

Shmanners 455: Media Training

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[theme song plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And [stumbles over words] lou're— You're— [speaks gibberish] to *Shmanners*!

Teresa: [laughs] It's extraordinary etiquette.

Travis: Small glitch in the recording there, folks. Sorry about that. You're listening to *Shmanners*!

Teresa: [laughing] It's extraordinary etiquette.

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: You know, my dentist says I have a large tongue.

Teresa: [bursts out laughing] Um, sure!

Travis: Nothing like having someone with a metal implement in your mouth, like drilling your tooth, and saying, "You know, you have an enormous tongue."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And saying it so matter-of-factly, and just with a completely flat affect. Not like... Ugh, oogh! Just, "Hey, you have an enormous tongue."

Teresa: Well...

Travis: And I jokingly said, "Biggest you've ever seen?"

And she goes, "Top three."

Teresa: [laughs] Our dentist has, um... She has a lot of...

Travis: For somebody who uses so many sharp tools...

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: ... she sure is blunt.

Teresa: [through laughter] She sure is blunt. But you know what?

Travis: I enjoy her immensely.

Teresa: She's a straight shooter.

Travis: She really is.

Teresa: [wheeze-laughs]

Travis: I enjoy her immensely. Um, and she wasn't just being a teenage bully...

Teresa: [bubbles into laughter]

Travis: ... who could point out the one thing you're nervous about. We were talking about sleep apnea, but...

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: ... it was just such a great, like...

Teresa: It was part of the conversation, I'm sure.

Travis: Okay, cool. Great. And this is interesting - so I'm gonna tie this back in. Follow me, folks.

Teresa: Okay. I'm ready.

Travis: Come down this winding path with me. So growing up, right, I went to speech therapy for several years, starting at seven years old, because I had a problem with S's and Z's, and like, S-H, and I had a problem with that. And I mumbled a lot. And didn't really enunciate well.

So I did speech therapy, and stuff like that. And it wasn't until 41 years old, right, and she was like, "You have a huge tongue." Right? She didn't say *enormous*.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: And I looked up, like, "Is it possible to do a tongue reduction? Is that a thing?" And it is!

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Um, but...

Teresa: Sounds painful.

Travis: Yeah, it's not a thing that you do, like, on a whim, you know?

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: And the thing is, is you basically can't talk for a while. You have to go to physical therapy to relearn to talk.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it will change the way that you speak.

Teresa: Yeah, totally.

Travis: And I'm not going to do that. This isn't like, an "And I've been looking into it..."

Teresa: Oh, no.

Travis: No, no, no. But it is one of those things where it's like, you know, I'm 41 years old, and my voice has been my voice since I learned to talk. And it was that moment of, like, I'd never thought about what an impact the size and shape of my tongue has on not just the way I enunciate, but just the way that I sound.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: And what would I sound like, if I had a smaller tongue, right?

Teresa: Oh... Okay.

Travis: And so it just makes you think a lot about the way that you talk.

Teresa: [chuckles] Okay.

Travis: And, say, in an interview...

Teresa: [gasps] Oh!

Travis: Oh, yeah!

Teresa: Here it is! I was wondering.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: I was wondering where you were gonna get to, and I am so proud of you.

Travis: Well, that's the thing. Man, like... [sighs] 'Cause we're talking about media training...

Teresa: Media training!

Travis: ... this week. And it's so interesting – and we'll get into it, and what that means and everything – but it's so... Yes, it matters what you say.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: But also how you say it.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Right? There's, like, inflections and deliveries, and tone and stuff. But, like, that...

Teresa: That's not media training. But sure.

Travis: Yes. But, like, in an interview, right? Be it a job interview, be it an interview for a newspaper or whatever. The press junket.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Right? Is like, that thing about the way that we talk, the way that we deliver these things, is so deeply ingrained in the size of our tongue. Apparently.

Anyways...

Teresa: Oh, apparently.

Travis: So media training. What is media training?

Teresa: Yes. So I think that there is a certain amount of being natural at something, right? We tend to, if we look at people who do things like... I love the example of Graham Norton, right?

Travis: Mm!

Teresa: Not only is he very good at, like, putting people at ease... He's good at — I mean, he is just kind of, like, the epitome of talk show interview, and I feel like almost everybody around tries to, like, emulate that kind of rapport and ease.

Travis: See, yeah, I would do— He is so conversational.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? And, like, this is the reason I could never be a talk show host, is that everything he's doing is facilitating the story the person's telling.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And, like, increasing that. Like, I think Seth Meyers' another good one. He's so interested in what the person's saying, I was watching a clip this morning. And, like, 90% of the time, he's like leaning forward on his hands...

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: ... and just smiling, and going, "Yeah! Oh, yeah. Yeah." Right? And, like, actively listening and encouraging that thing out, you know?

Teresa: Yeah. Occasionally, I will come across a talk show... I mean, I don't really watch TV anymore.

Travis: Who does?

Teresa: But you'll come across a clip, right? And sometimes, it feels like I'm intruding on the host's intimate conversation with someone, and I'm not into that kind of...

Travis: That's how I feel, whenever Conan O'Brien interviews Timothy Olyphant.

Teresa: Oh, yeah?

Travis: And it's just two buddies hanging out in their garage.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Drinking a beer, while their wives are like, "Where are they?"

Teresa: [laughter rises]

Travis: "Have you seen them?" And I enjoy that immensely.

Teresa: But there is a kind of training that you can go through, called media training, that might help you *appear* a little more natural. Right? And so it's a type of communication instruction for people who plan to have public interactions, right?

Travis: So you don't mean just, like, talking to someone in public. You mean like you're being viewed by the public.

Teresa: Right, yes.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yes, you're right. And so the idea is that it will prepare you to represent yourself, or your brand, or the company whatever, with professionalism and poise, okay?

Travis: Can I give you an opposite example of that?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: One of my favorites— So Marshawn Lynch, who was a footballman...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... for the Seattle Seahawks for a while, and I think he went on to play for the raiders. But he was maybe my favorite running back that's ever been.

Teresa: What was his name?

Travis: The Beast, Beast Mode?

Teresa: Beast Mode, yeah.

Travis: Uh, having little to do with his playing ability. Which was great! He won me many a fantasy football league. But he is just a weird dude to me, and funny.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And he, one time, skipped a post-game press conference, 'cause he didn't feel like it. And he got fined.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And was told, like, "Don't do that anymore." So then, he would go to press conferences, and just answer, "yes" or "no," to every question, whether it was a yes or no question. So he would sit at the table and just go, "Yes. Uh, no."

Teresa: [bubbles into laughter]

Travis: "Yes!" Like, no matter what the question was, so that he wouldn't be fined for skipping the press conference.

Teresa: Oh! He found a loophole.

Travis: He would eat, like, so many Skittles before every game. He loves Skittles.

Teresa: That's okay!

Travis: Yeah. Sometimes, he threw up. But that is fine! It's fine.

Teresa: [laughs] What?

Travis: Well, he'd eat so many Skittles, and then he'd just run around a football field.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: They didn't sit well!

Teresa: Okay. So the idea is that the training makes people natural and likable on camera, right? But the fundamentals can be used for everyday situations, like job interviews and networking events.

Travis: Dates.

Teresa: And dates, sure! Sure.

Here's what it involves, exactly, because you mentioned a little bit of pronunciation and elocution, and the assumption is people who are receiving media training already have that kind of thing. Right? We think about celebrities, movie stars, things like that. Right?

Travis: Oh! There's a little bit of this in *Ted Lasso*.

Teresa: Yes!

Travis: Where Keeley, Keeley is like, working with the players.

Teresa: That's a great example.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah, there's a lot of that in *Ted Lasso*, because not only do you get to see them *in* the press conferences, right? You also get to see them *prepare* for the press conferences.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: There's a really great one where she's working with Roy, and she's moving from chair to chair, right? And basically trying to make him angry, while she's doing this, so that he can be prepared to know what to do with those feelings when that happens. That's a great example.

So usually, a trainer will be brought in by a company to coach people. Usually one-on-one, like Keeley does. And although you can do group training, like she also does, there's one scene in that – maybe more than one – but it's usually one-on-one.

Travis: That seems to make sense, right? Because it feels like such a specifically tailored thing to the person.

Teresa: Mm-hmm, right.

Travis: Of, like you mentioned, maybe it's a person who gets angry at questions, or whatever. But also, like, what you're really trying to do is bring out the personality of the person that best— Like, in a perfect world, I would imagine, you're not trying to change who they are...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... to fit some kind of mold. You're saying, "Okay, here's the best facet of yourself that you wanna bring out in this moment. And here's how we do that."

Teresa: Right. So the idea is to make them personable, concise, and thoughtful with their information. Like I said earlier, like, Graham Norton is a *great* example of this. He often has, sometimes, three or four people on the couch at the same time.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And some of the best interactions are between the people who are being interviewed. And it's just because, like, you can see that there's people on the couch who are really good at it. And then there are some people who are maybe not so good. But everybody kind of, like, rises to the occasion, and wants to make it into a one-up kind of party atmosphere. And that is what you want to bring out...

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: ... in a person, when you're doing the media training.

And it can encompass so many different things. Especially press junkets, right? Where you're supposed to get out very specific information about what you're doing.

Travis: Over and over again. This is the other thing. In case you don't know, if you ever watch those things where it's like, there's a poster for the movie between them...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: It's like, the interviewer in this chair, the person – the celebrity whatever – in this chair, being interviewed. And there's, like, a curtain behind them.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: That is, they probably have spent five to eight hours that day...

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: ... in five-minute chunks, with maybe little breaks in between, where they're just moving different interviewers into those seats.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And getting asked, potentially, the same questions over and over again, and answering those. And when you watch those clips, one, you never know how long they've already been doing it that day, before it gets to that point.

Teresa: Oh, yeah.

Travis: And it's also fun to try to guess that.

Teresa: I think that... I feel like when that first started happening, the idea was trying to be, like, fresh for every single interview, and never let on how tired you are. And *now*, I feel like now that we know that that is the way that it works, it's almost like we're waiting for someone to be like, "Oh, my God! We've been doing this for eight hours, and this is the same question over and over again!" right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: You're waiting for them to kind of comment on the situation. I think that's a good thing. I think that that makes—

Travis: Because it's a ridiculous thing to make someone do?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And it makes them kind of relatable, so... I think that there's a fine line, though, between commenting on the ridiculousness of the situation and then turning it into, like, complaining. Right?

Travis: Yeah. I mean, we've reached a point. Not to get too far into this, but we've reached a point in, like, celebrity culture where relatable is often more appealing than, kind of, like a Hollywood, you know, Illuminati. That's not the right word.

Teresa: [wheeze-laughs]

Travis: No, it doesn't— Hollywood elite would be a better way to put it, right?

Teresa: Elite, yeah.

Travis: Where if you think about the 40s, 50s, right...

Teresa: Yeah. They're kind of wearing the mask of celebrity.

Travis: Right. Where it was like, "Oh, this is Mountain Olympus, and they're the gods." And now it's much more people wanna see that moment where the two celebrities, like where Sebastian Stan and Anthony Mackie crack each other up...

Teresa: Right.

Travis: ... during the thing, or whatever. Right? Or Chris Evans misunderstands a question about Five Guys. And you're like, "Oh! I would've done that, too." Right?

Teresa: Yeah. Definitely. So...

Travis: Why are all my references Marvel references? I... They're everywhere, yeah.

Teresa: They do a lot of press junkets, 'cause there's a lot of those shows.

So a couple of things that you'll probably work on, if you undergo media training. Like I said, it can look up at a bunch of different things, but here are some basic ones. You are gonna learn, kind of, the functions of media communication. So your trainer will likely teach you fundamental marketing concepts, like best practices for interviews, right? Direct communication styles, and information on what media formats you'll be interacting with.

Like, for example, are you doing print pieces, or television stuff, right? If you're doing clips for TV and the internet, you're going to speak in a different way, or you're going to be *edited* differently, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Than if you were doing an interview for, like, *The New Yorker*, or whatever.

Travis: Same with long form, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Exactly, yeah.

Travis: Because sometimes you'll see written interviews, where there's one sentence question from the interviewer, and then like a paragraph of response.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And sometimes, it's written more like a narrative, almost. And you're only getting, like, one sentence. Like, "And then I asked him this. And oh, blah-blah-blah." Like, it's written much more... There's no way they just answered that in one sentence.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: That's just what they're putting in.

Teresa: Yeah. They're gonna also help you predict questions. This, again, is probably really important for press interviews, right? But also, on a lot of those chat shows, you do a pre-interview beforehand, where you talk about, like example, *Graham Norton*. They'll often bring up stories of set, or they'll bring up stories from their childhood, or things like that. And all of that...

Travis: Now, you have a special talent. You have a thing that's either...

Teresa: Right.

Travis: The person told them that, or their publicist mentioned it, or something.

Teresa: Or it's a pre-interview type thing, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: And sometimes, I know that it seems like they're, like, embarrassed, or they were surprised...

Travis: Acting!

Teresa: Not only that, but these pre-interviews can contain *so much* stuff that they may have actually forgotten what they said they were gonna talk

about, or you know, there's just so many embarrassing anecdotes to choose from.

Travis: Mm. Speaking of choosing from...

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: How about a word from another Max Fun show that you can choose to enjoy?

Teresa: Nice.

[theme song plays]

Brenda: Hi, is this Sam?

Sam: Yes, it is.

Brenda: I'm Brenda, host of *Secret Histories of Nerd Mysteries* on Maximum Fun, and I'm calling because you've been named Maximum Fun's member of the month for May!

Sam: Wow. I'm really excited to hear that. I love being a member; I like all the BoCo, and I just— I enjoy all the shows that I listen to. I just love Maximum Fun.

Brenda: As our member of the month, you'll be getting a \$25 dollar gift card to the Maximum Fun Store, a special member of the month bumper sticker, a special priority parking spot at Maximum Fun HQ in Los Angeles, California, just for you.

Sam: I can't wait to see what the bumper sticker looks like. [chuckles]

Brenda: Oh, yeah. I am obsessed with bumper stickers. [laughs]

What's your message to people thinking about joining Maximum Fun?

Sam: I mean, if you really like the shows, I think it's a really good way to help support them. I'm really happy I'm able to.

Brenda: Thank you so much for listening.

Sam: Thank you for making your show!

Advertiser: Become a Max Fun member now, at maximumfun.org/join.

[background music and ad change]

Jesse: It's hard to explain what happens on *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* So I had my kids...

Kid 1: Saying swear words?

Jordan: Saying swear words.

Kid 2: Yeah, um...

Kid 1: Bad jokes?

Jordan: Bad jokes?

Kid 2: Bad jokes. Maybe it's like... you tell people that you're gonna interview them, and then you just stay there, like, really quiet. And try and creep them out.

Kid 1: [laughs] Yeah!

Kid 3: It's just really boring!

Jesse: Because of Jordan, right? Not me?

Kid 3: Because of both of you.

Jesse: Oh. [sighs]

Jordan: Subscribe to *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*, a comedy show for grownups.

[ads end]

Travis: Now, I'm back here with Teresa McElroy.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Teresa, you were just telling me about media training. I'm so interested – please, go on.

Teresa: Absolutely! So...

Travis: See, that was a little— I was doing, like, an interview. What did you think?

Teresa: Oh, I loved it.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I loved it.

The next thing that they'll probably go over is the promo spiel. We talked about that earlier, right? Where you have to talk about your project that you're pushing, you know, where you can find it, and... I mean, I see these especially on Seth Meyers, right? He'll bring out different people, and they'll be like, "Okay, well, introduce this clip, and show us the thing and what you're working on," and all that kind of stuff, right?

It's meant to make you likable, but also the show, right? The thing that you are doing, it's supposed to make it so that people wanna go see that.

Travis: Yes. You know, Justin and Griffin have a ton of these stories – of course, not in movies, but in video games, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: From when they worked at *Joystiq*, and *Polygon*, and stuff. And whenever I think about these press junkets and interviews and stuff, I'm reminded of the number of times they told me about, like, they would be interviewing a game designer, or game developer or whatever.

And they would have, like, a lawyer basically standing over their shoulder. That, like, when a question was asked that was something that was something they couldn't talk about yet, like...

Teresa: Like proprietary information?

Travis: 'Cause it was, yeah, embargoed or whatever. Or something that was just like, "Oh, we can't— Legally, we can't say that, or we can't do this." Like, the person would just lean into their ear, and talk very quickly and quietly...

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: And they'd be like, "Oh, yeah, sorry. I can't answer that." And, like, I think maybe more so than movies and stuff like that, because there's so much technology involved.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That makes it feel like a legal deposition, almost.

Teresa: [laughs]

And that's one of the things that they'll definitely work with you on, how to kind of, like... If you don't have a lawyer over your shoulder, how do tactfully, like, shut down certain things, or steer it a different way. We see this a lot with the Marvel stuff that you mentioned earlier, where they can't talk about spoilers or whatever.

Sometimes, even for Marvel, they give them different scripts, or they black out whole scenes that they're not in, and things like that, right? Trying to make it so that you are presenting what the company, what the thing is trying to make people do, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Typically, these sessions last about a half a day. And they're held in a studio, which is the kind of practice you're getting to make it feel like you're actually there. And they might conduct a mock interview, or try out, like Keeley does, try to get some emotion out of you, so that you can feel what that's like, and try and figure out what to do with it.

Also, they might actually video it, right? So that you can go back and watch, and see your mannerisms are. Maybe you have a tendency to – like I do – sometimes I look away from the person I'm talking to while I'm thinking, and then I come back to the other person. They might train you, instead of looking to the side or whatever, maybe look down to the floor, or at your hand, or something else, so that you don't appear kind of shifty, right, on camera.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um...

Travis: Looking up is always better, I think.

Teresa: Up or down, maybe, instead of to the side.

Travis: Yeah, it seems more active.

Teresa: Yeah. So they'll take notes, and help you figure out how to make you appear the best that you can be. Um...

Travis: The best facet of yourself.

Teresa: Yes! Definitely. They are *expensive*.

Travis: Media training?

Teresa: It is an expensive training to go through.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Anywhere from \$1,500 to \$20,000 dollars, right?

Travis: Well, I have to imagine the idea is that they are being paid by a studio, or an agency, or if it's a sports team, the organization, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And not by the individual?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Most of the time.

Teresa: Yes, most of the time. But I think that I mention that, because it can be cost prohibitive. So if you are just going on to, like, your local television station, like... People don't expect you to *have* that kind of level of training that, like, a celebrity going on *Graham Norton* would.

One of the main reasons that we are so interested in this is because celebrities have greater access to their fans now, outside of traditional media. We've talked a lot about talk shows, and press junkets, and things. But *now*, we have *Instagram* and *TikTok*, and kind of 'round-the-clock access to our favorite celebrities.

Travis: Well, and not just that. I mean, so many conventions and appearances and...

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so, like, in the past, you would have a magazine interview or a talk show spot, and that would be kind of the *only* glimpse that you would have of a person, outside of their work environment.

Travis: And you would maybe watch it *once*!

Teresa: Right, yeah.

Travis: You know what I mean? Like, it wasn't watched over and over again, and dissected with sections pulled out, to be like, "But what about this one sentence?" If you went on a show in, like, the 60s, if people watched it, they watched it. It might get quoted in, like, an article or something, but then it wasn't like...

Teresa: But then it was gone!

Travis: Yeah, it wasn't like you could then go, and pull that clip up, and watch it over and over again, or share it with somebody.

Teresa: Right. So but now, like, Selena Gomez can go on her *Instagram* Live...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: ... and talk about whatever she wants, right? And so that gives them a bigger audience, but it also makes the stakes a lot higher for every single interaction. For example, there's stuff going on right now about Chappell Roan.

Travis: "Right now."

Teresa: Right now.

Travis: I mean, yeah. If you mean in the grand scheme of time of "right now."

Teresa: [giggles] No, I—

Travis: But if you mean, like, today— Are people talking about it as much as they were, like, a month ago? No, but I just don't really care.

Teresa: No, what I'm talking about is the interview that she gave, talking about all of her friends that are having babies, right?

Travis: Yeah. That was, like, two months ago. So I'm just saying, right *now*...

Teresa: Oh, okay. But—

Travis: In the context of the Earth, yes.

Teresa: It continues to come up...

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: ... is what I am saying. It is still available, people are still shuffling it around the internet. And one of the things that comes up with that is, in the comments section, people go, "Get this girl some media training!" or whatever. And I think that people tend to say that when something divisive comes up.

Travis: It's a double-edged sword, because what I've noticed is, when someone says something like that and answers a question in kind of a blunt or direct, or honest way...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: People are like, "Oh, they need media training." And then somebody's like, "Why didn't this person stand up to that interviewer, call him out for this stuff?" Right? "They should've called him out for that." And don't get me wrong, most of the time you're right.

But that's media training. That idea of, hey, you're here, representing this team, or this brand, or this movie, or whatever. And the idea of, like, they say something, or you're asked a direct question like, "What do you think about what this person said about your girlfriend, or said about the movie?" And you've been trained *not* to rise to that, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: To give some, like, "Well, you know... I think about this, and this, and this," right? Like, that's what you've been told to do. And it's like, you can't have it both ways. You can't be upset when someone answers a question in a way you don't like, and also be upset when someone doesn't answer a question...

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: ... the way you want them to.

Teresa: And I think that there is a division between answering a question, maybe a little too truthfully. And saying something like that is going to upset a certain amount of people, right? That's what I'm talking about with Chappell Roan, like... the idea that she's entitled to her opinions, and this is her experience, and parenting is hard. [chuckles] And so when I talked to my other friends about my experience, I might tell them about how hard things are, right? And that's what she was commenting on. And people saying, "Get this person some media training," doesn't necessarily mean that they... I mean, obviously they don't agree with what she said. But I think that that's kind of, like, a scapegoat in this situation.

Travis: Well—

Teresa: Saying, "Oh, if they had media training, then they wouldn't say that thing." But no, that's something that is their experience, and they can have that. And media training isn't really to keep them from telling their truth.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: It's to make it presentable, even if you don't agree with it.

Travis: And so that's why— Like, I was telling Teresa about this today. You will see in a lot of interviews what— I don't know if this was a term or a thing before. We started saying it when we were younger. This is pre *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, but we in the McElroy Family call it "kidding on the square."

Teresa: Mm, yeah.

Travis: And I saw a press junket interview with— Oh, why is his name escaping me? Harrison Ford, right? Where he was talking about, in I think it was *Captain America: New Worlds*, where he was playing the Red Hulk. And

the guy asked, like, "Is there ever a voice in your head that's like, 'I feel ridiculous, pretending to be the Red Hulk, 'cause it's so CG and all this stuff?"

And Harrison Ford goes, "I hate to burst your bubble, but that's what the *money* is for!"

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: And the guy says, like, "Oh, it just goes away with the money! It's magic."

He goes, "It's not magic! It's *commerce*."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And it's great, because that is a perfect example of kidding on the square. Because instead of saying, "Yeah, I do feel stupid. It's stupid. I feel dumb, and it's a dumb thing to do." Which would be a *horrible* thing to see in a thing promoting a movie, right? Like, "This movie's dumb, and me being in it felt dumb, and I was embarrassed to do it." Right?

But he also didn't say, "No, it was so cool. Such an honor to wear a mo-cap suit, and pretend to be the Red Hulk..."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: "... smashing around at, like, 72," or however old Harrison Ford is. Right? So instead, he *answered* the question honestly, in a joke.

Teresa: Yes!

Travis: Right? And I'm not saying, like, so any time someone has a strong truth to deliver or whatever, they should do it as joke, as a jester might. But that is a thing you see a lot in those press junkets, and in media training, is like, you don't have to *not* say the truth. But you have to deliver it in a way where everyone feels in on it, and good about it, and that kind of thing, while still answering truthfully. That happens a lot.

Teresa: Sure. And I mean, like... I think that what we need to try and figure out as a society, before we judge people for "Are they bad at interviews?" or

"Do they just have a personality?" Is like, "Do I need to agree with every single thing that everyone says, or do I need it to be so highly palatable that I don't really care about it?"

Travis: Also, what type of person are they?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know? Because sometimes, it's like, either you like that type of person, or you don't. You know? Like, I'm reminded of Prince. When Prince did interviews, he was so cool! In all things, right? But he wasn't sitting there, trying to be humble about things, right? He wasn't sitting there, like, "Oh, well, that's just when I'm *Prince*. That's a character I play." Right? That's the type of person he was.

So in an interview, the idea of him *not* being that...

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Would be weird.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? So sometimes, it's like, "Well, I wanna like the person they are when they're making the thing I like..."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: "... but I don't wanna be faced with that, when they're just being a person." And it's like, oh, no. That's not how that works.

Teresa: No. [laughs]

Okay, so let's say that your boss gives you a call tomorrow, and says that you're gonna go on the news and promote your company.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Here are a few things that you should keep in mind. This is kind of a mini media training, right here.

Travis: Oh, okay. Cool.

Teresa: Be mindful of how you dress on camera. Things that look great in real life don't always look good on camera. Thinking about, like...

Travis: Inflatable T-Rex suit.

Teresa: [chuckles] Sure. I was thinking more like busy patterns and bright colors, *unless...*

Travis: Unless.

Teresa: ... that's part of your brand.

Travis: Oh, yeah.

Teresa: A lot of celebrities these days are kind of in the fashion scene. I think about Zendaya, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um...

Travis: I think about Zendaya all the time.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: What's she doing right now? I hope she's okay.

Teresa: Where part of—

Travis: Hope she's having a good day, you know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs] Yeah, me too. Part of her thing is that she's gonna wear those bright patterns. She's gonna wear something that's very fashion-forward, and she's gonna be styled to look that way, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: But as a good idea, you can always go for jewel tones, or earthy tones. Something that looks good on you, and on camera, right? I'd try and avoid something that's stark white.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: Just because it's a lot of brightness, right, and it can look very flat on camera as well.

Travis: Also find out if you're being interviewed on a green screen, and don't wear green.

Teresa: Absolutely, right? And...

Travis: You can always bring options with you, too.

Teresa: Sure.

And make sure that you remember that cameras pick up *everything*, right? So check for lint, and dander, and wrinkles, and flyaways, and lipstick on your teeth, and all that kind of stuff. Because, like...

Travis: A squirrel in your hair.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Everything.

Teresa: [laughs] Especially if you're being filmed in HD, right, it's very, very...

Travis: Home Depot?

Teresa: [confused tone] No? High definition?

Travis: That makes a lot more sense.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah. It's important that things look pretty immaculate, at that point. While you're being filmed, there are specific ways to hold yourself that look better on camera.

For example, when someone sits down on camera, they can look a little stiff. And you might wanna slightly lean forward, into the person that you're talking to, to make you look more engaged in the conversation. Instead of sitting back, which can make you look a little more standoffish.

Travis: Yeah. Crossing arms, same way.

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: Crossing arms makes it look like, "I don't wanna be here, I don't wanna be talked to."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And it's okay—

Travis: That's why I stand with my hands on my hips.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Legs, my feet four feet apart, exactly.

Teresa: Power posing.

Travis: Power posing.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Chest out, butt back.

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: Making a full kind of J with my body.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Where my butt actually curls up, I've been able to do.

Teresa: That sounds great, yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Um...

Travis: It hurts a lot to do.

Teresa: [laughs] Not to say that you have to stay in one pose! It is okay to move around, because people move around. And a lot of shows will have a coffee mug, or a glass or something, just for you to have something in your hands, or also it usually has water in it to keep your mouth from drying out while you're talking. That's okay! That all makes you look approachable.

Do maintain eye contact with the person interviewing you, and not the camera. Although I have seen some really great interviews where, you

know, like *The Office* style, someone pulls to the camera for a really great joke.

Travis: For a good bit, yeah.

Teresa: For a good bit, right? And also, if you are in front of a live audience, sometimes stories are directed out towards the audience. Or it can be a really great way of drawing people in, to feel like, "I'm telling this story, and the audience is in on this story, and now the camera is part of the audience. And the camera's in on the story," and all that kind of stuff, right?

Travis: My suggestion for that is, there are times where if you're being interviewed with a livestreamer, right, and you're telling a story, or joke, or whatever...

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: ... and you get a reaction from the crowd.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That is a *great* time to turn and be like, "Yeah, right? You guys know. Alright, you know what I'm talking about." Right?

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: It's a great time to include them in that.

Can I give two other suggestions?

Teresa: Sure!

Travis: Another one is, there will be times where, like – once again, job interview, date, interview, interview, whatever. You will be asked a question that you don't really immediately have a good answer for, but there's kind of a similar question...

Teresa: Or, like, a question *inside* the question.

Travis: Right. That you *would* have an answer for?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And so there's a way to redirect. The example I would give is if somebody was like, "Name a time when you, like, solved a problem no one else could solve." And you don't really have an answer for that...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... but you have an idea for, like, "I came up with a great idea in my previous company that was great." Then, you can be like, "Well, we were brainstorming one day, and I came up with this idea, and it came up doing this, and this, and this," right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Because answering the question precisely isn't as important as answering the question well, and in an interesting way.

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: And the other thing I would say, learn a lesson that I am still working on to this day. Because this might surprise everybody, but I like to talk.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Know when to stop talking.

Teresa: Oh, yeah. [laughs]

Travis: Know when you've answered the question, and like, there are times where I've been in interviews where I've said something where it's like, in my head, thought, "That so clearly answers the question, that will be the pull quote from the thing I just said. Now, stop talking," right?

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: I answer the question, done.

Teresa: Great. Some other ideas, train your resting face. So you don't have to be *completely* engaged the entire time, and buzzing in your seat. But a small smile, a tilt of the head, that's all that really matters there. You just wanna look, you know, inviting.

Travis: Do better than I did in the *My Brother, My Brother and Me* TV show.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Where whenever I wasn't talking – I was listening, I promise! But my face looks like, "Oh! I'm talking, I'm talking!" [sudden droning groan]

Teresa: Kind of like you wanna have that active-listening *look*, right?

Travis: Yeah. It looked like I just went to static, until it was my turn to talk again. But that was me listening, I promise!

Teresa: Yeah. Also, if you are on a set, don't lean on anything. It might be held together with tape and dreams.

Travis: Yeah. It could fall over.

Teresa: [laughs] It could fall over, so don't lean on things. But most interviews, you'll have a chair or something that you'll sit in, right, and that's fine.

If you're in a press conference, and lots of questions are going on at once, try and pick the ones that have the most to do with your assigned talking points. You don't wanna get off topic. And so you wanna make sure you are always putting the kind of reason that you're at the interview forward.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Instead of responding to, I don't know, bait about who you're dating or whatever. Right?

Do your best to keep things positive. Don't repeat things, or have any super large or negative reactions. We talked about this at the beginning, with Roy and Keeley. They're really working on trying to make sure that he doesn't explode, or if he does it's kind of in a really genuine way, and it's not too off-putting. It's his personality; it's the way that Roy is. But they want to get him *used to* this idea, so he's not caught off guard.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: If you don't have the answer, don't lie. You can say things like, "I'm not sure, but I hope to find out soon," or you could say, "No comment on that, at this time." Or something like that, right?

Travis: Or a really genuine – once again, kidding on the square, like a, "I don't know, man. But if you find out, tell me! Alright? [fake laughter]"

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Like, that's great.

Teresa: Don't be too worried about filler words, but try not to make it so that that's something you haven't practiced.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: People in the world say things like, "like," "um," or "huh," things like that.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay? They say those things, and so try not to be too worried about it. If you've rehearsed, if you've had some practice with what questions you're gonna have, those things will go away as you get more comfortable.

If you're doing a phone interview, you can have notes. That's great to have. That will...

Travis: Don't get distracted by your phone, though. It's hard. Right? It's very easy, like you're there on your phone, you have notes or whatever. And you're getting— That's why I like doing video or in-person interviews better, so I can focus on the person.

Teresa: Oh, okay!

Travis: And I get distracted by everything.

Teresa: Yeah. Try not to get distracted. Um, don't talk smack about anybody! You know, that stuff. We talked about this earlier. The internet's forever. Don't say something that you wouldn't say about your mama.

And don't shy away from the hard questions, but keep it so that... I don't wanna say, "Keep it positive and light," because sometimes you have to talk about the hard stuff. But you know, feel free to ask the people helping you

to prepare to come up with answers for some of the harder questions, so that you're just not caught off guard.

Travis: This is, once again... You can be honest, you can give an honest answer, but focus on what facet. For example, right, if I was at a party, meeting new friends, and someone asked me about my mom...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: I wouldn't *lie*, right? I would say that my mom passed away when I was 21.

Teresa: Right!

Travis: I would talk about it differently with them than I would with someone I've been friends with for 15 years.

Teresa: Mm-hmm. Totally.

Travis: That kind of idea of, like, you can answer and be honest. And decide how much of that you want to be honest about. How much detail you wanna go into. What facet, what response, whatever you want to answer...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: ... while still being honest and genuine.

Teresa: Right.

Or, or maybe your brand is that you lie all the time.

Travis: Maybe!

Teresa: I don't know. [chuckles] Maybe that's it.

Travis: Try not to do that.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I don't think that's a brand you *wanna* have. I don't think that's going to have longevity.

Teresa: I'm thinking about Sabrina Carpenter's *Chicken Shop* interview, where she talks about being six feet tall.

Travis: Oh, sure. That's fine.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Um, and be polite. Thank everyone. You can thank people on camera, but mostly make sure that you thank everyone else! Thank them when the cameras are off. People's attitudes are always talked about, and you can catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar.

Travis: Who's catching flies with vinegar? Clearly, no one.

Teresa: Nobody, it doesn't work.

Travis: Or I was gonna say it the other way around.

Hey, thanks everybody for joining us today. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not do this show. Thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we could not do this show. And thank you to you for listening! I don't *wanna* do the show without you. Where are you going? Come back!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, we announced some new tour dates for *My Brother, My Brother and Me* and *Adventure Zone*, continuing on the Twenty Thunder Drive Tour. You can check those out at bit.ly/mcelroytours. If I remember correctly, if you're listening to this on Friday the 16th, tickets go on sale today at noon local time, so get all that information and links and everything, one more time, at bit.ly/mcelroytours.

What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Thank you to 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.

As always, we're taking topic submissions, and questions, and idioms. And please, send us all that stuff – 'cause we do look at it, and keep it going – to shmannerscast@gmail.com. Say hi to Alex, because she reads every single email.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us! So join us again next time.

Teresa: No RSVP required!

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme song plays]

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