that you build it into this slight that it was not at all.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

And not everybody is paying attention to every word you say as much as you are.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

You know what I mean? So, this kind of perceived slight, where it's just... and vice versa, I would say, that sometimes you have to forgive other people when they say a thing and you're like, "Did they mean that to offend

me?" It's like, if you have to ask, they probably didn't, and you should probably just let it go.

**Teresa:**

Well, but I also think that, um, there's no harm in bringing something up in the way that you would say, like, "I'd like to discuss this a little more today, let me explain how I feel."

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

Or, "Let me explain a little better." Sure, why not?

**Travis:**

I think the one circumstance in which you'd have to be really careful with this is if it's, like, someone who, like, whether it's work right, like, maybe you're a big fan of, you know, or something like that, and you get a second impression, I would say you're better off just starting a brand new conversation and, like, coming away from that second encounter with a very positive feeling, rather than starting that second conver—if it's someone you know really well or you're friends with, definitely be like, "Hey, I rea—" I do that now, where it's just like, rather than sit there and worry about it, it's so much easier to just say like, "Hey, I said this thing, and I think I could've been interpreted this way, and if it did, I'm so sorry.

But if it's someone that you don't know very well, and, like, you're so afraid you've made a bad first impression on, just make a really good second impression rather than going on and on about your bad first impression.

**Teresa:**

I think that's a really good middle ground.

**Travis:**

Um, this happens a lot. This is from Kim, and I've been in this conversation a lot. "How do you react when this conversation happens? Friend: "My car broke down," or some other uncontrollable misfortune. Me, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that." Friend, "It's not your fault." Like, clearly, I didn't make you break down. Is saying sorry the wrong thing in this scenario?" I think specifically here, I more experience with me going, "Oh, sorry," and then them going, "It's not your fault." As opposed to say, "I'm sorry to hear that."

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

But I get what you're saying.

**Teresa:**

Right. I think that that clears it up a little more, if you say, "I'm sorry that happened to you." Or, "I'm sorry to hear that." Or, "I'm sorry, that's unfortunate." You know, something like that. I think if you, if you expand it a little bit, you can get your point across that it is, that you feel sympathy for the situation—

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

... without having them feel like you think you caused it?

**Travis:**

Well, I think it's also, you gotta acknowledge that in that circumstance your friend is being a bit of a turd.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

'Cause, like, if you said, "That sucks," They wouldn't say, "That doesn't inhale. What do you mean?"

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

Like, you know what I meant, Todd. Like, Todd's being a turd, and he knows it. And I think that, you know, especially in that circumstance it'd be like, it might make your friend feel a little bit better [laughs] that their car broke down? Sure. But like, I don't think anyone actually thinks you're really apologizing for the bad thing that happened to them. They're just being a bit of a turd. This is from Chad. Um, "What's a typical situation that might call for a written apology?"

**Teresa:**

Um, I think a situation where you need to replace or, uh, give back the value of something that you have destroyed. I think that requires, uh, a written apology. Uh, like I said earlier, if your dog got into somebody else's flowers and you'd like to replace those flowers, um, the idea of the monetariness of the situation requires a written apology.

**Travis:**

Now, I have, in the past, um, used written apologies in a circumstance in which I felt I had a lot to say about the scenario, and either I didn't think the person would want to hear it because they were very mad at me, or it's not something I want to engage in a conversation in, I just wanted to get my point across, is that self-serving?

**Teresa:**

I think it is a little bit. But if you need a written apology in order to express your thoughts in a clear and succinct manner, then you should do it anyway.

**Travis:**

But not if you... because I think that was the pitfall I used to fall into, was like, "I'm really gonna explain myself here."

**Teresa:**

It's different if you're making excuses.

**Travis:**

Yeah.

**Teresa:**

Because, uh, a written apology isn't the way to make an excuse. You shouldn't apologize with an excuse. Um, but if you needed to organize your thoughts, then it's a good way to go.

**Travis:**

Let me ask you a judgment call. 'Cause I think we've been talking about, like, excuses a lot. Is there an area in which, in your apology, in your opinion, that you could, that a justification is different from an excuse? For example if you were to say, like, "I don't think I made it clear why I was so upset about the thing we were talking about, but here's an aspect of my life that you didn't know about in this argument," like that kind of thing. Not an excuse so much as, like, "I don't think I was clear as to why I was feeling the way that I did or what had happened."

**Teresa:**

If you need to give maybe a little bit of back story as to why you were so passionate or, um, the delivery of what you said, I think that's okay. But if you are giving an excuse about what it is you said that hurt the other person, that's not okay. There's—

**Travis:**

So, it sounds like—

**Teresa:**

There's no excuses for that. That's what you are apologizing for. Um, but if you wanna give a little bit of your own, your own back story as to the rising action—

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

... I think that's all right.

**Travis:**

So, the difference between bringing clarity, versus thinking the excuse makes it better.

**Teresa:**

Exactly.

**Travis:**

Okay. Cool. 'Cause I think that's the difference. Is, it's one thing to be like, "I want to be clearer," versus, "So, like, I guess I really didn't do anything wrong when you think about it that way." Like, no, no, no.

**Teresa:**

Right, that is unacceptable.

**Travis:**

This is more, a little bit more esoteric. But I like it, because I think that it's something that we all kind of need to get better with. And Amy asked, "How do you forgive someone who never apologizes to you?"

**Teresa:**

Wow.

**Travis:**

Yeah.

**Teresa:**

I know that a lot of, um, Western religions put a lot of emphasis on forgiveness. Um, maybe even where the person who wronged you doesn't ask for it or doesn't deserve it.

**Travis:**

Like, turn the other cheek?

**Teresa:**

Exactly. Um, and so, I think that that's kind of, if that's something that you believe in, that's what you need to rely on. But for some, to forgive someone who doesn't ask for forgiveness, you really have to figure out and weigh for yourself what that friendship is worth to you.

**Travis:**

I think that's an excellent point, 'cause I think... now that we are adults, um, I hear a lot of adults say this, and a lot of people come to the realization of, like, oh, you don't have to be friends with anybody. You know what I mean? So, I think that everybody in their life has had one or more friends where it's like, you know, "They're kind of a jerk and, uh... and act a little bit, but it's okay, 'cause that's just them and they're my friend."

It's like, if you find yourself over and over again having to learn to forgive someone who's not sorry for their terrible actions, they're not your friend. You are a friend to them, but they're not being a friend to you.

**Teresa:**

Right. So, in this situation, you really need to figure out what this friendship means to you, and if it means more to you than it does to them, maybe you— you just let it go. But if it—

**Travis:**

It's the friendship bank.

**Teresa:**

Yeah, yeah. If it doesn't mean that much to you, maybe you need to let them go.

**Travis:**

The friendship bank is a concept that I came up with a while ago that I really am proud of.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

It's the idea of, like, are they depositing back into the friendship bank or are they just withdrawing?

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

Because at a certain point, they're gonna overdraw. And at that point, like, you can either cancel their account or you need to have a sit down meeting with them, you know what I mean?

**Teresa:**

Right. Yeah.

**Travis:**

This is from Magda, which is a great name.

**Teresa:**

Hm.

**Travis:**

Um, "Does over apologizing make your apologies worthless?"

**Teresa:**

Well, I think over apologizing makes kind of an awkward situation for everyone. It makes it feel like the person you've apologized to hasn't forgiven you and you're begging for that kind of forgiveness.

**Travis:**

Oh, that's interesting, you went with a different scenario than I did.

**Teresa:**

Oh, really? What did you think?

**Travis:**

Uh, you're talking about, like, a specific occurrence someone keeps apologizing for the same thing.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

I was thinking somebody who constantly was like, "Hey, I hate to ask. Oh, I'm so sorry to bother you. I'm sorry." Like, that they're preface for everything was to apologize.

**Teresa:**

Oh. Hm.

**Travis:**

Because I think in that scenario, uh, it's hard to know when the sincere one is.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

You know?

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

Which is why I like that in the Japanese culture there's three different versions.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

So, it's like, if they apologize like this, you know that this is what they mean. But if they apologize like this... And so, that idea of a friend who is always apologizing to you... I also think, once again, at that point, just like if you're self-apologizing all the time and, like, bumping into someone and going, "Sorry, sorry, sorry. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." Like, talk to your friend

and be like, "Hey, we're friends, like, you don't have to do... it's okay to ask me for things.

**Teresa:**

Right. And you kinda tune it out after a while, if they begin every sentence with, "I'm sorry, bud."

**Travis:**

Exactly.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

But to your point, I think you're absolutely correct, that once someone has forgiven you, you're not helping rebuild it if you keep apologizing.

**Teresa:**

Exactly.

**Travis:**

You're just looking at the wound over and over again.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

You gotta leave it covered.

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

So it can heal. Is that right? I don't know anything about—

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

You gotta let it breathe? Uh, keep it covered.

**Teresa:**

You gotta leave it alone.

**Travis:**

There you go. Don't fiddle with it, one way or to other. Um, let's see. What else? Uh, this is from Katie, "My dad says that I should never say, "Sorry," if walking past/through a large group, only, "Excuse me," um, something about sounding weak, I think? I don't really get it. Do you understand his thought process and should I always be saying, "Excuse me," rather than, "Sorry?""

**Teresa:**

Well, I think, "Excuse me," is definitely a clearer way to get across what it is you need from those people.

**Travis:**

And more appropriate to passing through people.

**Teresa:**

Right. To that situation. But I think, "Sorry," has become a lot... has almost become a colloquialism, um, where if you can't hear what someone has said, you say, "Sorry?" When what you really mean, "Can you repeat that, please?"

**Travis:**

Or if you're in Ohio, you say, "Please?" Which is—

**Teresa:**

"Can you repeat that, please?"

**Travis:**

... so confusing. Ugh.

**Teresa:**

Oh, Travis hates that.

**Travis:**

When I first moved to Ohio and I was working retail, and I'd be like, "Do you want paper or plastic?" And they'd go, "Please?" And I'm like, "Please what?"

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

You didn't.

**Teresa:**

Like I said, as, "Sorry," has become in that way almost a colloquialism where you say it but you do— what you mean is something else. So, I kind of agree with your dad in the way of, it's a lot clearer what you need from those people when you say, "Excuse me." But I don't think that, "Sorry," conveys weakness. I think that it's— it's just more of, like, something people say when they mean something else.

**Travis:**

I definitely see his thought process though, of, like, you shouldn't have to apologize, you need to get a place, and they're in your way. But, like, I think that you're right in, like, today, "Sorry," is just kind of a catch all term for, "Excuse me," and, "Pardon me," and, "I couldn't hear you," like, all of those things.

**Teresa:**

All of that stuff. It's replaced a lot of different things. But, uh, you're not apologizing for what you're doing. I mean, maybe you are if you stepped on people's toes or whatever, but what you mean is, "Excuse me," and so why not say what you mean?

**Travis:**

Say what you mean, that's a good place to end it, I think.

**Teresa:**

All right.

**Travis:**

Um, thank you for listening to Shmanners. I wanna say, once again, thank you to Jeff Porter for suggesting the topic, apologies. If you have any ideas, you can Tweet them at us, @ShmannersCast, S-H-M-A-N-N-E-R-S. You can post them on the Facebook group. Uh, just search for, "Shmanners The Podcast," in the Groups tab. You can email them to us, I believe it's shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Um, and you know what? While you're at it, you should also listen to all the other amazing Maximum Fun shows. There's a new one called The Greatest Generation, a Star Trek podcast for people who feel a little bit embarrassed to be listening to a Star Track podcast.

**Teresa:**

Trek.

**Travis:**

Trek, Track, you know what I meant.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

You know what I meant. I ain't sorry. Um, let's see. What else? What else should people? Go on iTunes, rate, review, subscribe.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. They should, um, go onto iTunes and buy our ringtone.

**Travis:**

They should. It was written by Brent, Brent "Brentalfloss" Black, who is my cohost on Trends Like These, and a dear friend, and an amazing composer.

**Teresa:**

Uh, they should check out the portfolio of Kayla M. Wasil, who did our beautiful banner and, um, was it that, thumbnail art?

**Travis:**

Yes. You should also follow Teresa on Twitter, and then go tell her congratulations, because she is pregnant with a baby.

**Teresa:**

Thanks, guys.

**Travis:**

Which is pretty exciting. Um, and you can congratulate me too, I'm @TravisMcElroy, except I didn't do very much work, and Teresa's work continues on for many months. Um, but so, for all of you who kept suggesting, do an episode on pregnancy, there's a reason we haven't done it yet. [laughs] But we will do it in the future, I promise. Um, yeah.

**Teresa:**

Oh, uh, thank you for joining our Facebook group, it is growing quite nicely. And I do appreciate the more, uh, forum like tone it has taken on. Um, as everybody very politely suggests things, uh, suggest help for other posters.

**Travis:**

Um, so, and thank you for listening. Once again, if you enjoyed this episode, please be sure to tell a friend. Say, "Hey, you should check this out," is a good way to tell someone they need to apologize to you. [chuckles]

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

Um, but I think that's gonna do it for us, 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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