

Shmanners Ep388: Ask Shmanners

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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: How's your year going?

Teresa: [sighs] Too early to say.

Travis: Ah, see, I expected a very much, like, passing someone at the office, like, "Great, how's yours?"

Teresa: Oh. [laughs]

Travis: I was not expecting so much introspection.

Teresa: Well, it's only the third.

Travis: Yeah, that's why I was expecting a, like, "Heading on great, Bill," and not, like, "Man, let me tell you. Um, it's just, it's hard to process sometimes."

Teresa: [laughs] Well, it is what it is. [laughs]

Travis: Okay, still not giving much here, that's fine.

Teresa: Happy New Year.

Travis: Happy New Year!

Teresa: We did it, we survived.

Travis: Here, do you wanna see how I thought it— Ask me.

Teresa: Okay, okay. How is your year going?

Travis: Great, thanks for asking. How about you? Ho ho! Bup-bup-boo, and then we're on with the show!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's a great start. If you are any fans of My Brother, My Brother and Me here tonight, hey, raise your hand if you're a fan. How are you? 20-fungalore, everybody. And if you're not a fan of My Brother, My Brother and Me, that makes no sense.

Hey, even if you are a fan of My Brother, My Brother and Me, that might make no sense. What are you gonna do? For this episode, we decided to start the year off with a little Q and A, a little tête-à-tête between us and you, our fanners.

Teresa: An Ask Shmanners, we love these ones.

Travis: An Ask Shmanners. So here we go.

Teresa: Are you gonna— Are you?

Travis: I'll read the questions.

Teresa: Okay, great.

Travis: "Hi, Shmanners." Hello, hello. "I am one of those people. I hate parting with my Christmas decorations every year. I just don't wanna put them all back in their boxes. But I also know that it can be a little tacky to leave your decorations up until Easter or something like that. So to be straight with me, how long is too long to leave up my holiday decorations?"

Teresa: I wanna start off by saying, you get to decorate your personal space however you want, no matter the time of year.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Our children, they tend to want to keep their Christmas trees. They have little hobby trees or whatever, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: With the tiny—

Travis: Full of their little dreams.

Teresa: With tiny ornaments. They tend to want to keep those until at least February.

Travis: Sometimes they have to just disappear.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Sometimes we must do it under the shadow of midnight.

Teresa: Because we need to make room for other things. But you can keep yours up however long you like. The only difficulty is outdoor decorations are different.

I would say the end of January is pretty much the cutoff, although traditionally January 6th, which is the Three Kings' Day or the Epiphany, is when a lot of religious sects decide that the Christians must put away their Christmas things in order to continue, like, the different celebrations, right?

Travis: Sure. That wasn't a thing in the Baptist Church. No one was like, "Hey, take down the inflatables, Bob." That wasn't a concern. I was gonna say, end of January seems long to me, but I would say I think...

Teresa: For outdoor stuff?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I think that is dependent on the neighborhood you're in. You know what I mean? Like—

Teresa: Sure. Maybe you have an HOA that has specific dates. And you need to check that out.

Travis: See, I was more thinking like, as I was pulling into the driveway this evening, I noticed that our neighbor down the way still has their Christmas lights up, so I don't feel bad about it.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: But I don't wanna be, like, the last person in the neighborhood to take theirs down.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: You know? Mostly because we have quite a few lights and right across the street from us is an older gentleman. And I don't want to be like, "Hey, have fun bud." And, like, every night. you know, 5 to 11, blasting him with the holly jolly spirit.

Teresa: You know, some people actually say that the twinkle lights during the darkest nights of the year, you know, really help with their seasonal depression.

Travis: Oh, okay, well then, he's welcome.

Teresa: I don't know— I don't know if he suffers from that, but...

Travis: Okay, you know, people also do, they keep the tree and they put up Easter, they put up Valentine's Day decorations, they put up— Can I just say, Arbor Day decoration, you don't have to put anything on it.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Just the tree and everybody... bows down to it? I'm not sure.

Teresa: [laughing] I'm not quite sure.

Travis: However you observe it at your home.

Teresa: But yeah, they definitely do make those kinds of things, if that's what you wanna do. I'm looking forward to taking our tree down because I wanna have all that room for activities again.

Travis: Yeah, that's true. And where it is actually the only place we can put it, half the couch can't see the TV.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So that is a bit of a concern. Luckily there's few enough of us that it's not a problem. But I also know people— I mean, if it's an effort thing, I've always, I don't think you can do this with, like, inflatables, right? For obvious reasons or some lawn decorations. But I know that there are people in town who just leave the lights up year-round, just unplug them.

Teresa: Right, yes, not lit.

Travis: Yeah, not lit.

Teresa: But there are things as, like, permanent Christmas lights that you can have installed.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: You just don't turn them on.

Travis: Question two, I hope you're all ready. I hope you all put A for the right answer. That's correct.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: They're checking your Scantrons now. Do they still use Scantrons?

Teresa: No, it's all digital, I'm pretty sure.

Travis: So kids, there was an added anxiety of, not only you're taking a test, but the worry of like, what if I only fill in 98% of the bubble and it doesn't read?

Teresa: It doesn't count.

Travis: Okay, enough about how old we are.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "What's the proper etiquette for wishing someone a happy new year if the person celebrates it earlier or later than you?" Ooh.

Teresa: Okay, all right. You're always good to go with a happy holidays.

Travis: Okay, so wait, do you think that this is about, like, Chinese New Year?

Teresa: Lunar New Year. Maybe?

Travis: Or, like, time zone? Because that's what I was thinking of, of like...

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: I have, you know, especially when I was, you know, when we lived on the West Coast, but, like, I have British friends and I got LA friends.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So my British friends are having their New Year's five hours ahead of me. The others are getting, they're getting a happy New Year the next day. Let's be honest, the LA friends, you'll get that the next day. I'm not saying that till 3 AM to wish you— What? No.

Teresa: Well, so it's not a religious thing, so it doesn't really carry the same kind of baggage as Merry Christmas does, right? So I think you're good as long as it's, like, it's newish, right?

Travis: Yeah, happy newish year.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Oh, I didn't realize you were newish.

Teresa: You know what I mean! You're probably good within a few days of celebrating your new year, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: But, like, February's too late, I think.

Travis: Yeah, and if it's the time zone side of it, my gut says try to, like, do it on their new year, like, right? So— And it works out great, frankly, if you're on East Coast time and your friends are in London and you're old, cause then it's, like, 7 PM! Happy New Year everybody, good night! We do that with the girls.

Teresa: Oh, yeah.

Travis: 'Cause they're not gonna stay up till midnight. I don't think they physically could stay up till midnight. So we—

Teresa: I don't think that I could physically keep them up until—

Travis: I know, we'd have to be dumping, like, ice water on them, right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It would be like boot camp. And so we put on, like, a live stream of, like, the London fireworks and do a countdown at seven PM, have some sparkling juice as a toast. And then bedtime. I bet it confuses our neighbors though, because we have those little popper things, you know, you pull it, it shoots out streamers. And I guarantee our neighbors are like, "It's seven!"

Teresa: "It's seven!" [laughs]

Travis: "What? What's happening?" Well, that makes— It's a little bit easier.

Teresa: That's alright. They're not that intrusive.

Travis: That's true. Our kids?

Teresa: No, the poppers.

Travis: Oh, okay. "What is the proper response to someone saying, drive safe and the like? Thank you seems weird. Anything else I can think of just sounds wrong at best and arrogant at worst. I deliver for FedEx and I get this five to 10 times a day and never know what to say."

Teresa: Can I tell you that when I tell someone to drive safe, I am not listening to what they say after.

Travis: Yeah, true.

Teresa: I don't care. That's my, that's the end of my interaction. "Drive safe!" That's it. I don't care what they say to me. So I think thank you is fine. Nobody's really listening, right?

Travis: Yeah. "And you stay safe in your house."

Teresa: [laughs] "You as well."

Travis: "You sit safe."

Teresa: Maybe if two people are parting from the same destination from the same place and going to different destinations, you can say, "You too." Right? But I mean, as a FedEx driver, like, you said, people say 5, 10 times a day...

Travis: Say it to me, I just thought— Say it to me.

Teresa: Drive safe.

Travis: I'll try, but you drive me wild.

Teresa: Ooh!

Travis: Yeah, right?

Teresa: That sounds like a lawsuit waiting to happen.

Travis: Oh, sorry, don't do that as the FedEx driver. Okay, sorry, I forgot it was a FedEx person when I thought about that. That was just, like, a friend or loved one saying that. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know what? In retrospect, forget I said anything? Forget I said anything.

Teresa: You could say, "Have a nice day."

Travis: Or, like, "Okay, I will, thank you." This is the thing of, I agree with you completely, they're in their head, because that is not being said for your benefit, right? This is like when someone sneezes and you say, like, bless you, right? It's because they feel like they need to say something at this point, right? So it's like, "There you go. You know, thanks for the package or whatever."

Like you say, "Have a great day" or whatever you say at the end of a FedEx interaction or just giving them a package, and they feel like, "I need to say— I have— Ugh... I need to say— Drive safe!" 'Cause they're not gonna say, like, "I hope your son does well in his softball game tonight." They don't know.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So drive safe is just, like, their thing. It's not a— It's not really a command. It's not, like, "Drive safe or I'll know." Like it's not, I don't think it's that.

Teresa: Yeah. And so, you are fine. It is not arrogant. You can just say thanks. You can say, have a great day. Whatever, they're not listening. They're not listening to you.

Travis: Let's see, next. "My college campus is throwing a huge celebration for Lunar New Year. That's not a tradition that my culture typically celebrates, but it's something I'd really like to experience. Am I still allowed to go and party with everyone?"

Teresa: It's awesome that your college is providing different experiences in a very inclusive manner. I love that. And the short answer is yes, you absolutely can. This was not a private event.

It is open to everyone on campus and it's really great to, like, meet new people and strengthen camaraderie and you know have great experiences with your class and college, all the kind of stuff.

When you are participating in events like this you want to make sure that you are appreciating and not appropriating, right? So don't wear clothes associated with that culture's event, unless someone has given you explicit permission to, right?

Travis: Like if you walk in and they hand you, no matter what event, they hand you, some kind of head wear or a garland or something, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Then you would be rude not to.

Teresa: You can, for Lunar New Year, wear something red, which is considered lucky, but no traditional clothing unless someone has given you some.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Also, try not to center yourself in the activity.

Travis: I mean, mentally, always be centered.

Teresa: Always be centered.

Travis: Center yourself before you go, deep breath is great. Don't center yourself physically.

Teresa: Exactly, right. You can participate in common events, but if there are, like, speeches, right? Probably not.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They probably don't hear from you.

Travis: Think of it like a wedding. It would be wild if, like, when the maid of honor finished and you're, like, "You know what, my turn now."

Teresa: Exactly, exactly. And that doesn't mean to be anti-social. Sometimes there are events like karaoke or, like, communal dancing or things like that, right? That you can be invited to join.

Travis: Hot dog eating contest.

Teresa: [hesitantly] Mm...

Travis: I'm not saying at— You don't know.

Teresa: I feel like you need to prepare. That's, like, a sign up deal.

Travis: No, most of it's mental.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Most of the, you always need to be ready for a hot dog eating contest.

Teresa: Try not to be anti-social, 'cause that would be kind of awkward for everyone, right?

Travis: Along those same lines, I would say that finding a balance between not centering yourself, but also, as you said, not just standing off the sidelines gawking and watching, right? You don't want it to feel like you're, like, "Look at this show I'm watching," right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: That you're there to participate, you're there to be present in the event, not just there taking pictures and filming a thing or whatever, right? That you're— Unless you're a photographer or a videographer...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... but you're not just there, like, "I came to watch it" and "I came to like, I don't know, drink in this different culture." Like you want it to be like, "I'm here and I appreciate this and I'm participating and it's not about me and this isn't just here for my benefit."

Teresa: This is probably not the case at a college campus event, but for different festivals and things, spend money, you know? Support the people who have come out to the event to sell their wares or maybe they have different, like, food stuffs that you can buy or even if there's, like, food trucks, people selling their homemade goods, things like that.

Travis: Oh, yeah.

Teresa: Spend your money. That's a great way to support different aspects of your community.

Travis: I also just like buying food wherever I go. If people are selling food, oh.

Teresa: You love that.

Travis: I love it.

Teresa: Jams and jellies and...

Travis: Oh, my God, you kidding me?

Teresa: ...mustards and—

Travis: Ah!

Teresa: You love that stuff.

Travis: Tea? Loose-leaf tea? Oh...

Teresa: Yeah. Also, don't be afraid to learn and ask questions. Obviously, it's not people's job to educate you...

Travis: Yeah, that's what I was gonna say.

Teresa: But if you wanna say, like, "Hey, what's going on? What's this?"

Travis: Right.

Teresa: "How do I participate in this?" Not like, tell me the history of this entire thing.

Travis: Yes, exactly, the "What's this" is great, right? 'Cause like I said, to go back to, like, you know, somebody set up a stall selling things, right? And it's, like, "Oh, this is beautiful. What is this?"

You know, or, like, "Oh, this looks delicious. What is it?" That is great. The idea of, like, "Hey, you seem old and therefore wise. Tell me everything about your culture." And they're, like, "I'm 42, go away."

Teresa: [laughs] So have a great time. Happy Lunar New Year.

Travis: We're gonna be right back with some more of your questions. But first, how about a word from another Max Fun Show?

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

Laurie: Hi! This is Laurie Kilmartin.

Jackie: And I'm Jackie Kashian. And we have a podcast called The Jackie and Laurie Show on Max Fun. And it's very exciting, because what do we talk about?

Laurie: Comedy!

Jackie: Stand-up comedy. We both do stand-up comedy and have since the dawn of Christ.

Laurie: Well, Jackie...

Jackie: Is that offensive?

Laurie: It is offensive. To me, because you've aged me.

Jackie: [laughs]

Laurie: We started in the late 80s and we're still here. You can't kill us.

Jackie: So go to The Jackie and Lori Show on Max Fun and listen to that.

Speaker: The Jackie and Laurie show. New episodes Monday. Only on maximumfun.org.

John: The following are real reenactments of pretend emergency calls.

Operator: 9-1-1...

Caller: My husband! It's my husband!

Operator: Calm down, please. What about your husband?

Caller: He... He loads the dishwasher wrong! Please help! [crying] Please help me!

Operator: Where are you now, ma'am?

Caller: At the kitchen table. I was with my dad; he mispronounces words intentionally.

John: There are plenty of podcasts on the hunt for justice, but only one podcast has the courage to take on the silly crimes. Judge John Hodgman, the only true crime podcast that won't leave you feeling sad and bad and scared for once, only on MaximumFun.org.

[ad break ends]

Travis: Okay, next question. "New Year's resolutions are fine and all, but my mom gets really into the losing weight aspect of things every year. As someone who's trying to be more body positive, this talk gets me really uncomfortable. Is there a way I can politely ask her to back off the body talk?"

Teresa: This is a great way to explain boundary setting, I think.

Travis: Yeah. Yes.

Teresa: First of all, before you set a boundary, I want you to think about some empathy, right? Not only empathy for yourself, because you deserve to feel good in your body, right? Remember that you are beautiful just the way you are.

Travis: And good in your brain.

Teresa: And good in your brain.

Travis: If there's a thing going on, you're like, "Oh man, this is really bothers me to hear this person talk about this over and over again." That's not just a burden you need to bear as part of the relationship with that person.

Teresa: Exactly. But let's also have some empathy for the other party in this, your mom, in this situation.

Travis: Your mom.

Teresa: Mm... Because diet culture is pervasive and I mean, it really hurts people.

Travis: Especially with a generational difference, if you're talking about your mom and you, you growing up in a different generation have experienced a different generation's perspective on diet culture and body positivity and that kind of thing, right? And so a lot of that, even when you're old—Like, even— Like, so I'm 40, right? Which isn't the oldest, God, no, thank you, back off everybody.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But still, right? There are things now that I'm like, "Oh no, that makes sense," it's just harder to internalize it, takes me longer to internalize it because I'm undoing a lot of stuff the way I looked at it when I was, like, 15, you know, that kind of thing.

Teresa: Exactly, so let's have compassion and empathy, like, all the way around. Second, boundaries are— They work best when they are direct. So instead of saying something like, "I don't like when you talk about diets," right?

That's very general and that doesn't have any kind of action to it. You can say, "Weight loss talk makes me uncomfortable, and if it comes up, I am going to leave the conversation or change the subject."

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Because this is the way that a boundary works. You cannot control the other person, right? You can tell the other person what you are going to do if you become uncomfortable. That's the boundary.

Travis: Yeah. I also think just in general, when it comes to resolutions, and I think that weight loss is one of these, but I think there's others as well. That there are times where it's, like, well, that's not a productive way to look at that, right?

Where instead of saying, like, oh, I wanna lose weight, you could say, like, you know, I wanna be more mindful of the food that I eat and not just...

Teresa: Or I wanna be more consistent with my workouts.

Travis: Right, or like, yeah, I've noticed I'm a lot more sedentary in 2023 and I watch TV more than I, you know, walked around and did stuff or whatever and I wanna try to do that, right?

That feels to me a lot more like you're rewarding yourself and saying, I'm gonna take care of myself, and less of a punishment that you're giving yourself, and saying like, I'm gonna punish you and take this stuff away because, you know, whatever.

And I think that one of the things that we try to work on with Bebe and Dot is, like, setting examples and, like, modeling the behavior. And so like, if this is something that your mom keeps talking about, saying, like, "Yeah, you know, I've always found that, like, looking at it that way for me has always made it kind of self-defeating because I just end up always judging myself."

So instead I try to set, like, quantifiable productive goals. Like I set a goal this year, I wanna try to walk five miles a week, right? Like, yeah, I can keep track of that. I can do that. I can do it. And then like it's less beating myself up or a vague, like, exercise more.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: For me, I need the quantifiable thing.

Teresa: I think that's a great conversation if you're willing to have it. But if you're not willing to have it, I think setting the boundary of, if you talk about this, I'm gonna change the subject or leave.

Travis: Why not both?

Teresa: Sure, because it is about changing the behavior instead of attacking, like, your mother's character, right? "You always do this, I hate it

when you do this," kind of thing. Instead, you talk about how this affects me and this is what I will do when I feel affected by this, right?

Travis: It's also possible, once again, in the modeling and changing the way the conversation works, say like, if you want to talk about like exercise, right, or whatever, why don't we focus on positives?

And you tell me about if you hit a personal best in weightlifting, or about how you feel stronger, or you're able to run farther without getting exhausted, right? These things that feel like victories, and not just you judging yourself, because I love you and it's hard for me to listen to you judge yourself. That kind of thing.

Teresa: Sure, again, if you're willing to have those conversations, that sounds great. Another thing that you can do for yourself, question asker, is to continue seeking out body positive resources, maybe a therapist or a counselor or different literature that you can find.

There's actually some really great stuff online about how being even body neutral is something that might really help offset kind of these uncomfortable feelings. So continue your own journey in body positivity.

Travis: I would encourage to, whenever it's anything about mental health journey or, you know, changing the way you think about things to try to limit the experts that you seek out to being actual experts.

Teresa: Sure, yeah.

Travis: And be careful you're not getting stuff from just, like, a TikTok influencer or just like someone on, whatever, on Instagram, right? That these are people who are qualified to, like, talk about these things and get different ways to look at it.

Teresa: That's a great way to learn and get advice from other people, right? Is not do it from a TikToker or an influencer. [laughs]

Travis: Yes, it is. Hey, listen, I'm not an expert. I've told you that for years. Don't take my advice. I don't know what I'm doing.

Teresa: Remember that you are perfect just the way you are and so is your mom.

Travis: Now, if you wanna get six inches taller, I have an idea.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You're not gonna like it.

Teresa: Next question, please.

Travis: Next question. "We got married this year." Not us, but the question. We got— Okay, you get it. "We got married this year, yay. But we still haven't sent our thank you notes, boo. Can we still? And are we tasteless people if we don't send thank you notes to everyone who bought us something?"

Teresa: Hey man, this is a universal experience. It is difficult but necessary to send out thank you notes. Here is— Here's some official—

Travis: I like how you said this is universal, but, like, you did it very, you were very prompt and you were very good. I didn't want to do it.

Teresa: I know.

Travis: I— For me, it was quite, eh... who cares?

Teresa: But it is difficult. I'm not saying that it comes easily to me and I always send out thank you notes. I didn't give out thank you notes for my birthday this year.

Travis: No. No, but all the gifts people gave you were crap. [laughs]

Teresa: [laughing] That's not true. That has nothing to do with the thank

you note. Anyway, anyway, okay. You should send thank you notes to everyone who attended your wedding, regardless of if they gave you something or not.

And experts agree that even a super late thank you note is better than no thank you. People say you have three months? A year? Somewhere in there to send out your thank you notes, depending upon where you look at it, like, where you look. But late is better than nothing.

Travis: Are there now, like, digital thank you notes?

Teresa: Absolutely there are, absolutely there are. There are online form letters, you can send email thank you notes, you can send, um, I think that places like Evite or maybe even Zola, I should look if they have it, can send out a thank you note to everybody who you send an invitation to.

Travis: There you go.

Teresa: And it doesn't have to be handwritten like and completely original every single time. Three sentences will do. If you haven't listened to our, I think we have two now, two episodes on thank you notes. You really only need three sentences.

The first one is the opening. It was so nice to share our special day with you. The second one is how the specific thing, thank you for, even if they didn't buy it, buy anything.

Travis: Thank you for attending, thank you for—

Teresa: Thank you for attending. And then the— Or thank you for the crock pot or whatever. Right? And then the third line is the closing, I hope to share many more milestones with you in the future. Or I...

Travis: Look forward to seeing you again.

Teresa: ... look forward to seeing you soon, seeing you again, any of that stuff. That's the only three sentences you need and they don't have to be... They're original, they don't have to be individualized.

I wrote out my thank you notes by hand when we had our wedding. So I didn't wanna write the same sentences over and over again, I mixed it up a little bit, right? I had two or three different kind of formulas that I went with.

Travis: If I was at your wedding, I don't think I was, but if I was, I want you to know you don't have to send me a thank you note. I've already stopped thinking about it and it's okay.

Teresa: There are people who will expect a thank you note. And if you know who those people are, your great aunts and uncles, grandparents, things like that, I would start with them first.

Also, I would start with anyone who sent a gift but could not attend, because if they didn't see the gift or if they didn't hear from you that you got it, that's important, they need to know that you received it.

I would also start with people who made a big contribution to your day. Maybe someone, you know, maybe they were not your wedding planner, but they were very helpful in organizing, like, on site, or...

Travis: Or, like, they went and picked up your grandmother from the airport for you.

Teresa: Right, yeah. Or they traveled a long way to get there, right? Maybe somebody came from Europe or something, right? And so, like, there are lots of places that you can go to get help with thank you notes and please do get the help digitally. I wish I had done that. [laughs] It is what it is, but nobody ever feels angry about receiving a thank you note.

Travis: "I'm doing dry January, but I sincerely don't mind if my friends are drinking. I just won't be. What's the best way that I can bring this up?" Well, when they come around with me, you say, [loudly] "None for me, thank you! I am doing a dry January—" No, I'm doing dry January because, you know, take a break after the holiday, get my— Basically, my birthday, Thanksgiving, to think there's just a lot of celebrating in there.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Taking some time off. And I, my gut says that, as with most things, when it's just, like, I won't be participating, but I don't want people to feel weird, in the protesting too much is where the weirdness comes from.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like if you go out to dinner and the server's, like, "Anything to drink?" And you're just like, "Oh, no, thank you." And your friend's like, "What?" And you're like, "I'm just taking a month off." Okay?

But if you're like, "Listen guys, when we're out tonight, I want you to know, it's okay if you— I won't be, because—" I just feel like being too serious, making too big a deal out of it, is gonna send a signal of, like, oh, "I actually think this is a very big deal for them..."

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: "... and like, I need to be—" You know what I mean? And you can even say what you said here in the question of, like, "Oh, you guys do— I'm just taking a..." But it's the nonchalance, right?

That, I think, is the difference between the, like, "And I'm serious, guys, I'm serious. If you wanna have a beer, Derek, that's okay." And like, why are you saying that to me? Why are you looking at me specifically? Right? I think that makes it weird.

Teresa: I think that it really depends on your circle of friends, right? Who you're with at the time. If you think that someone is gonna give you the kind— Like, an interrogation about why you're not drinking, you don't owe them that. And so like—

Travis: I also think, as time goes on, dry January's entered more and more common parlance.

Teresa: It's— Yeah.

Travis: So I think if you're just like, "Yeah, I'm doing dry January, taking a month off." Okay.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like, that makes complete sense. Like if you were like, "I gave something up for Lent," and they were, like, "What, what's that? Why? Why did you do that?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Like, I think, like, if you're, like, "Yeah, I'm just taking a month off for dry January." Okay.

Teresa: But I think that if you want to, like, be really, like, you know, just easy going about it, even if you wanna, like, send out a text and be, like, "Anybody wanna do dry January with me? No? Okay, that's cool."

Travis: Yeah. But I think doing a big, like, "I'm just letting everyone know. If you see me out at a party. I'm gonna be doing dry January..." So like, just live your own life in your own way. Let other people live their lives in their own way and bump gently against them in the dance of friendship.

Teresa: But how are you gonna get your favorite La Croix at your next party if you don't tell people that you're not drinking?

Travis: You bring your own.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You shouldn't assume there's gonna be drinks for you at a party anyways. Doesn't matter if you're drinking or not. You should never just assume that you don't have to be BYOB. I'm not gonna provide Y-O-B.

Teresa: [laughs] I provide water.

Travis: You might have them there— Yeah, you have a sink, babe.

Teresa: Yeah, always. I always have a sink.

Travis: You can drink out of the hose.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay, one last question here. "In 2024, I'm getting top surgery. While I'm really excited, I have a question. What's the etiquette for men taking off their shirts?" Rip it down the center. "I've always—"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Sorry. [laughs] "I've always been told to be covered my whole life." I actually think that in this circumstance, because it's been so prolonged, you got a lot built up, you can rip your first five shirts down the center. That's allowed.

"I've always been told to be covered my whole life, but without boobs, I'm not sure what the protocol is now. Any insights are appreciated." Well, you've come to the right place because I've been taking my shirt off for years. There's many times in my life I've had my shirt off.

Teresa: Okay, so I think that a good rule is that if you're near a body of water during the summer, you're good, take your shirt off, that's great. If you're swimming or laying in the sun or on a boat, you're good to go. Other times, if you are working out, outside sometimes.

Travis: Yeah, as I say, not at a gym, there's usually rules against that.

Teresa: Yes, if there is— That's a good point. If there is a rule in your location against being shirtless, can't be shirtless there. That's a rule.

Travis: Here's the beauty of it though. Here's the beauty of it, because gosh knows, societally, we're far too restrictive when it comes to people's bodies, especially bodies that would traditionally be considered female. And you are about to switch from not being allowed to take off your shirt in many places

or being judged for doing it, to now being able to not do it if you don't want to.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Because this is the other thing of now you get to make the choice, which all people should have, of deciding, like, "You know what? I don't really want to right now." Like, when we go to the beach, I wear a sun shirt because I don't want to get sunburned. I ain't trying to get sunburned out here and damage my beautiful skin. I need it, it's the only one I've got.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: They haven't figured out a way to give me new skin yet, right? So you don't have to, right? The key is I generally think about, like, the vibe more than anything.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Like, if you're sitting there, it's a hot summer's day, you're hanging out with friends, you've got the windows open, there's a grill on the balcony, everyone's chilling, drinking beer, and you're hot and you wanna take your shirt off, excellent.

You're at the company Christmas party, and you're, like, "Ah, a little warm in here." No. Not then. That's not a good time for it. And I know you haven't had a lot of practice with this. So in the beginning, you're gonna wanna skew a little bit towards conservative with the vibe.

But over time, you're gonna get a good read for, like, "You know what? No one's taking their shirt off yet because they're all waiting for the first person they say to take their shirt off. And I'm gonna be that pioneer." And everyone will cheer for you. They won't cheer for you, but...

Teresa: Probably not.

Travis: And a slip and slide, you can do that. That's a body of water, I think that counts.

Teresa: Yep, that counts as water. Anytime you're on your own property, right? If you're doing yard work or lounging in the backyard, walking around your house, absolutely. You can, you go ahead and take your shirt off for sure.

Um, in general, like you said, most buildings do have the expectation that you will continue to wear your shirt. However, um, if you are at, like, a sport arena or a concert venue, um, especially if it is outside and warm, there will be other people, perhaps at a festival, whatever, with their shirts off. Feel free to join in there. Um, but if you are, for example, if it is a, maybe a bowl game or whatever for the footballs...

Travis: Sure, yeah.

Teresa: ... and the only people—

Travis: Very natural, the way you said that.

Teresa: [laughs] The only people who have their shirts off have body paint on their chest. Probably not, right? That's not really, like... They're probably cold.

Travis: And if the music festival is, like, a pop symphony, maybe not then.

Teresa: Okay. Yeah, maybe not then.

Travis: Yeah, listen, you'll get it. It's gonna take you a while. Basically, the difference is, right? When you're a child and you're allowed to take your shirt off, then it's about reining it back, right?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: And my parents saying to me, "Hey, now this is a time when you do need to put a shirt on." And I'm like, "Why? It's just church." And so this is

now, you're just coming at it from the opposite direction of you're gonna ease into, like, "You know what? I'm gonna get comfortable taking my shirt off here. Okay, great, this feels like the right time to do it."

You're just coming at it from a different direction, as opposed to being, like, you know, a four-year-old who was allowed to run around shirtless all the time, and then slowly adding a shirt to the equation. You are now slowly removing a shirt from the equation.

Teresa: But I hope that we gave you some, a few concrete answers.

Travis: I hope so too. All right, everybody, you know what? That's gonna do it for us. Go to mcelroymerch.com if you haven't already. We got some new merch there, including a fun shirt of me and my brothers lovingly staring at the moon like three wolves.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's a really great shirt. Happy 20-Fungalore to everybody. Want to say thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we couldn't make this show. Thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we couldn't make this show. And thank you to you for listening. I mean, maybe we can make the show without you, we've never tried. And frankly, I don't want to, I'd be scared.

Teresa: I don't want to.

Travis: Without you holding us up, you're our rock. You're our rock.

Teresa: [laughing] Okay.

Travis: Thank you, Teresa, for being my co-host.

Teresa: Thanks Travis.

Travis: I love you very much.

Teresa: I love you, too.

Travis: And being my wife, I guess. Let's see, what else?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "Brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. 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, go ahead and join that group today.

Now also, these were submitted by listeners to our Gmail, which is shmannerscast@gmail.com. You can send us questions anytime, topics anytime, idioms anytime, but make sure that you say hi to Alexx, A-L-E-X-X, because she reads everyone.

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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