

#148 - Make Memories Like a Lazy Genius

Hi, everyone! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode #148 - Make Memories Like a Lazy Genius. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves to mark moments, make memories, and give our kids something to remember when they're teenagers and kind of hate us. And even if you don't have kids, there's still a high cultural premium on memories. Scrapbooking, photo albums, daily journals, the Gram. And to be fair, it's not just cultural pressure or even always bad. Memories are beautiful. Experiencing things that make us feel happy, that connect us to other people... memories are beautiful. But if we try and manufacture them, mechanize them, or if we simply forget that we're human beings who can live our lives without pressures from other people's expectations, we'll get overwhelmed by this thing that's really natural, that our brains already do. So today we're going to talk about making memories like a Lazy Genius. We're going to focus on what matters, ignore what doesn't, and then create actual strategies and shortcuts around those things. And no ad or ask today. Let's just dive in.

So we're going to go through four sections in this episode: presence, flexibility, tradition, and tangibles. Presence, flexibility, tradition, and tangibles.

First, presence. I think this matters to all of us. We want to be where we are. We don't want to get distracted by what's around us. We want to pay attention. If you're listening to this, it's very likely that going slow and connecting both matter a lot to you. I think what we often do though is sacrifice presence in what we think is service to making a memory. It feels strange to think that making memories exists in the exact space we're in. There has to be some kind of forethought or we have to capture it with a photo or video. We have to think about how we might recreate it down the road and create traditions. But really, we can't force memories. We can't keep thinking ahead, trying to manufacture them. Your brain remembers well. Your senses are incredibly capable of capturing moments, and I think sometimes the moments that matter matter because we're in them. We're present with them. It's not that we create something from the outset knowing it's going to make a memory. Some things are like that, I suppose: weddings, birthdays, vacations. But really the ordinary life memories happen and stay and feel like they matter because we were in them.

The other day, I was watching my daughter draw. I don't usually watch her draw. If she's happy drawing, which is very often, it means I get to read. I'm next to her. I'm kind of with her, but I'm doing something else. Now that's not bad. I love reading, and it's nice to be able to do something that we both love next to each other. But there was something about this particular occasion where I just sat with her and watched her draw. I didn't really say anything. Everything was the same as it usually is except instead of looking at a book I was looking at her, and I'm not sure I'll ever forget that couple of minutes. It was a memory in the making, simply because I was there and watching. I didn't take a picture or anything because I don't think I realized that something important was happening until after it was over, but my senses - my eyes, hearing the scritch scratch of her cheap marker, hearing her breathe - it's embedded in my memory. Like

I can see it and conjure it without any hesitation. Now memories like that fade of course, but the point is being present in and of itself is a great way to make a memory. You just might not know it when it's happening. So don't give up presence for planning. Planning is great. Planning has its place, but memories don't always come because you planned them. They come because you were present. You were there.

The second part of this is flexibility. When we get into planning mode or when we enter an occasion that feels important like those weddings and birthdays and graduations and vacations and stuff, we have expectations. We expect things will go a certain way. Or we want them to go a certain way and are disappointed when they don't. I've talked about this before in other contexts that I can't exactly remember right now, but essentially, a lot of us go in with unnamed expectations about certain events in our lives. You don't know how much pressure you're putting on the birthday girl to feel excited *and* look the part. You don't realize how you assume no one will fight on vacation. You didn't know how much you wanted your high school student to give you a hug and say thank you at her graduation rather than just leave with her friends like it was any other day. We often have expectations, and because they're unnamed or because we're holding too tightly to what we want, we are not flexible. We don't roll with it because we're rolling with the wrong thing.

Being flexible in life and definitely in terms of making memories, especially around typical memorable occasions, it's like it gives you more surface area for memories to stick. You're in a posture where anything and everything can count as a beautiful memory. What matters is being present and connecting with your people, so when the circumstances change in big or small ways, you're not beholden to those circumstances because what matters - the presence and the connection - are likely still there. And if they're not, if something like a teenager leaving when you wanted her to stay with you, you can name that for yourself, you can have the perspective of her growing up and changing and all the things that I haven't experienced yet as a parent, but by naming it for what it is, you're not resenting your daughter. You know you wanted her to hang out with you after graduation or for her birthday dinner, so when she chooses something else, you can immediately know "oh, that's different than what I hoped would happen" but you can say with compassion instead of resentment. You can be flexible and connect with her the next morning and go get coffee. You tell her that you love her and you're proud of her as she's leaving with friends and not make her feel badly for being a teenager and moving away from her family being the place she always chooses. I realize that's a really heavy example, but being flexible in those times especially is its own component of making memories. You're not seeing everything through a lens of harsh disappointment. You're remembering what matters, and in your flexibility around everything else, you can still have good memories, even if things don't go the way you wanted.

So the first two - presence and flexibility - are a little more intangible. With these last two, we'll have some more bones. So next is tradition. I have an episode actually called Ten Steps to Creating Your Own Traditions. It's episode #132, and it has a bit more of a holiday bent, but that doesn't mean it can only be applied during the holidays. There are steps in creating and naming traditions in your life and with your family. One of the biggest places is really the smallest, and

that's to start small. We really love the idea of a life of tradition, of things we do all the time that everyone looks forward to, but if you try and craft a ton of traditions, you won't do any of them probably. So start small. Start with what you already do. That episode goes into the process of this in more detail, but the point is that you're likely already engaging in more traditions than you think. You just haven't really named in that way before.

I think it's also important to remember that memories are made from spontaneity for sure. You remember getting to go on that cool trip as a kid, you remember being woken up in the middle of the night to watch a meteor shower in your driveway with your dad. Those things are amazing and definitely can be memory makers. But so are things that are incredibly consistent. Traditions are just things you do again and again, and some of those can be super simple and ordinary but they carry extraordinary memory powers.

Things like Laura Tremaine's family doing Sunday pancakes. Laura is a real life friend and the host of a great podcast called 10 Things to Tell You. Her family makes pancakes every Sunday morning. Is it always super special? Do they always talk to each other the whole time? Is it full of laughter at every turn? No. It's kind of ordinary, but the repetition of it is what makes it special. So just remember that as you think through traditions that consistent, regular, ordinary things work their own memory grooves in us and in our people. Your kids will remember eating pizza every Friday or going on a walk around the block after dinner every night or listening to a certain audiobook or album in the car on the way to school. Those things are really important, not so that you feel the pressure to make it all count but to just remember that those things matter, too.

And finally some tangibles. I love to capture and look back. I think it's important. I just don't want to be beholden to it, especially in a trade for just being there and being a person. So I use three separate things to capture life. Sometimes that life is of a specific event that is a memory, and sometimes not. But here are my memory making tools.

First is the app 1 Second a Day. It's a great app that costs a couple of bucks, and it captures a one second video of every day or as many days as you have and puts them into one long video. The nice thing is that you can pull from the cloud, and every video is connected to a date. So basically you don't have to update the video in the app every day. I just take a video as many days as I think of, a literal video of a second or two, and every couple of weeks, I go in the app, grab the videos that go on each day, it's super easy, and then I'm done. We've been doing this since the end of 2016, so we have videos of every year with a little snippet of most days. And it's the best. It's my favorite memory keeping option.

The second thing I use is a five year journal. I'll link to it in the show notes, but it's basically a year long journal with a couple of lines for every day but it has space for five years of writing on every page. So one page has a date, like March 12th, but there are five year options on that page. I've been keeping it for a year and a half maybe, and I use it for myself. I remember things about my own days, what I felt, what I enjoyed. Sometimes it's work, kids, friends, trips, a movie I saw, whatever. I'm not much of a journal person, so this works well for me because it's really a sentence every day. Super small and easy to fit into my life.

And the third thing is I take purposeful photos of my kids once a month. I have an alarm set on my phone as a reminder that goes off on the first of every month. I take square photos of each kid individually against the same wall in a well lit room, and then I take a photo of the three of them as a group. So at the end of the year, I have twelve photos of each kid and twelve of them together, and you'd better believe we put those in a book for grandparents every year. I actually have a private Instagram account that I use just for photo storage for that. Because we usually use Chatbooks to make those books, it's easier to just connect to an Instagram account rather than uploading photos from my phone or the cloud or whatever.

So those are my three things: one second of video a day, one sentence written a day, and one set of photos taken once a month. What this does is eliminate the need for me to capture everything. I'm capturing the growth of my kids through the photos and the videos, I'm capturing the anthology aspect of life through both, and I'm remembering my own things with the journal. It's freed me up from taking photos all the time, of feeling pressure to capture every moment... it's been a huge load off.

Basically, you can ask yourself what matters about capturing memories and moments. What is it that you really want, and then think about one or two things you can do on a regular basis to fit that. Make those steps as small as you can so you'll do them. That's why I love these tangibles.

One other tangible tip I have is to take the photo or video in the moment but post it later. No posting needs to happen now. That way you can stay present, assuming that's what you're ultimately after. I also try and use my eyes more than my camera as much as I can. This is very true of things like school plays. My husband is a school counselor and doesn't have the job flexibility to be able to see one of our kid's school performances in the middle of the day, so of course I record it for him. But I really try to record it with my phone but watch with my eyes, not watch through the phone. I know that's kind of a strange distinction, but it makes the memories stick more to see them in real life versus through the phone, even if I'm still in the room.

So presence: remember that being present actually makes memories stronger because you're remembering where you are. You can't force it or manufacture it. Just be present, and allow memories to create themselves. Be flexible. Roll with what matters, and try to not be so stuck on what happens. Start small with your traditions, and listen to that extra podcast episode to get some ideas. And remember that ordinary consistency creates memories just as much as spontaneous fun does. And fourth, use tangibles that work for you. Mine need as little attention as possible but with big payoff in the end. Name what matters to you, ask around for other ideas, and seek out tangible approaches that allow you to capture memories without losing the presence and connection you ultimately want.

And that's how to make memories like a Lazy Genius. If you have thoughts or questions about this, I'll be on Instagram this Thursday around noon eastern time to talk live, so follow me there @thelazygenius. So until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week.