

#168 - How to Go Back to School

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? Well, today is the episode we've all been waiting for. How to Go Back to School. In a regular year, it's an important question. Transitioning from summer to school routine is a legitimate thing, but this year? Well, clearly we don't have to say a lot about this year. So how do we go back to school when we don't even know what that looks like?

Our county still doesn't have answers. There are ideas and possibilities and scenarios, but nothing definite yet. So how in the world do we plan for possibilities? How do you figure out what to do when the situation could change? Plus the way it'll be for the first half of school might not stick around for the second half. It's all so unknown. I feel it too. Just because I have Lazy Genius principles and try and come up with systems and permission to help you in difficult situations, that doesn't mean this is easy. No matter what you leave this episode with, no matter how helpful it is, this is still a really hard situation. I think when things are challenging, we assume that solutions take the challenge away, and that's just not always the case. The harder the situation, the more we crave solutions to solve the problem, to make it disappear. But that's just not reality. So not to be an Eeyore right out of the gate, but I think we all need to prepare ourselves for this season being a difficult one. We'll do our best to focus on what matters in our own lives and maybe even create some systems to support it, but even when that's in place, be kind to yourself. This is a hard season. It's normal for you to not know what to do next sometimes. It's normal for you to feel overwhelmed. It's normal for you to want to throw out every system you created and start from scratch when things get hard. But rather than do that, remember that feeling that way is normal. We try and make changes to get rid of that feeling, to stop the feelings of overwhelm and stress and fear over what's happening around us. We try and uproot everything that's sort of working to get rid of that feeling. But if we name that those feelings are normal and maybe even okay, we won't try so hard to get rid of them when things feel hard. I feel like that will be an important aspect to surviving going back to school and being in school these next few months. The upside-down-ness within yourself is normal, and you can't systemize it away.

Okay, so now what? That's all well and good I guess, but it would be nice to have some tangible approaches to these next few weeks and months, right? Let's see if we can create, maybe not a path, but at the very least an entrance into making some decisions for your back to school journey.

I think the best place to start is what we just said; we need to remember that this is a season. One of my favorite Lazy Genius principles is to live in your season. We try and cram one season into the shape of another, and it never works. We're just cranky and discontent and burn every system in our path. So that's where we start. Live in your season.

Okay next up. Decide what matters. We won't camp out here for very long, but with all of the unknowns in front of us, it's important to name what matters. There are certain things we won't

know until we have more details about how the school year will work and whether the kids will be home, whether your kid gets accepted into an online school, whether or not you decide to just homeschool this year so that at least you'll be in charge of things. But even with those unknowns, there are some larger things we can name that are important, that matter no matter what the circumstances around it are.

So what are those things? I think there are two categories to consider here. Category one: what matters about the transition from summer to school? Category two: what matters about education and the school experience in general? Those might have two different answers, so it's good to put a distinction there. Then for each of those categories, think about the people involved. Let's start with your kids because if you don't have kids, you're likely not listening to this episode in the first place. So let's start with your kids. What matters to them about the transition from summer to school? And then what matters to them about the school experience in general? Is it social interaction? Variety every day? Consistency every day? Do they need a strong goodbye to summer? Do they need to embrace as much of the summer vibe as they can for as long as they can? The answers are different depending on your life and your kids, but ask. What matters to your kids both in the transition and in the coming experience?

What matters *for* your kids? This is likely going to come from you, not from them. What matters for your kids in the coming school experience? Maybe they wouldn't say that they hope they don't hate school by December, but you might. You might want to make sure that however school goes, something that matters is that education is interesting and engaging and not boring. Again, lots of possible answers.

Next, what matters for you as their mom or dad or caregiver of any kind? In relationship to the kids, what matters to you about both the transition and the coming experience? For me, I don't want to take my frustration about the situation out on my kids. It's not their fault that they probably won't go to actual school every day, but sometimes I treat them like it is. Which isn't great. That matters. Not holding them responsible for the inconvenience in my life matters to me. So name what matters to you in relation to the kids.

Finally, what matters to you as a separate human from your kids? Rest. Getting your own work done. Having an hour to yourself every day in some form. You are not just a mom or caregiver. You're a whole person, and while being a parent is a pretty big slice of the pie, it's not all there it is, and it's normal and good for you to name what matters to you as a whole, not just to you as a mom.

If you have a spouse or partner or share the care of your kids with someone else, ask them to name what matters to them in the same way. Once you have all of that info and puts words to stuff that's just floating around your head, you'll have a much clearer picture of what to be a genius about and what you can just let go.

If your list is super long, I'd like to invite you into another Lazy Genius principle: go in the right order. If your list is long, you'll likely see all of the things holding equal weight, but that's not a

realistic approach. If you try and be a genius about every single one of those things, you probably won't be able to give much genius energy to any of them. So you go in the right order. The idea of the right order is that you start with the one thing that will make such a big splash, that will impact things in such a deep way that if other stuff on the list doesn't happen that it'll more or less be okay. Maybe not ideal but certainly okay.

For example, if you want to prioritize an engaging educational experience at home, a predictable routine for everyone, and teaching your kids to tend to themselves for two hours a day so that you can get a jump on your own work or do stuff that keeps the house running or whatever it is. Now trying to be a genius about three of those things could be tricky. In fact, if they're all equal, they might fight each other a bit in what's most important. So choose the one thing that will make the other things fall into place a bit more. If you prioritize an engaging educational experience at home, it could be that the kids feel pretty stimulated and fulfilled and are more likely naturally inclined to do their own thing and be creative or content on their own time because their brains have been engaged. Maybe the routine is less important because when they're stimulated and curious and have fun with something, the routine isn't as necessary.

Or the routine might be the most important thing. Even if school is kind of a drag, the fact that it happens in a similar way each day and has a similar reward or experience at the end makes up for a lack of exciting curriculum. It really all depends on your life and your family.

So when you have your list of what matters, really pull the one thing that will make the biggest impact. Don't ignore the others, but don't try and give equal genius footing to all of them or you're spin yourself into a tizzy.

Finally, I want you to essentialize. That's the final Lazy Genius principle we'll use today. To essentialize means to name what matters which you've already done, remove what's in the way of what matters, and then keep only what's essential. If you want a calm schooling environment, remove what gets in the way of that. Let's say you always fold laundry on the kitchen table, but now that's where your kids do their schoolwork three days a week. Find a new place for laundry. It's not supportive of what matters, and therefore it isn't essential. Move it somewhere else.

What if what matters is having three hours to bust out some writing or do your job that you have to do from home now? At this point, I'm the parent at home with the kids and I also have a job. It's a lot. It really matters that I get my work done every day and that I have a chunk of time to do that. Now I could take a couple of approaches to this. Forgive me for the callous choice of words here, but if I need to remove what doesn't support my work, that means I need to remove my children. It's really hard to get anything done when they're in the house let alone the room. So I can do that by hiring a high schooler who's also doing school at home to hang with my kids a few mornings a week. Or if hiring somebody isn't in the cards because of money, do a kid switch with another family. You might have already merged COVID bubbles with another family at this point, so see if there's a way to swap kids and time. Even if it's not for work, just go take a nap.

Another way though I can remove what isn't essential when it comes to working from home is taking out things that are distracting from my work. Turn the desk towards the window instead of the room that has laundry to put away. Choose one playlist to listen to every time I sit down so that I don't waste five precious minutes trying to find the perfect background work music. Remove distractions that don't support what matters, and then keep only what's essential.

I wish I had an easy answer for you, a paint-by-numbers formula of how to handle this next year, but like I've said for years at this point, I don't know your life. You know your life. You know what you need way better than I do, and trying to give you rules and structures that don't take into account what matters to you makes no sense. However, giving you some perspective and questions to ask so that you can build your own is great. It takes more work on your part and it doesn't make for a very sexy podcast title because I can't solve anything for you, but I can give you tools to come up with solutions for yourself.

Remember though, this is a hard season. Your solutions will only take you so far. Be kind to yourself when you hit your limit and feel like burning it all down, when you let the kids go feral, when your toddler knows how to navigate Netflix better than you do... remember that all of that is normal and isn't necessarily an indicator that you're doing anything wrong. This is just really hard. It sucks, but it's also okay. Live in the season, be kind to yourself, let people in, name what matters, go in the right order, and essentialize.

By the way, all of those are principles in my book *The Lazy Genius Way* that releases in two weeks you guys! It's available August 11th, but if you preorder by the 10th, you get the entire Lazy Genius digital library for zero dollars. It's usually \$112 but for the next two weeks it's zero. If anything I said today resonates with you, you will not regret in the slightest preordering this book and getting these freebies. This way of life, this Lazy Genius approach doesn't always have quick fixes but it has quick lenses that help us see more clearly than we did before. And when we see more clearly, we're able to make decisions that actually serve us, not reactionary decisions that we'll eventually undo because they were made under duress. So there's a link in the show notes or you can go thelazygeniuscollective.com/book and preorder from wherever you'd like preorder (Barnes and Noble, Amazon, your local bookstore, get it on audio, whatever you'd like) and then you'll go that website thelazygeniuscollective.com/book and let us know you preordered so that we can send you the Lazy Genius digital library in your inbox.

Okay, that's it for today. You're doing great, y'all. We've been doing it for the last five six months? And even though we thought it would be more normal by now, it's not, and we can keep going. One day at a time. Be kind to yourself. Be kind to your kids. Be kind to your spouse that processes the world differently than you do. We're all in this together, and it's gonna be okay. Thanks for listening. 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!