

350 - Starting Fresh When You Can't Start Over

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 350 - Starting Fresh When You Can't Start Over. We've spent the last few episodes trying to be Lazy Geniuses about January. This time of year is when potential and hustle and goals and new year new you energy is at an all-time high. None of that energy is inherently bad; sometimes it's helpful, even necessary. But that is true only if you are living like a Lazy Genius, if you're naming what matters to you and making decisions from that. We'll get into that more later in the episode. As a reminder, we've already talked about finding what brings you joy, I talked to James Clear, the author of *Atomic Habits*, about how habits don't actually have to demand perfection like we sometimes think they do, and a couple of weeks ago, I shared some small changes I've made in my own life that led to big differences. Today, we're going to stay with that slightly subversive January energy and talk about how to start fresh when you can't start over.

Before we get into the episode though, today is a really exciting day. In order for the excitement to make sense though, let me give you the tiniest background on the mechanics of podcasting. When you listen to a podcast and you hear ads, that means that the show is very likely with a podcast network. A podcast network is the middleman between shows and brands. I don't talk to anyone directly at, say, Ritual or KFC, but my network does! A network knows the brands and knows the podcasts. Well, we've been with a network for three years, and it's been a great arrangement. However, we have now switched networks which is why we didn't have a new episode last week, because of the mechanics of the switching, and today is the first episode on that new network. Now, why on earth would this matter? Frankly, that is not interesting information. But in this case it really is. We are now the first new show on the Office Ladies Network. You guys. Y'all very likely know the Office Ladies, Jenna Fischer and Angela Kinsey. They are real life best friends who played Pam and Angela on the comfort show of all comfort shows, *The Office*. Well, they are delightful, kind, smart women, and they started their own podcast network and asked me if The Lazy Genius Podcast would join their network and be the first new show aside from their own. You guys. Do you see why this is exciting? It's kind of like we work in an office with the Office Ladies! Jenna and Angela are kind of like my co-workers, and it is the coolest thing. So on their show this week, you will actually find a clip of this episode so their listeners get to know me. Next week on February 5th, I'm going to be a guest on The Office Ladies Podcast where we talk about who in *The Office* is the most lazy and the most genius, and then on February 12th, Jenna and Angela will be on this show where we will have Office Hours with the Office Ladies and I Lazy Genius two of their personal problems in real time. You guys. Can you even handle it?! It's the most fun thing, and I kind of love that it's starting today on a round episode number like 350. So so fun.

So welcome to any new listeners from The Office Ladies Podcast! We are genuinely so happy to have you. This entire show is about helping you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't, and you get to decide what that is. Our goal is to have

actionable help while also offering a ton of permission to do what makes sense for your season of life. This is not a place where you will be made to feel less than, talked down to, pushed to hustle more, or follow a certain list of things to do. We just want to be people who feel like ourselves no matter what's happening around us, all while still getting our stuff done. We try and strike a balance between system and soul, and I hope you feel at home here.

So fun news has been declared, and now it's time to jump into episode 350: starting fresh when you can't start over.

First, I want us to talk about why we want to start over at all. Right around now, you might have a resolution or a goal or something you decided to do in the beginning of January that you haven't done in the way you hoped to. There are so many examples of this, right? The most common in January, especially for women, are unfortunately things related to our bodies, particularly exercise plans and meal plans. Frankly, I don't want to use those examples because I'm a little tired of them being the main headlines of what women are and should be doing. Your body is good, and you don't have to change its shape or size to matter here. So since there's often a lot of baggage around January choices that involve our bodies, today let's use examples that don't. You might have set some kind of goal around a hobby, making time for something you love or want to learn. You might have set out to read a few minutes more a day, to wake up or go to bed at a certain time to promote better sleep. You might have made a small choice in the area of how you tend to your home or maybe how you're teaching your kids about tending to a home. I know for me in January, I'm like oh wait, my kids are now one year closer to living independently on their own. There is still a lot they need to know, and I might set up some kind of new system for this new year to help my kids learn how to be functioning, responsible citizens who understand basic hygiene. We all have things, and the list is literally endless. But so often, we get to the end of January and you have a desire to start over. To clear the decks and try again. To, holy moly, get another planner because the one we've used for a month doesn't work. Don't worry. My hand is raised. I do this, too. But why? Why is that? Why do we love the idea of starting over? Why do we keep thinking we have to?

I think it has to do with our perspective on failure. I mean womp womp. That's a fun way to begin, but I think it's still true. When we reset or restart, it's a new game. We didn't fail or lose whatever goal or game we were playing. We're just starting over. It's like a mulligan in golf or cards or something. We're like, "Hold on, I didn't do that right, let me do that again!" And we just keep calling mulligans over and over again, cleaning the slate, restarting the metaphorical game, not wanting to count our quote unquote failures as part of the actual game. We don't want to fail. We don't want to come up short on what we said we would do. We want to have one long unbroken line of success day after day after day. Pals, that is such a tough expectation to live under.

If you are listening, you likely have a body full of hormones that do all kinds of different things week to week. If you are listening, you likely have a full-time job of some sort, possibly more than one. You might go to work at an office with a boss, and you also might have the full-time job of running the invisible ship that is your home and the people who live in it. Frankly, it is an

impossible ask of women specifically to have one long unbroken line of anything. Our lives have to be so responsive to our own bodies, to the needs of the people we live with, and even to the cultural expectations of how we manage both. It's a lot. We carry a lot. And while we're carrying all of that, we're also carrying this idea that we're supposed to get up at the same time every single day, make time somehow for developing hobbies every day, we exercise and shower and cook meals and do laundry and finish work projects and lead sales teams and organize carpools and do all of these things in one singular rhythm or flow every day, and when that flow is disrupted, when that rhythm hits the wall of a sick kid or an early period or childcare that falls through or a project deadline that gets pushed up, it's our fault. When those things happen, it's our fault. Or at least it's our system's fault. Maybe what we built to keep all of this going is wrong or flawed somehow, and we need a do-over. And this is all while also having some type of new year new you goal to become a better version of ourselves. With all of that, it makes sense that we'd want to call a mulligan. "I've almost got it! I didn't know I'd get Covid or that it would rain so much that my basement flooded or that there would be a blizzard that kept me from meeting my daily step goals. I didn't know! Let me start over and try again!"

You are not a robot. You are not and should not be expected to create this masterful plan of a life and then set it and forget it. If you expect that, you will keep calling mulligans and trying to start over. Let me just get one more shot. It didn't work this time, but I know it will the next time.

Y'all, that's just not a reasonable expectation of a life well lived. That's not what a life well lived is. I think if you're listening to this show and especially if you have been for awhile, you realize that we have a different goal here. It's not to become some imagined future version of ourselves. It's not to hustle and be awesome all the time. It's to be a person, to be integrated and ourselves and at peace whenever possible no matter what is happening around us. Our circumstances do matter, our rhythms and systems and goals we have for our lives do matter, but if we make them matter first, if we let the circumstances and systems and goals run the show, we will always be chasing that one long unbroken line. Instead, let's change how we see those circumstances and systems and goals. How do they fit into a life well lived? How do we avoid this energy of cleaning the slate and starting over, again and again and again?

Because most of the time, you can't start over. Not really. Sometimes you come close with a move or a new job or a new relationship, but other parts of your life are still going. Restarting one thing doesn't restart everything, even though we act like it does. So what do we do when we can't start over? I say we start fresh, and we do that, not by changing what we do but changing how we think about what we do. Let's get into it.

We need a fresh take on January energy, y'all. We need some new words when we feel the compulsion to start over. I shared some of these words last January, and I need the reminder just as much as anyone, so we're going to look at them again.

The first word that will help us start fresh instead of starting over is continue. Instead of beginning, continue. Everything you do builds on what has come before. You are living a beautiful, sometimes messy life, and it's a continuation. January is not a restart. It is not necessarily a new beginning. Energetically, there are some helpful things about the feelings of January, of the literal turning of the calendar, but that does not require you to begin everything anew. In fact, you can't. That takes so much work. Instead, if you feel the pressure to begin something that does not truly align with what matters to you, simply continue. Continue doing what you're doing, knowing that you're not failing anything by not starting over, by not beginning again just because it's January. Continue. You're really smart. You're probably already doing a lot of great things that don't need a reset. They don't even need tinkering with. Just continue. In the places that you know what matters and you know what works most of the time, just continue.

The second word is tend. Don't fix. Tend. Don't get me wrong. There are things that need fixing. They need to be taken apart and put back together. But usually that's stuff like toilets or an IKEA closet that wasn't installed correctly. We fix things. We can't exactly fix life. But we sure do try, don't we? We come at it like a certain part of our life is a problem to solve and fix when really most of our lives need nurturing and tending. They need compassion alongside correcting. And when we compassionately correct one small thing at a time, that is tending. That's looking at what's there with kind eyes, not going too fast, and taking it one step at a time. That is so much more sustainable than continuously taking apart and putting back together all the systems and processes and goals of your life. So think about where you want to fix and if instead you need to tend.

The third word is small. I love small things. I love small choices, small differences, small steps, small problems. That's why one of the 13 Lazy Genius principles is to start small. The smaller something is, the easier it is to solve, to tend to, to manage, to live with, to incorporate into your life on a regular basis. But January energy is big energy. It's big swings, big systems, big changes, and that's why we can't stick with anything. We're starting with big problems, and big problems require big solutions. I don't know about you, but I don't have room for big solutions right now. Life is so beautifully unwieldy, and inviting big systems or big goals or big solutions into that is almost impossible. And when those big things don't work, I want to start over. I want to call a mulligan and get to try again so that what came before wasn't a failure. Instead, let's start small. Really really embarrassingly small.

I told a story in my first book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, about how I started small with yoga. I have terrible joints as well as a lot of frantic mental energy. I call myself a caffeinated squirrel, and consequently being a caffeinated squirrel with hips and knees made of glass, yoga is really good for me. It's good for my joints and my brain. Years and years ago, I knew this and tried to incorporate more yoga into my life, but I couldn't make it work. I couldn't get it to stick, and I got so frustrated by that because it mattered to me! It mattered to me for reasons that felt right and good and aligned with tending to my body. But I just couldn't seem to get into a rhythm at all. And do you know what I did? I kept restarting. I kept restarting the commitment counter to zero over and over again, and that was also defeating.

So I tried a new approach. I made doing yoga embarrassingly small. I said I would do one down dog a day. One down dog a day. If you're unfamiliar with yoga, that's basically bending over once a day and sticking your butt in the air. Some might argue that's not even yoga, but it was so small that I did it. I did this thing that mattered to me, and because it was so small and doable, over time I built on it. And hear me: when I say over time, I don't mean like days later. I'm pretty sure I did one down dog a day for weeks and weeks without much difference. Some of those days, I'd do a full sun salutation which still only takes like a single minute, but I didn't change what the daily habit was of one down dog for literal months. But guess what? I did yoga every day. It was so small that it became part of my life and my routine in a way that worked, in a way that supported what mattered. So your third word is small. Even embarrassingly small. Nothing is too small. Don't start over. Start fresh by starting small.

The fourth word is reflection. January has a lot of evaluation in it, right? We evaluate what worked, what didn't, and then we make an intelligent assessment of where we are in life and move forward with new goals and plans accordingly. Instead, reflect. Look back kindly without an agenda to make things better or different or start over. Just reflect. Remember, we're continuing, we're tending, we're starting small, and we can simply reflect on what has been. That doesn't mean you might not make decisions based on that reflection. In fact, Emily P. Freeman, my favorite voice in the area of discernment and decision making, has taught us that decisions are always better when we include reflection. It's unwise even to move forward before looking back. So sure, you'll move forward. But by changing the language from evaluation to reflection, your posture towards yourself and those decisions you might make is kinder. And since one of the 13 Lazy Genius principles is to be kind to yourself, we love anything that helps us do that better.

And the fifth and final word is seasonal instead of annual. This one is a bit more practical, and we all love what's practical. There is nothing wrong with starting January with something you want more of 2024. Frankly, I have several of those things. I shared some of them in my last newsletter. It's fun to think of a single year as a container for specific things we hope for. That's lovely. But I also want to remind us of seasons, too. Another Lazy Genius principle is to live in your season, and January seems to erase seasonal thinking from our brains. What matters to you in January might not matter as much in July, and yet we build all of these systems for an entire year without thinking of the seasons of that year or the seasons of our lives. So as you move away from this understandable compulsion to start over, consider starting fresh by looking at your upcoming season instead. What season of life are you in? Are you looking at the upcoming winter and what that means for your work, your energy, and your rhythms? Are you in a season of trying to figure out where you're going to live because you have a move looming? Are you in a season of being single after a recent breakup? Are you in a season of your kid getting his permit and now he's driving all the time to get in his hours and you did not realize the emotional impact this would have on you? Starting over pays little attention to your particular season, but starting fresh can. Start fresh by acknowledging where you are, by acknowledging the season you're in and what that means for your decisions, your rhythms, and your attitude towards yourself. Think seasonally, not just annually.

So to recap our five words: continue, don't just begin. Tend, don't just fix. Start small, don't just build it big. Reflect, don't just evaluate. And think seasonally, not just annually. And all of this is under the umbrella of what really matters to you. You're not a robot. You don't live a set it and forget it life. You can't schedule or plan or systemize your way into a checklist existence in service of an invisible future you. Live today. Live as you are today. You don't have to keep starting over. It's not realistic, and it's definitely not compassionate. We want to be people who are kind to ourselves and to others, who want to do excellent work where it matters and relax and accept where it doesn't. We want to live, as Brene Brown says, wholeheartedly no matter what our circumstances are, and we want to live fulfilling lives according to what matters to us instead of according to expectations of us. I hope this episode helps you do that in the coming weeks.

Before we go, as always let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week, it's Ana Josephs! Ana writes this about a tremendous way to use the Magic Question. As a reminder, the Magic Question is one of the 13 Lazy Genius principles and it is "what can I do now to make something easier later?" Ana uses what she calls a Next Time note on her phone. Here's what Ana says: "Something I started a few years ago is a note in my phone labeled "Next Time", and it's somewhat of a "hits and misses" for general life.

I started it around the holidays to write in real time what I loved or didn't and what worked or didn't, bullet point style.

This turned into making a note for almost every month.

"May is nuts. Plan a vacation for the first week of June."

"Start trick-or-treating earlier next year, maybe around 5:30."

And a favorite, "Do any outdoor activities like hiking before mid-July. No one wants to go then."

All of these seem like such simple things I would love to think I can remember a year later, but I don't! This list has come in handy SO many times and really helps me approach the next year with more confidence and calm."

I love this idea, Ana! I do something similar in my Google calendar, and it's so helpful! I do love the idea of using a Notes app note though! You can keep it all in one place organized by month, and then when it's time to plan something in that month, check the note first to see if there's something you already Magic Questioned for yourself. Great idea, Ana, thanks for sharing, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!