

# #96 - The Lazy Genius Works from Home

Hi, everyone! 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 96 - The Lazy Genius Works From Home. This is yet another highly requested topic, and so I'm excited we get to talk about it! Of course, your situation might be very different from mine and from each person listening, so as I share how I work from home, just let it be an encouragement on how to think about your own work, whether professional or just what makes you feel like a person outside of motherhood and other responsibilities. I'll give you the nitty gritty, not for you to copy but for you to consider as you develop your own nitty gritty.

Before we get into the nitty gritty, just a heads up that The Meal Plan is opening up again! It'll be available from February 24th to March 7th, so about a week and a half. It looks a bit different than it did the last time around, but it's still the Lazy Genius Guide to Happy Dinners at Home. I'll keep you posted here on the podcast, and if you want the first word of when it's available and all the details, join the mailing list at [thelazygeniuscollective.com/join](http://thelazygeniuscollective.com/join) or click the link in the info section of this episode in your podcast app.

Alright, let's talk about working from home! This entire conversation assumes you have kids in the house, simply because other humans are the biggest reason it's hard to do our work. Now, if you don't have kids, I think you might get some good tips and mindsets in this episode, but I'm working from the starting point that the reason you struggle to work from home is all the tiny humans. In this episode, I'm going to offer five simple points, the Five Commandments, if you will, of working from home.

Number One. Use your free time for your stuff. It's nap time or one of the two mornings a week your kid is at preschool or grandma is in town and just took the kids to the park for the morning. Sure, you could clean the house or get a jumpstart on dinner or any number of things, but if you can do those things when your kids around, don't do them during your free time. Only use your free time for the stuff you have to do alone. If you want to write, it's impossible to write with other people around. If you're trying to take online classes to develop a skill in something, it's hard to concentrate when someone is constantly asking for juice. If you have a boss and you want to do a good job in the work expected of you, it's nice for it to have your full attention. You know the thing you need to do, and you know that you could do it at a high level if you can do it uninterrupted. That is why commandment number one is to use your free time for your stuff. Not for cleaning or dinner or running errands. I know that all of those things are loads quicker without your kids, but they're not impossible with your kids. Your work mostly is. I'd rather be a little rushed at dinner than waste my rare mornings on meal prep instead of on work.

Number two: Take what you can get but on purpose. If you have lots of little kids at home, your only free time might be when they're sleeping. I've lived those days and ran businesses during those days; it is not easy. I feel your pain. But working from home with kids is often harder in our minds and expectations than in the execution. Let me explain. If all you get is an hour a day during nap time if your kids happen to nap at the same time and for an actual REM cycle, you might feel really discontent with that. Only an hour? And not even a consistent hour? I know I've been frustrated with the lack of time, too, but accepting those tiny pockets of free time as they are rather than resenting the fact that you don't have more time is super helpful. Take what

you can get. You'll eventually get more, but for now, have realistic expectations about this stage of your life. I know that's basically the worst because it feels like it will never end, but it does. It does end. And also it feels like the worst because you don't want to wish these years away, right? It's all the things jumbled into one ball of nonsensical emotion. But it's not. It's not nonsensical. In fact, it's incredibly normal. It's okay to look forward to having more time without resenting where you are now. It's okay to be frustrated with the fact that you're so tired and have literally 15 minutes to yourself every day and still take what you can get on purpose. In some ways, the time is secondary. An hour a day that you take and embrace on purpose could very well result in way more stuff done and a calmer spirit than four hours three times a week that you wish was five days and you had a housekeeper. You see what I mean? It's all about how we see it, so number two is take what you can get on purpose. Know that it won't always be like this, and if right now has tiny bits of time, be intentional with how you fill those tiny bits rather than resenting not having more. Easier said than done but also an invaluable practice in just learning to be a more self-aware, compassionate human.

Number three, use timers. Timers are weirdly magical, and here are some ways to use them, especially when you hit the season of having larger chunks of time. Because, let's face it, if you have babies at home, they're your timer. Crying, lunch time, dirty diapers... those are life timers. But if you're in the season of a kid being in preschool a day or two a week or a more dependable afternoon nap time that lasts longer than an hour, consider using timers. Just because we're given larger chunks of time doesn't mean we're automatically awesome at managing them. We get distracted with that time just as easily as any other. Timers keep you on task and give you permission to play or focus on things other than work every so often. There are a lot of names and iterations of this particular idea, but the gist is you set a timer for a certain amount of time and go hard, and at the end of the timer, you get a little time to do something else like scroll Instagram or unload the dishwasher. So a timer set for 45 minutes with 15 minutes to do whatever you want. Do that three or four times during a preschool morning, and you're all set.

But you might think, that's an entire hour of my four hours given over to non-work stuff. That feels wasteful! You're right, it might feel that way, but almost certainly you're unintentionally using that much time, if not more to not focus on your work. We all think that when we have that big chunk of time that we're just going to sit and bust it for hours without stopping. But instead, you get a text and answer it but check your email real fast. You use the bathroom and stop to put a load of laundry away on the way back to the desk and get distracted by a mess in a kid's bedroom and start hate-throwing wooden trains into a basket. You might even just see your four hours as so luxurious that you don't need to rush because you've never had this kind of time before and just don't use it super effectively because you're not focused. But with a timer, you work for 45 minutes with your phone flipped over, your email tab closed down on your laptop, and you work, knowing that it won't be long before your time will be up and you can do whatever you want for 15 minutes before getting back to work. You're allowing yourself time to be distracted which keeps you from actually being distracted while you're working. Now, I do love the idea of deep work that Cal Newport talks about in his book *Deep Work*, and he's not a fan of distractions and instead wants us to train our brains to focus on one thing for a longer amount of time. This practice can actually help you develop that skill. You might start with a timer rotation of thirty minutes of work and eventually grow to several hours if that's how your brain desires to engage. Or you might just want to look at Instagram about once an hour, so give yourself that permission on purpose with a timer. It also helps with being distracted by the messes around you at home while you're working. When your 15 minute timer starts to do what you want, prep dinner, speed tidy a room or two, put away a load of laundry. Do those things on purpose within a certain confine of time, and you'll be surprised at how much more productive you are.

Number four: You can't do everything nor do you have to. When it comes to working at home, women often have a mental block. In the norms of recent tradition, women who work also have to manage the house. We are thankfully moving in a direction of equal partnerships in the home between spouses or partners, but often women who have a job or a side hustle or just a dream they want to cultivate feel like any time spent on that is at the expense of time doing something else, probably more important. We need to stop with that mentality. You know you can't do everything which is why your work is probably put on the back burner more often than not, but you also don't have to do everything. You don't have to see your work as some grand sacrifice that your family will suffer from and never eat a hot meal again. It's not all or nothing. Work doesn't mean you're terrible and have to find ways to be less terrible. So what does it mean to not have to do everything? One way is to share the load with a partner. My husband has an 8-5 job, and for a long time, I saw him as a kind of babysitter when I wanted to do work or something fun. I apologized over and over again for taking his valuable free time to spend with his children. Even if you're chuckling at that, you've probably thought it before, too. Most of us have, I think. It's a weird shift to see our work as equal to our spouse's in importance, even if the measurements of money and obligations are different. Being home with kids is a job, too, and we all should get rest and breaks from those jobs. Now, it's weird because there's often a higher calling to motherhood than to, say, accounting, and if that resonates with your beliefs, you can be called to motherhood and still need a break. You can be called to motherhood and still acknowledge that you and your spouse have equal needs of rest when the weekend comes. So you trade off. Maybe on a Saturday afternoon, you each get a couple of hours to do whatever while the other parent is on kid duty. No apologies, no weird comparison of parental sacrifices or feeling like your husband should just get to relax after a long week at work. Your week was long, too, and that's okay. You can't do everything nor do you have to. That's why partners are a beautiful thing. You're on an equal playing field, encouraging each other equally, supporting the other in what they need but not at the absolute expense of yourself. It's equal and not selfish to see it that way.

What are some other ways you don't have to do it all? If you heard that first rule about only doing your own work during your free time and thought "well, when am I supposed to clean the house?" First, you're not the only one who can help with that, but you can also be creative in maximizing your cleaning time by partnering, not just with a spouse but with a friend. Grab a mom who's in a similar life stage as you, with kids home around the same times, and swap house cleaning days. For example, every other Tuesday, one of you takes both kids while the other mom goes home for three hours and busts the house clean. Listen to *The Lazy Genius Cleans the House* as well as *Cleans the Bathroom* and *Cleans the Kitchen* if you need some inspiration on that front, but the point is you're already with your kid anyway, as is that other mom. Share that load, give your kids playmates, and you each get one morning a month that's dedicated to that thing you feel like you're sacrificing for the sake of your work. You could even have a standing playdate with that mom every single week where some of the days you just hang out with each other and your kids and be people and just rotate how you spend that time. You can find partners so you don't have to do everything on your own time with no help at all. You can also not do everything when it comes to dinner like eating new things all the time. Maybe it's a season of a two or three week meal rotation over and over again. If people in your family aren't a fan of that, they can cook to change it up. If you wish your husband helped with the cooking but he has no idea what he's doing, give him the easiest brainless crowdpleasers of heating up a bag of that Trader Joe's orange chicken and making rice in a rice cooker. Or send him the link to *Change Your Life Chicken*. That thing is hard to mess up, even for folks who don't know much about cooking. You don't have to do everything nor do you have to. Release the shame, share the load, and don't feel guilty because somehow you're supposed to be Superwoman. You're not. Sharing is lovely. And this isn't a flippant comment but here's this final point to that: if you're in a relationship where there's resentment from your partner about sharing that domestic load on the weekends, I'm going to lovingly ask you not to DM me about how to get your partner on board because I don't know your partner or you and I'm not a

licensed therapist. What I will say is to instead go to couples counseling or at least have a conversation with trusted couple friends to process how everyone's feeling. It's an important conversation that has so many layers and personal attributes, so don't go looking for a simple hack to get your husband cool with making dinner once a week so you can write for an hour in your room. That's a very normal communication issue that is best processed in a safe space, probably with a counselor. And you're not weird or dysfunctional or anything but normal for needing that. It's really good to need that and acknowledge. I'm a personal fan of therapy and dealing with the junk we think is fine just to stay buried. It's okay to dig it out.

So use your free time for your stuff, take what you can get on purpose, use timers, remember that you can't do everything nor should you have to, and number five: Batch. I live my life by batching. It's my absolute favorite. Batching is simply doing the same kind of task all at once rather than doing the next urgent thing in front of you. When it comes to your work, especially when your time is probably already blocked out in obvious ways because of naps and school pickups, batch in your blocks. Let's say you have work that requires three different kinds of energies - one is straight creative like writing or creating a marketing plan for the nonprofit you work for, something like that. Another energy is administrative - data entry, returning emails that don't require a ton of attention, that kind of thing. And a third personal communications - Skype calls, project meetings, and stuff that requires a conversation. Rather than doing a little of each in every block, batch. Have one day be all creative, another all administrative, and the third be the day you schedule all your meetings. Your job might have two kinds of energies or ten, but the point is to group similar tasks and, more importantly, similar brain energies together in one block. You get in a groove that way, you don't have to switch from one mindset to another, and somehow you feel more productive. Now on days, maybe like administrative days, where you don't really want to do that work, those are great days to definitely use your timer. Work for 45 minutes, and then for the 15 minutes, watch funny videos on YouTube or pick up the novel you keep close by. Walk around the block if the sun is shining and listen to some fun music. Do something rewarding of certain batches or more of a drag.

And those are my Five Commandments of working from home. Now here's a quick rundown of how I personally use these concepts for my own work. My boys are in elementary school, so they're gone most of the day, and my daughter goes to preschool two mornings a week for four hours. I also have a babysitter who hangs out with her a third morning a week for three hours. So that's three big blocks of time each week. I also have about an hour or a little more when she's napping in the afternoon before we get the boys from school. Right now, I'm using three of the four weeks a month to just write the book I'm working on. The fourth week is a very focused deep work week of the podcast. I come up with topics, break down outlines, work out the content, and have them ready for when I record. On those weeks, I also usually take about six hours on the Saturday morning, so like 6am to noon, to do more of that work. Why? Because my time didn't change when I signed my book contract. I added a gigantic thing to my plate without the ability to take anything off the podcast/blog/Lazy Genius plate. I need another chunk of time, sometimes more than the one. My husband and I have gotten into the habit of talking every Sunday night about the upcoming week, how we can support each other, who's in charge of dinner and bedtime, how the laundry won't be folded at the end of laundry day so we'll do it together after the kids are bed, that kind of thing. We have that conversation every week because every week for us looks different. So my work mornings are set. I use the time Annie is gone just for my work, I take what I can get and use it on purpose, and I batch my work in those blocks of time.

In those singular afternoon hours when she's napping, I'll take one to record the next week's podcast episode, another to get ahead on some household tasks, another to probably do some kind of food prep, and I try and take at least one, often two, afternoons a week to nap or read or do something fun and unproductive. It's the tiniest beat of a weekly sabbath, but it's so important and worth it. And, y'all, that's pretty much it. I don't get up at 4am to write. I don't

currently have a housekeeper even though that's probably not far off in my future because I have a friend with a daughter my age who we sometimes switch weeks watching each other's kids. Or the house is just a little dirty or I ask my husband to take over a few chores I used to have time for during the week.

You can't do everything, my friend. It's hard to fit in work for a number of reasons, but don't let your hangups about what you deserve be one of them. I know what that's like because sometimes my mind still goes there, but it does no one any good. And you know what I love? I love leaving at the start of a Saturday morning or for a writing weekend that I have to take to write this book and saying to my kids, "I'm going to work! Have fun with Dad!" And not feeling guilty about it at all. It shouldn't be unusual for their dad to be the primary parent sometimes just like it's perfectly normal for me to be. We're all in this together. A family is the best kind of team, and I love showing that team spirit to my kids because I want my sons to maybe one day get married and not think it's the least bit strange to be with the kids while the wives get filled up. I want my daughter to become an adult woman who knows that her dreams and work matter just as much as any man's and that her security as a mother isn't threatened by her desire to also do work separate from her kids. It's a good practice for us all to let go of unnecessary pressures and become people who work together for the good of the people we love. And that's all I have to say about that.

If you want to talk more about this or have questions for me, I'll be live on Instagram this Thursday around 12:15pm EST @thelazygenius. And don't forget to join the mailing list, not just for first word news on things like the next release of The Meal Plan but also for my monthly Latest Lazy Letter that many of you have said is your favorite email to get. Which is amazing praise, thank you.

That's all for today, friends. Thanks for listening. I'm Kendra, and until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. See you next week!