

#202 - Revisiting Your Morning Routine

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 202 - revisiting your morning routine. I released an episode about three years ago called The Lazy Genius Morning Routine, and I still think it's such a helpful episode. I'll put a link in the show notes, but today, after I give you the briefest overview of that original episode, I want to revisit the concept, especially in light of still living kind of in a pandemic, and give you one question you can ask yourself - just one - as you think about how your current morning routine is serving you or not. I'll also share my own current morning routine and its evolution over the last few years. And bonus new thing! Back in the day, including in that original morning routine episode, we used to do a Lazy Genius tip of the week. I still get requests years later to bring it back, but I'm going to give you something that I think is even better. We're going to end every episode for the foreseeable future with a Lazy Genius of the Week! I get tagged on Instagram @thelazygenius multiple times a day where you all share how you're using the Lazy Genius principles from the book The Lazy Genius Way or how you're implemented ideas from specific podcast episodes, and I'm going to start sharing one of those every week at the end of each episode. So be sure you're following me, and tag me when you share some kind of Lazy Genius tip or application or whatever so I can see it! It'll be fun to bring a feature back that y'all love but highlight your tips, not mine.

Okay, let's jump into this episode!

First a Cliffs Notes version of what a Lazy Genius routine is, no matter where it is in the day. Build the Right Routines is actually a principle in my book, The Lazy Genius Way, and the idea is not to create a list of repetitive tasks. We think that's what a routine is, but that's only part of it. Because what happens when you don't do all five of your routine steps? So often we beat ourselves up for not completing the routine, we give up completely if we can't do it all the time, or we think something is wrong with the routine and choose a different five steps but still struggle to complete those too. And the cycle continues.

The cycle continues because we're starting from the wrong place. Without this lens, you're starting from the what, the pieces of your routine rather than the reason for the routine. A Lazy Genius routine is an onramp. It's a collection of choices that take you where you want to go. How you get there is less important than where you're going.

So for a morning routine, the point for most of us is to kindly open the day with purpose and gradually increase our productive energy. I'll say that again. The purpose of a morning routine is to kindly open the day with purpose and gradually increase your productive energy. You might have a different purpose than that, but I think that's a safe definition for most of us.

So if that's the case, you know what's great? We can all choose what that gradual increase looks like individually. We can choose different things. You don't have to get up at 5am unless

that matters. You don't have to exercise first thing in the morning unless that matters. You get to decide what pieces create that gradual increase of productive energy.

Another thing I said in that first episode that feels worth repeating here is that a morning routine helps you feel like yourself first thing so that you're not frantically searching for yourself throughout the day. That feels true, right? When I enjoy a morning routine that does help me start with purpose and gradually increase my productive energy based on what matters to me, I feel more like myself. And I continue to feel like myself as the day goes on. It's kind of like filling your own bucket in the morning so that as you're drained throughout the day, you're not scraping the bottom by lunchtime.

So how can you build your own morning routine based on this perspective? With one question.

What one thing will help me feel most like myself in the morning? That's it. What one thing will help you feel most like yourself in the morning?

Is it quiet? Music? Coffee? Reading? Meditating? Moving your body? Taking five minutes to make a plan for the day? Standing outside? Getting dressed? Connecting with a spouse or friend? Laughing?

The list of possibilities is fairly long, but the magic isn't in the list. The magic is in choosing the one thing that makes you feel like yourself. Because we're all different. We all need different things.

I remember a conversation I had here on the podcast with Erin Moon about her morning routine - we'll have a link to that in the show notes, it's a highly popular episode - but Erin was struggling in the mornings because she felt the tension between feeling like she should be starting the morning early and on her own when really she just wanted to stay in bed longer. But she couldn't stay in bed longer because her kids needed supervision and she felt guilty about giving them screen time in the morning even though that's what they often asked for and were content with when they got it. So when I told Erin that she could just decide to give her kids a certain amount of screen time in the morning and the kids know that's okay, Erin could stay in bed longer and gradually increase her productive energy that way rather than cutting into her sleep and being alone in the dark morning hours when that thing wasn't making her feel like herself. You have to do what makes you feel like yourself. You have to serve what matters to you more than what the routine list says.

So that's your singular question: What one thing will help you feel most like yourself in the morning? And then just do that thing. Start small. Make it one thing. Build the right routine by creating an onramp with anything you choose and start with choosing one thing to gradually increase your productive energy in light of who you are and what you need. Those needs change as your life changes, so to give you some context, I'll share how my morning routine has evolved over the three years since I released that first episode **after this break from our sponsors.**

AD BREAK

Alright, let's take a few minutes to talk about how your routine can change even when the primary purpose stays the same. The reason for my morning routine has not changed in the last three years. It is still a gradual building to productive energy by doing things that make me feel like myself and remind me of myself before I get thrown into another day. That hasn't changed. But the routine itself has.

Three years ago, my morning routine involved getting up early around 5:30am, making coffee because I liked the slowness of it before anyone else woke up, ten minutes or so of yoga and meditation, reading, finishing up school lunches that were mostly already made, and I used to wash my face before I left my room. Also in relistening to that first episode, apparently those were the days when Annie would wake up at 8am. That's weird. I do not remember this. This is why when my kids ask me to tell them stories about when they were little I have basically no answers because everything gets kind of blocked out with each stage. Side note, this is why I need Emily P. Freeman to help me reflect! Okay, so how has my routine changed but more importantly why?

I used to wash my face first because I would often forget to wash my face. Back then, skincare wasn't that important to me, but it matters more now than it used to. I don't forget to wash my face anymore, and I do it when I'm getting showered and dressed and stuff. So that's no longer part of my morning routine.

I used to get up around 5:15 or 5:30am because I needed a longer stretch of alone time, mostly because I was at home with Annie all day. This was before she was in school. Now she is, and my boys are a bit more self-sufficient than they were back then. Also I don't go to bed as early as I did back then (and therefore don't want to wake up as early) because my boys stay up later than they used to. So that extra bit of alone time or hanging out with Kaz is at night instead of in the morning. I'm just not as desperate for immediate alone time because the morning hours are not the only time I'm alone right now. So the time I get up has changed. It's usually by 6am which is half an hour before the kids get up, but even this morning that I'm recording this, I didn't wake up until a kid woke me up.

This leads me to how the morning routine has morphed the most. I still want that gradual increase of productive energy, right? Well, we kind of have a family morning routine that does that now. I don't need my own for that; the family has the gradual increase already built in. At 6:30am, Annie helps me make my coffee. She knows how much sugar to use and how to press the button on the Nespresso or the French press, whatever coffee I'm making that day, and it's really sweet. So that's gradual in our family morning routine.

I also used to have to drag the boys away from playing to get ready and brush their teeth for school and stuff, but they don't need that as much anymore. They have their own morning routine where they listen to music in their rooms from 6:30-7am so really I'm only parenting one

kid at once instead of all three, and they know to come out dressed by 7am. And they get their own breakfast. While the boys get their breakfast, Annie and I make school lunches, both still in our pajamas. We get those done, and Kaz takes the boys to school. Annie and I then have a solid 30-45 minutes before we need to leave to take her to school, so we spend that time together getting ready. It's a very gradual process. Even though I'm with all the kids, it doesn't feel as much like a gauntlet as it did three years ago because the alone time is coming. The morning routine is more for my family than for me. So when I get up before anyone else, it's just icing. I read, I do some yoga, I journal, but I'm not tied to any particular activity.

Oh, and that piece about choosing the one thing that helps you feel like yourself? Mine is music. I let the boys listen to their own weird music in their rooms so that I can listen to mine. I turn on some kind of chill Irish instrumental music or a playlist, and with that as the background to our loose family routine, I'm in good shape. Another thing that makes me *not* feel like myself is being rushed, but the way our family morning routine is set up keeps us from being super rushed. Sure, there are mornings where a kid forgets a mask or Sam gets distracted reading his book and forgets to brush his teeth or Annie spilled my coffee so I'm making sandwiches more speedily than I'd like. But overall, the rhythm in the mornings is the same, it's not super frantic, it's gradual, and because of the music and just being present, I feel like myself.

Eventually it will change again. Maybe even in a couple of months when the pandemic is over. In fact, when the boys were home for virtual school the first half of this school year only a few months ago, I absolutely got up earlier every single day to have alone time because I didn't have any. None of us were alone for so long. Some of you still aren't. But naming the point of it all, naming what matters, that helps you have less attachment to the specifics of your routine and have more kindness and grace when those elements change. Because they will change. But there's less pressure because you're still accomplishing what you're after, just in multiple ways depending on who you are and what your life looks like right now.

So that's our revisit into your morning routine. Remember the point - it's a gradual increase in productive energy that also pays honor to what makes you feel like yourself. Then ask yourself what one thing can contribute to that, and then just do that thing. For me, it's the music. If I'm playing music I love even when the morning is hectic and a kid wakes me up and I did nothing for myself, it's still okay. Because that's my one thing. Try on a few one things if you get stuck, but keep asking. Start small. Name what matters as you build the right routine.

Okay, before we go, let's celebrate our Lazy Genius of the week! Today's is Danielle Barham! (@daniellenbarham linked in the show notes) She posted this recently: "the lazy genius principle that has made the biggest difference in my life? Make sure that your counters are clear and ready to receive groceries before you head to the store" and she shared a picture of her empty counter. That singular tip is such a game-changer and deserves to be mentioned as often as possible. Danielle is so generous in sharing Lazy Genius tips and thoughts, so thank you Danielle! You are the first Lazy Genius of the week!

Thanks for listening, y'all. I'm so grateful you're here. 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!