

#234 - 10 Rules for Holiday Gift Giving

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 234 - 10 Rules for Holiday Gift Giving. You might be done with your holiday shopping already, and I think that's great because you likely did it because getting it done early matters to you. Even if you are done though, I think some of these rules can still add some lightness and help to the next couple of months.

Let's just jump in, shall we?

Rule number one: Name what matters. Obviously. I will never stop reminding you of this because this is the most important thing. What matters to you about your gift-giving? What matters most about the money you spend, the energy you spend, the time you can invest, the wrapping, who you get gifts for at all. And here's what's tricky: we can't assume that what has mattered before will matter now. What matters to us changes all the time, but we don't take the time to name that and then get in the weeds in some way. So name what matters to you about your holiday gift giving.

I was in a Lazy Genius virtual gathering recently, and a woman shared that since all of their kids are grown, she and her siblings decided this isn't the year for gifts. Because of the stress of things not arriving in time because of the supply chain craziness, they're just not doing gifts this year.

And "this year" is important here. Just because you choose something this year doesn't mean you have to forever. Did I share this example yet? I can't remember. But a few weeks ago, a friend of mine was talking about hanging up Christmas lights on his house and how he's gone so elaborate the last two years and felt like he needed to do that again even though he really didn't want to. And even though he's a very smart person and wasn't saying this outright, there was an underlying message in his words that implied that if he didn't do lights this year that he was choosing to never do lights again. And that's not how this works. You can change your mind. You should change your mind. You're making choices based on what is best right now, on what matters right now. To assume that what matters will always stay exactly the same is an approach that will drive you crazy. So name what matters about your gift giving this year.

Rule number two: There is no perfect gift. This is just a reminder, y'all. There is no perfect gift. One of the reasons gift-giving can feel overwhelming and full of pressure is because we're putting pressure on ourselves to get every single person the most amazing gift they've ever had. That's not a thing. You can be thoughtful without the person weeping in a puddle or bursting out in grateful song. You can get a gift that someone values without it being the gift they list when asked what's their favorite gift ever. There is no perfect gift. Stop searching for it. There comes a point of diminishing returns where the time you spend trying to find this illusive item saps so much of your energy, and you have very little left for all the other important things during this

season. So just go ahead and tell yourself now - there is no perfect gift. There are gifts that you love to give and hopefully the person will love receiving, but perfect is not on our rubric.

Rule number three: Batch only what matters. Batching is one of the 13 Lazy Genius principles in my book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, and it's a concept we're all familiar with. Rather than doing a task once and then waiting until you need to do it again, you do a batch of the same task. You're grouping something together that you might not normally. For example, gathering up all of your dirty dishes and then loading them in the dishwasher all at once is batching rather than loading the dishes as they're dirtied but then having to do dishwasher Tetris because not everything fits now that you have a bunch of dishes. Some people batch birthday cards. They buy all the cards they need for family and friends all at once, address them all at once, and then just grab the card when it's time for that person's birthday. There are so many ways you can batch stuff, and when it comes to gift-giving, there are even more. You can batch your shopping by only buying from one or two places all at once. Or by hunkering down on the couch with your computer and not getting up again until everything you need is ordered. You can batch your shopping by picking a specific day and spending every minute of it getting all of your shopping done. You can batch wrapping where you wrap all of your gifts at once. You can batch Christmas cards by addressing and mailing them all at once. There are a lot of ways you can batch your holiday gifts, but I want to encourage you to only batch what matters. Only batch if it helps. If you like the discovery process of finding gifts (which we'll get to in a second), shopping in one fell swoop probably isn't going to be fulfilling because that's not what matters to you.

I love to wrap gifts a few at a time over weeks and leave them under the tree throughout December. My sister likes that too but because she has two tiny humans who want to open a gift the minute they see it, she has to batch-wrap her gifts and put them under the tree on Christmas Eve. That's what matters to her in this season of life, so batching it is. I used to do that, but now I don't have to. I like the slow build of Christmas, that matters to me, and I live in a season to support that better than I used to when my kids were younger. So I don't need to batch wrap my gifts because I like doing it a little at a time. Now a way I can make that easier is by physically batching all of my gift-wrapping stuff in one place. I can have a bin with all the ribbons and scissors and tape and tags and a Sharpie to write on the tags so that I have everything I need when I do sit down to wrap. But the point? Batch, but only batch what matters to you this year.

Rule number four: Shop when it's best for you. Recently, someone whose name I don't remember - I'm so sorry! - messaged me after she used *The Holiday Docket* to plan out her holiday season, and she said that in going through that process of naming what mattered to her, she realized that she had been living by the invisible rule that you're not supposed to think about Christmas until December. But then she was scrambling to order the family pajamas she loves to get and gift-buying was stressful and Christmas always came so quickly. But when she realized that it's actually really helpful for her to slowly choose gifts and do it in October, it changed her energy around the holidays and made it so much more pleasant. Don't live by invisible rules that don't support what matters.

There is a lot of comedic but sometimes shaming talk around not getting to Christmas early. And I get it. I like to enjoy fall and Thanksgiving before being bombarded with Christmas stuff. And at the same, thinking about and planning some things for your gifts before December could be really beneficial for you. It doesn't mean you're ignoring where you are or that you've been sucked into the cultural vortex of a materialistic Christmas. It just means you're getting some things done early so you can enjoy Christmas when it actually comes. And that's really great. So shop when you need to shop. If it's early, if it's last minute, or somewhere in between, do what matters to you.

One other point I'd love to here is to know *how* you like to find gifts for people. You might be a list-maker where you have your list of folks to buy for and then you look for gifts specifically for them in the few weeks leading up to Christmas or Hannukah or whatever you're celebrating. You're like a heat-seeking missile that's focused only on gifts when it's time to shop for gifts. Or you could be a discovery person. You could be the person that sees something at an antique store in July and you know it would be such a great gift for your sister or mom or friend or whatever, and you buy it then. You kind of always have your radar up when something reminds you of someone you love. So if you do love to shop that way and that matters to you, it's likely that waiting to do that discovery until December will be stressful. If you're a discovery person, name when it's good for you to start shopping, and honestly it could be all year round. I'm kind of that way. If I see something that reminds me of someone I care about, I get that thing. I bought my sister's birthday present three months before her birthday because I saw something I knew she loved and just got it. I do that with a lot of people, and I love shopping that way. If you don't or that doesn't matter in this season, don't do it that way. But knowing if you're a discoverer helps because usually that kind of person needs a longer runway than just December.

Rule number five: Value doesn't have to require money. My sister, Hannah, and I had a great conversation about this on our secret monthly podcast for Patreon supporters, and we talked about all kinds of things related to gift-giving. She brought up how she had felt bad for awhile about the gifts she gives because of a tight budget. And that kept her from really enjoying the process of choosing gifts for people she loved because she was equating value with money. You can give a valuable gift that does not cost much money. I think you intellectually know this, but I want to remind you in case you need the reminder. If you're feeling bummed out entering another gift-giving season where you have maybe ten or twenty dollars to spend on your dearest people, especially when a gift guide I once saw in a magazine gave me the perfect gift for my mail carrier and it was \$35?, remember that value doesn't require money.

We'll be right back...

Rule number six which is very related to rule number five: Splurges don't have to be expensive. When we think splurge, we think excess which can be true, but excess doesn't have to be expensive. One of my favorite books is *Joyful* by Ingrid Fetell Lee where she breaks down the mechanics of what makes people experience joy. It's a scientific approach to manufacturing joy, and it's fascinating and works. One of the things that gives people joy is abundance. And in this

context, abundance doesn't mean financial abundance or materialistic success. It's more like repetition or a lot of something. Ingrid writes this: "It took me a little while to understand why confetti, polka dots, and stripes have such an outsize effect." The reason is deceptively simple: small things repeated many times create a burst of joy much bigger than each individual piece could." And that makes sense, doesn't it? If you wear a black raincoat versus a rainbow polka dot raincoat, your sense of joy will likely be different. I'm a pretty neutral classic person when it comes to my clothes, and I can sometimes sacrifice my joy for minimalism and simplicity. But things that are repeated and abundant bring a lot of joy.

So how does this apply to giving gifts? A splurge can be thought of as something you don't usually get for yourself. That splurge can be expensive and grand, like a day at the spa. But a splurge can also be every chocolate snack at a Trader Joe's. And that is abundant repetition and therefore brings joy but doesn't cost hundreds of dollars. I once gave a family friend on her 9th birthday like six or seven packs of Trader Joe's soft mango because she always ate it when she came to our house and loved it. So why not get her a lot of it? And the smile on her face was priceless. One, it was abundant. There was a lot of it. Two, and this is another principle of joy from Ingrid's book, it was a surprise. Every gift is a surprise I expect, but getting a bag of mango is definitely not as common. And she loved it. So when you're thinking about splurges, especially if you're on a limited budget, think about abundance. A bunch of different pens to test for your pen-loving friend. Six different kinds of dips or salsas for someone who loves trying new foods. Three boxes of your co-worker's favorite canned drink. Doing more than one - adding abundance in some way - brings a lot of joy and feels like a splurge because of that abundance and that excess. So splurges don't have to be expensive.

Rule number seven: Pay attention to what makes people happy. This is why I love buying gifts for people. I'm a pretty connected person and really thrive in one-on-one relationships. I remember things people say about what they love. I pay attention, to possibly an intense level, to what makes someone happy. Then when it's time to get a gift for that person, I look for something that I know makes them happy. My husband Kaz is one of the hardest people to buy for because he's so content and likes everything and never wants for anything. It's annoying. But the man loves queso. Adores queso. And weirdly doesn't often get it for himself or he hoards it a bit and stretches it when he does. So a fun gift to get Kaz is a bunch of queso because it makes him so happy.

Pay attention to what makes your people happy. Just ask yourself that question - what has made so-and-so happy lately? Is it music? Get them a premium subscription to Spotify or surreptitiously find out if they have a record player and get them an artist they love on vinyl or get them concert tickets or a new set of bluetooth headphones. What would enhance their happiness in an area they already love?

Rule number eight: Tracking is helpful, but do it your way. First, here's why tracking is helpful. I think a lot of us forget what we bought, right? There's a decent chance you have a lot of people to think about during the holidays, and unless you shop in a batch in one day or whatever, you might forget if you ended up getting that truck for your nephew or if you should get this stuffed

giraffe when you're at the store. So I think it's probably important to track your gifts somewhere, but do it your way.

Do you need to track what ideas you have? Are you tracking what you're specifically shopping for? Do you need to track what you already bought or already did buy a few months ago when you found something someone loved? You don't have to elaborately track everything, but it's highly likely your gift-giving journey will be smoother if you're keeping track of what matters most or what impacts your energy the most. So don't track everything but consider what would be helpful to track.

Rule number nine: Make it fun. Depending on your personality or family situation or money situation, gift-giving might feel discouraging. You wish you had more to spend. You wish you didn't have weird family relationships that are highlighted by the fact that you have no idea what to get your sister-in-law because y'all aren't close. You live alone or don't have many siblings or your parents are no longer in your life and so you don't want to track gifts because there's so little to track that it makes you sad. That's a real thing. There's a lot about the holiday season that can be discouraging.

Also gift-giving can be a drag because it's so stressful. There might not be big emotional weights connected to gifts, but logistically? You're very weighed down because there's so much to choose and buy and wrap and mail. So make it fun. That is rule number nine. What will make your process fun?

Only you can answer that, but here are some thoughts. Listen to a great playlist in your earbuds when you're shopping at a store. Write your gift list on a piece of paper that makes you laugh or brings you joy. I've never done this, but I might this year. I just had the silly idea to print out a picture of my beloved James McAvoy and write my shopping list on that paper so when I'm at the store and look at what's next on my list, the ridiculousness of having a pixelated printer image of James McAvoy will make me laugh every time.

Watch a great movie while you wrap gifts. Get a happy little polka dot notebook to write down all your gift ideas. P.S. I have a gift notebook where I write down ideas for all the people every year and then write down what I ended up getting. Then when it's time to shop the next year, I know what I got people the years before because y'all I don't remember things that already happened. It's a problem. But even in sharing this point with you all, I'm realizing that my gift notebook is just a black moleskin. I would love a happier, more fun little notebook! I'm going to get one! Because it's important to make things like this fun.

And rule number ten: What you do this year isn't what you'll do forever. I mentioned this already, but it's an important point to end on. What you decide to do this year - who you give gifts to, if you give gifts at all, how much you spend, all the things - what you decide to do this year isn't your lot for the rest of your life. It's just for this year. Choose what matters this year. Then next year, ask the question again. What you do this year isn't what you'll do forever.

Okay! Those are the ten rules for holiday gift giving. If you'd like some help with holiday gifts, Team LG has put together a fantastic list of ideas for you. Leah, our creative director, put together the whole thing to look beautiful, but every single person on Team LG, including the men in our lives, selected their favorite gifts to give. These are all tried and true gifts that we've all had success with, so you can check that out in the link in the show notes. Also in that gift guide is a list of a few small businesses and websites that are great places to go looking for gifts, so if you're still in the market for stuff, check out that gift guide!

And before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! We haven't had one of these in a couple of weeks, so it's fun to get back into it. This week, it's Chelsea Riccio. I'm sorry, Chelsea, if I'm saying your last name incorrectly! Here's what Chelsea wrote: "I loved getting notes in my lunchbox as a kid & I wanted to start the tradition with my 1st grader. I bought a 2021 day by day calendar (in August so it was on sale!) and use the back of the page to write the note! Art on the front, note on the back! Thanks for all you do!"

I love this idea, Chelsea! And I used to love those tear-off yearly calendars when I was younger. Those things were so cool and felt so grownup. Thanks for sharing this lovely idea, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, that's it for today. Remember that the Lazy Genius gift guide is linked in the show notes, and you get to decide what matters to you about this next gift-giving season. I hope this episode has helped. Thanks so much 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!