

Shmanners: Left-Handedness

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

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

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette.

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: I'm all right. You know, it's just, it's the winter crud season, so...

Travis: But that's unfair, because it's fall.

Teresa: Oh?

Travis: Which is my favorite season. And—

Teresa: I mean, technically, yes.

Travis: I feel like... what's another word to describe the weather? You know how like—

Teresa: Is it frightful?

Travis: No, no, no, I mean like, you know how sometimes it's like a combination of like the temperature and the quality, the air and stuff, I feel like all that's changing--

Teresa: Mm-hm?

Travis: Maybe because of things people do.

Teresa: Oh?

Travis: And it results in a lot of differences, but mainly, we get like two weeks of fall.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And it bums me out, and I've got sinus stuff all through my ears, all through my face... all through my heart.

Teresa: My voice sounds better this week, though.

Travis: How does my voice sound?

Teresa: Your voice sounds like silk.

Travis: That's great, because I can't hear it myself—

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Because my ears are all stuffy. [sniffs] I'm gonna try not to sniffle in the mic a million-bajillion times during this recording. But I'm also energy-drained, because we did Blart yesterday, and we don't want to give away any details, it was a great episode, but Bart really takes it out of me!

Teresa: Maybe you should explain to our Shmanners listeners what Blart is?

Travis: Oh, if you don't know—

Teresa: They may not know.

Travis: So, Justin, Griffin and I, and our friends Tim Batt and Guy Montgomery, from the podcast The Worst Idea of All Time, have committed

to an eternal podcast once a year, where we watch and discuss the movie Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2—excuse me, the film, Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2.

Teresa: [titters] *Cinema.*

Travis: And we will do it until we die. At which point, we have elected other people to take over for us, and then they must continue on, and it will continue for the rest of recorded history.

Teresa: And this is new—this is not new to Tim and Guy. The Worst Idea of All Time is a podcast where they re-watch the same movie.

Travis: The same bad movie.

Teresa: The same bad movie, over and over and over again, for a year?

Travis: Well, they just put out, or they just started their new season, where, in what I believe they're calling a review veritas. They lived at a comedy club and watched Joker: Folie à Deux 14 times in seven days, and recorded a podcast after each watch, while staying at the comedy club. So, anyways, check out both of those.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: 'Till Death Do Us Blart—

Teresa: The Worst Idea of All Time—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And 'Til Death Do Us Blart.

Travis: That'll be out on Thanksgiving, American Thanksgiving. But none of that is what we're talking about.

Teresa: You're right.

Travis: What are we talking about?

Teresa: This is an Ask Shmanners episode, where Alex has compiled different questions that our viewers—listeners, mm-hm, have sent in.

Travis: Depends. I mean, we don't know who's outside our windows all the time?

Teresa: [chuckles] And—

Travis: I'm never checking over my shoulder?

Teresa: And if you would like to contribute to our next or a future ask Shmanners, you can send those questions to shmannerscast@gmail.com!

Travis: And give something back. You know, we give you so much.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: The least you could give us is a little content.

Teresa: Okay, now let's get into it.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: Mason E writes, "Hi! I've recently entered a relationship, and it's the first holiday season I'm going through with this boyfriend. Currently, I'm struggling a bit to balance both spending time with his family and my own. I've never had a partner where I've had to worry about this with. Holidays are super important to his family, as well as mine, and I do want to spend time with each of them. Any tips/advice for a situation like mine?"

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So many people are in that very same boat!

Travis: Here's the advice I'll give—and sometimes I like, you know how people talk about like a designated driver, right?

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Or a designated survivor when they do the—I like to be kind of the designated selfish person.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: By which I mean, I'm gonna tell it like it is, I'm gonna lay it out, but in a, I don't know, a good way. I'm not a jerk. I try not to be. And that is that—especially like if this is someone whom you see like spending a lot of time with, like spending your, I don't want to say your life, but you know what I'm—being with, right?

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: While it is important to spend time with their family and your family, you are also now a unit.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: And your experience also matters throughout the holiday season. And I think that, especially now that we have kids, right, this is a thing that there's three experiences that you're juggling during the holidays, which is like; my family, Teresa's family and our family.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: And I think at a certain point, it is important that you don't let that third experience suffer, because you're trying to please everybody. So, I kind of put my foot down a little bit after the girls were born, that I was like, we can be with one of the sets of in-laws in the days before Christmas, and one of the sets of in-laws the days after Christmas. But on Christmas, I want to be home with the girls. I want them to have Christmas here in their house, making their memories.

Teresa: And we allow in-laws to join us.

Travis: Absolutely!

Teresa: We have just said, this is what we want to do for them. And we have spare bedrooms, and some of our—like my family lives close enough, they could drive down in the day. Like so, we haven't said, "And we're only going to do us." We've said, "This is what we're doing, and we would love to have you. But we can also understand that you have things you're doing, so we can make a plan to be together at different times."

Travis: But early days—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: We did it bad a couple times.

Teresa: We did a bad job.

Travis: There was one time where I remember it was like I think Christmas morning or like Christmas Eve, or something, and like we drove separately, so that I could be home like 12 hours before you left. So it was like, ah, Christmas morning at your house—okay, bye! And then I left, and like drove three hours to Huntington, to get there by like 11AM on Christmas morning. And then like six hours later, you drove three hours. And at a certain point it was like, if you have to go through all that to make it work, it's not working.

Teresa: Right. So, here's some practical advice. Expectations. You want to make sure that everybody is equal, as far as what they're expecting.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, you talk about what you expect from the holiday season, they talk about what they expect. Maybe one portion is more important to their family than it is to you. Some people do Christmas Eve, for example—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They do a big thing Christmas Eve. Some people do it Christmas Morning, or even Christmas Day or afternoon, right? So, once you've mapped out kind of what is most important to you, you can start to figure

out how you are going to spend the time, because the time is finite. But when we make plans, we can make it so that we feel like everyone gets a piece of this pie, right?

Travis: And that matters too, not just with the two partners' families—

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: But between the partners themselves, right?

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Of like, I—like, I would hate for a partner to feel any kind of bad feelings, I can't think of a better word, because they, without discussing it, felt like they needed to sacrifice some kind of enjoyment of it to make the other person happy, when the other person would have been fine either way, right? You know that feeling of like, "Well, this is what I need to do, or they'll be upset." But actually, they wouldn't have cared.

Teresa: It needs to get all out in the open. You need to be very honest about your expectations and what you need, and then you can decide the logistics of, "Well, it's important to my family that we have a Thanksgiving meal on Thanksgiving, but your family doesn't seem to really mind moving it around. So, maybe we can do an early one with your family, and then—"

Travis: Yeah. Or like the day after, maybe on Friday, they're super chill and love just hanging around the house, you know, playing board games or whatever, and that's the real family time for them.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So, we'll do that!

Teresa: Or if that's not possible, to split the holiday into two different holidays, you can do it different years.

Travis: Mm-hm.

Teresa: My sister's in-laws, they play—they usually do, like they will spend Thanksgiving and Christmas at the in-laws' house. And that makes sense for them, because they live in Massachusetts, so it's a while to go, right? But so like, they'll alternate years; Thanksgiving and Christmas in Massachusetts one year, and then the other year it stays here, right? So, you figure out how you could make it work for everyone. But there's no way of doing that if you don't talk about it, so you gotta lay it all out on the table.

Travis: I also think it's important to, as long as you're setting expectations, to brace yourself that like, you will receive some disappointment from your family.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: They will be sad. Because like, they're used to not having to share you on the holidays.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: Right? Like, it is understandable that when you're like, "Yeah, I know normally I'm there for like six days, and this time I'll only be able to be there for three, because I'll be with partner's family for the other three." It's perfectly understandable that they wouldn't be thrilled about that.

Teresa: Yeah. And I think that it's okay to let them have their feelings.

Travis: Right!

Teresa: And also stand firm in what you want.

Travis: It doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong.

Teresa: That's right. While we're talking about this, make sure that you're splitting up the holiday admin. We don't want anyone to do all of one thing, right? And then maybe feel like they haven't had any help, or like it's not like an even partnership, right? So—

Travis: Or unless it's like, "I love being responsible for this thing, I hate being responsible for that thing."

"Oh, that works out great, because I love being responsible—"

Teresa: Yeah, I mean, that's exactly what I'm talking about, like dividing the load, right? Because now—

Travis: Like you're good at wrapping presents, and I'm absolutely terrible at it. Like a drunk monkey.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: One might say.

Teresa: One might say. What I'm saying is, now that there's double the amount of people, there is double the amount of work, make sure that you divide it well.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Because doing double the amount of work is not fun for any one person, but there are two! You can also offer to host, right? If you have the means and the space, and you—

Travis: And the patience.

Teresa: And the patience, you want to do a whole fam-damily, right? You could have both sides over to your home, or to a third location, right?

Travis: Yes, or to a secret, hidden location.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Where they must solve a series of clues. What's our next question?

Teresa: Our next question, okay—

Travis: Let's keep moving.

Teresa: Okay, you're ready, you're ready. Ortez E writes, "When I get home from work, I'm usually exhausted, but my dog sure isn't. In my haze, I always take him for a walk, but sometimes I'll honestly forget the poop bags. I feel really bad when this happens, and I do my best to guide her to pooping out of the way and not in the middle of someone's lawn. But like, am I good? Does forgetting my poop bags make me the worst person who ever lived?" No, it doesn't—it doesn't make you the worst person.

Travis: I would say, on the scale, I don't know how to break this to you, Question Asker, there's some pretty bad people who have lived!

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: They're way up there, you know what I mean? Listen, just a piece of advice, I know that this isn't the point of your question, but get a bunch of grocery bags or something and tie them onto the leash in like a couple knots, right? Four or five on there. And then they're just there, right? There's little—also little hooks you can get—

Teresa: Yes, they do make something specifically for that purpose. There's like a little—they sometimes even look like little dog bones.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: With a roll of the poop bags inside that clip right to the leash, and that way, you can keep it right there. But I mean, occasionally, those also run out, right? And so, if you find yourself without a poop bag, I would say that if you are within two or three houses of your home, take your dog back, go get it, and then come back and pick it up. Or if your dog simply will not return to your home, once you've dropped your dog back off, go out and pick up the poop.

Travis: Now, here's my question for you, Teresa.

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: This is my personal thing. I'm out walking, right? Walk the dog. Pick up the poop in the bag. Someone's trash can is still by the road, right? They haven't taken them trash can back to their house yet, after trash pickup. It's okay if I throw my poop back in there, right?

Teresa: No.

Travis: No?!

Teresa: No.

Travis: I'm just supposed to carry a bag of poop all the way home?!

Teresa: Yeah. You are.

Travis: According to who?! According to who? I won't be judged here.

Teresa: I would say that—

Travis: You're saying it's less weird for me to throw trash in a trash can than to walk around with my little poop bag prize. "Look what I've done, everyone!"

Teresa: A public trash can is different. And I would say that the one time that you are allowed to put it in someone else's trash can is if it is about to be picked up for the trash, because then it will be emptied. But to just put a dog poop baggy inside an empty trash can that does not belong to you—

Travis: Were they gonna use it for something other than trash later?

Teresa: You don't know those people, and it is not—

Travis: It's a great way to get to know your neighbors.

Teresa: It's not polite.

Travis: A great way to get to know your neighbors.

Teresa: Do not.

Travis: "Hey, Steve! Steve, wasn't it?" *Bmpf!* You throw it in.

Teresa: Hold on to it until you get home. Unless, like I said, a public trash can is okay.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And if the trash has not yet been collected and something is out there, because it's going to only be in that receptacle for, let's say, an hour or so—

Travis: Fine. Fine.

Teresa: All right. Here's the thing, though. Dog waste left behind can contaminate the soil and water, introducing pathogens like E. coli and Salmonella to the ecosystem. It also attracts flies and rodents, which can spread diseases to both humans and other pets.

Travis: And it's gross, if it's like on sidewalks or something? It's a slip and fall hazard, someone could step in it. A stroller could roll through it. That's a baby! That's a baby in there! A baby's car rolled through it!

Teresa: Also, the dog poop is highly acidic, and it can kill grass and damage other plants around it. If it's in your yard, I say do whatever you want. Sometimes in the back, we just let it go, because nobody goes back there, at the back like, we call it the back nine. [chuckles]

Travis: Yeah, that's the dog—

Teresa: The last like—

Travis: That's the dog's house—

Teresa: 20 feet before our back fence, nobody goes there. It will disintegrate before anyone can even look at it. We don't care, we leave it

there. But that's our yard. So, I would say, like I said, get that little thing to attach it, or like you said, knot it to your leash, or go back and get it.

Travis: Mm-hm. Okay!

Teresa: All right.

Travis: We're gonna take a quick break for a word f'nother Max Fun show. I just cut out like three syllables. *For a word from another Max Fun show!* We'll be right back.

[theme music plays]

Mark: Ready to go.

Hal: Knock, knock.

Mark: Who's there?

Hal: We Got This.

Mark: With Mark and Hal?

Hal: *Gah*, you knew this one! [chuckles]

Mark: We can't put that out as an ad.

Hal: We just did! New episodes every week on maximumfun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts! Now, it's hewn in rock.

Mark: Hewn in rock?!

Hal: Yeah?

Mark: How do you hew something in rock?

Hal: With a chisel.

Mark: There's only one Hue in rock, and it's Huey Lewis.

Hal: [chuckles] And the news is, We Got This with Mark and Hal is available every week on maximumfun.org.

Mark: I walked right into that.

[both chuckle]

[break]

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[break]

Travis: And we're back.

Teresa: All right. Virginia E writes, "My mom has very graciously been letting me borrow her car while mine is in the shop. I'm returning it to her next week, and I want to show her I'm grateful. What's a good way to thank her for letting me use her 2017 Toyota Matrix?" Oh, what a good car to get to work.

Travis: I love a Toyota Matrix.

Teresa: We had a Toyota Matrix. Was it 2017? No, it was just before that. It was a—

Travis: No, it was like a 20... it would have been a 20, because we—

Teresa: 2000—

Travis: We moved to LA—

Teresa: 10.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I think.

Travis: Because we moved to LA in 2014, and we drove it there with a trailer hitched to it. And as we went over like mountains in the like Colorado area or whatever, the max speed we could get was like 55 miles an hour. Like fully gunning it—

Teresa: But it was good car! [chuckles]

Travis: It was great! Listen, it was great!

Teresa: It was a very good car, I really loved my Toyota Matrix. Anyway—

Travis: Full tank of gas.

Teresa: Yes, that was—

Travis: Clean.

Teresa: The number one thing, number one, full tank of gas. Number two, clean, if you don't have to get it professionally cleaned. You can get some Windex and a trash bag, like really—

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Just make sure that it looks nice. And I mean, of course you can always write a thank you note. I would leave it probably like in the passenger seat.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: In like a little envelope.

Travis: Or just hide secret notes throughout the car that she'll find over time.

Teresa: [chuckles] Doesn't that—that seems a little bit like trash?

Travis: No, no? You think if our children—

Teresa: Secret—

Travis: If our children left you secret notes, you'd be like, "Look at this trash." I thought you loved them.

Teresa: [chuckles] Hidden all over the car?

Travis: Not all over! I'm not saying dump out a huge box full! I'm saying like one in the glove compartment, one in like the seat backs.

Teresa: I never look in the glove compartment—

Travis: That's why it's a secret, you'll find it later!

Teresa: [chuckles] I cannot tell you the last—

Travis: You'll find it in like eight years, when you're selling the car and you have to get—or when you get pulled over by a cop, and you gotta get the insurance out. And then you'll be so excited to see a little note that says "I love you," and you'll be like, "Oh, okay, mixed bag."

Teresa: [chuckles] Okay.

Travis: Also, get your mom a gas card, or like a gift card to a gas station.

Teresa: Ooh, that could be fun.

Travis: Because like you're not gonna hand your mom a 20, right? That feel— "Thanks, mom." And then slide her a tip. But you could get her a gift card or something.

Teresa: You could. I think that you could do that, or fill up the tank. Because I think that doing both of those things might be a little cost prohibitive.

Travis: Sure. Sure, sure. But I mean like, then maybe it's like an I owe you a hangout date, right?

Teresa: Oh, sure! Maybe—

Travis: Of like—and fill up the gas. But like, "And I'd love to take you to a movie or something and say thank you." Because I think filling up the gas is something you should do automatically when you borrow someone's car.

Teresa: I mean, that is what she's asking.

Travis: Yeah, not—but, I mean, not just as a thank you, right? It's like if I borrow your car and I return it on empty, right? That's rude.

Teresa: Of course.

Travis: So, I would say that's standard. So then a thank you would be like—

Teresa: Oh?

Travis: And thoughtful on top of that.

Teresa: Okay. Like I said—

Travis: Because if someone returned the car to me and said, "And I put gas in, you're welcome," I'd be like, "Yeah, man! Yeah, dude, you're welcome. You borrowed my car."

Teresa: I mean, I think that—I think that their mom will understand, but like—

Travis: Return the car, but it's a 2019 Toyota Matrix.

Teresa: [chuckles] Oh?

Travis: Whoa.

Teresa: Oh, no.

Travis: And see how long it takes her to notice the upgrade!

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: That's two years newer, mom.

Teresa: Okay, here's another one. This is from Cautious Christmas Crasher.

Travis: Yeah, you like that.

Teresa: I did like that.

Travis: I can see you're very happy about that.

Teresa: "I'm crashing a friend's family Christmas this year, and I have no way of knowing who is or isn't going to get me a present. What should I bring as just in case presents for everyone that aren't so fancy they make anyone feel bad for not getting me anything, but also good enough as an exchange for people who do get me something. Additional info: I think there will be up to 11 people at this, so it can't be too pricey." This is a fantastic question. I love this.

Travis: Okay, but can we stop for a second? Can we infer here that you're not really crashing—

Teresa: Oh, no, they know that you're—

Travis: You're probably going with a friend.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: You're not gonna try to sneak in and hope you don't get noticed.

Teresa: [chuckles] You're not going next door and just walking inside.

Travis: "I'm your uncle—" No, like you're going probably with them.

Teresa: Yes, yes.

Travis: Okay. That would be a wild thing to do.

Teresa: That would be wild.

Travis: Don't do that.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Not a stranger's Christmas.

Travis: Yes. What's something... I'm trying to think, because if it's like... let's call it a dozen, so I don't have to keep saying—remembering 11.

Teresa: [chuckles] Okay.

Travis: And I don't know why. They're like the same length of word, but 11 feels so much more work to think of than 12, a dozen.

Teresa: Okay, while you think about it, I'm gonna say—

Travis: I don't have to think about it *that* hard, baby?

Teresa: Okay? [chuckles]

Travis: It's not gonna take me eight minutes to think of a—

Teresa: Let me just say that the person who you are accompanying is a—is what you need to do first. You need to do some reconnaissance from them. First of all, you need to know, is this like a Secret Santa type gift exchange? Does everyone get everyone gifts?

Travis: Yeah, this is true.

Teresa: Right? And I think that will—that will—

Travis: You gotta figure out the mechanics.

Teresa: Or is this like a white elephant gift exchange? Figure out the mechanics of what it is that they do so that you can be prepared, and not just, you know, roll up now with 11 presents that you don't have anything to do with, right? And I would say that if I were welcoming someone into my home during the Christmas tide, I would not expect them to get me anything. I would probably get them—

Travis: Mm-hm!

Teresa: Get them something, like a food item, right?

Travis: Now, hold on, if you know, let's say Bebe, home from college, you know, 20 years old, brings home her friend.

Teresa: Mm-hm?

Travis: You wouldn't expect it, right? That they got us all presents. But you're the one like treating someone to a Christmas experience in your home.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? So, you wouldn't—if they got you—if they got little presents for everybody, you wouldn't be like, that's weird that they got us stuff.

Teresa: Oh, of course not, that's not what I'm saying at all.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But I'm saying part of like the generosity of the season is, I bring someone into my home who is not part of my family, and then I treat them as my family, I don't expect them to know that I like crew socks or whatever, and get me—

Travis: Well, now everyone knows. You gave it away! That's your biggest secret! I was—

Teresa: And get me something. I'm just—their presence is present enough for me.

Travis: Here is my recommendation. And you tell me how this hits you. Do you have a favorite fancy candy bar?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Oh, no, I'm asking the question asker.

Teresa: Oh. You said it to me? [chuckles]

Travis: Yes, babe, you're the only other—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: You're the only other person in the room.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Do you want me to look into space? Do you have a fancy—

Teresa: No. [chuckles]

Travis: Okay. If you have a fancy candy bar, get like—and I'm not saying like a Snickers, right? Like this is like, "Ooh-la-la, that looks nice," right? Like, you know, something that's wrapped nicely in a pretty—right. You get like a dozen of 'em and—a dozen little ribbons in a bag with you, that you

take with you. And then when someone gives it to you, pop a ribbon on there, and here's— "This is my favorite kind of candy bar, and I wanted to share." Right? And then, at the end, if nobody gives—if you don't need to exchange 'em, you have a dozen of your favorite candy bar!

Teresa: That is a great idea. I think food stuffs is a really great idea; cookies in a nice little tin, candy bars. I mean, you could even go and get like funky sodas or something. A lot of places—

Travis: Well, I was trying to think of something that—

Teresa: You can fill up a—like a six pack or whatever, of like different types of like funky soda. Or if it's like an adult's party, and you know that they imbibe, you could get even funky little beers or whatever.

Travis: See, but I was trying to think of something that like, for a dozen people, right? You aren't bringing like a box of wine into the room, right? With a dozen bottles in it.

Teresa: Right, no.

Travis: Something where it's like small enough—

Teresa: It would be single serve.

Travis: You know, like we have Lolly and Pops, that candy store over in Kenwood Mall. And they have like little, you know, like champagne gummy bears, right?

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: And stuff like that. Something like that, where it's like, oh, that's not something I would just get at a convenience store, right?

Teresa: Yeah, totally.

Travis: "He must have gone to a store and gotten it." And so like, it shows some thought to it.

Teresa: Mm-hm.

Travis: But also not like so personalized that if they don't like that thing, right, "This is weird that you got me, you know, this—" I don't know, whatever. Where it's like, if I'm not the type of person who likes that thing, it would be weird to get it for me, if that makes sense?

Teresa: Yeah, totally. So, there's also—Alex has the idea of maybe if you—if you want to look around your own home, you could do things like, if you do have a notebook you've never used, maybe hand that notebook and like a set of nice pens. Or like I think these are—

Travis: Give them each a signed copy of The Adventure Zone graphic novel. I have a bunch of those sittin' around I could give away. I have limitless copies of Everybody Has a Podcast Except You I could give 'em!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: It's still available probably in most 99 cent bins, written by the McElroy brothers. Go read it today!

Teresa: Aw...

Travis: Some people have it!

Teresa: Some people have it.

Travis: Have I ever told you about the running—it happens every time, and every time we comment on it. When we do any kind of like signing at conventions, there's some—one person brings one copy of our podcast book, and it's like, we got one!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: And it's always one. It's always one copy. [chuckles]

Teresa: [chuckles] You could also put together—this is more of like a host gift, I would say.

Travis: Yes, definitely bring a host gift.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: That is not—you don't need to worry about if there's an exchange or not, if they got something—this is like, "You've welcomed me into my—into your home. Here you go."

Teresa: Yeah. Why not put together a basket of like bath stuff, right? Like a face mask and a lotion, or a bath bomb or something. Or I mean, even a food basket is nice too. Like a little—

Travis: Yeah. Though, that would be important, ask your friend like if you're—you know, if the family—like immediate family, at least, whoever's hosting in the house, if they have any food allergies.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's a great idea.

Travis: Or any dietary considerations, really.

Teresa: Also, here are some ideas; you do candles, you can usually get candles, like the smaller little jar ones, those are usually under 10 bucks. Blankets and throw blankets like that?

Travis: You can also—

Teresa: People always love new blankets like that.

Travis: Depending on like the vibe of your—like, I think you could infer from your friend, or your vibe, really, you could get like some novelty like, you

know, reindeer head bands, or whatever, right? Something that's like, oh, those are—like silly socks, you know? Christmas socks.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Something like that, where it's just like not—it's more about like, you know, "This is a silly thing, and I think it's funny, and I thought it would make you smile." Oh, how nice, right?

Teresa: No matter what little thing that you get, presentation goes a long way, right? So like we talked about like a little ribbon around it, or like have it in cute little bags, or in like those little tins that you can get for cookies, or little baskets.

Travis: That's the thought, you know?

Teresa: Even—yeah.

Travis: That's the thought that counts.

Teresa: Even if it's a silly little thing, putting it in that kind of presentation really makes it feel like a gift. And one thing that she said, lottery tickets. They're cheap, they're easy, people love 'em for stocking stuffers. And if you don't have to give everyone one, maybe you'll get lucky. [chuckles]

Travis: Lottery tickets is another great thing to ask the friend you're going with like, "Your family's not like so devoutly something that if I'm like, 'Gambling!' They're not gonna be like, 'Sinner!' And toss me out of the house, right? That's okay?"

Teresa: Does a scratch off really count as gambling?

Travis: Yes. Can you win money?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Do you spend money and potentially not get any money back, but potentially do?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: That's gambling!

Teresa: [chuckles] Okay.

Travis: That's actually the definition of gambling.

Teresa: *All right.* Here's a new one—

Travis: Also, great host gift, one of those big popcorn tins where it's divided into three sections.

Teresa: Mm...

Travis: And it's like caramel, cheese popcorn, butter—literally everyone on Earth loves that.

Teresa: You know what you should actually get? Just cheese. Because nobody likes the caramel—

Travis: Oh! What's it like to be so wrong?!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Oh my god! What's it like to be so incorrect? In a perfect world, you get a big tin where those are mixed together, and you're eating the cheese and the caramel at the same time. Little bit of sweet, little bit of salty, it's amazing! Like dipping—

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Like dipping Cheetos into peanut butter? *Incredible.*

Teresa: Every single popcorn tin we have ever bought for this family, the cheese disappears first, and then nobody eats the caramel.

Travis: Incorrect! The cheese disappears, then the caramel goes down to about a third, and then the rest of the popcorn is a great decoration.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: The plain popcorn, that's somehow worse than any other version of butter popcorn you've ever had in your life, just sits there staring at you, as if to say, "Why not me?" And the answer is, because you're gross!

Teresa: [chuckles] Because you're gross. Okay, next question. This is a long one, so... Mike J writes, "My immediate family growing up would call me Mikey, which is fine. Then some people in high school would call me that, since my sister went with me, and now people in my husband's family do too.

My mom—" Sorry, "His mom and I got into a discussion a few years ago about it, and ultimately, we agreed that no one should call you a name that you don't want them to. And then we left it at that. So, now she doesn't. But his aunt started doing it a couple years ago, and she's not doing it to bother me. I deal with it, because I don't see her often. But it also makes me feel weird, because usually his mom is around—whether or not she hears.

I don't really know what to say to get her not to call me that anymore, or how I could just deal with it. I always introduce myself to people as Mike, but it's harder when they hear other people talking about you by a different name, especially when it seems harmless." This is something that we are currently encountering, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Because our children have full names that have—

Travis: Well, I mean, most people do!

Teresa: [chuckles] That have a lot—

Travis: We make them earn a new letter of their name each year!

Teresa: Excuse me, you know what I mean.

Travis: I do know. They have formal names!

Teresa: They have formal names. And then they have *a lot* of nicknames that surround those names. And inevitably, we call them something, their teachers call them something, their friends call them something. And sometimes—

Travis: As it should be!

Teresa: But sometimes they say, "Would you call me—" for example, "Call me Barbie," or whatever, right?

Travis: Well, I mean, Dot is like, "Call me Saturn," you know?

Teresa: [chuckles] Sure.

Travis: "Call me the Ice Queen," you know? And it's like, "Yeah, you got it, man. Sounds great."

Teresa: But this is something I feel like we are going to have to continually navigate throughout our lives, them deciding what it is they would like to be called, and us and others attempting, and sometimes failing, at calling them what they would like to be called.

Travis: But this is—the fact of the matter is, I am a big proponent of that, right? Throughout my life, right? So, I am Travis. I like my name. I feel like a Travis. Travis feels right. Justin and Griffin and Dad get to call me Scraps, right? Because Dad gave me that nickname when I was little. They've known me all my life. Not Griffin. He was kind of late to the party.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: So, he's known me—

Teresa: Not his fault.

Travis: He's known me three years less than everybody else, and he's on notice. But they can call me that, right? They can call me Trav, that's fine. But if other people were to do that in the same way that they do? No! You're not them, right? Like, this is the thing, look at it this way, Bebe and Dot call me Dad. If other people called me Dad, it'd be weird, right? If I—if like I just met somebody and they're like, "Ah, I see that little girl called you Dad. Should I do that too?" Like, no, of course not.

Teresa: When I am talking to them about you, I call you Dad.

Travis: Well, yes, you're also my wife.

Teresa: Yes, that's true.

Travis: And we co-parent those children. So, I think we can infer that that makes sense. But I just think that like, there are people in your life—like when I was in college, right? A lot of the time, I mean, in my friend group, we tended to like call people by their last names a lot.

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: Right? Where—when it felt right, if that makes sense?

Teresa: That seems like something on movies and—in movies and TV that I've seen males do to each other.

Travis: Well, I mean, McElroy is a great name to call somebody by. But like my friend, Trevor David, we wouldn't call him David.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Right? That'd be confusing.

Teresa: He has two first names.

Travis: But like Michael Bradbury, he's Bradbury, right? But Bobby Glasser, he's Bobby, right? It just, it works out.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: It's the kind of thing where eventually it all makes sense. But like, I was known as McElroy a lot of the time by these people, and like, yeah, it completely makes sense. If I'm hanging out with my family and someone tried to do that, you would see, like velociraptors, a bunch of heads whip around.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Right? And so, I think that contextual nicknames and stuff makes sense. Here is my advice for you, Question Asker. When we correct people, in all things, when we're setting a boundary for ourselves, I would like to pitch a new rule or new guidance system.

Teresa: Okay?

Travis: And I call it the handshake rule. Firm, but not forceful, right? You're coming in, it's clear. You're saying it firmly. You're not doing it in a punishing way. You're not doing it in a way to establish dominance, right? You're doing it and you're saying, "I prefer Mike. Oh, actually, I prefer Mike." Right? It's like, that's clear. You're not coming in and going, "Could you..." But you're also not going, "It's Mike!" Right?

[both chuckle]

Travis: Like, if it—now, listen, if you've set this boundary a couple times, if you've set it even once, and you get the feeling that this person is doing it to get under your skin, at that point, handshake rule's off. Right now, you're coming in and you're establishing dominance, and you can do it however you please. If you're asking us, "How do I do it in such a way that I don't feel like I'm going to make them feel bad," or whatever, firm, not forceful. That said, they will feel however they feel.

Teresa: Exactly. You deserve to be called what you want to be called, and you cannot control how they feel when you tell them that. I would say that as you gently correct this, the aunt, I believe, you can do, "Actually, I prefer

Mike," right? And then after that, if you find that it is still a problem, I would enlist the help of your partner.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Because they might have some other way of like speaking to that person in private, right? That would help the situation.

Travis: It also—ooh, this is great too. If your partner then goes to this aunt separately and goes, "Just so you know, they prefer Mike." What's great about that, subconsciously, it's actually good. Because then, your partner, who ostensibly knows you better than your—than this aunt, right, is saying, "Hey, I'm gonna give you like the secret code to a speakeasy kind of deal."

Teresa: Mm-hm!

Travis: "Because I'm someone who knows him real well, and I'm gonna let you in on the secret, right? You're worth knowing. He prefers Mike. So now you know him a little bit better than you did before. You're more in the group." Right?

Teresa: That's a great way for them to go about it. And we're nearly out of time, but I have—I have to get to this one.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Is it—Hannah M writes, "Is it impolite to pour the chip crumbs in your mouth?"

Travis: Who's looking?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Who's lookin'? What's the scenario?

Teresa: I knew you would love this.

Travis: At a job interview? Yes. Don't do that.

Teresa: [laughs] No, don't do that. I agree, it's about location. It's... food, you can eat it. But like—

Travis: The important thing is that you have your emergency contact ready to go, because sometimes—

Teresa: [chuckles] You get a surprise.

Travis: You do that—well sometimes you do it, and you're like, "Oh, let's—" And then it's just pure salt, you know?

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Don't do it with pretzels! Don't do it with pretzels, because it's all the salt that went to the bottom.

Teresa: Oh, but that Cheeto dust? That sweet, sweet Cheeto dust. We love it.

Travis: What Cheeto—no, there's not just dust at the bottom of a Cheetos bag.

Teresa: Yeah, there is?

Travis: Doritos, perhaps? Your Lays and Ruffles, perhaps.

Teresa: Anyway, the answer is yes, because it's food, and it's very difficult to pick up. So I think that pouring a—

Travis: Now, if you're talking about—

Teresa: Personal size—

Travis: Hold on, no—

Teresa: A personal size bag—

Travis: Stop, are you talking about Cheeto—

Teresa: Not—wait, wait, wait! Stop! Stop!

Travis: I wanna go back to Cheetos! Are you talking about little, tiny chunks of Cheeto at the bottom? Because they're not just loose powder. Then you're talking about there's like—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: There's like a meteor shower—

Teresa: The little nugs!

Travis: Yeah, that—okay, yes, absolutely. Sorry, you said the dust, and I was picturing just like all of the cheese dust had fallen off of some of the Cheetos. But the—whatever glue they put on there is very effective.

Teresa: I hope that people at home could hear my eye roll. Anyway!

Travis: I'm sure they can. I can hear it from over here.

Teresa: Personal bags, yes. I would say that if it's like the family size, party size bag, that that is a very difficult proposition, and I would recommend pouring it into a bowl, and then pouring it into your mouth.

Travis: Now, if other people want the dust, what you can do is dump it out on the table, and then with like a credit card or something, start spreading it out into lines.

Teresa: [chuckles] Hand out spoons.

Travis: Yeah! Heat it up.

Teresa: [chuckles] But it's about location, right? Like you said, job interview, probably not. The office, at like—in the kitchen, no. At your desk, yeah.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Okay, sure.

Travis: Maybe at a loved one's funeral.

Teresa: No?

Travis: Well, I guess it depends how much of a party animal were they? Would they appreciate it? And then like bite into a beer can, like Teen Wolf does, you know what I mean? I did that to a Sprite once and it hurt my gums.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: It was that my friend Ryan Baker's house.

Teresa: I would caution against doing it in moving vehicles, because, again, dust—the chip dust in your eyes.

Travis: It goes flying everywhere.

Teresa: Is a bad idea.

Travis: Well also like, usually, the pouring—your mouth is normally below your eyes, and so the bag would be in front of your eyes while you're doing that.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Now, if you're not driving...

Teresa: Again, it's dicey, because—

Travis: You gotta duck down below the seat level.

Teresa: [chuckles] No. I mean—

Travis: "Close all the windows! I'm about to pour cheese dust in my face."

Teresa: [chuckles] Like we said, it's about location and your company.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Like I said, it's food, you can eat it. But do be mindful about where and when.

Travis: Always be mindful. ABM, always be mindful. Hey, everybody—

Teresa: We're still workshopping it.

Travis: Yeah. Thank you all so much for being here. Thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom we could not do this episode. Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not do this episode. Thank you to you for listening, we couldn't have done this one without you, because it's your questions, Goober!

Teresa: That's right!

Travis: Sorry about the goober thing, you're fine, you're great. Hey, everybody, Candlenights is returning to Huntington this year, we're doing a lot of really fun things—in person. There's gonna be bits and skits, segments and...

Teresa: Songs.

Travis: And songs. I was trying to think of something that rhymes with segment. Legmnets? That's nothing.

Teresa: No, mm-mm.

Travis: But, and I know what you're thinking, hasn't that been—yes, but... one, it's not a video. Two, it's gonna have a lot more—kind of the only—you know, stuff that you can do because it's staged with an audience, and you're like on a stage together.

Teresa: There's that certain *je ne sais quoi*—

Travis: That's what—yeah! A little, how do you say—

Teresa: That happens at a live show.

Travis: And a lot bigger and stupider stuff. So, we are going to do it in person, in Huntington, but we're also going to film it, and then have that streaming as a video on demand for a couple weeks. So, if you want to come in person, it's December 6th, in Huntington, West Virginia, you can get tickets for that.

And if you want to watch it streaming, that's December 19th, and it's going to be available through January 4th. If you get the in-person tickets, that includes a streaming ticket. And the proceeds from all of that goes to Harmony House, which is a shelter in our hometown, which is working to help end homelessness in the Huntington, West Virginia area.

You can get tickets for both the in-person and the streaming at bit.ly/candlenights2025. Champions Grove packages are still on sale. Even if you are like, "I don't know if I want a package, but I would like to know what he's talking about," go to championsgrove.com and find out all about it. It's amazing. 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. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pin-up 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 are taking your topics, topic suggestions, your questions, your idioms, send those on down! Shmannerscast@gmail.com. Say hi to Alex, because she reads 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: [sings] Manners, Shmanners! [claps rhythmically] Get it?

["Shmanners Theme" by brentalfloss plays]

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