

359 - 7 Routines That Work for Me

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 359 - 7 Routines That Work for Me.

I usually don't make a habit of sharing specific things that I do because never in a million years would I want to indicate that what I do is best, is prescriptive, or will work for everyone. That is simply not true. It's not true for me and not true for other time management experts out there. Just because something works for someone else, especially if that someone has a platform, doesn't mean it will work for you. And at the same time, it's often helpful to hear what other people do because a) it might actually work for you because there are so many similarities in priorities and season of life or b) the way someone else does something will give you an idea of how you can adjust that thing to work in your own life. So while this episode is definitely seven routines that work for me, the reason I'm sharing them is not so that you will do them because they'll work. It's more to see how I arrived at certain routines, what priorities they support, and maybe they'll inspire a small change or adjustment in your own routine that could make your life work better for you and the season you're in.

Before getting into the specific seven routines, let's lay a touch of groundwork. Set the Right Routine is one of the 13 Lazy Genius principles laid out in my first book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, and the idea here is not necessarily to create an order of tasks that you repeat forever. That's not really the purpose of a routine. The purpose, to me, of a routine is to create an onramp to a place that matters to you. A morning routine isn't about doing seven things each morning. Instead, it's about what those seven things or two things create in you, in your environment that lead you to a place that matters. A morning routine is to ease into your day. You don't need to do ten things to do that. In fact, on busy mornings or a morning where a partner or kid or dog or neighbor does something out of the ordinary or even chaotic that impacts your own morning, you don't have to be so consumed with not being able to do your morning routine and failing at this thing. Instead, you can know that the purpose of your morning routine is to ease into your day and can choose maybe one small thing that will support that, despite unexpected chaos. That's why I love Lazy Genius routines. They're less about the things you do and more about where you're wanting to go, what you're wanting to experience, how you're wanting to feel. So that's some background on routines, at least as far as I describe them.

The other important aspect to Lazy Genius routines is that your routines should support what matters to you. If you see that someone else has a morning kitchen routine so that they leave the house or start the day with a kitchen that's clean but a clean kitchen at the start of the day doesn't matter to you, you don't need a morning kitchen routine. If you see that someone else has a daily routine of getting the mail and then pulling weeds that she sees on her way inside so that yard work doesn't get out of control but having a well tended yard doesn't matter to you, you don't need a weed pulling routine. If someone else has a budget and bill paying routine that happens on a specific day with cash envelopes and color coded budget categories but you have

automatic bill-pay and don't budget by category because it's not suited for how you live and therefore doesn't matter to you, you don't need a detailed budget and bill paying routine.

You see what I mean here? Routines are meant to support what matters to us, so not only do you want routines to support what does, you also can ignore routines that support what doesn't. So as I share the seven routines that work for me, I'm also going to share why they work, what they support that matters to me. If the same thing doesn't matter to you, you shouldn't have that routine. We have enough to fit into our days, so remember that not only are my routines not prescriptive, routines themselves need to be rooted in where they lead and how they support what matters, not just the ten tasks you think you should do in a row.

Now, there are many things that matter to me in my life, right? The same is true for you. Some are wildly specific, some are only for a season, and some are lifelong. Sharing specific things that matter doesn't really serve this conversation as much as the broad things do, so to better inform the seven routines you're about to hear, these are the four things that have mattered the most to me for most of my adult life and will matter even more the older I get. Those four things are calm, connection, kindness, and joy. Calm, connection, kindness, and joy. I am a caffeinated squirrel in my head, and I have some sensory issues. My stress is always on the brink of being activated, so a sense of calm in my head and in my environment matters a lot to me.

Connection. Connection matters to me so much. I am an ambivert in that I get energy both from people and from being alone, but it's more than just that. When I connect with people, it helps me make sense of my own self. If you're an Enneagram person, that's often true of people who are in the dependent or responsive stance which are Ones, Twos, and Sixes. It's almost like I can't quite understand myself outside of relationship. I also find deep satisfaction in being connected with my people. Kindness is the third thing on the list that matters to me. I am so obsessed with being kind in all things: kind to myself, to my people, to strangers, to offer kindness to the world at large, to make kind decisions as often as I'm able. Kindness is also fairly selfless if you think about it, and since I am a person who can get wrapped up in my own business, my own judgment of situations and myself, kindness is a healthy way to take me out of my own selfishness. And fourth, joy. Joy matters to me. Not happiness or fun, both of which are great. But bone-deep contented joy. I love experiencing wonder. I love being in a moment and identifying how important it is, how alive it's making me feel, how myself it's making me feel, how small it's making me feel. I want to prioritize the experience of joy no matter what my circumstances are. So the four lifelong things that matter to me are calm, connection, kindness, and joy. Funny enough, all seven of my routines which I will now finally share with you support at least one of those four things.

Okay, let's get into the seven routines that work for me.

The first routine that works for me is my weekly meal planning routine. Every weekend, usually Sunday, I meal plan for the upcoming week. Depending on the season we're in, I might plan for a month, but the most common approach is weekly. We have a dry erase calendar on the

kitchen wall, and that's where our meal plan goes. I have a dinner queue list written on the side, and that's just a list of all the meals that we love or want to try in this current season. If you've been around for awhile, you know that my family eats pretty much the same 20-30 meals on repeat and have for over a decade. I'm okay with that. So on Sunday, I'll first go to my three kids and ask each of them what's one thing they want for dinner that week, and then I'll put each of those meals on the day that makes sense based on what activities we have going on, what the weather is, stuff like that. Then I'll fill in the rest of the days, often according to a loose meal matrix where the same type of meal happens on the same day, and then we're good. Now that continuation of this routine that has made a huge difference and is not as old as the meal planning routine itself is in that moment also playing a grocery delivery order. When I had younger kids, I went to the store. When Covid hit, we started doing grocery pickup. Now that I work a full time job in part time hours and have less flexibility with my time, especially with my oldest kids having a lot of activities that I need to be the transportation for, going to the store every week is not how I want to manage my time. What matters to me? Calm. Calm matters to me. Do you know what's calming and frankly brings me a lot of joy, too? Opening my front door and having my groceries right there. I realize this is not doable for everyone or even feasible depending on where you live, but it is something that supports our family's priorities very well. So the first routine that works for me is meal planning once a week which includes asking my kids what they want which gives me three meals out of the gate, writing those meals down on the calendar where everyone can see them, and ordering groceries for those meals at the same time that I plan. And that routine definitely supports calm.

The second routine that works for me is my morning weekday routine. I've talked about this several times in several places, but our morning routine has been finding its footing for years and we have a great rhythm right now. I live in a two parent household with three kids, and getting the kids out the door in the morning, including breakfast, lunches, and promptings is my responsibility. Kaz and I have a very satisfactory division of labor - you can listen to my division of labor episode if you want, episode 337, and mornings are mine to take care of. I get up either a few minutes earlier than my youngest kid or just wait for her to wait me up at 6:30am because she always will. We go to the kitchen, and I help her get her breakfast if she needs help. While she eats, I unload the dishwasher that ran overnight as it always does, and the lunchboxes are in that dishwasher. I put everything away except those repeated items that we use every single day, particularly for breakfast and lunch and just leave those out. Then I make lunches for the kids. Now, if I have an early meeting or I need to not make all three lunches, I won't. I'll usually tell the kids the night before if that's the case, or I'll just say, "hey, I need you to finish packing your lunch." We have used Planetbox lunchboxes for literally 12 years, and they are bento style. That means the kids can see what "finishing packing your lunch" means because there are empty compartments that need filling. I wake up Sam 20 minutes before he needs to actually be out of bed because I'm happy to be his human snooze button. Ben wakes up on his own, so I don't worry about that. All three kids often leave at different times, particularly Sam since he has three mornings a week with activities before school but that all start at different times with different carpools, carpools that I sometimes have to drive for. So on mornings where I have to drive three fourteen year old boys to chess club at 6:45am, my morning routine is a little different and Annie usually carries the brunt of packing everyone's lunches because she's up

the soonest. And then somewhere in there, I brew a cup of coffee with my Nespresso machine, and my vitamins are in the same container that my coffee pods are so I'm visually reminded to take my vitamins. Once all the kids are out the door, I might shift to getting myself ready, drinking more coffee and reading, heading straight to my office to work. What happens before or after my weekday morning routine will often change, but the time from 6:30-8am usually doesn't. I do the same general things with the same general attitude all five of those mornings. Why? Because calm, connection, and kindness all matter to me. Having time to get everything done without feeling rushed supports calm. Being in the kitchen instead of in the bathroom getting ready supports connection because I'm with my kids. And getting up at the same time as everyone else and not an hour before where I'm a little cranky because I'm still tired helps me be kind to my kids as I get them up. I'm not kinder if I'm alone first. Not anymore, not that they're now old enough to be out of the house every day. So my morning routine works for me because we've been honing it for years and everyone knows what to expect, but it also supports calm, connection, and kindness.

The third routine that works for me is our Saturday morning routine. You might have heard me talk about this one before, but my kids dubbed it Calvin Saturday. A few years ago, one of my boys who was very into reading Calvin and Hobbes at the time asked me if he could watch TV and eat cereal on Saturday mornings like Calvin does. Umm, yeah dude. So the kids have Calvin Saturday. They get up whenever they get up, they get their own breakfast, and they know they can watch their devices until we ring the bell for them to stop. We have an actual bell by the way. And guess what I get to do? Stay in bed, read, go for a walk, do whatever I want to do without having to get up and be responsible for anyone. Same is true for Kaz. It's a delight. That is a routine that absolutely works for us and supports calm and joy. So much joy lying in bed for longer.

The fourth routine that works for me is how I keep track of my memories. I shared this in a recent episode, the last What's Saving My Life, so this one is familiar. Every night right when I get in bed, I write in my one line a day journal and in my connections joy journal. I don't journal beyond that or scrapbook or do much with photos or videos other than doing the one second a day videos when I have videos to add, but having those two simple tasks happen in just a minute or two is all I need. Too much is too much, and for me, this routine is just right. It supports connection in that I remember what was connective that day, it supports calm because I'm not frantically trying to remember something from days and days ago, it supports joy because I literally write down what brought me joy, and it's kind because it's doable. Most memory keeping is not doable for me, and I can get unkind toward myself about it. This tiny daily routine supports all four things.

The fifth routine that works for me is my weekday lunch break. This is one that took some time to accept and was basically required by my therapist. I work from home obviously, and I would often have a scarcity mindset about my work hours. I'm the stay at home parent in many regards even though I'm often working, but my job allows me to respond to my kids if they need something. My husband's does not. That's why I often do not plan anything between 2pm and 6pm on weekdays because who knows how I'll be needed, what homework kids will have, who

needs a ride from a meeting they didn't know about until today. I can't get my work done once my kids are home without question, and I was hoarding my work time a lot because of that desperation. That hoarding made it so I was often more stressed than I needed to be, and I wasn't as productive when I was working because I hadn't rested. Then my therapist was like, "Kendra, you need to take a lunch break." I've shared some of those details over the years, but now I can say without question that my lunch routine on weekdays is can't miss and works wonders for me. It usually starts around 12:30pm and runs until I start getting kids from school after 2pm. I get lunch and a good one. It's either leftovers, something I prepped for my own lunch, or I'll make a quick tasty lunch like The Chickpea Bowl or I'll make that barbecue chicken pickled red cabbage wrap I've mentioned before. I have learned that my lunch needs to be delicious, hearty, a little crunchy, and colorful, and I take the few extra minutes to make that happen, whether on the day or the weekend before or something. So I eat lunch, I usually watch an episode of a show or read while I eat, I take a 17-minute nap, I do a quick reset of the house or prep something for dinner so I'm more available from 2-6pm for the kids, and I do this every single weekday. It is the best thing of all the things. I would be such a sad person without it. Now, does everyone get this? Clearly not. My husband is a middle school counselor, and many days he comes home with his lunch still packed, completely uneaten. Certain jobs do not afford actual lunch breaks, much less lunch breaks in your own home. I recognize deeply how privileged that is, and I'm also deeply grateful for it. It's one of the greatest ways that I refuel every day which makes it less important for me to do other things to refuel later. I actually have energy and connection for the entire afternoon because of that lunch break. So it supports calm because I'm not rushing through my work time to get literally everything done, it supports connection because I will absolutely be more connected to my kids later because of this time now, it supports kindness because it's kind to myself to take care of myself and eat and rest, and it supports joy because it truly does bring me tremendous joy to eat a good meal in a bowl while watching a show. What a gift.

The sixth routine that works for me is that afternoon weekday routine. It's not the same things in the same order, but from 2-6pm, I am almost always ready to love on and support my kids after school. That comes in the form of homework, snacks, inviting other friends over after school, driving carpool, making dinner, playing a game, all the things. I see our afternoon weekday routine less like a to-do list and more like an art basket. Remember in the episode The Lazy Genius Organizes Paper how I shared about that huge basket where we put all of the kids in process or completed art work? We still have that basket by the way, and it works so well because it's one giant holding place for everything. The art doesn't have to be ordered or organized. This is just the basket it goes in. Our afternoon weekday routine is kind of the same. All of our afternoon things just go into the 2-6pm basket. If a kid is emotionally dry after a hard day, I'm not going to make them do homework first thing if they need to rest a bit. It'll happen before dinner, but it doesn't have to happen right now. We have flexibility but also containment because everything happens within a certain time, and I'm available for all of it. It's pretty great. And it supports calm, connection, kindness, and joy. All four, man. I love it.

And the final routine that works for me is my monthly routine of Emily and Kendra Workdays. Emily P. Freeman is an author and a podcaster and my best friend. We've been friends for over

15 years, close to 17 now I think, and we've had to adjust how we see each other as friends often have to. Seasons of life, schedules, and all kinds of things impact where and how often you see someone, and even though Emily and I literally live four blocks apart, we went through a long season where we just didn't see each other regularly. So now we have Emily and Kendra workdays. One Thursday a month, we get together in the morning, we work together at a coffeeshop and talk shop and get ideas from each other and catch on work things while also trying to do actual work, and then we go to lunch after and talk about non-work things. It's blocked off on the calendar with no end, and it has been the best thing. We always know when our next time is, and even though we might see each other between those monthly workdays and often do, knowing we're just a few weeks away from a good time of connection makes all the difference. That routine supports connection and joy.

And those are the 7 routines that work for me. I hope this episode has inspired you to notice your own routines, to name what they support, and to consider if there's something you're already doing that you can adjust to serve your life even better.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Jennifer Petermann. Jennifer's quick tip is this: "Hey Kendra! I'm a teacher and a children's book enthusiast! My new decide once is that for my kids' friends' birthdays, I always gift a book. I also always wrap it in brown craft paper and let my own children (ages 5&6) decorate it!" I love how simple this is, Jennifer. A lot of folks have great Decide Once ideas for gifts. For the last year or so with us, it's been the game Genius Square because we love it so much, but I love this because of the added bonus of wrapping it in brown kraft paper and having the kids decorate it! That's a fantastic idea that also makes it feel more personal. Thanks for sharing, Jennifer, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

A quick note that this Wednesday is the first Wednesday of the month which usually means the Latest Lazy Letter lands in your inbox. However, because we're just coming off of spring break at our house and the Easter weekend holiday for my team, we're pushing that newsletter to next Wednesday, April 10th. If you are not signed up to get the Latest Lazy Letter, let me give you a little taste as to why you might want to. It's a monthly newsletter, so you just get it once a month, and in it, I share usually three or four essays so to speak of different things going on in my life. I've told a story about how my husband ended up carrying a goat out of a field. Completely unplanned event. I told the story about when I got my first and only tattoo. I share parenting challenges and wins, I talk about how obsessed I am with the press tour for Dune 2 because of how hot and stylish that cast is, and literally anything else that's relevant, interesting, or encouraging. I also share reviews of the books I read that past month, and I read a lot. I read about ten books a month, and I know a lot of you make your TBR lists from my reviews because you've told me so, so I'm here for that. If you'd like to get the Latest Lazy Letter, head to thelazygeniuscollective.com/join and sign up! Again, the next issue will go out on Wednesday, April 10th.

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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!