

#206 - The Lazy Genius Guide to Buying Great Gifts

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 206 - the lazy genius guide to buying great gifts. It's April, and we're entering Teacher Appreciation Week soon, then it's Mother's Day and Father's Day and the end of school. Now that pandemic guidelines are loosening, people are planning weddings and baby showers. Then of course there are birthdays and holidays and all the regular things. We have many opportunities to buy gifts for people, and it can be overwhelming. So today we're going to Lazy Genius gift-giving. We're going to talk about what's holding you back, how to know what someone wants without asking, how to remember before it's too late, and what Lazy Genius principles you can apply to making sure you and the person you're getting a gift for enjoy it.

I covered about half of what I'm going to share in a very very early episode of The Lazy Genius Podcast. It was episode twelve I think called The Lazy Genius Buys a Gift, and y'all it is so solid. I'm restating a good bit of it today but adding some helpful next steps with the principles too. Also those were the days when I had a format for my podcast where we had a problem, a pitch, and a playbook. The English degree in me was coming out really big with all that alliteration.

Okay, first up. What is holding you back when it comes to gifts? It's the myth of the perfect gift. You think that every gift should be the most amazing one ever. Like new bike as a kid kind of level. And some of you try. Some of you work so hard to find the perfect gift and try to be a genius. You scour the internet, you look at all the gift guides, you spend more money than you need to because you're trying to be amazing but don't have the margin to think creatively so you just buy something super expensive. And some of you want to be thoughtful about your gifts and give something amazing but you just do not have the energy to, so you get really lazy and buy everyone Starbucks gift cards. That's not bad, but I'm guessing you'd like to be somewhere in the middle. You want to be a thoughtful gift giver, but you also can't let it run your life or ruin your budget. So we need to Lazy Genius this, right?

So first is to release the pressure of the perfect gift. It doesn't exist. You do not have to blow everyone away with how amazing you are at this. Be kind to yourself, have fun in the process, and use the rest of what I'm about to tell you to buy great gifts without losing your mind.

Next up, here's how to know what someone wants without having to ask them. Now, you might be like "nope, I'm asking." And some people love to be asked. If that's the case, you might not struggle with gifts anyway. But if you want to be thoughtful and give a surprising gift that makes someone smile without that process taking over your life, here are three ways to know what someone wants without having to ask them.

First, pay attention to what makes them happy. What band or food or time of year or activity or anything makes them happy. Whenever a friend says out loud just casually "that makes me so happy," or I see them get excited about something, I make a note of that. I file that away in my brain and then eventually note it somewhere. We'll get to the somewheres in a second.

Second, pay attention to their rainy day dreams. Notice when a friend says “I’d really love to try making pottery someday” or when your brother says “One of these days I’m going to run another marathon” or whatever. Pay attention to those things and consider a gift that holds hands with that rainy dream. Get the friend a handmade ceramic mug with a note that says, “can’t wait to see the one you make someday.” Or maybe get her a lesson at a local art center and go with her. Just acknowledging people’s loves and dreams is a huge gift in itself. People want to know that they’re known. They want to be seen and loved, and noticing those things can impact your gift-giving in some really beautiful ways.

And the third way to know what someone wants without asking them is to pay attention to how they live. Do they do a lot of stuff outdoors? Do they read a ton and love having books in the house? Are they gardeners or bakers? Do they go biking as a family? How do they live? Let that inform your gift ideas too. If you have a friend who loves to knit, google “gifts for knitters” and see what you find. It’s so much better than looking through every aisle at target for the perfect gift. A disaster waiting to happen. Pay attention to those three things, and you’ll always have at least one or two if not way more gift ideas for the people in your life.

Now what about people who you don’t really know? Maybe a kid’s teacher or the kid of a friend or a co-worker. There are gifts we get because it’s expected and a good thing to do. If your kid gets invited to another kid’s birthday party, you’re going to get that kid a gift. If your office does a gift exchange this Christmas, you’re going to get the person you draw a gift. But you might not have a lot of emotional attachment to that person and will have no idea of what makes them happy or what they dream about but you still want to be thoughtful.

This is where we pull out the perfect Lazy Genius principle for buying gifts: decide once. Deciding once is just making a decision one time and sticking with it until it doesn’t work anymore.

You can decide once about gifts, and it’s actually a fantastic way to do it. I mentioned this in my book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, that for teacher gifts, I always get them the book *Cozy Minimalist Home* by Myquillyn Smith. It’s a beautiful book, so practical for every decorating style, and I know it works. Some of you have even said my book is your decide once gift which is legit very humbling and fun. But think about a person or type of person that needs a gift that you might not be quite as personally connected to, and decide once what that gift could be. You might have a go-to baby shower gift, wedding gift, birthday gift for a preschooler, an elementary kid, a high schooler, etc. I’m actually going to have a post up on Instagram this week where we’ll collect all of our decide once ideas for gifts. Choose what makes the most sense for your life, and all of your “what should I get them?” problems are solved.

Another way to decide once is not just the exact gift. It can be who gets gifts and who doesn’t. Like, maybe you do birthday gifts for friends but not Christmas gifts. Or your Christmas gift is something you do for everyone, like a box of cookies or something. Decide once. I’m not saying that’s a great idea; you might love getting Christmas gifts for your friends. It’s just an example of

something you could decide, but you can make whatever decision you want. Another example would be those gift categories: birthday, the holidays, teacher appreciation vs. the last day of school. You can decide once what holidays and celebrations you get gifts during and which ones you don't. It's not just who but when. Another decide once could be in a category of gift rather than a specific gift. Maybe for birthdays, you always get someone a book wrapped in a t-shirt or a tea towel. Always. The book will change, the wrapping will change, but every single birthday for every person you love, all you have to choose from is what book to choose and what to wrap it in. Speaking of wrapping, you can decide once with wrapping. All of your gifts are wrapped in brown or white craft paper. You only do gift bags, no paper. You always do a card. You never do a card. There are lots of ways you can limit your choices and therefore your stress by deciding once when it comes to gifts.

Okay, the final thing I want us to talk about is how to remember to get the gift before it's too late. That's a stressful part of the gift-giving too is the remembering. You see someone's birthday is coming up, you have to choose the thing and then get the thing and then wrap the thing and then figure out how you're going to get the thing to the person. So many things! A Lazy Genius principle we can bring into this is batching.

Batching is doing one task all at once instead of many times over a longer period of time. This might not work for everyone, but a way you could batch your gifts is to look at your calendar once a month, maybe at the end of the month, and see what gift-giving situations are coming up. It's your dad's birthday, it's teacher appreciation week, there's a baby shower in a couple of weekends, and it's Mother's Day. Think about what you're going to do for all of those things. Maybe you already know what some of those gifts will be or at least there are very limited options from your list of Decide Once gifts. You can batch making that list of what you need, you can set a time later in the weekend to batch shop for all of those gifts, and you can wrap or package them up at the same time too. If we were to bring The Magic Question into this which is another Lazy Genius principle - what can I do now to make life easier later? - you can answer that with "not being surprised by needing a gift." Do whatever you again, maybe using batching, to make that happen however you need it to.

Now in terms of remember what you want to buy, there are a couple of ways. First, you really want to record the things you notice as you pay attention to your people. When that friend gets excited about a new lotion she's now obsessed with, you want to have a place to write that down so you'll remember it for later. You can have a little gift notebook, you can use your Notes app or voice memo app on your phone, you can write it in a bullet journal or planner, or you can do what I do and use Trello. Trello is both a website and an app that I use for a ton of things. I use Trello for my reading, for planning podcast episodes, for my Instagram editorial calendar, for planning projects, and for keeping track of gifts. I have cards for people in my life, and I try and keep track of as many of those things that I mentioned earlier in the episode as I can. I won't remember or log every single thing that makes my people happy or plays into their rainy day dreams or is perfectly connected to how they live, but I don't have to have everything. Just knowing a couple of things is so helpful. But the point? Don't depend on your memory. If you want to give meaningful gifts that make your person feel seen *and* not get overly stressed out in

the process, writing down gift ideas as you think of them and having a place for them is so important. That's another Lazy Genius principle: put everything in its place. Have a single place for gift ideas, no matter what it is, and always put them there so you'll always know where to go.

For remember, a second point is to give yourself margin to search for the gift. Our tendency is just put "buy a gift for Mom" on our to-do list but think of it only as a choice to make rather than something that will require time to find. If you don't know what gift to buy for Mom and you don't make that its own task, you'll be stressed out because you'll be down to the wire trying to find something in a random Target aisle. Maybe even the tiny shift of saying "decide on a gift for Mom" as opposed to "buy a gift for Mom" could help you see it differently and give that task the margin it needs. And again, the more you track ideas or things types of things that make your people happy, the easier it will be to find a gift without searching the entire Internet.

My brother-in-law Chris loves beer and also has his pilot's license so he loves old planes and loves to fly. A few years ago, I knew I wanted to get him something beer related, so I got on a website, probably uncommongoods.com or something fun like that, and searched "beer." There were lots of great ideas, but then I saw a set of beer glasses that were made from the glass of old planes. I mean. Come on. I was so excited because it was meaningful, it spoke to what makes Chris happy and what he enjoys doing, and I was done. Simply narrowing down the search to beer helped make the search so much easier. The more you do that, which is made possible by recording the happies of your people somewhere, the more fun you'll have buying gifts.

There are so many other things we could talk about - where to buy, if you have a decide once gift closet or not, if you don't want to give actual physical gifts but give experiences instead and what that looks like... the possibilities on this topic are endless. But I think that you will be so well served by 1) removing the pressure of the perfect gift every time, 2) building in margin to actually find gifts in a way that fits your life, and 3) making the decision easy by deciding once on how you choose what to get certain people.

Again, we'll be able to have all kinds of ideas on Instagram this week, so follow me @thelazygenius and look for that post to share your ideas and also get so many more new ones if you need them.

Okay, before we go, let's celebrate our Lazy Genius of the Week! It's Brittany Jenkins @justbbritt, and she posted a photo of herself holding my book, and it might be my favorite photo that includes my book of all time. She's a digital media specialist, but she could also be a model because of how beautiful she looks sitting on her couch in emerald green leisureware, and I'm just weirdly obsessed with it. But she says in her post about reading the book "The weekends are always busy because parenting doesn't stop, but I'm learning to make sure I take a little time for myself and this book is on my self-care list." First, I'm so honored any time any of you spend your free time reading my book. I know that free time, especially when you're a parent, is at a premium, so I'm just so honored and humbled when you spend it with the Lazy Genius Way. But also I love that Brittany's takeaway was so simple. Just take some time. Like

the principle says, Schedule Rest. It's a reminder of those small choices that build up to make a life we're really wanting to live. So thank you, Brittany, for reading and sharing that beautiful photo that I need to probably chill out about, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, friends, that's it for today! Thank you for listening, and 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!