

345 - How to Approach Holiday Downtime

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 345 - how to approach holiday downtime. This episode is releasing on Monday, December 18th, and for some of you listening, you're close to entering a longer breaker from regular life. The winter holidays are upon us, Christmas is one week away, New Years two weeks, and there is a lot of activity but also a lot of downtime, sometimes more than we realize. Today, let's talk about how to approach it.

Before we jump in, I want to acknowledge those of you who have jobs or responsibilities that don't offer holiday downtime. You might get one or two days off over the next couple of weeks, and that is it. All of these people talking about their long holiday breaks and that week between Christmas and New Years when nothing is happening might make you feel a little down. You might feel frustrated at the assumption that everyone has that time off, or maybe you have work off but not life off. You might have some kind of responsibility or obligation that does not leave you much space for this holiday downtime problem. I just want to say that I see you and want to acknowledge how challenging this time of year is for you for reasons that people don't often speak about. So maybe this episode isn't for you and you can skip to the next thing, but I do want to say that I see those of you who are still working for the rest of the month.

For those of you who aren't working as much, who have some time off, or who have kids home for a couple of weeks, I want to talk to you. While I don't know what your holiday calendar looks like, chances are that this next week is nuts. This is the week you're seeing family or traveling or going to Christmas performances or finishing up shopping or wrapping gifts. There's a lot of buzz this week, a lot going on. Then once we get to next week, to that week between Christmas and New Years, it's a different vibe. Some of you might follow the liturgical calendar where there are actually twelve days of Christmas, and the first day starts on Christmas. Your celebrations might land on different dates, but perhaps the rhythms are similar.

Either way, a lot of you listening are about to enter a short season where time is unusual. Some of it is packed, some of it is wildly empty, and depending on the day or the person, sometimes one or both is not ideal. So let's talk about how you can approach holiday downtime.

As a group, all of y'all listening tend to have some tricky feelings around free time. You might remember Episode 320: How to Feel Good About Free Time. We don't often feel good about free time, especially time that is free to just us. When we are alone as individuals and we have the opportunity to essentially do whatever we want, we can feel all kinds of feelings about it. If that's you, check out that episode. But for many of you, holiday downtime is different. It's not really free time per se, and it's definitely not just for you. Free time feels like time that's a break in the action. It's a relief amidst the regularity of responsibility. But during the end of December, we have more downtime. We have longer stretches where there's nothing to do, nowhere to go,

and sometimes that's amazing. Other times it's challenging. So this episode is focusing more on holiday downtime, on these longer stretches where we have breaks.

The first thing I want us to acknowledge is the purpose. What is the purpose of your time the next week or two? Again, the week before Christmas might have a different purpose than after. But what is the purpose? Is it to rest? To play? To be with friends and family as much as possible? To get a handle on a project that doesn't get your attention during regular life?

Going back to the idea of rest, now might be a good time to revisit Episode 258: The Seven Kinds of Rest. Sometimes we use the word "rest" as a blanket description for anything that isn't responsible, but there are different kinds of rest. Do you need to relax, reset, recharge? Do you need a break? Do you need to rest before, during, or after something is busy? For this time of year, the after rings true.

So as you think about the purpose of your holiday downtime, consider what matters most. What's the purpose of this time? You might want to answer that question for yourself individually and maybe as a family, too, if you live with other folks.

The second thing I want you to consider is your perspective. How do you view holiday downtime? What do you imagine? If I was just me and had no other obligations or people to tend to or other feelings to consider, I would spend the week between Christmas and New Years in the coziest clothes reading, eating, and napping in whatever order suited me, and then I'd hang out with people at night. It would be cozy in my house. Gentle music would play. The fireplace show would be on TV. The sweatpants would be plentiful. But I do not live a life where I have no other obligations or people to tend to or feelings to consider. I have a husband and three kids. This Christmas, I have a mom who is moving houses. There are meals to plan and make. There are extroverted children in my house who hate movies and stillness and reading and just want to go out and play. Everyone in my house still gets up early. It's very sad. But if I don't consider my perspective, if I only sit with this imagined idea of my holiday downtime, when I want to get cozy on the couch and a kid wants to play or whines because there are no friends to hang out with or doesn't respect the fact that I'm trying to read here, I can get frustrated and even resentful. The reality of my situation is messing with my perspective, but really my perspective was a little idealized in the first place.

Or maybe you're on the other side of that scenario. Maybe you're imagining that the downtime is magical for everybody, and you have expectations within you that everyone is going to feel the same way about the time and even some of the things you've planned for that time. But then they don't, and it all gets wonky. Make sense? So think about how you're seeing this upcoming holiday downtime, and see if you can kindly adjust your perspective and therefore your expectations to a place that better embraces everyone.

The third thing to consider is a plan. Do you have one for the week after Christmas especially? Now that you've thought about the purpose and your perspective, is there anything you want to put in its place to help make that holiday downtime valuable for you? It might be putting some

feelers out to your kids' friends' adults and saying, "Hey, who's in town next week? My kid will almost certainly want to hang out with friends, so holler if you'll be in town and up for that." That's using the Magic Question - what can I do now to make social kids easier later? You ask their adults now if anyone is around. That way you don't feel weird doing the Day After Christmas Text where you feel like you're bothering people because maybe they're traveling or with family. Or you already know who's out of town so your kid doesn't get her hopes up when you text the friend that is currently in Minnesota and not down the street in North Carolina. What are some things you can plan now? And by plan, I really just mean loosely put in place. You don't have to set a specific date for kids to hang out. In that scenario, you're just gathering information.

You could plan a couple of movies that everyone likes to watch. Or maybe there's a restaurant your whole crew likes to go to, and you can know that at some point during that holiday downtime week, you'll go to that restaurant. You might gather up a puzzle or some games and put those under the tree like we learned from a Lazy Genius of the Week now that all the Christmas gifts are gone. Just consider some things you can do now to loosely create a plan for some ways to fill that holiday downtime if you need them. No need to lock anything in. You're basically just making an activity queue.

As part of your plan, you might also want to think about some holiday House Rules. Episode 212 is called A Guide to Summer House Rules which might offer some good structure even though the season is different. During holiday downtime, a House Rule might be we have a quiet hour every day. Or maybe there's a house rule around movie nights: one kid picks the movie, another picks the snack, and another picks their seat first or something. Then you rotate. Just consider if there are little fights or frustrations that seem to creep up during holiday downtime that you could apply a House Rule to to help make that thing a little easier.

Okay, so we've established a purpose, we've thought about our perspective, we've made a very very loose plan, and now I want to give you some permission. Holiday downtime doesn't have to be magical and sparkly. It doesn't have to be the most amazing time where the entire family is connected and laughing and like a holiday card. It doesn't have to be a time where everyone is gladly playing games or doing puzzles or charmingly covered in flour making cookies. It could be that everyone is doing their own thing on a screen, and you're reading. It could be that you or your kid watches college football literally all day. Keep your decorations up as long or as short as you want. Don't feel bad that the day after Christmas is a clean slate or that it's January 10th and you're still happily turning the Christmas lights on every morning. You can rest, play, do projects, be productive, be alone, be with people, sleep in, let a toddler play Dots on your phone in your bed with you so you can keep your eyes closed a little longer. I want you to embrace the permission to make your holiday downtime something that works for you. It doesn't always look the way we want, the way others do it, or even the same day to day. Just be kind to yourself and receive your own permission to enjoy holiday downtime in the way you and your people need to.

I have a feeling that for us, we'll have a mixed bag of really lovely holiday moments, a good bit of whining about kids being bored, a little frustration from me as I remind them of the things they just received, and not all at once because it'll happen with different kids at different times. We'll decorate sugar cookies, but the kids will tap out before things are close to done, at least if past years are any indication. We'll watch football and eventually take the tree down and maybe go see a movie that all three kids will feel dragged to. Who knows. But regardless, that time is important because it's where we are. Where you are during these next two weeks, wherever it is and whatever you're doing, matters. You don't need to overplan, overanalyze, or over stress. Be where you are, but if there are small things now you can think about or put in place to help make the next tiny little season easier, I hope this episode helps.

And that's how to approach holiday downtime.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week. This week it's SJP122. SJP writes: "Lazy Genius holiday tip! Our family loves confetti on NYE 🎉 Instead of throwing it out, I keep our used Christmas wrapping paper and cut that up for homemade confetti. Bonus tip, make the pieces big so they're easier to clean up at the end of the night - no vacuum required!" What a fun idea this is! If you like confetti or your kids like confetti, you might not want to spend money on it, and you can use all the paper that is about to go through your house. But I also love the idea of the pieces being big enough to clean up easily. Big confetti is still confetti, and easy cleanup is always a win. Thanks for this idea, SJP, 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!