

292 - How to Enjoy the Last Two Weeks of the Year

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 292 - how to enjoy the last two weeks of the year. We have done so much work these last few weeks of figuring out how to manage our expectations and our holiday home and our time and our tasks and all the things. I hope you've felt some comfort and help in learning to manage it, but we don't want to just manage all the time. We want to enjoy our life, and this time of year is one where you might actually have margin to do that. So that's what this episode is. We're going to move from management to enjoyment and do it the Lazy Genius way.

So what is different about the last two weeks of the year, the week before and the week after Christmas? Why is the energy there consistently different from the rest of the month of December? You intuitively know this, but maybe you haven't named it yet. The first two weeks of December are very preparatory. Things are beginning. Decorations, gift-buying, planning of calendars, committing to certain things and saying no to other things, finally getting dates for the kid's Christmas play, lots of pieces and parts. Even though it feels like a lot, I think that putting preparatory energy into those first two weeks of December really pays off later. That's why we've been doing all of these preparation episodes the last little while so you'll feel more ready and on top of the things that matter to you. But then ultimately the second half of December is when things slow down from a management preparation standpoint, and now you get to enjoy the fruits of your labor. You watch the movies. You wrap the gifts while watching the movies. You go to the parties and see the town square Christmas tree and see the Christmas musical you got tickets for a month ago and visit your parents. You do the things you've been getting ready for.

And as a reminder before you start to feel guilty for how you've handled the holidays so far, when I say "the things you've been getting ready for," that phrase is so relative. What *you* need to get ready is different from what someone else needs. What you're getting ready for and how many of those things there are is different than what someone else is getting ready for. Don't assume that when I talk about preparation that you did it wrong because you're not doing a lot or you're feeling behind or you think everyone needs to just calm down because it's just another holiday. There are a lot of feelings this time of year obviously because of life stage, family relationships, your living situation, budget, your location, your interest in the holiday, even faith-related struggles... there are a lot of things happening right now inside all of us, so as we move forward in this episode and talk about what we've prepared for and what we're now enjoying, it's normal and good for everyone listening to have different versions of that. If you don't care about Christmas cookies or movies or caroling or lights or Christmas itself, you can feel that way just like the person who's a real-life Buddy the Elf can feel their way. We can all kindly exist with whatever matters to us.

Okay, so we've likely been in a season of preparation. How can we move to a season of enjoyment these last two weeks?

A wonderfully small place to start is naming where we are, naming that we're about to transition into a time of enjoyment. If you're listening on December 12th when this episode comes out, next Monday the 19th begins the enjoyment phase of the holidays. December 19th isn't the rule. It's just the beginning of the week before Christmas, and that's when the energy starts to shift. So if you're listening in real time, you can say to yourself that you have about one more week of preparation left. Naming that alone can be helpful in preparing you for enjoyment. You can decide what tasks or decisions still need to get done before you can fully rest and enjoy the last two weeks of the year.

So what are those things? What is still on your list? On your mind?

If you listened to Episode 288 - How to Make the Rest of 2022 Easier and you did your homework from that episode, you can look back at those notes and see where you are. What did you name as most important? What did you mark as now, soon, later, and never mind? Are you still thinking about the things you said never mind to? Are the things that could happen later still undone and later has become now? Basically, you might already have some words around what you still need to do.

And before I say more about finishing up management, let's pause real quick. This isn't a binary thing. It's not that you can't enjoy the holidays before December 19th and literally everything has to be done after December 19th. That's not what I mean. It's simply that the pie chart shifts. Probably. The majority of you will have more management the first half of December and will desire and hopefully experience more enjoyment the second half. And that's what we're aiming for here. A shift. A shift to a new majority energy shareholder. You're enjoying things more than you're managing them. Sometimes there are seasons, like the first two weeks of December, where there is a heavier dose of management, and that's okay. In fact, I think that's good because it allows for more enjoyment later. So that feels important to say. It's not one or the other. It's both but in different ratios. Okay, un-pause.

So for this upcoming week, name what still needs to be done so that you're in a better position to enjoy more things next week and the week after. How do you know what you still need to do? If you didn't do the homework from Episode 288, you can still go back and listen and do it now, or you can just do a Brain Dump. I love a Brain Dump so much. Simply write down everything on your mind. Don't categorize it. Don't analyze it. Don't overthink it. If it's on your mind, write it down. Getting it out of your head and on paper is a worthwhile exercise in and of itself.

Either right after you make that list or a little while later while you give the list and yourself a few minutes to breathe, you're going to categorize. You're going to batch it and group things together. That's a Lazy Genius principle, right? Batch it. Which some of you hear something else every time I say it, and that will always bring me so much joy.

By grouping your tasks together in any number of ways, you'll be able to see what you need to do more clearly and be more efficient in getting it done. Here are a couple of ways you could categorize your list. You could categorize based on time. I already mentioned this, but you can

make four new lists from your Brain Dump: now, soon, later, and never mind. You go through your Brain Dump and put everything you wrote down in one of those categories. Write them all out again together so you only see what you need right now. If this is helpful, sometimes I'll give parameters to what I mean by soon and later, like soon is tomorrow and the next day. Later is this weekend. Something like that. You might not need that, but you can make those words mean whatever you need them to mean. Ultimately, you can categorize your list by time or urgency.

Another way you can categorize your list is by whatever the thing is. Errands, emails, at-home tasks, tasks you can delegate, things that require a conversation with someone else first. This type of categorization is especially helpful if you have a long Brain Dump list and are overwhelmed by the sheer number of things. You look at it and are like I will never get all this done! You're just seeing the amount, not the items. And categorizing by time first doesn't really work because the size of the tasks doesn't go down; you're just making a lateral move to cataloging your urgency and that can be overwhelming and not helpful. So instead, you can break your list down by the type of task. I love doing this because it lets the air out of the urgency. When you break your big list apart into whatever type of task it is, you realize that a huge chunk of your tasks are all things you need to know from your mom or dad or sibling or partner before you can do anything else. So really you could mark off a lot of things with just one phone call or conversation. Or maybe you have a lot of errands to run, but you realize that you could knock them all out in one morning and therefore knock out half of your Brain Dump list that just a second ago felt super overwhelming and make it feel more manageable.

One final way to categorize is by how it fits into your Lazy Genius way of life, specifically you can ask "do I want to make this easier, make it matter, or let it go?" If it matters, schedule it or put it into an existing routine. Put it in its place. If you want to make it easier, use principles like Decide Once or Start Small or Let People In. If you're letting it go, use the principle Be Kind to Yourself because letting things go is often pretty tough to do. There are so many Lazy Genius principles at work here, right? I love it when that happens.

So in summary, take a minute to see what else you need to do to get prepared for the last two weeks of the year. You can use your Episode 288 homework or do a Brain Dump, and you can categorize your remaining to-do list by when something needs to get done, by what the thing is, or by how it fits into your Lazy Genius life. Or you can categorize your Brain Dump however works for you! The point is to get everything out of your head, and then make it smaller by putting it with similar things so you can manage more effectively.

And I mentioned this in last week's episode, but if you're just really struggling being a responsible grownup right now with big "I don't wanna" energy, try episode 238 - How to Get Stuff Done When You Don't Feel Like It. A huge help when you're just over it.

We'll be right back...

So we've talked about getting stuff done so we can ease out of management and into enjoyment. How does that work?

I think the best answer is an opening ceremony. Now before we get into what that could look like, if you're new here, here's the idea. I love opening and closing ceremonies as a concept because they simply help us open and close on purpose. Now, do they have to be huge? No. Do they have to include other people? No. Can they simply be a thoughtful moment where you name that you're moving from one thing to the next? Yes. So don't let the word ceremony mislead you. Sure, things can be very exciting and elaborate and ceremonial however you want to define that, but really it's about marking the time, marking the moment on purpose.

So I think that a great way to begin this time of enjoyment, whether it starts for you on December 19th or the 23rd or whatever is to thoughtfully mark it. You can do that in your own head, you can make a fun dinner on that night and say we're on Christmas Enjoyment Time now! You can have a whole day where everybody in your house just does what they want and stays in pjs or whatever to mark the beginning of a cozy season of enjoyment. The particulars don't matter, but I think actively, intentionally naming that you are entering into this time really matters.

Back to the pie chart majority energy shareholder thing. Does this mean there's nothing left to do or that you no longer have anything to be responsible for or that you won't get stressed over something or that you won't run an errand for another two weeks? Very likely no. Remember it's just the shift. We're just shifting into having more time enjoyment than time management.

Another way you can enjoy the last two weeks of the year is to choose something enjoyable every day. You can do it ahead of time or just know that every single day there will be something deeply enjoyable and seasonal for everybody. It can be a movie, a day visiting family, whatever it is. But by having every day intentionally hold something enjoyable and naming it either ahead of time or on that day, you're setting the stage for enjoyment. And I don't mean it has to be something super planned. It can be "we're enjoying today by having Christmas movies on literally all day and putting out a puzzle and counting popcorn and hot chocolate as a primary food group." Rest is deeply enjoyable and also deeply important, so don't get tricked into thinking enjoyment has to be terribly active or social.

If you'd like a practical way of approaching this, you could feel in whatever enjoyable things are already planned for the next two weeks. On empty days, check in with your Holiday Docket which a lot of you filled out a few months ago, and see what mattered about this season that you haven't done yet. What have your people said they want to do this season that you haven't done yet? Put those enjoyable things on the calendar or days you might not have anything yet. You're essentially creating space for what matters.

And really, isn't that all this is? The last two weeks are in many ways beautifully ripe space to do what matters. I'm not assuming everyone has those two weeks off of work or school or whatever either. A lot of you might have two or three days off in total over those two weeks, especially

because the usual holidays of Christmas and New Years Day are both on Sunday. So hear me. I'm not picturing all of you lounging about your house for two weeks with nothing to do. But even when you get home from work or finish caring for the family member that still needs care over the holidays or tending to your chronic illness or whatever it is, you can still enjoy the holidays intentionally every day over those two weeks. You can feel the Christmas spirit in whatever way you like until Christmas or past it if you follow the liturgical calendar of the 13 days of Christmas. You can engage in that quiet, reflective, sparkly time between Christmas and New Years where you're tending to your house or thinking about your future or just enjoying some quiet. Even if you do one tiny thing every day of those two weeks, you are enjoying the season on purpose. You are being present and engaged and aware of this unique season and your place in it.

It's a really interesting thing to me because obviously people call this the most magical time of the year, the most wonderful time of the year. And in many ways I agree. I love December with my whole heart. I've never actually ranked my months, but I think it's probably hands down my favorite month. It definitely has my favorite weekend in it which is our town's Christmas celebration weekend, but it also has Christmas which I love, my church's music service which I love, and my birthday! So it's a fun month. I love it. I find it to be very magical. But obviously there are a lot of folks who don't see it as magical for many reasons - family, consumerism, expectations, financial and social stress, just dealing with other people. It's easy to put ourselves on two very opposing sides of the holiday spectrum, much like we do the Lazy and Genius spectrum. It can be very all or nothing. It's almost as though if you are frustrated by certain parts of this time of year, you're betraying yourself for enjoying any part of it at all. Or if you love it but you feel stressed about certain parts, you feel like you're pretending or playing a part. I don't think that's an overly present problem for a lot of you, but I do think it has merit to say.

Maybe the reason this season is hard for some people is that we're expected to exist on one side or the other. We're supposed to be Tiny Tim or Scrooge. We have this expectation that it either has to be all completely magical, and if it's not then none of it is worth it. I don't think any of you actively believe that, but it's easy to absorb those messages all around us, especially when we might be under extra stress because of the extra things happening. So just remember that your enjoyment of these last two weeks of the year don't have to be linear or expected or without nuance. Just enjoy what you'd like as you can and with as much intention as you're able.

A couple of other ways to approach enjoyment as we close up. First, remember your holiday vibe. We have an episode on creating your holiday vibe, and really it's about leaning into music and smells and the feeling you have in your home both pre and post Christmas. And honestly those vibes might be different from each other, and that's good to name, too. But play music and turn on the fireplace show on Netflix if you don't have a fireplace and read under a cozy blanket and take a walk around your neighborhood at night and see the lights. So much holiday magic and enjoyment is in those subtle quiet things like light and music.

Another thing to consider is some house rules for your two weeks, especially if you have kids who are off school and you are kind of home a lot. The week before Christmas will probably make more sense than the week after because the week after feels like this long expanse of spaciousness. But tiny kids don't always respond well to spaciousness. At the risk of sounding like a terrible parent, there have many times during that week after Christmas or even the random stormy Saturday in any month there is where Kaz or I will say to the other, "This would be a great day to not have kids." And I know in some ways that sounds terrible, but really it's just acknowledging that the way we as adults might spent spacious time is different for tiny kids. So if you have tiny kids, it's a season, and you might need some better parameters during those two weeks. Which is why I mention House Rules. Think now while we're still in preparation mode about what limits your kids might want to stretch over the break. The likely culprits are snacks and screen time. Maybe even baths if you're my kids. They love when they get to skip washing themselves. So you could think now about how you'd like to approach those hot button parenting topics now, share the House Rule with your people, and then roll with it. It's like my friend Elizabeth said a couple of years ago, "don't give yourself something extra to manage." I shared her words in an Instagram post ages ago, and it really resonated with me and a lot of y'all. Those words came up when we were visiting her family in the mountains, and she put all the drinks that were acceptable in a cooler and just told everybody to get whatever they wanted when they wanted. She said she'd rather do that and make the decision one time and put the drinks in their place than constantly be asked if it was okay to have a soda or whatever. She didn't want to give herself more to manage. That is the key here with House Rules. What can you delegate out to a House Rule or some other Lazy Genius principle so you have less to manage with your kids and more room to enjoy the time?

And finally, please pay attention to the difference between the week before Christmas and the week after. They tend to have pretty different energies, and if the post-Christmas energy sneaks up on you, you're going to pull out those big black trash bags and frighten your family. Pay attention now to what you think you might need. Prepare for that. Maybe you will do some kind of decluttering in a room the week after Christmas. Maybe when you pulled out your holiday decorations, you realized how cluttered that closet is where you store stuff and you're going to clean it out before putting decorations back.

Also quick side note. This is a tip from The Nester who was on the podcast a few weeks ago talking about seasonal decorating. She will likely share this on Instagram soon if she hasn't already, but this tip of hers is genius. Look at your holiday decorations you did not use this year. Why did you not use them? It's very likely you don't actually need them anymore. So her rule is to not repack decorations you didn't use. Now sure there are instances where you're having a different Christmas than years past or something and so you will use those things another year. But for a lot of us, that's not really the case. If we didn't love it enough to use it this year, we probably won't love it enough later. So go ahead and get rid of it so you only pack up what you love for next time.

Okay, this was a way longer episode than I expected, but I hope it helps. The biggest thing is to notice that we are in a time of transition from management to enjoyment, and the more we

intentionally make that transition based on what matters to each of us individually, the better off we'll be and the more we will actually enjoy our holiday.

Before we go, let's celebrate our Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Kristine Heatwole. Kristine writes this: "Hi, Kendra! I've been listening to your podcast since 2019, and I love how the Lazy Genius principles can apply to almost anything, even cookies. I love homemade cookies. But I'm just not in a cookie season of life. With five kids from 9 months to 13 years, I just don't have the time or energy to bake a batch of cookies: shaping of dough and setting of timers over and over. I've decided that when I make a dessert, it needs to be in a 9x13 pan. It goes in and it comes out once. No waiting for a batch to finish so I can put in the next batch. I've been collecting a small repertoire of recipes like brownies and cookie bars that are easily baked in a pan. It's nice having limited options and not feeling the pressure to make something that I don't want to give my time or energy to right now." Ah! Kristine, this is so good, and I'm so glad I got this during this season. There are seasons of life where certain things we love just don't work as well. But that doesn't always mean you have to give it up completely. Kristine has shown us a beautiful use of Decide Once and Live in the Season, two crowd-favorite Lazy Genius principles. She decided that her season of life wasn't made for cookies and decided once that everything gets baked in one pan. And she still gets the pleasure of baking and enjoying and sharing but without the more stressful parts. I love the simplicity of this, and I hope for y'all listening that it gives you some freedom in an area, maybe centered around the holidays, where the season isn't as suited for one particular activity or choice. And also that you don't always have to completely let it go. You can adjust and still enjoy things. I love this so much. Thanks for sharing this with us, Kristine, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, y'all, that's it for today. Thank you 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.