

#207- The 15 Moments That Shaped the Lazy Genius

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 207 - the 15 Moments That Shaped the Lazy Genius! I get asked about the origin story of this business a lot, especially when I do our Ask Me Anything sessions on Sunday nights on Instagram. I get a lot of questions like "how did you get started, where did the name come from, what made you decide to make a podcast, did you have jobs before this," so today, that's what I'm going to share! I went through my life and tried to trace the Lazy Genius throughline. It was actually a very therapeutic, energizing practice. I mapped out my life on a whiteboard and saw how all of these pieces fit together into a really beautiful story, one that I hadn't really noticed before in this way if I'm being honest. So originally I was going to call this episode the Lazy Genius Origin Story, but the moments felt so pivotal and I needed some way to structure this episode that wasn't just me giving you a slideshow of my life. So here we are. The 15 moments that shaped the lazy genius.

#1: In 8th grade, I placed second in a local sports writing competition. I was a studious kid, very into lists and organization and things being just so. I also wanted to be a sports broadcaster for years. When I was an 8th grade homeschooler, there was a competition in the paper that was kind of a marketing arm of the ACC tournament which my city, Greensboro NC, often hosts. This was also when the Internet and computers were kind of becoming a thing. So the contest was to write a piece about a pivotal moment in ACC tournament history, and the winners would get to go to a couple of tournament games and write some recaps on the local newspaper's website that was of course very polished and ahead of its time. Right. Well, I was in 8th grade and figured this contest wasn't really meant for me, but I entered anyway. And I got 2nd place. It was me, an 8th grade homeschool girl with a braces and an unfortunate cocker spaniel haircut, and three middle-aged dudes. I got to go to the two semifinal games, one of which included my beloved Carolina Tarheels, and I balanced the bulkiest laptop on my wool skirt and black tights I bought at The Limited, and tried to report on the game. I did think my seat would be at the press table. It was not. I was on the second level in the middle of the Clemson section. Plus the battery life of this thing was like five minutes, so I didn't do great in the execution of my prize, but I came in second place in a sports writing competition! And they didn't know I was a kid! When the newspaper people called me to tell me I had placed, they didn't believe I'd written the piece. Probably because the moment I wrote about happened before I was born, but no matter. I was a good enough writer to come in 2nd in this competition. It lit something in me and made me believe even a little bit that I was good at this writing thing.

#2: When I was in high school, my English teacher Mrs. Johnson told me I was a good writer and that I would make a great teacher. I gave up on the sports broadcasting dream when I got into high school, mostly because I realized I was not tall and thin and blonde like pretty much every woman was on the sidelines. Seriously, if you Google "female sports announcers," you will be drowning in blonde white women. Plus I knew I had to pay my dues and work those sidelines for a really long time before I would be taken seriously enough to have the chance to call a

game. And that's really what I wanted to do. But I also figured I'd get married and have a family one day, and did I really want to have to travel and change jobs often to get into bigger markets and climb the ladder to get the job I wanted but that barely any women had? Even today in 2021, the only woman who really sits on the sidelines and calls games is Doris Burke. And that's only for basketball. Mary Carillo is a fixture in tennis, but you don't have women announcing baseball or football games, and again Doris Burke is pretty much the only woman who does it for basketball where she actually wears the headphones and talks the entire game. It was a very tough road to climb, and I didn't want to be a pioneer. I didn't know what I wanted to do though. I had often thought about teaching, but if you were a Christian female teenager, especially in the south, a main job that was pushed was becoming a teacher. You do that until you have kids, and then you quit and stay home. That's not a bad career path in the slightest. It was simply presented as pretty much the main option. I didn't want to do it just because that's what I expected to do. I wanted to do something I was good at. So when Mrs. Johnson, my senior year English teacher, told me I was a good writer and would make a great teacher, that's what I decided to do. I would be a high school English teacher, not because I liked students but because I did like teaching people new concepts, I liked writing, and someone told me I was good at both.

#3: Also I promise not all 15 of these will be this long. #3: I learned to pivot when I had to drop out of college. Well, this one might be a little long. So I was a very smart person growing up. My brain was my best asset in my mind. I was good at school, so I put all my energy into being the best at it. I was valedictorian of my high school class, I didn't get a single B my entire K-12 education, and I put so much of my identity into being the smart one. So when I was midway through my sophomore year of college and - this could be a weird part of the story - I literally heard God tell me to quit school, I was like "umm, you're crazy." But I did it, the details are long and would require an additional seven podcast episodes, but I quit school without telling my parents which was a whole thing, and it was for the absolute best because we had a family emergency a month later that I wouldn't have been home for. Not only because I would've been in school, but I was going to be spending the next semester in London. God knows better than I do apparently. But the point is that I quit school. I withdrew from the teaching scholarship I had because I wasn't sure if I would be a teacher anymore. I dropped the education from my english education major and went back to college six months later as just an english major. And I was okay. I'm not usually known for pivoting well because plans are so important to me - or so I think - but this experience has always been an important one because my plans literally burned up in front of me, and not only did I survive it, it also made me more of who I already was. And that lesson of learning to pivot and be flexible is certainly an important one when you have your own online business and are basically creating plans from scratch. You have to learn to pivot.

#4: I learned how to organize tasks and moving parts at my first job as a youth group programming director. I did that for about three years in the early 2000s where I planned out the weekly meetings, organized trips, managed logistics, tried to notice skills in high school students and put them in places where they could use those skills. I think that job absolutely helped me learn to pay attention to what matters and taught me how to manage a lot of moving parts at once, again something that is very important in having your own business.

#5: I learned that I *can* write boring words but also would rather not. After I left the youth group programming job, I got a job as a technical copywriter at my alma mater, and I hated it. The people I worked with were a delight. Loved them. But the job itself was so boring. Some writing is boring. Teaching college students how to program their Blackberry was important work in 2006, but it wasn't writing that made me come alive. I realized that I did love words and putting them together and even the teaching aspect of figuring out the best way to say something so a person could understand it, but I wanted it to be my message, not someone else's. And that was a very important lesson to learn. Because that was my last job where I had a boss.

#6: I learned that I love helping people feel comfortable in the kitchen by becoming a cooking teacher. In 2007, I started my first business called My First Kitchen. The idea was to invite people into my home and teach them how to cook basic things so they would have more fun feeding their people every day. It actually did really well! I had 6-10 classes a month that all got booked up, I learned how to go through all the legal stuff to get your house approved by the health department and all kinds of grownup things that very much freaked me out as a 25 year old. But I loved teaching. I knew I loved teaching, but I didn't know that I loved teaching cooking. That was huge. I loved teaching people how to feed themselves.

#7: I created an utterly ridiculous business that showed me I could do things my own way, and that was my second business called The Sugar Box that I started in 2012. I quit the cooking classes because I was starting to resent my firstborn son for not napping better so that I could get my work done, and God was like "yeah I think it's time to take a break here, my love. Let's shut this down and the next thing will come." I thought the next thing was baking. Any time I make a dessert, usually very classic things, people say it's some of the best they've ever had. I didn't want to be an on-demand baker, but I started telling locals friends that I was baking a certain type of cookie or cake and they could order a certain amount. I would do that once or twice a month, announce the foods, take preorders, box up whatever they ordered on the same day, and deliver those boxes all over the city. And it was good but it wasn't as fun as I wanted it to be. I thought that baking was the thing, and when it wasn't, I got confused. Then I learned that passions, even weird ones, can go far if you just give it space to breathe. I remember it so clearly. I was sitting in Emily P. Freeman's living room along with our friend Melissa, and I was verbally processing like I do, trying to figure out how to make this baking business work better. I was sitting cross-legged in a chair with high arms because that's my favorite kind of seat anywhere ever, Emily and Melissa were both lying down feet to feet on the two sections of a big L-shaped sofa, and Emily said, "If you could make this business whatever you wanted, no matter how ridiculous, what would you do?" And I said, "Well, I wish I could make the desserts pop-culture themed." And they both sat up and were like MAKE THAT RIGHT NOW. So we fleshed out a few ideas there in the living room, and The Sugar Box was really born. Every month, I would pick a theme like Friends, Downton Abbey, Harry Potter. I would brainstorm desserts that fit the theme, maybe six or seven different things, and then I would open orders. No choosing specific items, no personalization, you just ordered a Wizard of Oz Sugar Box, and you'd pick it up at my house on Sugar Box Day. My kids loved Sugar Box Day. I loved it. I would block off two whole days and just bake and package, bake and package. One baking day I

made 1200 cookies. That's a lot of cookies. And it was a blast. My marrow of gathering around fun food and creating an experience for people grew bones and muscles and skin during the sugar box days. But after I'd done for it over a year, I started paying attention to the money. I realized I was making - wait for it - two cents an hour per box I sold. And my max number of boxes was 75. Anymore I didn't have room or hours for, not on my own. So when I realized I was making almost literally nothing for this very fun job, I knew I had to make a choice. Either I become a baking business, get a facility, hire a staff, and ship sugar boxes, scrapping all of the writing I was doing alongside the business, or I would scrap the baking and focus on writing. But I'd have to change what I wrote about because cupcakes and Jude Law can only take you so far. And that leads us to...

#8: I created The Lazy Genius Collective in 2015. It took almost a year to figure out what it would be, and even now, it's different than when I started. Which I'll get to that. But when I was thinking about what I wanted to write about, I knew it was helping people not feel so tired anymore. It just seemed like there was so much effort expended all around me, and I found myself giving people in my real life and on the internet permission to let something go. Like all the time. So I thought okay I'll become the person who helps you figure out what to say no to. But it was also more than that. I wanted to talk about meal prep and parenting and parties and planners and also still talk about Jude Law and cupcakes. But I needed a lens. Enter Emily P. Freeman again. She has a secret superpower of naming things, like literally naming books and websites and maybe even children I don't know, but she and I spent a couple of days battling ideas back and forth over text or Voxer. Not sure if we had Voxer then? I just know we were talking about it what felt like constantly which was so generous of her because she kind of had a job too. And she came up with the phrase lazy genius. Bless it. Then I came up with the tagline but not on purpose. I was just verbally processing the name she magically created and said, "yeah it's like I can help people figure out how to be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't!" And we both started screaming because it was perfect. That name and that lens jumpstarted the whole thing. My first blog post was published in August of 2015, a recipe for a two-minute stupid easy raspberry sorbet which is actually quite delightful, and the second post was called "it's time to name what matters." An excellent start I'd say.

#9: I learned to use my voice and started a podcast. I only wrote blog posts for a year but then started thinking about this podcast thing. Maybe I should start one? But I never thought I'd ever have anything to say and instead wanted to do an interview show because that's what I thought you were supposed to do. It just seemed at the time way too narcissistic to be like hey guys listen to me and only me for twenty minutes. And while I see how that is such a ridiculous perspective to have now, at the time, it made sense. I didn't think anyone would want to listen to me, so I had guests. And it was good and fun, but also I'm not a super great interviewer. I'm not fishing for compliments here, but it's not my strongest skill. That's why we only do maybe 4-6 interviews a year on this show because it's not where I shine. Plus interview podcasts are hard. You have to plan the conversation and prep and edit and be on someone else's timetable, so after ten episodes, I took a break to reevaluate. I knew I loved the medium. I loved using my voice, way more than I expected to. But if I hadn't taken that smaller step to have a show with people, I never would've made a show without them. Which leads us to...

#10: I enrolled in Marie Forleo's B-School program in the spring of 2017, a year and a half after starting the blog and six months after starting the podcast, and I found my voice. B-School is not cheap. It's two thousand dollars for the online course, but it's a wonderful crash course for creating a business that serves people well but also uses your best abilities and passions to make it happen. Going through that course helped me name that I did have things to say and that people would listen to me. One of the exercises in the course is to ask 6-12 people to describe what you're good at in a handful of words. The words that came out of that were pretty much under one of three categories - funny, smart, and relatable. Every single person said some version of "I just like listening to you talk. It's easy and I always learn something but it's not boring or preachy." And I just had this settling in my soul of finding my own voice or maybe more specifically believing that my voice could make an impact in people's lives. So I changed the podcast to just me and relaunched it in March 2017. Here we are over four years and close to nine million downloads later, and I'm so happy I found my voice.

#11: I found my face. Is that a thing? I found my love of being on camera when I - wait for it - when I auditioned for a televised baking show and made it to the final cut. It was summer of 2017 so just a couple of months after relaunching the podcast with just me, and I applied to be on this show. There were zoom interviews and an in-person taste-test and interview. For the final round, I flew to New York and actually competed against other potential contestants in an industrial kitchen. And the entire time, there was a camera crew walking around the kitchen with a producer that was asking me questions. And I was like YES LET'S DO THIS EVERY DAY. I loved it. I couldn't believe how much I loved it, and I was good at it. I say that not in a prideful way, but I remember looking around the room and observing how people were on camera, either really tight and nervous or swinging the other way and trying a little too hard, and it just felt right to me. I didn't feel like who I was had to change when a camera showed up; who I was made sense on camera. When I got the call a couple of weeks later from the production assistant and not the actual producer, I knew I didn't get it. But he was so kind, I had met him in New York at the final audition, and he said, "You were on our list in the pitch. We wanted you on the show, but the network wanted to go another way." And while I was disappointed, I also got it. I'm a big believer in things working out the way they're supposed to, so it was okay. Turns out, that was a year where the show I was going to be on got pulled in the middle of the season because the judge turned out to be problematic, so that was insane. And the entire reason I wanted to go on the show was to grow this audience, was to grow my platform. I could've gone on location for three months away from my family and then months later when the show aired seen all of that investment fizzle when the show was pulled from television after only two episodes. I feel like it was a divinely appointed experience because I got the confirmation that I'm good on camera and can pursue that in different ways, but I also didn't have to go on TV and turn my life upside-down to do it.

#12: I hired help. In six months, I had found my voice, I had found my face, and I was like okay yeah this is a legitimate business and I want to make this work. And I realized that I could in no way do everything myself. So in 2017, I hired a friend who worked for another friend to do my email inbox and some administrative things a few hours a week. Then I realized I needed

someone that could do a variety of tasks who I'd love to see stay with me for a long while. I found Leah in March of 2018, and everything changed after that. Leah does everything. For real. The only things I do are only what I can do which is come up with content. I want to make a great podcast, share helpful and fun content on Instagram, create products that work for you, write books that work for you (that's coming), and Leah does literally everything else. Hiring her has been one of the most important things that has shaped the Lazy Genius without question.

#13: I joined a mastermind. The internet/author space has some really amazing people in it, and I have made some excellent, intelligent friends over the years. Sometimes I'd ask them questions and it was never weird to be like "I don't know what to do here because I'm making this up as I go do you have any ideas?" But in early 2018, around the same time I hired Leah, I was talking to Jamie B. Golden of The Popcast with Knox and Jamie, my favorite podcast of all the podcasts, and we were joking because we'd heard about this paid mastermind that someone we both follow had joined, and it was \$17,000 a year to be part of it. Now, that is a high price, but it's also not ridiculous. There is remarkable value in being with focused ambitious smart people in a small group, meeting regularly, and learning from each other. But I hadn't done that on any level and knew that my first foray into masterminds would not have the pricetag of a Kia. So as Jamie and I talked about it, I was like "well you and I could do that, right? Couldn't we meet on purpose regularly to talk about business stuff?" And she was like "yes we can that'll be \$17,000" because she's Jamie and is always funny. But we started meeting in maybe March or April, then we both went on a trip called Literary London hosted by Tsh Oxenreider and Emily P. Freeman, and Bri McKoy was on that trip. She shared in our group time that she wished she had someone to talk to about her business and how to best make decisions and we were like come with us! Then literally weeks later, Jamie invited Laura to our first call, and we just tried to see if we worked well together. Turns out we do. The energy the four of us have together is really special and has been a huge driver in shaping the Lazy Genius. They're not the only places I get advice or counsel or ideas, but the consistency of our meetings and the purpose of our friendship which is primarily to be each other's business cheerleaders was tremendously clarifying and helpful and I love them so much.

The 14th moment that shaped the Lazy Genius was the book I wrote, The Lazy Genius Way. Looking at the chronology again, I started The Lazy Genius Collective in the fall of 2015, I started the interview version of the podcast almost a year later, I relaunched it with just me maybe nine months after that. Around that same time, I hired help, and I joined a mastermind. There was some rocket fuel happening in 2018. It was around this time that I decided it was time to write a book. I got so many questions about various Lazy Genius aspects, and I wanted to create a single resource for people. Now I thought that resource would be a book full of specific ideas - how to clean everything, how to plan everything, how to do everything everything. I wrote a book proposal in the same summer I went to London, so before the official beginning of my mastermind, and my agent pitched that proposal in the fall of 2018. I agreed to a deal with my publisher Waterbrook Multnomah on September 27, 2018, I signed the official contract in October, I started writing the book in January of 2019, it came out in August of 2020 because book publishing takes a really long time, and here we are. You're still reading it, it's still

selling, it was a New York Times bestseller, and I'm so glad that I figured out what the book was as I wrote it.

And that's the 15th moment. Writing that book taught me that you learn what works by doing something that might not. I did with the book because I had to write over 50,000 horrible garbage words to find the book. It wasn't supposed to be a book with a list of ways to do something. It was a book of principles that you could apply to any situation and figure out your own way of doing something based on what matters to you. Every reader is different, but principles serve every single one of them in every single situation. But I wouldn't have found that book if I didn't try the other way first. I've done that multiple times in this business. I have no way of knowing what will work until I try something knowing that it might not. And that is really tough for me as a recovering perfectionist who didn't try things unless she knew she'd be amazing at them out of the gate. That's not how you create a business that serves people. You have to try. You have to mess up and tweak and pivot and hold plans loosely while still making plans. It's so amebic and strange running your own business, especially one where you're creating content for people to consume, but it continues to find its shape because we try, and when it doesn't work quite right, we figure out what to do next to see if something else will stick and serve you a little bit better.

And those are the 15 moments that shaped the lazy genius. I hope that this answers some origin story questions for you, but I also hope you see that nothing happens all at once. Ever. Every person's experience is a collection of loosely connected parts that build on each other, but you don't really know what they're building when you're in the middle of it. That's why I'm so glad I did this episode! I got to see how everything has been building on itself for years, even decades. This kind of work has always been in me, and even though it could've taken any number of shapes, the experiences I had over the years led me here, and I'm so glad they did.

Thank you so much for being the only reason those moments have a place to land. This space would not exist without you. I could have lived all of those moments, but if you weren't here, listening and reading and making chicken and turning Lazy Genius into a verb, I would have a different path. Which would be okay, but it's such an honor that the path is what it is and that you are here with me on it.

I also wanted to let you know before we go that if you really love this Lazy Genius space and want to level up how you apply Lazy Genius principles to your own life, this week, the doors are open for Camp21, a membership community where we learn how to level up your Lazy Genius life. Details are at thelazygeniuscollective.com/camp21, so in case the podcast is the only way you interact with me or you miss me talking about it this week on Instagram or you don't get my newsletter, I wanted to mention it here! The link will be in the show notes.

Let's take a final moment to celebrate our Lazy Genius of the Week! It's Mary Chris Richard who wrote this in a recent Instagram post: "Yesterday I listened to the lazy genius podcast called how to rally on a bad day. I just love her practicality in naming what matters, how to show grace along the way, and leave the rest behind. I often catch myself wondering when does it get

easier? And if I'm being honest we go from one hard stage to the next with this crew. (This crew is a photo of four adorable tiny humans.) So instead we're learning. We're learning to recognize the season we're in, we're identifying what matters to us, and showing lots of grace along the way. This week, it was filling up a sticker chart for using calm bodies and kind words. And can't we all just agree with Christine that we're here for the ice cream." And Christine is the tiniest human in the picture very happy that she's holding a giant cup of said ice cream. Mary thank you for sharing these sweet words and this lovely moment of your family just living life one small step at a time! I love seeing stuff like this, so thank you for being our Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, fam, thank you for being 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!