

357 - Your Planning Playbook for Spring 2024

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 357 - Your Planning Playbook for Spring 2024. One of the most foundational principles of managing your time like a Lazy Genius is to think about your season. There are multiple factors that impact our energy, our schedules, and our priorities. There's also the literal season of the year! Right now here in the US, we are approaching spring. It was 76 degrees last week what on earth. So depending on your life stage, if you have kids, what part of the country you live in, and if you live in a different country and even hemisphere, even the season of the year will also impact how you plan. This is why we love one of our thirteen Lazy Genius principles: live in your season. It matters so much.

But when it comes to boots on the ground, tangible time management, how do we plan within a certain season? I'd like us to start doing that more here on the podcast. We already tend to have an episode like this in the fall when the onslaught of fall holidays and busyness begins, and those episodes are always our highest downloaded episodes. We all need tangible help with planning. That's why I wrote a book called *The PLAN*. But since it doesn't come out until October and we need to plan some stuff now, let's plan our spring together. Our hope with Team LG is to have a quarterly episode like this, a planning playbook, so that you don't have to start from scratch in your planning. Instead, we can walk through a process together! The more you do it, the easier and more helpful it becomes.

Before we get into the process itself, I want to explain what this is *not*. There's a difference between being at the start of a new season and anticipating its stressors and being in the middle of a busy season and being overwhelmed. I tend to think that where we are now in March of 2024, we're in that first space. We're in the "a new season is starting!" space, and we're looking ahead at all that's to come, and if you have kids or are in the school system in any capacity, you know that May is trial by fire holy moly. So you might not be super overwhelmed with your daily life today, but you're anticipating that feeling to come soon.

When you're in the middle of a busy season, the process is different than when you're in the beginning. Today, we're talking about the beginning, so if you are in the middle and stressed out, I encourage you to listen to Episode 339 - How to Make the Rest of 2023 Easier. It released in early November which is for sure smack dab in the middle of the busiest time of the year for a lot of people, so even though the calendar is different, the approach is the same if you need it. It's a more detailed approach to your tasks, helping you work out your actual to do list. It's more of a game plan than a playbook. In sports, a playbook is a collection of plays or choices that will support your own strategy and ways you want to win. You don't use every play in your playbook during every game, but you've narrowed down what works for your team in your season, and you choose your plays from that playbook. That's what we're doing here. We're making a playbook, gathering information and making a few choices that will positively impact our season. Man, I love it when I get to use sports analogies it's my favorite.

The reason we want to create a playbook before we create a gameplan is because you need to understand the season you're in before it starts. If we wait until we're feeling crazy, it's much harder to get things done and feel like a person. Looking at a new season on a regular basis is so impactful to helping you stay afloat instead of feeling you're trying not to drown. We're making a playbook. Kind of like a planning dinner queue. Narrow down what matters, what you're dealing with, what is significant about this season, and then when it comes time to actually plan a day or a week or a project in this season, you'll be far better equipped to do it.

Now this probably isn't the first time you've tried to get ahead in planning an upcoming season. This is a group that tends to enjoy planning. Not everybody, but a lot of you do. You're probably quite good at taking what is ahead of you and putting it in its place. But here's the problem. When we try and plan an upcoming season, we almost always just look ahead. All we do is plan what's coming. To be fair, that's what the productivity industry has taught us, so it's not your fault for approaching it that way. But without naming where you are right now and without naming what you've already learned from past seasons, you are cutting yourself off at the knees in planning for the future. Your future plans are deeply impacted by where you've already been and where you are today. It's like how sports teams watch tape of previous games. They're learning from what they already did, not just looking ahead at what game is next. More sports! Okay, I'll stop, but the analogy works so well!

Alright, here's the process. The gist of our planning playbook for spring 2024 is three parts: look around, look back, look ahead. Stand still where you are, and then look around, look back, look ahead. The industry has us on a hamster wheel, you guys. We're always in motion, always moving, even if we're not progressing. There's an inherent compulsion to keep going and going and going and thinking and thinking and thinking and planning and planning and planning, and we need to give ourselves more permission to just stand still and look around. Look around at where we are, look back at where we've been, and then look ahead at where we're going. Doesn't that sound so much better than trying to manufacture an invisible future? I think it does.

So our first step is to look around.

How can you put words to that? Well, ask yourself where are you right now? What season are you in? Spring 2024, we know that. What about your job? If you're an accountant, holy moly I know what season you're in. If tax season is in your spring season, you need to name that and plan accordingly. Otherwise, you're going to try and fit time and energy and life management approaches in a season where they don't fit. What works for you in August won't work in March and April. That's true of many people in lots of jobs and seasons of life. That's why we pay attention to the season. That's why we look around.

Where are you right now? Where are you today? What is going on in your life this upcoming season, whether tangible or emotional, that will impact your energy, your time, and therefore decisions you'll make about them? Look around.

You can do this a couple of ways. You can jot down a quick list of what comes to mind. These are the big hitters, the things you're dealing with right now. These are the things you anticipate dealing with in another month or two. Just jot down what comes to mind. You might flip through your calendar. Notice how full or empty it is. Notice the weather. Notice your health, both physical and mental. Notice the health and energy and schedules of anyone you live with. Invite a partner into this process, please, so you're not doing it all yourself. Look around. Where are you? What season are you in? Name where you are.

I'll share my own season a bit to help put some meat on these bones. For me this spring of 2024, I'm traveling a lot. I spent a lot of the winter traveling, and I have one more trip on my own plus spring break with my family before we hit the gauntlet of May. I also have a good number of evening meetings and things going on where I'm away from home. That impacts my own energy and workflow, but it also impacts my parenting. I'm in a season of parenting where my youngest, Annie, really loves being with me, and she has a deep well of missing me from these past couple of months of being gone more often than I normally am. That means a component of this spring is prioritizing filling her bucket. It's being home for bedtimes and having a House Rule which is a Lazy Genius principle where I don't miss two bedtimes in a row if at all avoidable. She matters to me. Remember, when you're a Lazy Genius, naming what matters in the season you're in is the whole thing. She always matters just like all my kids and my husband and my people do, but in this season of her life, at her age, with how much she's still a little girl who just wants her mom around, I want to prioritize that for her.

I'm also in a parenting season this spring where my oldest kid is about to go to high school which is nuts, and he might get a job this summer. Also nuts. He's going to be fifteen in six months heaven help me. That means that as I look around, part of our season as a family is to prepare him a little bit more for the upcoming responsibilities he's going to have. So he and I have been working more specifically on how he organizes his homework assignments, instilling it now so that he'll find it easier on his own later (there's the Magic Question!) when his workload gets heavier. He's been getting more responsibilities around the house. That's part of what I see when I look around at my current season.

I'm also in a season where my work is on the quieter side, especially compared to what it will be in late summer early fall when *The PLAN* comes out. Book launch seasons are nuts. That means while it's quieter in my work now, as I look around and have plenty to do but also some time to do a bit more if necessary, I might benefit from getting ahead on the podcast, organizing a couple of book launch projects so that I have a starting point when things are busy, that kind of thing. I can Magic Question my book launch by doing some things now to make it easier later.

So this first step of looking around is all about naming where you are. See where you are, see what season you're in, name the things that are impacting your time and energy, and acknowledge them. Don't ignore them. We're not taught outright to ignore them, but seasonal thinking is not common in most time management processes. And it should be. It's how life

works. It's how plants work. It's how animals and birds and the sun work. We can't create a life we love and then click a button, assuming that everything that works now will work later. It very likely will not, and that is because our seasons change. Let those changes be a guide, not an annoyance. Look around.

Step two is to look back. What can you learn from last spring or even from the last three months that might impact how you live your life this season? Two of my favorite people who teach about reflection in different ways are Emily P. Freeman and Laura Tremaine. Emily is an expert in discernment and decision-making and has taught me just in my friendship with her how important reflection is for making decisions in the future. I'm a person who just barrels ahead without looking back. That is a sad way to be, and Emily has helped me see a better way. She also just released a book called *How to Walk Into a Room*, and if the earlier idea of looking around is a bit foreign to you, if you're struggling to see where you are, Emily's book starts out with helping you name what rooms you're in, physically and metaphorically. The book is about discerning whether or not you still belong in spaces and how to know whether to stay or walk away, and the beginning work in that is to name where you are. She uses the analogy of rooms, and it's so helpful if you'd like to explore that idea on a deeper level.

Laura Tremaine is also excellent at reflection, primarily through the art of journaling and accessing our own stories to help us move through our futures in a more wholehearted, holistic way. She has a course called *Journaling for Grownups* that is so thoughtful and practical and expansive to those of us who think that journaling takes forever or has to look a certain way.

So if you're looking for a deep dive into reflection and the positivity it can bring to you, those two women are my favorites. I should not be your favorite. By no means. I'm honestly terrible at reflection. I have a couple of practices that I do that help me, and I'll share those in a minute, but I wanted to plug those women first so you're not woefully left with so little here from me. I'm a planner, not a reflector.

Still, planning is most effective when we look back, to a startling degree. So these are some questions you can ask at the start of a new season to help you think about the old one, and you can use any of them that you like. I'll share my favorite when we get to it.

The first question is what do I remember from last season? And I would encourage you to think about last spring if you can since there are likely a lot of similarities between your life then and now. What do you remember? What do your people remember? What sticks out? The point of this question is to help you notice what holds space in your brain. If it holds space even a year later, that means it was something significant, whether logistically, emotionally, positively, or negatively. It's pretty simple, and there are no rules for the answer. What do you remember?

Next is what has changed since last season? What's different now? Maybe more specifically, what mattered then that doesn't matter as much anymore? Our decisions should support what matters to us, so take the time to name what matters in this season now before you're potentially overwhelmed in the middle of it. What has changed? It could be schedules, it could

be your health, or it could be a person you used to do life with moved away or someone you love and are learning to do life with moved closer. Relationships impact our seasons, too. So what has changed since last season?

And then what worked well last season and what didn't? It could be domestic decisions, dinner approaches, or even Sunday afternoon walks that were just good for your soul. What worked last season and what didn't? This one is my favorite just because of how practical it is. When you name what worked and what didn't, you can more easily narrow down what might work now. Not always because seasons change, but having a baseline of reasonable success in how you live and plan is super helpful.

If you don't know the answers to those questions because you're like me and just don't remember old seasons very well, here are a couple of ways to look back. Open your camera roll, and scroll through photos from last season. See what memories it triggers. Look back at your calendar. What was going on? When you see your appointments and trips and such, what does that bring to mind? And if you use some kind of reflection journal like a one line a day journal or Emily's Next Right Thing Guided Journal or anything else, look back at last spring and notice what you were saying then. Were you stressed? Were you grateful? Were you home a lot, away a lot, connecting with certain people in a meaningful way? Did you start grilling dinner early in the season and it was an amazing choice? Using those tools - your camera roll, your calendar, and any reflection journals - will almost certainly help you answer those reflective questions. Now, if you have zero answers, no worries. You gave it a shot, and you can still look ahead. But if you do have zero answers, perhaps it would be helpful to add a small reflective practice now, like a one line a day journal, that might support future reflection for you.

So you've looked around and named where you are, and you've looked back and answered some questions. Now look ahead! I have some questions here, too, but the most impactful one for me is the question: what am I already dreading? I think so much of our seasonal planning energy can feel like dread over one general thing. I do have a general sense of dread around May, just because of all the school activities, transitioning to summer and figuring out a new rhythm and all that, but by naming that now, by naming what already has me stressed, I can use this early part of the season to Magic Question it. I can make my problems smaller. I can create a project or two for some of the bigger transitional things like figuring out camps and stuff for my kids. We have an episode on how to plan a project, and I can do that. I can make some of these things that have multiple decisions and steps into a project so it's not one looming thing that sits on my to-do list. Remember, projects don't go on your to-do list. You'll just keep moving them to the next list because they're too big to check off. Make your projects smaller. So I find such comfort and help in naming what already has me stressed even just thinking about it. If I'm stressed out thinking about it, I'm definitely going to be stressed doing it. I'd rather make a couple of small choices now to help stave that off in the future. So what are you already stressed out about?

Some other questions to ask as you look ahead are what are you excited about? Let's add some fun and sparkle into our days, pals! That's so important. Similarly, what are three things

you hope to do in this upcoming season? Name them so they might actually happen. Write them down. Put them in your playbook so they're available when you plan.

This one is sneaky good. Hat tip to Myquillyn Smith, aka the Nester, for teaching us to think with our seasonal senses. What sounds, smells, sights, textures, flavors do you love about the spring? Are you a flowers person? How can you bring more flowers into your life? Do you love birds in your yard like I do? Get a new bird feeder! Do you love fresh produce? Consider how you can make a trip to the farmers market a more regular part of your routine. Plan with your senses.

And the final question for looking ahead is what needs to be made smaller? What is coming up in your spring of 2024 that feels too big right now? Just write down what needs to be made smaller. You don't even have to make it smaller right this second. Just note that it needs to happen and maybe even pop a time on the calendar to do it.

This episode is not called your *plan* for spring 2024. It's your planning playbook. It's a collection of the tools and ingredients you need to actually plan. As you move into a new month, a new week, a new day, you can glance at the answers to all these questions and notice how they impact your time management. It's like a cheat sheet for what matters, what to Lazy Genius, and what to spend your time on. It's your playbook for how to move through this season because you've already done the thinking work. You've already looked around, looked back, and looked ahead. Now you have what you need to make plans and respond to life as it comes. It's like a dinner queue but for planning, and I'm excited about doing these more often. This is the work, y'all. This is the good, meaningful, personal, versatile work of planning like a Lazy Genius. Answer questions like these. Consider their answers when you're making spring plans. Tuck whatever piece of paper into your actual planner so you can see what matters. Be kind as you adjust to whatever the season brings you. Feel like yourself as you do it. I'm excited about doing this more often, and I genuinely hope it helps.

And that is your planning playbook for spring 2024.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Sarah Rosenthal. Sarah writes this. "My husband and I are NOT good at remembering to go on date nights. Life, kids, scheduling, it just never happens. He planned a date night last week and it was lovely. While we were out, we talked about why we don't remember to keep up with date nights, and he said "We need to find a consistent time to plan these so we can keep them going. What if we plan them WHILE we are on date night. Then we will remember, we won't be distracted by kids etc, and we will actually get on a roll and keep it up." I was FLOORED! It might be the best idea he's ever had. We have our next date scheduled in our shared calendar app to go to a movie we both want to see. I almost can't believe it! Thanks for everything you're doing, Sarah." Sarah, this is such a great idea! Also your husband is co-Lazy Genius of the Week. Planning the next thing while you're doing the thing is one of the sneakiest great ideas ever. Do this with playdates, girls night, professional meetings, family hangs... it's such a great way to keep

connection going without forgetting. Thanks for sharing, Sarah, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

This episode is hosted by me, Kendra Adachi, and executive produced by Kendra Adachi, Jenna Fischer, and Angela Kinsey. The Lazy Genius Podcast is enthusiastically part of the Office Ladies Network. Special thanks to Leah Jarvis for weekly production.

Thanks, y'all, 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!