

Shmanners 403: Leave No Trace

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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're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you on this rainy April day?

Teresa: I mean... fine. I think that this might be the real spring. The real one?

Travis: Hmm.

Teresa: 'Cause sometimes this happens in Ohio where you have several fake-outs before the actual spring happens.

Travis: [goofy voice] The weather in Ohio. Oh-ho-ho—[unintelligible mumbling]

Teresa: But you do! You have several very nice, wonderful, spring-ish days. You think about, like, planting flowers and—

Travis: I don't think about that.

Teresa: —all that kind of stuff. And, like, then it gets super cold again. We had, like, four freezes.

Travis: I tell you who I feel bad for.

Teresa: What?

Travis: The bulb flowers.

Teresa: The bulbs.

Travis: They start comin' out, like, middle of March and they're like, "Aww, yes—what the—?!" and then they're so cold.

Teresa: Like the daffodils that get frozen.

Travis: The poor daffodillos.

Teresa: Did you know that daffodils are toxic? I had—

Travis: Yeah, I mean, I hear 'em gossiping all the time.

Teresa: Noo.

Travis: And I'm like, "Guys, this isn't—come on."

Teresa: No, I had to convince our children not to pick them for me.

Travis: Not to eat them?

Teresa: Well, I mean, I don't think that they would want to eat them, but picking them actually, like—when you cut their stems, there's a kind of, like, toxic sap that's released that can give you tummy troubles.

Travis: Oh, I don't want that.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay. Also tell 'em not to pick them because I worked really hard to grow those.

Teresa: [laughs] Well...

Travis: Yeah. I put a lot of work into cultivating our yard, and plants, and things like that. And I would like our kids not to pick them.

Teresa: Well, you're welcome. I kept them from doing that.

Travis: Thank you. Speaking of... we're coming up on Earth Day.

Teresa: We here! How apropos.

Travis: Cultivating. Planting. I love planting. My garden—my garden technique, by the way, in case anyone was wondering...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... 'cause I grow vegetables and flowers. I have a very—let nature. As nature will. I overplant. I don't—uh, I don't... like, for example, by the end of the season my tomato plants look like a tiny jungle, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I have to, like, root through there to find the tomatoes, and I'm fine with that. Let 'em go wild. That's my—that's what I do. Let nature as it will.

Teresa: And I'm happy to let you let nature.

Travis: Let nature as it will.

Teresa: 'Cause I don't do it. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Hey. But... here's a thing that I think that I did not know the history of for this Earth Day.

Travis: Is it tomatoes?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It is leave no trace, and this was suggested—

Travis: Hmm, like in spying.

Teresa: Nn—yes?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: On nature?

Travis: That's not so much now with the Daniel Craig James Bonds. Daniel Craig smashes through a wall to find documents.

Teresa: Oh, he does? [laughs quietly]

Travis: He leaves so many traces, you guys.

Teresa: So much. Uh, this was suggested by Katie F. So we're gonna talk about the history, as well as the criticisms of the program.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So that, you know, our listeners out there can have a good starting point on all angles of this conservation effort.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Speaking of which, you may wonder, how did Katie F. suggest it? Well, they emailed Alexx, A-L-E-X-X, at shmannerscast@gmail.com. Don't address it to her in the—

Travis: No, shmannerscast@gmail.com. It's not alex@shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Teresa: Right. No, don't—

Travis: That's too many @s.

Teresa: Yeah. That's too many @s. Don't do that. But address it to Alexx. Yeah. We're always in need of those topic suggestions, so thank you very much, Katie F.

Travis: Thank you, Katie F.

Teresa: Um, what exactly is... leave no trace?

[pause]

Travis: Oh. That wasn't rhetorical.

Teresa: No, it's for you. [laughs]

Travis: I assume, from the title, that it is about... traces? You don't leave 'em.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Um, that your impact on—like, when you—okay. I know, like, when you go out into the woods you take only pictures and leave only footprints, or something like that, in memories.

Teresa: Yeah. Something like that.

Travis: Take memories. Leave the cannoli. Something like that?

Teresa: [laughs] No.

Travis: What is it?

Teresa: No, don't leave the cannoli.

Travis: Don't leave the cannoli, whatever you do.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Don't give bears cannoli. We've trained the bears to love cannoli, and now we have bears in all of our pastry shops.

Teresa: It is a set of ethics promoting conservation of outdoor spaces in the US. Because during this post-World War II boom, population boom, more and more people were finding themselves with leisure time, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um, that the working class especially didn't used to have. And so that meant that people were taking vacations. We had highways. People were driving places.

Here's the thing. They probably wanted to just enjoy themselves. And they didn't really think about their impact on the environment. I can—I mean—

Travis: Do you just mean humans in general?

Teresa: Humans.

Travis: Because—do you mean, like, humans in general, forever and ever? Because that—I feel like what you've just said, I've watched, um... any, like, basically at this point, movie or television show, but basically we just watched Avatar for the Max Fun Drive bonus content that we put up. And what you've just described, um, seems like a pretty good summation of humans.

Teresa: Not all humans.

Travis: Not all humans.

Teresa: Indigenous people usually have a pretty good grip on how to take care of the things around them.

Travis: Yeah, though I do want to blanket that by saying, like... like, historically—I don't want to make that stereotype of like, because someone is indigenous they have naturally this—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: —better connection to that environment. But I understand what you mean. Historically, yeah..

Teresa: But those communities have a better track record.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um, and, you know, people were just kind of ignorant. It's the thing, right? They didn't mean to damage things, but they were ignorant about the damage they could cause to an ecosystem, right?

And in the '60s and '70s, this was an explosion of people into, like, public recreation.

Travis: Well, yeah. This is a—there's—it's one of the things that I'm interested in. But usually my version of the interest is in, uh, amusement parks. But this idea of car travel becoming so much more universal, and long distances and, like, the driving recreation, especially here in America where the railway system isn't what it is like, say, in Europe, right?

Teresa: It isn't even what it used to be.

Travis: Even what it used to be. And so this idea of things like Disneyland, right? Starts popping up. And then people saying, "Oh, I want to do that but airplane travel is still way out of, you know, our price range," right? And feasibility at that point air travel was a luxury thing akin to, like, taking a cruise. And so what you got was all of these, like, amusement parks popping up on, like, roadsides and stuff like that, right? And the same with the National Parks and stuff like that became destination things that you could drive to, take your kids to, do for a vacation without having to fly.

Teresa: Yes. The National Park Service saw their attendance increase from 33 million in 1950 to 172 million in 1970.

Travis: And that's more.

Teresa: That is...

Travis: That's a higher number.

Teresa: ... more. And all of these new campers—

Travis: I'm no mathematician...

Teresa: [laughs] All these new campers had to have gear, including tents and sleeping pads and other equipment that was made out of materials that caused harm to the environment that they were being used in, right? And that's not the only issue. Because several articles during this period talk about the country's natural spaces being, quote, "loved to death."

Travis: Ooh.

Teresa: People overcrowding campsites, crushing local flora, causing problems while they tried to track down and, like, watch wildlife.

Travis: Not to mention when you get into taking souvenirs. And then it's a whole—there's a whole issue—I think it was like with the petrified forest where they had—I mean, I don't think it was just specific to there, but that's the example that pops up into my head. Where they really had to start drilling into people's heads, like, please do not take pieces of the petrified forest home with you, or there will be less and less petrified—like, it's not a replenishing resource!

Teresa: It's finite.

Travis: If you keep taking rocks and stuff away and petrified wood away, there will be less and less of it every year.

Teresa: Right. And so there were regulations in place. Um, for example, like, group sizes, right? It wasn't that you couldn't—you couldn't have a family reunion of all your family anymore at the park without special permits and things. It was more like—

Travis: Or if you only had, like, three people in your family.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: You might have—it might be a small family and maybe you guys just haven't seen each other all day? And you're like, "We'll meet back here."

And then it's like, "Ah, what a great and easy reunion."

Teresa: But these rules that were meant to help everyone get along with nature and enjoy nature had a big push back initially. They were inundated with letters from people claiming that the rules took all the joy and spontaneity out of their wilderness adventure.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And so what—so the guidelines were great. But what we needed was to educate the public, right?

Travis: Yeah. I will also say, listen. I don't wanna sound like I'm down on human beings. Uh, but Avatar's really gotten me. Um, the thing is—

Teresa: Everything is Avatar these days.

Travis: Listen. It really—it really crawled into my heart, um, and planted a flag there. Uh, but...

Teresa: The wrong one. The wrong Avatar.

Travis: What? Oh, I see what you're saying. Yes, baby. Avatar: The Last Airbender and The Legend of Korra are the superior Avatar.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I will not die on that hill. But because it's just... wrong. They are the right one.

Teresa: They are the right one.

Travis: Yeah, those are the right one. But this idea of, well, you put rules on it and now it's not fun anymore—

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: —is a very human sentiment. Um, that you see—man, there are... wonderfully, uh, I don't know, wild—it's so weird, it feels so archaic to watch now—but videos you could find, like news stories and interviews from, like, the 80's when they outlawed drinking alcohol in your car while driving.

Teresa: Yep, yep.

Travis: And you can see people be like, "This is just ruining—you know, I get off of work and I've had a hard day, like, working in a factory or whatever. I wanna be able to drink a beer on my way home."

And it's like watching it now you're like, "What are you talking about?!"

Teresa: It's like the same people who complain about seat belts.

Travis: Yeah. It's wild.

Teresa: It's wild. So by 1987 the National Park Service, the United States Forest Service, and—

Travis: Four-year-old Travis McElroy.

Teresa: —the Bureau of Land Management...

Travis: Baby Griffin.

Teresa: They collaborated to make a pamphlet entitled Leave No Trace Land Ethics.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So by 1994 it wasn't just a pamphlet. It was a nonprofit. And the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor [crosstalk]—

Travis: I assume they still had pamphlets, though.

Teresa: I'm sure that they did.

Travis: They didn't plant a pamphlet and it grew into a nonprofit.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You said that like I thought you were gonna say "It wasn't just a pamphlet. It was a book."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But you were like, "The pamphlet somehow... became a nonprofit pamphlet?"

Teresa: Don't feed it after midnight.

Travis: That's wild.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Who's feeding pamphlets at all, baby?

Teresa: It formed the educational resources they had around seven original principles of Leave No Trace, and here they are.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Plan ahead and prepare.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Travel and camp on durable surfaces.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Dispose of waste properly.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Leave what you find.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Minimize campfire impacts.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Respect wildlife.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Be considerate to other visitors.

Travis: Yes!

Teresa: And so there's...

Travis: That's also the rules when you visit a school.

[pause]

Teresa: [hesitantly] Yes.

Travis: I mean, you shouldn't build campfires in school, but if you do, minimize the impact.

Teresa: [laughs quietly] Um, and these seven principles were kind of like—they were expanded and contracted and expanded and contracted over time. Um, and so it may have originally began with, like, 75 or so?

Travis: That's too many.

Teresa: But in 1999, those seven principles were finalized. And here's the thing, right?

Travis: Tell me the thing.

Teresa: It was a highly effective campaign. Maybe too much. Maybe—

Travis: [gasps] I can't wait! I wanna hear! Hold on—

Teresa: Maybe too effective.

Travis: I wanna learn. But first, how about a word from another Max Fun show?

[theme music plays]

[dog barks]

[music plays]

Alexis: Are you tired of being picked on for only wanting to talk about your cat at parties?

Ella: Do you feel as though your friends don't understand the depth of love you have for your guinea pig?

Alexis: When you look around a room of people, do you wonder if they know sloths only have to eat one leaf a month?

Ella: Have you ever dumped someone for saying they're just not an animal person?

Alexis: Us too.

Ella: She's Alexis B. Preston.

Alexis: She's Ella McLeod.

Ella: And we host Comfort Creatures: the show where you can't talk about your pets too much, animal trivia is our love language, and dragons are just as real as dinosaurs.

Alexis: Tune in to Comfort Creatures every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

Speaker 1: What is up, people of the world? Do you have an argument that you keep having with your friends, and you just can't seem to settle it, and you're sitting there arguing about whether it's Star Trek or Star Wars, or you can't decide what is the best nut, or can't agree on what is the best cheese?

Speaker 2: Stop doing that! Listen to We Got This with Mark and Hal, only on Max Fun.

Speaker 1: Your topics, asked and answered, objectively, definitively, for all time.

Speaker 2: So don't worry, everybody!

Together: We got this.

[music and ad end]

Travis: Okay. How effective? How effective?

Teresa: There were numerous officials and bulletin boards and pamphlets—

Travis: Smokies the Bear.

Teresa: Exactly. Um, and articles, and everything—

Travis: Do kids these days know who Smoky the Bear is?

Teresa: I think that they do.

Travis: We had a conversation—Teresa and I talked about this where because so much entertainment now happens on streaming and stuff, that I don't—I don't think kids are exposed to, like, the, uh, public—you know, the PSAs and stuff. We had one growing up in Huntington—I don't think this was universal—of Louie the Lightning Bug. About you gotta play it safe—phase— [singing] safe around electricity. You gotta play it safe around electricity.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, but you had McGruff. You had Smoky the Bear. You had Louies the Lightning Bug. You had a lot of them.

Teresa: You got a lot of them.

Travis: But I don't think those pop up for kids anymore. Right?

Teresa: I don't know. I'm not sure. Um, but everybody was hopping on board this bandwagon. We've got the Sierra Club, the National Outdoor Leadership School, the Boys and Girls Scouts of America. Um, we've got the National Outdoor Leadership School, the United States Forestry Service.

All of these nonprofits and other groups really latched onto this. Um, and so... it was with the best of intentions that it was dedicated to the responsible enjoyment and active stewardship of outdoor spaces, right?

Travis: Which seems like such a good thing.

Teresa: It really does. And across the world now, people model theirs—their, like, stewardship kind of programs on the Leave No Trace. We've got—there's organizations in Australia and Canada and New Zealand and Ireland.

And here's the thing. There are some very valid criticisms of this movement.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: We can all agree that throwing candy wrappers into the Grand Canyon is some true butthead behavior.

Travis: Can I tell you who especially agrees with that? Bebe McElroy.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Bebe McElroy gets so angry—

Teresa: About litter.

Travis: When she sees litter, I have seen her get angry to tears. And if you're listening... if you're listening to this and you ever even think about littering, I want you to picture my daughter getting angry to the point of tears, and then eat your garbage.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Do you hear me? You—because you even thought about it, you eat your garbage. You goat. You're a goat now, because you do—because you were even thinking about littering! Eat your garbage! That's my new movement, my new rule.

Teresa: [through laughter] Is eat your garbage.

Travis: If you—only if you even think about littering. If it crosses your mind, eat your garbage, and that's how you're going to learn a new trait, a new habit. "Oh, I don't want to even think about littering, or I'll have to eat this garbage." Okay.

Teresa: So there are several criticisms that I think that we—that definitely are valid. Um, for example in 2002, environmental historian James Morton Turner argued that the scope of responsibility for Leave No Trace isn't actually big enough.

We've run into this where, like, there's the kind of fallacy that every person doing it does their part, right? But if you don't hold corporations and municipalities accountable, then even every little person doing every little thing they can is not—it's a drop in the bucket, right?

Travis: Yeah. We've also talked about this before, I think, but you run into a lot with stuff like this where maybe what it should've been is, like, the first big step... on a series of big steps to get to a point. But you start doing this thing and then everyone was like, "Okay! We solved it. That's it. We don't have—as long as we're doing these things, we don't—"

And it's like, no, no, no! Sorry. That was step one. It's like, yeah, but I'm already doing these, so I don't wanna worry about it anymore. Which is always, frankly, one of the things with, like, recycling that we could talk about another time. But people will be like, "No, no, no, no. I can use as much as I want 'cause I'm putting it in this bin."

And it's like, "No, no, no! Hey! Wha—that's—no!"

Teresa: Not exactly it.

Travis: No, no, no.

Teresa: So even though Leave No Trace focuses on protecting the wilderness, right? The world is not just wilderness. And so what we need to do is tackle larger issues like the economy and consumerism, like you're saying, and the environment as a whole, not just these patches of forest, right?

Travis: And that's the thing is like, it's one thing—okay. Not to get a little preachy for a moment. But when we talk about not, like, littering, right? That's a great start of, like, you're driving down the road. Don't throw your candy wrapper out the window. Right?

But then also think about when you get a package of something, right? And there's, like, 18 layers to get to the thing inside, right? It's like, cool, you didn't litter this thing. But let's think about the way we package stuff. The

way—and that's not something I can change. It's something we can think about mindful consumerism, which everyone should be thinking about. But that kind of thing is—next step is like yes, you didn't throw the package out the window. Now let's work on less packaging, on biodegradable packaging, on packaging that doesn't need to be thrown away but can be reused, and stuff like that.

Teresa: Exactly. And so—

Travis: We focus too much on the recycle and not the reduce and reuse part.

Teresa: That's it. That's it. And also, speaking of the consumerism, right? Outdoor brands like REI and like North Face and all this kind of stuff, they have approved Leave No Trace labels that they put on their products. Which is great for them, but it does encourage people to consume more, because maybe you already have something, but you see that REI has something that has a Leave No Trace label, and so the marketing works on you, and you purchase something that you don't actually need.

Travis: This is a thing—once again—ugh. I feel like I'm getting on a little pulpit here. But this is a thing we were talking—I was talking with Justin and Griffin yesterday about if you ever watch—I love watching, like, restoration videos of, like, this is a coffee grinder from 1912, right? And they're, like, taking it apart and cleaning it and everything.

And what you find is, the way that they were constructed was to be, like, this is the only coffee grinder you'll ever—it didn't have bells and whistles. It wasn't fancy. But it was, like, two moving parts, and as long as you, like, maintained it, it was—it just was your coffee grinder forever, right?

And then we start getting into like, yeah, but then if you're a person who makes coffee grinders, you need more coffee—don't you need—and it's—that's where it gets into the consumerism of making things that are designed to break down, or trying to convince someone that the next—like, well, this is the new sleeping bag and it's better than the old sleeping bag because, question mark?

And it's like, okay, cool. We're just creating more waste from these things.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. There are a couple of reasons for those kind of breakdowns. Not only is it made more cheaply and quickly, but also when things start to introduce, like, computer components that break a lot easier.

Travis: Well, and there's also planned obsolescence.

Teresa: Yes, yes. That's—

Travis: There is the very idea of saying, like, "And we're gonna stop updating this one so that you'll buy that one."

And listen, now I'm going to step down from my pulpit and step over here into my little shame hypocrite corner. I am the type of person that's like, "Ooh, a new phone, you say? A new video game system?"

So don't get it twisted. I'm not saying, like, "And I'm better at this than anyone else."

It's just a thing that I've definitely become aware of more and more and I'm trying to be better about.

Teresa: There are other critiques of the Leave No Trace movement. Dr. Kiona, who is an incredible academic-turned-entrepreneur with a focus on education through travel and community, has some notes. And has a beautiful article entitled—which I cannot say the whole title here, but you'll get the gist—"How not to be a bullying... in the outdoors."

Travis: Hmm. What's the word start with?

Teresa: B.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So there are some cultural implications of Leave No Trace that lead to unintended consequences. As she puts it, "straight up racist harassment under the guise of LNT ethics."

Travis: Ooh. No good.

Teresa: So here are her main takeaways. Indigenous people are not usually the target of this audience. Um, and they don't often—like we said at the beginning—need to be told, "Leave what you find." Right?

Alex Piechowski-Begay, a Navajo outdoor guide who gave Dr. Kiona a tour of protected land in Utah, spoke about how the land that they were interacting with had been cared for by the Navajo people for millennia, and then white colonizers came, colonized, and then ironically created rules to preserve the land that was already being lovingly protected by the Native people. So the idea of leaving what you find specifically diminishes and invalidates the advanced knowledge and cultures of indigenous practices.

Travis: Yeah. It's almost like, hey. Why don't you ask the people who have been there how to do it? Instead of saying like, "I think we know."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: "We've been here for a short blip of time. I think we know."

Teresa: It's that—it begs the question, who are we protecting this land from? Right?

Travis: Yeah. And for.

Teresa: And for. Um, also—

Travis: That's the other thing, is how you use the land. It's like, "Yes, we're protecting this land so eventually we can build malls on it!" Or whatever. It's like, wait, no—no? Hold on.

Teresa: Or like, you know, we have a problem with wildfires in this country. Mostly because we do not control the wildfires that are necessary. Right? And everything—when you have so much brush and undergrowth, it keeps all of that kind of, like, dry kindling available for an unintended fire. Whereas if we were able to, like—normally a wildfire would take care of that stuff. And

so you wouldn't have all of that stuff building up and building up and building up. So that's the problem with keeping wildfires away, is you need the wildfires, and it also returns a lot of nutrients to the soil, making things better for the other things that are growing there. And you know, I understand the effort to protect wildlife and homes, but at what cost?

Travis: Well, and that second part, homes, is part of the problem. Of like, [crosstalk]—

Teresa: Maybe we shouldn't build homes here. [laughs]

Travis: And here's the thing, right? It makes complete sense, because when you find someplace that's beautiful, the desire to be there makes complete sense. Right? This is a beautiful place. I would like to live in a beautiful place. That makes complete sense and, like, I get that. But I've... heard from people who work in, like, wildfire services, right? That one of the reason nowadays wildfires can seem so scary is because—not because the wildfire encroaches into where people have been living, but as people encroach—

Teresa: Into where the wildfire happens.

Travis: —into where the wildfires happen, now you're doing things like, uh, disrupting where a natural break in the wildfire would happen, because you built a thing there, right? Or you've added houses there.

And so now it's like, well, yeah, people are in danger a lot more from wildfires now, because there are a lot more people where wildfires happen than where they used to be. You know, that kind of thing.

Teresa: Which is why I'm a fan of controlled burns and staying out of the wilderness.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Okay. Um—

Travis: Smoky never said that. Smoky should've been like, "And also, you can prevent forest fires, and maybe also don't live here! Like, I'm a bear!"

Teresa: [laughs] "I belong here."

Travis: "This is where I live! Can I come—give me a house! Do you wanna trade? You can come live in a cave."

Teresa: Okay. The next thing, um, is... that Leave No Trace gives quiet ammunition to white supremacy.

Travis: Oh no!

Teresa: Dr. Kiona spoke with Rebecca Maccaro, a member of the—please excuse my pronunciation... Payómkawichum Nation in California, who says that she specifically was harassed while on an educational culture trip to pick poppies and chia and other plants that have been ancestral foods for her community for generations. And during one of her approved trips, she was harassed by a passing white man, who was yelling at her about the "Leave no trace, leave what you find" kind of ideas, right? And so although we want people to be empowered to protect the wilderness, you never know what someone is doing, right? And it is not your job to police other people.

Travis: That's—um, just so you know, that's a good umbrella rule. Not just for Leave No Trace, but a lot of, uh, things you see nowadays where because somebody takes it upon themselves to be the rule keeper of an area, or store, or neighborhood, or something like that. And it's—don't do that. Hey. Don't do that.

Teresa: So I think that although it has some really great points, we want to make sure that we are not making sure that other people do it correctly. Right? Because you first of all never know what kind of permits they already have, and they might find enjoyment in different ways than you do, right? For example, one of the tenets that we talked about was be considerate of other people around you, right? In the wild, enjoying their own thing. And maybe for you, consideration means quiet contemplation, right? But maybe for someone else it means joyful laughter or singing. It means, like, um...

Travis: A drum circle.

Teresa: A drum circle, sure! Lots of different things it could mean. And it is, like we said, not anyone else's job to tell them what they're doing is wrong, just like you wouldn't want someone to come up to you and say, "You are being too quiet and still. Stop it."

Travis: Yeah. "You're creeping me out."

Teresa: [laughs] So, what do we do?

Travis: Be cool.

Teresa: Sure! Here are some ways to ethically practice Leave No Trace.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Plan ahead and prepare. That's one of the first ones, right?

Travis: [simultaneously] That's a great one, yes.

Teresa: Look up the place you're gonna visit. Are there any special concerns or regulations? What are the animals like? Should you refrain from making a fire because of the dry season? Check out their website. Okay? Make a plan.

Travis: Also, are there approved places to stay? 'Cause I don't know if y'all know this, you can't just go and be like, "I'm camping here now" most places. At least in, uh—when you're talking about, like, national and state forests and stuff like that.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Have a backup plan for extreme weather. Figure out when might be the busiest time and try to avoid the busiest times. On that note, try to use the smallest group possible, okay? Because the more people who are in your party, the more impact you're gonna make on this space that you probably don't actually, like, live in, right?

Repackage your food as best you can to minimize waste.

Travis: And to keep safe from bears!

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Look into a bear-proof bag if you think that—if bears are one of the animals that you might encounter, or might be in the general area that you're in.

Um, and when exploring, use a map, a compass, or a GPS. That way, you can cut down on marking paints and, like, rock cairns or flagging the trails for yourself. And also... if something else has been—is there, just leave it. Leave it alone.

I know that there are different reports of people making, like, rock cairns in rivers and stuff like that and, um, you know, there have been different campaigns to, like, if you see one of these push it down, it doesn't mean anything. It's just destroying the habitat for the fish. Like, all that kind of stuff. Right?

But don't. Just leave it. Don't make any more. Just leave it. Because again, that's not your job. The people who are—you know, the rangers of the area, they can go. They can push those down. But just leave it.

Travis: You can pick up trash though.

Teresa: Okay. Yes.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Your trash and any other trash you find. Um, second one, travel and camp on durable surfaces. The best campsites are found, not made. And the best campsites are set out ahead of time for you to be there. 'Cause that's what they're made for.

Um, keep your campsite small, and if you're camping by a lake or a stream, be back at least 200 feet so you don't disturb the bank of the river or the stream.

Travis: And so you don't roll into the stream while you're sleeping.

Teresa: Sure. Stick to the trails. And walk single file in the middle of the trail so that you don't disturb the flora or the fauna on either side. Um, and if you have to go off the trail to relieve yourself, um, I mean, you don't want to, like, do that in the middle of the trail, right? Do your business real quick. That doesn't violate Leave No Trace, because even a bear poops in the woods. Right?

Travis: They do! Okay. I've been wondering that and no one's ever answered it for me.

Teresa: [laughs] But you do have to dispose of it properly. If you cannot get to a facility, you need to dig a hole that is at least six to eight inches deep and, again, 200 feet from water, camps, or trails, and then cover the whole when you're done. That's for solid waste.

Uh, remember to pack it in and pack it out. Inspect your campsite, food prep areas, rest areas, any other places you use before you move on. Packing out all of your trash and leftover food and any of that other stuff. If you're washing dishes, which is something that we used to do at the Girl Scout camps that I would go to, make sure that you are, again, 200 feet from lakes or streams, and use a very small amount of biodegradable soap, and don't throw it back in the river. Drain and scatter your dishwater when you're done using it. Okay? Alright.

Leave what you find means, like you said, take pictures, not petals. Photographs and stuff are perfect.

Travis: No souvenirs. Just memories and pictures.

Teresa: That's it. And like I said—

Travis: Buy souvenirs in a gift shop.

Teresa: Uh, like I said, don't build structures or furniture or dig trenches on—any of that stuff. Don't do any of that stuff. But again, it's not your business what other people are doing. Assume kind intent and proper permits. When you see someone harvesting something, interacting with

something in a way you wouldn't, you know, use your judgment. A lady with a group of kids respectfully harvesting chia seeds is way different from a group of dumb teenagers throwing... trash at trees. Right?

Travis: Sure, yeah.

Teresa: Minimize the impact of your campfire means lighting fires in permitted places, like established fire rings, pans, and mounts. Keeping them small. Making sure that all the wood and coals are burned to ash, and scattering and raking them when you're finished.

Travis: Don't just dump water on it, because especially big logs and stuff, you don't know if it's all the way out. Those things can steam and reignite for a while. Sand and dirt is a much better way to ensure that it is completely out. Smother it. It's way better.

Teresa: And check safety advisories. You may not even be allowed to make a campfire at that point.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: Respect the wildlife. Enjoy and observe from a distance. Do not feed anything.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: We talked about securing food securely. Controlling pets, or leave them at home. Um, ask the ranger at your park if there are any sensitive wildlife times. For example, is it a mating season, is it a nesting season? All that kind of stuff is very important. It makes your visit better and it makes the wildlife there better. Be considerate of other visitors. Like we said, this is the one that is brought up the most, but also the most forgotten, right? Because you shouldn't harass people!

Travis: Yeah. Just in general.

Teresa: Just in general. So being considerate means acting in a considerate way, in the same way that you would want to be treated, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: So there are very, very, very few situations where you would ever need to approach another camper, or hiker, or wildlife enjoyer to voice your opinion. It is not your job. Ask yourself several questions before you even do. Questions like, "Why am I interacting with this person? Do I see something that could actively hurt them right now, or I'd like to protect them from? Or am I just sharing my opinion, an extension of me policing a person's experience?"

Travis: "So that I feel superior to them."

Teresa: Exactly. You are not a ranger. So if you feel that you still need to say something, don't, and go get someone who's in charge. Okay? Great.

Um, step downhill of the trail when you're encountering a packstock. That's like a donkey carrying things, right? Um, and then do your best to personally avoid loud noises, so that other people can enjoy themselves, right? But if someone—like I said, if someone is being loud, singing or expressing joy... that's beautiful too. Consider that instead of chastising that person, walk somewhere else quieter. Yeah?

Travis: And consider this. We wanna say thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could not make this show, and thank you for listening. We could make this show without you, but that would just be silly!

I also wanted to say thank you to my wife, Teresa. Uh, she is my rock.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: She is The Rock. And we want to let you know, uh, a couple things. One, we just announced a bunch of My Brother, My Brother, and Me and Adventure Zone tours. If you go to themcelroy.family, you will find all the information there. But we've got upcoming shows at the end of April here in Chicago. The My Brother, My Brother, and Me on April 24th is sold out, but we still have a few tickets for the April 25th Adventure Zone, and then we're

going to be at C2E2. You can find all of that information and all the new tours by also going to bit.ly/mcelroytours.

We've got a bunch of merch. If you haven't seen it yet, go to mcelroymerch.com. What else, Teresa?

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. Always send your topic submissions, your questions, your idioms, to shmannerscast@gmail.com. And if you are interested in this topic some more, please check out the Instagram community of Unlikely Hikers. Also Dr. Kiona's website is great, and you can check out the Urban Wilderness Program for another great resource. Bringing everyone together to enjoy the wilderness.

Travis: And that's gonna do it. Join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required!

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

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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