

#187 - Rethinking Opening Ceremonies

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 187 - rethinking opening ceremonies. I love implementing opening and closing ceremonies into my year and especially into the fall and winter holiday season. I'll go into what those are more specifically in a second, but as we all know, holidays in 2020 are not what we expected. So how can we rethink traditions and gatherings and opening ceremonies during such an upside-down time? This episode will hopefully offer some encouragement in that.

So first, what is an opening ceremony? It is what it sounds like. It's an intentional marker for the beginning of something. I was inspired by opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics a few years ago and thought about what that whole event would feel like without the opening ceremonies. I mean what if the olympic games themselves just started? One day there's nothing and then the next day people are shooting rifles and skiing and stuff. The opening ceremony is marking the beginning of something special, almost existing with equal importance as the thing it's marking. Now that opening ceremony can be grand and exciting and take up a day or a whole weekend, or it can be simply saying to yourself in your head "here we go into this next thing" and taking a deep breath. Or listening to a song. Or eating a specific meal. It can be whatever you need it to be. There's an entire episode on those ceremonies if you want some ideas, and I'm pretty sure there's even an instagram post where folks share theirs for the fall. If we can track that down, it'll be in the show notes!

So in terms of the holidays for our family, opening ceremonies for us have played out where we mark the beginning of fall and the beginning of December which helps separate the holidays into their own spaces. Every holiday gets its chance to shine. That's not important for everyone, but it is for me and my family. So our opening ceremony most years for fall is we go to this little farm and ride a tractor and pick out a pumpkin and pet a cow and walk through a corn maze. We've done it every year for the last I think seven or eight years. I've done it with baby children strapped to my front, and now the kids lead the way through the maze. That's how we open our fall every year. It doesn't really feel like the fall holiday season without that day, without that mark.

We also mark the beginning of the December Christmas vibe with the same opening ceremony every year. Our city does a winter holiday celebration downtown the first Friday of December. The streets are closed, the stores are open, Santa's there, there are food trucks and carolers and face painting, and it's so fun. Then the next day, there's always a holiday parade downtown, and we go to that. Then that afternoon, we put up the tree. So downtown festival on Friday, parade and tree on Saturday, and several of those years, there's a Christmas Lessons and Carols event at our church on Sunday which is literally one of my favorite things of the year. Basically, this winter weekend is my favorite weekend of the year. I adore every part of it. We've done the winter festival for the last couple of years with the family that we live a lot of life with, we always park and sit in the same place for the parade. Pro tip on that by the way. If you go to a parade, set up as close to the start of the parade as you can because the people in the

parade are still happy to be there. Plus a lot of them toss candy into the crowd, and it's so early that they haven't figured out proper rationing yet. Plus if you're at the start of the parade route for a parade that starts at 10am, your parade starts at 10am. If you're further down the line, your parade does not start at 10am. Some people like to be in the middle or at the end or wherever you want to be, but we are "start of the parade" people. Anyway, we always sit in the same place. We always see people we know which is really special and fun. And then we always attend and sometimes I participate in our church's Lessons and Carols event. It's the best best best December opening ceremony for our family.

And guess what? This year it isn't happening, at least not in the way it usually does. And that's really sad. I haven't fully grieved that yet because the weekend isn't quite here, but I've already spent some time sitting with that sadness and allowing it to exist. And that's where I'd encourage you to begin in rethinking your opening ceremonies or your gatherings or your holiday traditions. Things will look different. Somehow, in some way, to some degree, things will be different. And that could likely bring a lot of sadness. Trying to push that sadness down and power through and force normalcy onto your holiday traditions has good intentions but maybe not good results. Naming the sadness and grieving the loss help us to be less desperate to make things normal again. We're more open to thinking differently or saying no or slowing down or not being mad about having to be a little creative this time around. It's like the Lazy Genius principle of living in your season. Living in your season doesn't mean you ignore the hard or have rose-colored glasses or pretend the season doesn't exist. It means naming what the season is, allowing yourself to feel what you feel about it, and also paying attention to what the season is teaching you.

In some ways, the loss of our December opening ceremony weekend has taught me how much I love it. Now that I can't really experience it fully, I have seen how important it actually is. And guess what? Next year in 2021 when the same weekend will likely happen, I will be even more intentional about saving time for it and paying attention to how special it is. Seasons always have something to teach us, even if it's that we can make it through a hard season. So the first step in rethinking opening ceremonies is naming what you've lost by having to rethink in the first place and then letting that loss teach you something.

Now, do we wallow and just say screw it we can't do anything about anything? No, we don't have to do that. If you want to and that matters to you right now, then by all means. Sometimes we need to wallow. But it's likely that if you do want to wallow you don't want to wallow forever. So how we can move through grieving the loss of things being different and rethink what matters?

Naming what matters is how. Think about the one thing you can't do, that you're missing, that you're needing to rethink. Don't think about rethinking the holidays in general big picture because that's too big. Lazy Geniuses start small, so start small by thinking about one particular thing you want to rethink. And then name what matters most about that thing.

Back to our December weekend, what matters most about that weekend? Being downtown and being with people. There's something about being downtown and being part of our city that we love so much and then experiencing that with people. The irony is that we wanted to do our own winter festival where we literally walk around downtown and look at the storefronts and the lights and maybe bring our own mugs of hot chocolate and do this with the family we usually do the winter festival with and do all of this on the first Friday, kind of like we're recreating it as much as possible. But because we saw an extended family unit that traveled from out of town for Thanksgiving, we're playing it safe and laying low the week after Thanksgiving which falls on that first Friday weekend. Then the next weekend I'm out of town writing a book and the weekend after is almost Christmas and where does the time go! So what we're going to do is walk around downtown on a random weeknight with this family, and call it good. We're still getting what matters - downtown and community. And for the kids treats and hot chocolate. It's okay that it doesn't happen right at the start of December. It's okay that we'll wear masks and not get to eat dinner at the restaurant we always go to. It's okay that we won't see carolers or anyone really because downtown is just doing the baseline for very understandable reasons. But we're still doing something and marking the tradition by focusing on what matters most. Will it be the same? No. But as we've learned through so many events during 2020 that it doesn't have to be the same to still be special. Some of these stripped down birthdays and weddings and events have been uniquely special because they're unique, because they had to be simplified to what matters most. So lean into that rather than see it as a hindrance. I'm sad to not listen to carolers, but ohmygosh I literally just realized we can download a fun Christmas album or playlist - I can make a playlist! - that we play as we walk, just to have a little vibe. And that's its own kind of special.

So realize that it's sad and that there's something to grieve. Live in your season and let it teach you something. And then name what matters most about the thing you're wanting to rethink. And then just do it. Creativity and ideas aren't really your problem. Those are everywhere. But without those first two steps of grieving the loss and naming what matters, those ideas will only take you so far. And that's how a Lazy Genius rethinks opening ceremonies.

I hope that this, while very broad strokes and intangible, gives you the context to make tangible decisions and that you find it encouraging in how you spend the rest of your December. It'll be different. And that's okay. Let it be different and see what really wonderful things can come from it.

That's it for today! Thanks for listening. Some resources are in the show notes, and you can follow me on Instagram @thelazygenius to see other ideas and thoughts on opening ceremonies and the holiday season in general. I'm so glad you're here, 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!