#152 - Reading in Odd Circumstances

Hi there! 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 #152 - Reading in Odd Circumstances. If you're listening to this in the spring of 2020, we're in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, and you've likely been home for a long while. We've gone through it, you guys. The emotional upheaval, the annoyance at the groundhog day of everything coupled with the grief we feel for people all over the world in unthinkable circumstances, the sudden task of walking our kids through online school, figuring out how to talk to them about what's happening, trying to work from home maybe alongside a partner who also has to work from home, being worried about money, not being around our friends and extended families, not going to church, not hugging people, not knowing what's going to happen from one day to the next. I'm not listing it out to be dramatic; maybe we need to just take this moment to put our national and global situation in context. This is hard. You're not being kind to yourself at all if you're not allowing yourself to say that it's hard. I know that none of us wants to just fold and throw in our cards and give up, but you can still rally and be resilient and hopeful at the same time you name the difficulty of what's happening. The two don't cancel each other out. We're living in unprecedented times, at least for these recent generations, so be kind to yourself as you walk through the muck.

Okay, so yes this episode is about reading, and if you look at the title, we are definitely in the oddest of circumstances. But if you're listening to this in a time that's not the spring of 2020, aka not during a global pandemic, you can still have odd circumstances in your life that affect normal things like reading. A lot of us turn to reading when we need to feel better, when we need to escape, when we just want to relax and have a very specific kind of fun. P.S. I have an announcement about a very specific kind of fun at the end of the episode, so stay tuned. But based on the number of downloads of past episodes related to reading, I know that there's an overwhelming majority of people listening who really love to read. So when our regular reading rhythms are disrupted by odd circumstances, it's nice to have a roadmap of how to get back to normal or how to create a new normal. And that's what this episode will do.

It's quite simple; just three questions. First, when your reading was normal, what made it good? When life was the way it was, whatever *was* means, what made reading good? Maybe you had more time to do it or you had lots of options of what to read next or you were able to rest at the end of the day with a book. Just briefly, simply name what made reading good.

Second question, what do you feel like you've lost now that you're in odd circumstances? What do you miss? Libraries, for example, are closed all over the country. If one of your favorite parts of reading was browsing library stacks, that's a big loss. Another thing you might miss is night reading. Maybe now you spend your days taking care of your kids and have to work at night which is when you used to read, so you miss having that time to read. For circumstances beyond this pandemic, let's say you're caring for a really sick parent in the hospital. You used to

read in your favorite cozy living room chair, and now you live in hospital waiting rooms and those hard plastic blue hospital couches.

Maybe the answers to these two questions overlap quite a bit. What was good and what you miss could be the same. But they also might not be. What was good about reading was that you know what books you love to read, but now you miss reading when you used to read. The good part hasn't really left. You still know your style and what books bring you life.

When things change and shift, especially if in a confusing scary way, we tend to go all or nothing. If we can't read the way we used to, if we're so distracted by our odd circumstances, we kind of throw in the towel and just say well I can't read right now. I can't do this thing that used to bring me so much joy because everything is different. And I just want to encourage you that these first two questions are to help you see that maybe everything isn't different. There might be things that are still the same in a good way. So it's important and helpful to name the reality, to name what's actually happening in our situation, even with a topic as benign as reading.

And now for the third question: what one choice can you begin making that will make reading work for you now, even in these odd circumstances? Part of that could be wrapped up in what reading does for you emotionally. If your normal reading time was at the end of the day but now your end of the day is no longer fit for reading for whatever reason, one choice you can make is to name another time of the day, even ten minutes, where you can start reading again and get the benefit of enjoying a book.

Another single choice that could make reading work for you in odd circumstances could be that you move from digital reading to physical reading. Maybe because you're working from home, you're constantly on Zoom, and you're helping your kids do online school which is more computer time, pulling out your Kindle, even the Paperwhite that is as close to a book page as you can get, just doesn't cut it right now. So if you used to read on an ereader, that might not work as well now. One simple choice could be to read physical books instead.

Another choice might be related to the genre or vibe of the book you're choosing. A lot of people love stories about regular people living regular life but in tough situations. Well, that's kind of our reality right now in actual life, and maybe that preferred genre isn't the best choice. Maybe magical realism or science fiction or a mystery is better suited for you when it's time to read. You need more of an escape, and if you don't usually turn to reading for an escape, you might not think of that as being a good option to normalize reading in abnormal circumstances.

So the third question again is what one choice can you make that will make reading work for you right now? Knowing why reading was good before and naming what you miss now that life feels very different will help you choose a great small step to make reading fun again.

For me, when life and reading were normal, the thing that made reading good was that I always had something waiting for me. I buy books at a local book fair once a year and stock up on titles that I know I'll love and just read those throughout the year. I'm fortunate to have a pretty robust TBR shelf. It's actually a legit bookcase. And that hasn't changed. I still have that bookcase, and I still have great options of what to read next.

The second question of what I miss, what I feel like I've lost in my reading during these particular odd circumstances is that I don't have as much time to read as I used to. The kids are always home, my husband and I are both learning to work from home and trade off our time, and because I have less alone time and space during the day, I have less energy at the end of the day which is when I would normally read the bulk of my book. I miss the time. I miss having more time to read. And frankly because I don't spend as much time on Instagram or my phone during the day because there's just too much to do and manage which has been a nice perk actually, I still want to see what's happening with my friends and see pretty photos and laugh at funny stories, and so many nights, I look up and it's been 45 minutes where I've been scrolling Instagram and am already tired and ready to go to bed and haven't read a word from an actual book.

Now in theory, that's actually fine. There's nothing wrong with that, but I'd prefer to read than be on Instagram. So knowing that I still have the resources and choices to read something I'll love and naming that I miss having the time to read as much as I did before these odd circumstances, what one choice can I begin making that will make reading work better for me? I'm going to mute a lot of the people I follow on Instagram and give myself 15 minutes or so at the end of the day to enjoy the feeds and stories of my most essential follows. I could even set a timer for it. Then I can read the rest of the time. That doesn't mean that people I follow aren't good or that they don't matter; they're just not as essential for me in this time, and that's okay. Eventually I'll unmute again. But right now when I open Instagram, I want to see that little check mark that says "you're all caught up" and for it to not take so long for me to get there so that I can read.

And I don't have to do this in one fell swoop either. That's why the third question says what choice can you *begin* making. It's a process and doesn't have to be done or accomplished all at once. So I'm not going to go through the entire list of people I follow and mute. That would take more time than I have. What I can do though is when I am on Instagram, I'm going to pay attention as posts come up in my feed, and if an account doesn't bring me the greatest amount of delight, I'm going to click those three dots on the top right corner of the post and hit mute. Easy peasy. Temporary but helpful for what I need right now.

Then once you've answered those three questions, choose a book. Get to reading! And an update for those who have been around for awhile, I'm finally reading Jayber Crowe! It's been on my stack for the last several seasons I feel like, but it never felt like the right time. Now is the right time, and I'm loving it so much.

So try these three questions these next few days and see if you can add more joy into reading life again, even during odd circumstances. I'm planning to be on Instagram @thelazygenius this Thursday around noon to chat about this topic, so be sure to follow me there.

Okay, now it's time to share about the very specific kind of fun. Reading is great. We love stories and characters and all the things. We also love stories and characters in movies and TV shows. So I've created a project for us to do together. Or alone if you're not a group project kind of person. But I created something called The Favorites File, and it's available today! I know you're a responsible grownup and have a checklist of things you can get done while you're home for the next few weeks, and not to diminish that list or those of you who have essential jobs and are working at hospitals and post offices and grocery stores and teachers who are teaching online classes and trying to help your kids do their own schoolwork. Thank you for that! We're collectively so grateful for you. Truly. And as you go through that tiring day or as you live Groundhog Day over again in your house, I think we all need a fun distraction that also feels like we're getting something done. That's exactly what The Favorites File is.

It's a PDF that you can get absolutely for free. This is just a fun thing I made for you. No dollars needed. The Favorites File is broken into four parts or four files, and within each file are four separate assignments. So in the Film File, you'll systematically figure out your list of favorite movies and your favorite movie characters. In the Show File, you'll figure favorite shows and even a list of favorite episodes. In the Actor File, you'll figure out your Crushmore, your favorite celebrity pair, and in the Fun File, you'll plan out your celebrity dinner party and even choose who you'd be quarantined with. It's a whole thing, you guys, and I'm stoked.

What we'll do for the next four weeks is do our Favorites File assignments, we'll share some of them on Instagram with templates I'll put up, and then after the four weeks, we're going to have our own awards show from your choices called The Lazies. We'll vote and all the things, and I might even do an Instagram live to announce the winners. If you've been following me for several years, you know this is my secret sweet spot. I love systemizing pop culture. I mean, it's in my marrow. So this is going to be so much fun. All you need to do right now though is download The Favorites File. You can print it out, slide it into a clipboard, and we'll do the assignments one week at a time. Instructions and all of that are in the file and the email that'll come with it, but this is the project you will have no trouble completing. I promise you this with my whole heart.

So click on the link in the profile, or go to thelazygeniuscollective.com/tff for The Favorites File. We're going to have so much doing this, and I can't wait to see your answers.

Okay, that's it for today. Be well, my friends. Until next time, be a genius about the things that matter - and maybe a little genius about the things that don't in weird pandemic times - and also still lazy about some of the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week!