

Shmanners 469: Ask Shmanners

Published August 22nd, 2025

[Listen here on Maximum Fun](#)

[Shmanners 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?

Teresa: I'm well!

Travis: It's the first day of school.

Teresa: It is.

Travis: Kids are back in school.

Teresa: They are.

Travis: The nest feels so empty.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: My little birds! Oh, they're flying!

Teresa: It is a *little* quiet. But, I mean... It's good. It's good!

Travis: It's less quiet. We also got a new kitten.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And I posted pictures on Instagram. Jasmine, she's very cute. She is ready to explore the whole house, and she's letting us know about it.

Teresa: But she's only two months old.

Travis: She's only two months old.

Teresa: So she cannot be allowed unsupervised.

Travis: And we're doing the slow introduction of her to the house, especially with Buttercup and Lily around. Anyway, so there's a *lot* going on.

Teresa: But she's a real cuddlebug, and that helps with the empty...

Travis: Oh, my gosh, yes.

Teresa: The empty nest of the birds.

Travis: She is a real cuddlemonster. But that's not what we're talking about today.

Teresa: No, not at all. [laughs heartily]

Travis: I— I'll talk about my kitty! She has a little black heart on her nose, she's cute as a button. But that's not what we're talking about today. What are we talking about?

Teresa: We have *Ask Shmanners* to do today!

Travis: And people have asked us.

Teresa: They have.

Travis: And we will *Shmanner* them.

Teresa: Yes, indeed. We love doing this. So you can always email us, shmannerstcast@gmail.com, with any questions you may have. And we promise that Alex will lovingly catalog them, so we can keep you up to date on your etiquette.

Travis: Okay, what's our first question? Hit me! Hit me with that first Q that we'll A!

Teresa: Okay. "I'm proposing to my partner soon! That's the good news. But I have literally no idea how I'm supposed to choose the ring. That's the bad news. It didn't hit me until recently that we both talked about wanting to marry each other. We definitely haven't talked about what kind of ring she'd like. Are there engagement ring rules? Do we get to ignore them, because we're gay? Should I just outright ask her what design she likes? I definitely don't want the ring to be underwhelming. Help me, *Shmanners*."

Hey. Congrats, y'all.

Travis: Yeah. First, congratula— Well, congratulations, *and*—

Teresa: On your impending engagement.

Travis: Yeah. I'll say, like, a lowercase-c congratulations. I'm saving all uppercase, caps-lock "Congratulations" later.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: So we will *Shmanner* this out.

Teresa: Oh, yeah.

Travis: But I will also say, on a personal note, this is why I am so glad that both Teresa and I do not like surprises.

Teresa: Mm-hmm!

Travis: So we had many conversations. Teresa, one day, sat down and said, "Hey. Here's the cut I'm looking for. Here's what I want in the ring. Here's what I want the ring to look like," something like that. And I was like, "Great. Sounds great." And we picked it out together.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And when it came, I was like, "Hey. Guess what today is?" And this was also— When we moved in together, we'd been dating for three months. And the discussion was, she said, "If we're gonna move in together, I wanna know that we're gonna get married." And I was like, "Oh, yeah. Absolutely." And she was like, "Okay, cool." So that made the *whole* process...

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: ... so easy.

Teresa: Very streamlined for us.

Travis: Yes. Very straightforward.

Teresa: And I think that that is actually more of the norm, these days, when it comes to this significant life event of marriage.

Okay, let's break it down. *Traditionally*, yes, there have been, quote, "Rules of engagement." [laughs]

Travis: I get it.

Teresa: Um—

Travis: Like war.

Teresa: Like war. For example—

Travis: You know, love is a battlefield...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: ... I've heard.

Teresa: For example, the ring, it has to cost three months' salary. And it must be a diamond. And you must shop for it in secret, right?

Travis: Okay. But I also want— I wanna— Yes.

Teresa: But these are largely *outdated*.

Travis: And, *and*, as with a lot of things, especially diamond-related...

Teresa: Mm-hmm!

Travis: And we've talked about this with anniversary gifts, and stuff. A lot of this is wholly, solely built on capitalism.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? These things of, "This is how much it needs to cost, and it's a diamond," is because of a hard PR push from the diamond industry.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And, like—

Teresa: De Beers' propaganda.

Travis: Yes. A lot of wedding traditional stuff is from Big Wedding being like, "Spend as much money as you can! If you spend less than this, you don't really love them."

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: And it's not— That's not the way anymore!

Teresa: I read a lot of Regency/Victorian romance, and all of these weddings, engagements and stuff are *all* usually family heirlooms. Right? If there is— In these Regency and Victorian romances, if there are rings, they are *highly* personalized.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They're not just a solitaire diamond. This last book that I read, he said that there were stars in her eyes, so he gave her a ring of a blue sapphire. And then outlined on one side with white sapphires, to make it look like the moon in the night sky.

Travis: Amazing.

Teresa: And I was like, "Oh, my God! So romantic."

Travis: That's the other thing. As long as we're talking about wedding rings, and you mentioned family heirlooms...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: "Diamonds are forever" was another big diamond wholesaler kind of push...

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: To be like, "Hey, once you get your engagement ring and your wedding ring, don't give it away!"

Teresa: "Keep it forever!"

Travis: "Keep it! It's forever! They should have to buy a *new* one."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: All that to say, in my opinion, the right ring for you to choose is the ring that makes the most sense for you, that fits what you want. Maybe it's a family

heirloom, maybe it's— Maybe you do want to spend a ton of money on it. Cool, great. But you don't *have* to, for it to be right and perfect.

Teresa: Let me give you some practical considerations. If you were shopping for a ring for your partner, I want you to consider, how often do they wear jewelry? What do they normally do for work, like with their hands, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And what are their general style outlines? Because when I picked out my ring, I wanted something that was low-profile, because I was a swimming lesson instructor at the time. And I didn't want it to get snagged on kids, I didn't want it get to snagged on swimsuits. I didn't wanna have to take it off and on, all the time. So I made sure that it was low-profile. *And* I got a highly-durable setting, because I knew that I would be in the water a lot.

And technically, should you take off your rings before you go in the pool? Yes! Should you take them off before you shower? Yes! Should you take them off to wash your hands? Yes! All of these things are technically true. But I knew about myself, that I wasn't gonna do that.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? So I needed to get something that was highly durable, scratch resistant, water resistant. So I picked out the things that made sense for me. So that's one of the things that I would suggest for that.

But also... I think that the two of you, question-asker, have discussed this situation a lot. And so, why make it a single activity now?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I think that the two of you being so open and discussing it is a great opportunity for the two of you to go and look. Right?

Travis: And here's the thing. Once again, a lot of societal stuff, programming from TV shows and, I don't know, magazines and just, in general, society saying, "Surprise them with it! And here's another viral video of a huge proposal, where they're so surprised."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Yeah, that's a narrative, right? That's laid out where that might be what works. But I would say, even if you wanna start with, "Hey, I've been thinking about it," or like, "It occurred to me the other day to ask. We talked about getting married. When that comes down, do you wanna be surprised when it happens? Do you want me to choose the ring?"

Because here's the thing. Also, in a situation like yours where maybe the quote, unquote "traditional roles" aren't as laid out...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: They might also be thinking about the same thing. Right? And being like, "Should I get *them* a ring? Should I be the one to propose? What do— Hmm, what do we do here?"

And so even just having a vague discussion of, "When the time comes, do you have ideas for how it would go? Do you have a ring in mind?" That kind of thing. There can still be surprise to it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know, when it happens, how exactly you do it, all of that. But I don't think a surprise has to be 100% a surprise for it to work, if that's what you want to do.

Teresa: Yes. Have you seen those videos of the double proposals? People go to Disney World...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And one person gets down on a knee, and surprises. And then the other one turns around, and gets the ring for [with growing excitement] the other person out of their pocket.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And they get down, and it's so *cute*! I love it. But staged, maybe? Perhaps.

Travis: Maybe. But you also sound like you're ready to propo— You're ready for it to move forward. Because I think the only risk, in these open conversations, is that you have this. And really is just a, "Hey, I'm curious." But you have no plans of proposing any time soon.

And then they're like, "Oh, it's coming." Right? And, like...

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: That, maybe, is a little risky.

Teresa: Yeah. Okay. Are you ready for another question?

Travis: Yes, I am!

Teresa: Here we go.

Travis: Thank you for asking.

Teresa: "I borrowed a book from my friend that I did read, and wound up really enjoying."

Travis: "And then I ate it."

Teresa: "However, in the time since I borrowed it, we've both moved out of state. And even though we keep in touch, we don't see each other often. And eight years have passed since I borrowed it. Recently, I had another friend over at my house, and *they* mentioned that *they'd* love to read that book. Am I allowed to give it to them? When does something that you borrowed legally become yours? Does it ever? I need guidance, here."

Travis: Are there guidelines for this? Because I have my own, personal opinion, but...

Teresa: There are etiquette guidelines for this.

Travis: And I bet it's not eight years?

Teresa: [holding back laughter] No.

Travis: Like, eight years is too long?

Teresa: No. I mean... Borrowing something means that you use it with the expectation of returning it, right? If one uses something without the expectation of returning what's borrowed, that's... *stealing*?

Travis: No. Now, hold on.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Here's what I'll say. Counterpoint to that.

Teresa: Okay. I was gonna continue.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But alright, you can jump in here.

Travis: If it's something like a book, or a movie— And I'm not saying this is universal. But for me, and I've watched it a bunch or read it a— I've already read it, you know? And I'm giving it to somebody.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I'm not really— I'm not as worried about getting it back. Especially something like a book, where it's like, "I'm not expecting you to go home, sit down and read this tonight, and bring it back to me."

Teresa: Well, that's the thing, right? I think that question-asker needs to determine, from original lender, "Was this a loan, or was this a gift?" Right? Because that is the crux of this. Right? If it was a loan, it belongs to you now. You can do whatever you want with it. Lend it to as many friends as you want, or give it to someone else.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: If it was a *loan*, you need to—

Travis: If it was a gift, you could do that.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: If it was a loan— Yes, okay.

Teresa: Sorry, yes. If it was a gift, do whatever you want with it, 'cause it's yours, now. If it was a *loan*, you need to contact that person. And talk about it, even though it may be a little embarrassing.

Travis: I'll tell you right now, though. If one of my friends was like, "Hey. Eight years ago, I borrowed this book from you..."
I'd be like, "What are you talking about?"

Teresa: [giggles] Yeah! I would say—

Travis: There's *no way* I'm still thinking about that book!

Teresa: Like, that belongs to you now, right?

Travis: Yeah. Eight years, and I moved?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I *moved*?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I— That book is gone to me. That book ceased to be!

Teresa: This is what I am anticipating will happen. That this person will be like,

"Oh, hey! I just found this book that I know that you let me borrow eight years ago. Do you want that back?"

And they will go, "What? It doesn't exist to me, anymore."

Travis: Yeah, it's fine.

Teresa: "That's yours, now." [laughs] You know?

Travis: At the very least, I'm sure they will, on some level, appreciate that you still think about it.

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: But I would also say— And once again, this is my own personal opinion, I don't know that this is a *Shmanner* guideline. But if you loan something out to someone, *especially* if you're like, "Trust me, you'll love it," it's your idea to give it to them, and not them asking to borrow it...

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And you want it *back*, I think it's on the loan-er to be like, "Hey, have you finished reading that yet? Have you finished watching that yet? I'd like it back."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Because if it was your idea to give it to them...

Teresa: To borrow.

Travis: Right. They're not— They probably don't feel the, "I *have* to do this, right *now*." Right? If they're anything like me, you have to wait for, "Ahh, this has been sitting on my shelf for six months, and suddenly I'm *super* interested in it, and now design to read it!" The idea of, "I loaned it to you, because I thought you would like it, even though you didn't ask for it. And now it's been a week, and you haven't read it yet?"

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: You know? I think that, if they weren't banging your door down to get this book back after eight years, you're probably in the clear. But it's still polite and nice to be like, "Is that cool, if I pay this forward and loan it to someone else?"

Teresa: Yeah. I also think that it really depends on— The question-asker said that they still speak to this person.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Which I think is choice. But also, if you do not still speak to this person, I think that if they wanted it back, they would ask for it.

Travis: I would also say, something— As long as it's not super rare or hard-to-find, something like a book, or a movie, or something like that that's easily replaceable...

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That if they, out of the blue, were like, "Hey. I know it's been eight years, but I would like that book back." That you can be like, "Great. I could not tell you, off the top of my head, where it is right now. I'll order a new one, and have it sent to your house." Right?

Something like that, where— Unless it's something with sentimental value where it's like, "This was given to me by my father." At which point, they probably didn't loan it out to you anyways.

Teresa: Right, yes. I mean, I think that that's another great piece of advice, is don't loan things to people that you are not comfortable leaving behind.

Travis: I also think that there's a life lesson takeaway here of, if you are doing something like this, the clarity of language of, "I am giving you this book," versus "Do you wanna borrow it?" Right?

Where what you really mean is, "I don't expect it back." Or, "Oh, yeah! You can borrow it. Do you think you could have it back to me, like, the next time we get

together for board game night, or whatever?" And then you set a clear time and expectation of what you mean, when you're giving someone this book.

Teresa: Right. I agree.

Travis: Speaking of expectations, I have the expectation right now that we're going to hear a word from another Max Fun show.

Teresa: Ooh, nice!

[Shmanners theme music plays]

[ad plays, relaxed music in background]

Tom: Hi, is this Archer?

Archer: Uh, yes! Hello, who is this?

Tom: Hi. This is Tom Lum from *Let's Learn Everything!* I'm calling about your Maximum Fun membership's extended warranty. Do you have a few seconds to talk about that?

Archer: Uh, I think I have to go.

Tom: No. No, no, no! Oh, no. They're gonna be so mad at me.

Archer: Okay, fine.

Tom: Did you know that, as a part of your Max Fun membership's extended warranty, you've been picked as the member of the month? Which is wild, and we're so excited to have you!

Archer: That's so exciting! Thank you!

Tom: So, as our member of the month, you will also 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 Max Fun HQ in Los Angeles, California, just for you.

Also, I have to read— Hold on, I have to read this. It says, "We at Maximum Fun apologized you ended up with the worst host of the three. And as consolation, you'll be getting those..." Why is that included? I don't remember that being there for the other—

Archer: It's okay. I can settle, it's fine.

Tom: [bursts out laughing] Ah, Max Fun members are the best.

Speaker: Become a Max Fun member now at MaximumFun.org/join.

[ad changes, music picks up]

Kirk: Say you like video games.

Jason: And who doesn't?

Maddy: I mean, some people probably don't.

Kirk: Okay. But a lot of people do. So say you're one of those people, and you feel like you don't really have anyone to talk to about the games that you like.

Jason: Well, you should get some better friends.

Kirk: Yes, you should get some better friends. But you could also listen to *Triple Click*. [triple click sound] A weekly podcast about video games hosted by me, Kirk Hamilton...

Maddy: Me, Maddy Myers.

Jason: And me, Jason Schreier. We talk about new releases, old classics, industry news, and whatever, really.

Maddy: We'll show you new things to love about games, and maybe even help you find new friends to talk to about them.

Kirk: *Triple Click*. [triple click sound] It's kind of like we're your friends. Find us at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get your podcast.

[ad break ends]

Travis: And we're back.

Teresa: Yes. Would you like another question?

Travis: I would *love* another question, thank you for asking.

Teresa: I love when you thank me for asking you.

Travis: I love when you ask— I love when you thank me for thanking you for asking.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Got there.

Teresa: Got it.

"How long am I expected to keep cards? I'm not talking about heartfelt love letters, or real notes from friends, but like Christmas letters or Hallmark cards that someone signed and handed me on my birthday. If someone just signed their name and stuck a \$20 in a birthday card, am I obligated to keep it *forever*? What about Christmas cards?"

Travis: No one's obligated to keep anything forever.

Teresa: Agreed.

Travis: I don't know. Maybe there are some things— I don't know, don't worry about it. Forever's a long time.

Teresa: Yes. So here is a suggestion. I would say that, if you can find a way to keep all these cards in the same place, once a year is a great time to go through it. If they are Christmas cards, and you wanna keep them with your Christmas decorations, when you get those out, you can look at the cards.

See if they spark joy and you wanna keep 'em, or toss them and make room for new ones! Same thing with birthday cards. If you want to keep them, once a year is a great time, around your birthday, to go through and get rid of the ones that no longer spark joy.

However, I think that the day of the party, or the opening of the present, is the time to have that joy flood you. And then to let it go.

Travis: Maybe not right in front of the person who gave you the card.

Teresa: No.

Travis: Be like, "Hey, this brought me a lot of joy. Garbage!"

Teresa: [bursts out laughing]

Travis: Maybe not that?

Teresa: Not right in front of the person.

Travis: Maybe not *right* in front of them. The only time, especially mentioning Christmas cards, that I feel a little questionable about throwing them away, is when there's a family photo, or a photo or something in— it's part of the card.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: That's why, if it's up to me, I always prefer when someone sends a Christmas card. And if they want to include a family photo, it is a separate thing that I can be like, "And this photo gets saved. And the card, I love it, it brought me joy, thank you so much, it goes away."

Teresa: Sure. I agree with that. I can get behind that. Although my children, they love to keep cards *forever*.

Travis: Forever— Well, for now.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: We'll see.

Teresa: [holding back laughter] We'll see.

Travis: Every child does. They have no concept of time or garbage.

Teresa: [laughs heartily] Every tiny scrap of paper that they've scribbled on.

Travis: Oh, my God. So many...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: The one that kills me, that I can't wait for this to stop, is when they get any kind of blind bag, or tiny thing that comes in a package. A ball, or whatever.

Teresa: [gasps] With the thing! Yeah.

Travis: And you open the ball, and it's like, clearly the toy is the thing that comes with the stuff.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And they're like, "But I need to keep all this stuff too, including the little pamphlet that shows all the other ones it could have been."

I'm like, "No! All of this is garbage."

Teresa: [laughs heartily]

Travis: "This is gar— This is packaging. And I know it seems cool, but it's a waste of stuff, and it's packaging, and blargh..." That gets me.

Teresa: Yeah... Agreed. Alright.

Travis: Next question!

Teresa: Next question. "My friend is getting married, and going *really* untraditional with it, throwing the hippie wedding of her dreams. And I was pretty sure that I had the perfect dress for this occasion, until my partner pointed out something pretty important: my dress is white. Normally, I would never wear white to a wedding. But in this case, the bride isn't even wearing white. Is it still rude to show up in white, even if that's not the color the bride is wearing? To quote another one of your podcasts, 'Am I good?'"

Travis: Okay. Okay.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Do you have the by-the-book answer?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay, give me that.

Teresa: Okay... No. You can't wear white to a wedding.

Travis: Yeah. I thought that's what it was gonna be.

Teresa: That's the by-the-book answer. For a by-the-book wedding, right? Because traditions are traditions because we keep doing them. I think that—

Travis: This is true. Our children have asked, a lot, as we've done more traditional occasions, going to their first funeral or a wedding.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: They're sitting there, like, "Well, why do we do this?" And I'm like, "I didn't establish this."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: "This wasn't a choice *I* made. This wasn't a choice *they* made. This was established, like, 200 years ago. And for some reason, we still do it. I don't know, man."

Teresa: Yes. *Before* the tradition of the white wedding dress, then—

Travis: [singing] White wedding dress!

Teresa: [giggles] Yes, absolutely, you could wear a white dress. It was usually reserved for younger people. Established matrons, married ladies, didn't wear white very often. But you— Until we started with the white wedding dress, you could wear whatever color. And here's the thing: today, you can still wear whatever color you want to your wedding.

And I would say that, to get the best of all of these worlds here, all of these traditions, you should ask the bride.

Travis: Okay. Yes, but... Yes?

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: *But...*

Teresa: But?

Travis: Here's the thing you have to keep in mind, and this is not me telling you not to. But whenever we talk about things where it's like, you're breaking a traditional thing, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: You can talk to the bride. And it sounds like, from the vibe of it, I don't

know your friend, but she'll probably be like, "Yeah, I don't care." There *will* be people at the event that might side-eye you.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: There will be people at the event that take it upon themselves to judge you for doing that. You can't help that, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: It's not like you can get a contact list from the bride, and call everybody before the wedding, and say, "Hey, I'm gonna be wearing white. I talked to the bride first. She said it's cool, right?"

Teresa: Right.

Travis: "It's not gonna happen." That doesn't mean you can't do it, or that you're wrong for doing it, right? It's just one of those things of, be prepared for maybe, even, people coming up to you and being like, "Mm. White to a wedding. Pretty bold. Are you sure— Eugh, I don't know!" Right? But that doesn't mean you're a bad person, or that you were wrong to *do* it.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: It's just the kind of thing to be prepared for when you make that choice.

Teresa: And I think that— Let me give you some caveats around asking the bride. I think that it's important that you consider proximity to the wedding, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: If you think that this is something that the bride... might not *like* you wearing the white dress— It doesn't sound like question-asker really has any thought that that would be the case. But the earlier you ask, the better.

Don't wait until the week before the wedding. If you are thinking about buying a white dress to wear to this wedding, three months ago is when you should've

asked. Right? Because the longer that you wait, the more harried the situation is going to be. And so then that kind of puts it on— That transfers the responsibility onto the bride's shoulders, and they're already— They've got a lot on their plates already.

Travis: I would also say, the way you ask is very important. Because especially— I don't know your friend. But if they're the type of person who, you know, tries to be nice and likes to make people happy, and that kind of thing, if you were to ask and say, "Hey. I'm planning on wearing this dress, but it's white. That's okay, right?" It doesn't leave a lot of wiggle room for them to say no, and feel good about saying no.

Whereas if you were to say, "Hey. I'm looking at a couple different dress options. One of them is white, so I wanted to check with you to see if I should rule that one out and go with something else." Right?

'Cause that way, you're not assuming an answer. You're not putting the pressure of, "If you say no, it's going to ruin my experience," or whatever. You're just saying, "Before I decide on which outfit I wanna go with, one of them's white. Is that— I wanted to check with you, to see if I should rule that one out."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That way, it's very low pressure, and it gives you also a chance to read— If she's like, [hesitantly] "Well, I— I'm sure it's fine," then you know not to do it.

Teresa: I would also say, in this digital age, that it would be nice to include a picture. Because not all white dresses are made the same, made equally.

Travis: Yeah. Some of them look blue and black!

Teresa: [laughs] Oh, that's true!

Travis: Thank you. It's a very topical reference.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

But also, here's the thing. Maybe, it's a white background with floral on it. Or maybe, sections of the dress are white. Or you could break it up with a shawl, or a sash, or something else to not make it an entirely-white dress. Right? So I think that including a picture is a great idea. Asking the bride, also good. You know, far out. Not the day before, the week before.

But it seems, from the question-asker, that this is a highly nontraditional wedding, so I'm betting, I'm *bettin'* on it's gonna be okay.

Travis: Okay. Can I give you my "tough love" answer, though?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: This is a lot of stuff. And maybe, just choose a different outfit. Maybe— Listen, all of this...

Teresa: Yeah. You have to decide if it's worth it, really.

Travis: Yeah. Everything we've said is a way to handle it, if you're like, "This is the only thing." But what if you cleared your mind, and said, "If this dress wasn't an option, is there another thing that I would want to wear?" And if so, maybe go with that other option.

[pause]

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: But I won't judge you if you don't!

Teresa: [laughs heartily]

Travis: It's fine, it's fine, it's fine, it's fine.

Teresa: Are you ready for another question?

Travis: Yes, I am.

Teresa: Alright.

Travis: Thank you for asking.

Teresa: [giggles] "Every holiday where I eat with a lot of people, without fail, someone brings up me being vegan. And suddenly, I'm put on the spot for a few minutes while people ask well-meaning questions, and talk about how *they* could never do it."

Travis: Just point out other people, and say the things they do.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: "Oh, yeah? Well, Doug doesn't like to drive! Ask *him* questions! Oh, Susan never learned how to swim! Huh?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Don't you guys wanna know about that? Steve's afraid of fish!"

Teresa: Let me finish.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Let me finish. "While I understand they're trying to make conversation, I often find their comments dismissive or hurtful. And I can't refute anything without being seen as, quote, 'One of those bad vegans.' I would just prefer not to talk about my food habits at the dinner table. How do I steer the conversation away from this topic? Or, better, avoid it altogether?"

Here is my *Shmanner* answer. Stop talking about what people eat.

Travis: I mean, yeah.

Teresa: Just all the time. Unless you are cooking for them, right, stop talking about what people eat! I think that everybody has the ability to choose what ethically, morally, physically, medically, they can put in their mouths. And they do it because that's what they do. So stop it.

Travis: I think that that is great, to tell the people *asking* the questions, right? If they're listening— Hey, if you're listening...

Teresa: Stop it. [laughs]

Travis: Stop it! [quacks] Stop it! But to the question-asker, your experience is as important as anyone else's. And I do not think you are out of line, if this starts happening again at some function, and be like, "Can I tell you guys something? I have answered all these questions *so many* times. Could we possibly talk about anything else?" Right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: There might be a whiff of discomfort, because they're gonna feel bad. For a second. But the alternative to that is *you* feeling bad for the entire conversation.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? And sometimes, in an effort to not make anyone feel bad, we allow ourselves to absorb all that in, instead of saying what we need. So that we— It's like, "Well, I can deal with this. I don't wanna make anyone else deal with it."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And it sounds like it's coming from a place of ignorance from these other people, right? That they're like, "Oh, I'm curious," but they don't know how to ask the questions in the right way. They don't know how to let go of it, once they've started it. And it's not a thing— You're not a sideshow thing to be gawked at and grilled over. And I think just saying, "Oh, my God. Can I tell you? The hardest part about being a vegan? All the questions! Am I right, everybody?"

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: And making it clear that it's like, "I don't like this. I'm not *mad*, right? I

don't think you're bad people for asking me. It's just not a thing I want to talk about."

Teresa: Here are some alternatives in that vein. Get the host on your side.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Right? Have somebody in your corner say, "Hey, man. I love how much you are into making me vegan dishes, and I love that. Do you think that you could help me out, and kind of keep that topic of conversation at bay? Just do whatever you can to change the subject, that would be great."

Travis: Yeah. "If people start grilling me with questions, say something like, 'Leave him alone! Weren't you talking about...' and change the subject."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Get right off of it. Or something like, "Let's treat them the same way they feel about me, and get 'em off the grill!"

Teresa: [amused sound]

Travis: Yeah, what do you think? Something like that?

Teresa: Something like that. I also think that keeping topics adjacent to food, but non-specific to the vegan's diet. Like, "Oh, what's your favorite restaurant? Do you have a favorite restaurant, Dave? Have you been to blah-blah-blah?"

Travis: [with accusing tone] "What about you, *Dave*?"

Teresa: "You know..."

Travis: "What do *you* eat, *Dave*?"

Teresa: [bubbles into laughter]

Travis: "Do you like hamburgers, Dave? Tell me all about hamburgers!"

Teresa: Subtle deflections, I think, are a great way to move the conversation away. And in another vein, if you want to shut the conversation down, you can do whatever— I have suggested for other conversations, just a comment, no further question.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? So somebody says, "Ah, you're vegan! So you're eating tofu, or something." They go, "Oh, yeah." [pause] And that's it. Don't ask any follow-ups, don't make any comments. Just say, "Yes," "No," or "It's cool." And silence, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They will get the picture. And if they don't, someone around them will. [chuckles]

Travis: I think, once again, this is— We talk about this a lot, when it comes to dealing with something like this. Which is, gauge the level of work you're willing to put into it. The level of investment. Because I think if these are people who, especially multiple times, have brought it up, if it's a same group of people, or they're coming across really judgy...

Teresa: Yeah, like your family, maybe.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Extended family, judging.

Travis: And they're coming across very judgy? Shut it down. Right? If this is a group of friends or coworkers that you're like, "In general, I like them, but this topic is always kind of grating." Maybe a little more gentleness going into it, right? It's all on you to decide how you wanna handle it.

But being upfront about it in some way, or getting someone on your side to be upfront about it, is the way to go. Because it doesn't sound like, to me, these people are spontaneously gonna be like, "You know what? We need to stop asking them questions!"

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Right? They don't know.

Teresa: Yeah. That makes sense.

Travis: Hey— Yes.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Hey, everybody. Thank *you* so much for listening.

Teresa: Thank you for your questions, everyone! Keep 'em coming!

Travis: We couldn't have done it without your questions. And you know what else? Who else we couldn't have done this without?

Teresa: Our listeners?

Travis: Well, I was gonna say Rachel, our editor.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: And Alex, our researcher. But also our listeners.

Teresa: *Also* our listeners.

Travis: These episodes in particular, we couldn't do without you. Thank you so much.

Wanna let you know, we're doing *Adventure Zone Versus Popeye* and *My Brother, My Brother and Me* in Atlanta next week. It'll be during Dragon Con, but you don't need a Dragon Con pass to come to the shows. We will also be doing Dragon Con events, so if you're gonna be in Atlanta, or in the Atlanta area, or coming in for Dragon Con, come see us. You can go to bit.ly/mcelroytours for tickets and all the information.

Let's see, let's see. 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.

And like I mentioned at the beginning, we are always taking questions, topic submissions, Alex files all of those away for a rainy day. [laughs] So send those to shmannerscast@gmail.com. And say hi to Alex, because she does read every single one.

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

Teresa: No RSVP required!

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

Teresa: Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[Shmanners theme music plays]

Maximum Fun.
A worker-owned network...
Of artists-owned shows...
Supported directly by you.