

#208 - Essentializing Your Phone Apps

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 208 - essentializing your phone apps. I'm guessing if you're listening to a podcast, you have a smartphone. It's not correct to say that everyone has one since not everyone does for a variety of reasons, but for the subset of humanity that is this audience, it's likely that everyone does. Today, I want to help you essentialize your phone apps. Essentialize is one of 13 Lazy Genius principles in my book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, which currently has over 1800 five star reviews on Amazon if you want to see if it's right for you. In this episode, we're going to specifically apply the principle of essentializing to your phone apps to that you can go from being overwhelmed or annoyed or distracted by your apps to having them serve you in a way that matters.

Before we get started, this is not an episode about screen time. There is one of those, and it's actually super fantastic. It's episode 196 - *How to Lazy Genius Adult Screen Time*, and the feedback the week that episode came out was so good. No one felt shamed or judged about how much they're on their phones because that's not the point, is it? The point is naming what matters to you and making choices to support that. So, just so you know what you're getting into today, this is not an episode about the time you spend on your phone; that's episode 196. This is focused solely on your apps - the ones you have, when you interact with them, and how they're stored.

Now if we're going to essentialize your phone apps, we need to know what essentializing is. The word essentialism was coined by Greg McKeown in his book *Essentialism* which is a fantastic read and focused more on your work and vocation. Basically, you want to only focus on the work that is essential rather than on all the extra stuff that takes you away from that. But I think naming what's essential goes far beyond your work and also needs a few steps to help you figure out what to do after you know what's essential. That's why essentialize is a new verb we will use and love in this Lazy Genius community. There are three steps to essentializing anything. First, name what matters. Second, get rid of what's in the way of that. And third, make sure you have what you need to support it. It's pretty simple, and the applications for this principle are beautiful and vast. You can essentialize your medicine cabinet, your exercise routine, your approach to birthday parties, your relationship with your mother-in-law, and your phone apps. Anything can be improved using this principle.

So first, name what matters. What matters to you about your phone apps? I'm guessing the thing that matters most falls in one of three categories: what apps you have and how they function, when and how you interact with those apps, and how the apps are actually stored on your phone. Remember, I can't tell you how to organize your apps or which ones to get because we have different lives and different priorities. What matters most to you doesn't matter most to me, so it's so important to name what matters most first. Once you do that, you'll be able to make better decisions for yourself.

So the first area. Is the priority about the actual apps? Does it matter most that you have the best apps to serve your life ever? Does it matter most that everything functions super well? Does it matter that things sync up with your laptop or something else in your family? Does it matter that you only have fun things, that you don't have any fun things because they're too distracting, or most likely somewhere in between? What matters most about the actual apps?

Maybe that's not your priority. Maybe the area that matters most is when and how you use the apps? Is it that you use them more than you'd like? Is that you go in for one thing and get distracted by another thing? Is it that you can't find what you need? It could be the thing that matters most is in the category of when and how you interact with your apps.

The third area that likely has what matters most is how the apps are stored. Is there something about how you access them, how they look, or how they're organized that is a priority for you?

Take a minute to name what matters most about your phone apps. And if you're not 100% sure, just name one thing you think is likely a high priority. Essentialize based on that for now, and it certainly won't hurt anything. If things shift in the future as they often do, you can adjust later. This isn't rocket science. Just choose. You won't do it wrong. And you might not be doing anything at all now to intentionally think about your apps, so taking a small step in the direction of something that matters, even if you're unsure if it matters most, will still make your life likely feel a tiny bit easier.

Okay, so if the first step in essentializing is naming what matters, the second step is getting rid of what it's in the way of that. What is preventing you from being able to live with what matters most?

If your priority is in that area of the actual apps you have, that you only want apps you love and use, then the way you can get rid of what's in the way is to delete unused apps. Purge your phone. If you're worried that you'll purge something you'll want again, put all the purged apps in a folder on the last page of your phone. Keep them but put them out of sight if that's an issue. But you might have three different meal planning apps or exercise apps or to-do list apps because you download stuff in an attempt to get your life together, but now your phone is full of apps you don't use. Purge to get rid of what's in the way of your essential apps.

What about if what matters most is when or how you interact with your apps? Again, check out episode 196 about adult screen time, but you could get rid of easy access to distracting apps. Put them in a random folder on a back page if you'd like to stop automatically clicking on Instagram every time you open your phone. Instagram is not bad. I love Instagram. Let me make that clear. What I'm saying is if what matters to you is that you're not distracted by the same apps all the time, maybe get rid of easy access to them. You can also get rid of notifications for certain apps, you can silence notifications for certain text threads or folks you text. There are a lot of people in your life who you text with you who will not text you emergency related things. So if you what matters to you is not constantly being tapped on the shoulder by your phone, you could silence your texts. They still come through and that red number or

whatever is on non Apple products still shows up, but you don't get the notification. So you can get rid of alerts. Another way you can get rid of what's in the way if what matters is excess time is setting some app limits in your settings or overall screen time limits. If you know it's not good for you to spend more than an hour a day on Instagram, set a limit for social media apps that your phone gives you a little high five and then pat on the butt to move along after it's been an hour. Get rid of time you don't know you're spending by setting up some limits. You can also get rid of cellular data for certain apps. If what matters to you is that you read in carpool line instead of scrolling, turn off the data to your distracting apps as a reminder to open your Kindle app or an actual book instead.

And then what if what matters most is how the apps are stored? You can get rid of an order of apps that feels ugly or clunky. Streamline in folders or pull everything out of folders. Put fun or distracting apps in the back and productive ones in the front. Or if productivity is what you want to chill out on, put your Kindle app, a meditation app, and a fun game on the front page. Whatever matters to you. But get rid of organizational strategies with your apps that don't serve what matters to you.

Name what matters, and then get rid of what's in the way.

The third step to essentializing your phone apps is to make sure you have what you do need to support what matters most.

If what matters most is the actual apps you have and that they serve you well, notice if there's a category of app that you're missing that would serve you, like a meditation app. Or maybe the app you do have to serve a specific purpose, like budgeting or staying in touch with people or making a grocery list, works fine but doesn't work great. Spend a few minutes looking for a substitute that works better.

What about if what matters most is when and how you interact with your apps? Something that might be missing in supporting that priority is a routine around what you do when you pick up your phone. I will often pick up my phone to check something specific and immediately open my email app and then Instagram and then I forgot why I came. Maybe you have a lockscreen that says "do what you came to do" or "stop trying to get everything done right now" or "hi you're really pretty hope you're having a good day." I know that's silly, but also you might need to add something to your phone app life that impact what matters most. If something is missing, especially after you've gotten rid of what's in the way of what matters, add that supportive thing into your life.

And then what if your priority is how your apps are stored? You could add categories and folders. Maybe there's a productivity folder. Maybe you want to limit your interactions with certain games or social media apps, so those are labeled with a timeframe you're going to engage with them. Maybe you even make a Carpool Line folder, and those are the fun distracting mindless apps you're going to play around with during that specific time if that matters to you. You can organize your apps in rainbow color if having the phone feel pretty

matters, you can change your lockscreen or background to something that makes you smile, you can put only one app on the front page to remind you that that app is the thing you want to do more than the other things. There was a season where the only app on my first screen was my Kindle app. It was a visual reminder of like “hey, you love reading. This is a priority to you. I’m just reminding you.”

So that process of essentializing is personal and works. Name what matters, get rid of what’s in the way of that, and make sure you have what you need to support whatever matters most. To give you an A to Z example, I’ll share my own essentializing process.

What matters most to me is that I don’t go into the phone twilight zone. Like I said, I really love Instagram, I use my phone a lot to stay in touch with people and stay on top of what I need to do and all the things we love about having a computer in our pockets. But when it comes to zoning out, I’d much rather read. Like much much rather read. But - and I said this in the adult screen time episode - it’s important to remember that apps and the Internet and social media and all of it is created to make you stay. That’s the whole point. People make money when you’re on your phone, so they’re going to do whatever they can to keep you there. There’s nothing wrong with staying there, but if you want to have a different intention with your time at certain times of the day or whenever you open your phone, it’s important to remember that it is a bit of an uphill battle just because of how the thing is created. So all that to say, my biggest priority with my phone is that I don’t fall down the rabbit hole and find myself having scrolled for an hour when I could have been reading. Or that everything is so automatic that when I open the phone to check if it’s supposed to rain during soccer practice tonight, I spend ten more minutes opening the other apps because they’re there and I’ve gone automatic on it.

So if that’s what matters, the best thing that I can get rid of is the expected. I have to trick my brain into not expecting a certain app to be in a certain place. That simple tap of “oh wait that’s not my email app” because I moved it to another folder with completely unrelated things helps wake me up enough to remember that I’d rather be reading. Almost always. Or it reminds me that I can check the weather and then turn off the phone. So I will get rid of my phone set up often. I’ll rearrange everything and put stuff in different folders and on different pages. It’s almost like being in high school in English class or something and you’re in discussion groups and then everyone has to get up and find a new seat. I do that with my apps to keep my brain from getting too connected to interacting with them a certain way.

And that third step of what do I need depends on my season. Sometimes after a busy work season where I’m on Instagram a lot, for example after my book came out last year, I needed to have the only things on my front screen be my Kindle app, the Spotify and Sonos apps so I could play music, Voxer because I like talking to my friends, and the Starbucks app because it was fun to think about taking a minute for a fun treat after a busy season. I don’t always know what I’m missing until I think about the season I’m in.

Remember the Lazy Genius principle of Live in the Season. It’s important to name where you are. I needed my phone a lot when I was launching my book. To put Instagram and my camera

app and the apps I use to make graphics and all that, to put those in some obscure folder on a back page would not have served me in that season. It would've been really annoying. What you need depends on your season. It's not as simple as "be on your phone less." That's diminutive and generalizes your situation and might even feel like you're shaming yourself. You decide what you need, and there are seasons where we need to take a break from all the apps or some of the apps and other seasons where we want to play so much Two Dots or Spider Solitaire because our brains are just so overloaded with input. You decide what matters. And once you do that, you can essentialize your phone apps.

I hope this helps you and gives you some encouragement to see your smartphone through different eyes. In case you're interested, I'll be sharing my essential apps on Instagram this week. I have ones that really do impact my life in beautiful ways every single day, so I'll share those @thelazygenius this week, so if you don't follow me there and would to, please do! And of course I'd love to hear how you're essentializing your phone apps; we'll probably have a feed post where you guys can share what you're doing to name what matters, get rid of what's in the way, and have what you need. The more we practice essentializing, the easier it becomes.

Before we go, it's time to celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week, it's Liz Wienke. She wrote an Instagram post recently @mamaste_well (great name by the way) that was so beautiful and so very Lazy Genius and I wanted to share it with you. Liz writes underneath a picture of her sassy smile and a tshirt that says "Espresso Yourself" the following:

Dirty hair. Tired eyes with yesterday's makeup smudged beneath them. Picking up takeout yet again. We are in the middle of a move and things feel hectic. Things ARE hectic. I've often resisted "survival mode." It felt like a cop-out. An excuse to just not try. But, like it or not, we are smack dab in the middle of survival mode over here.

I started listening to the book "The Lazy Genius Way" and it is the biggest breath of fresh air. It's given me permission to let go of perfection. Moving is chaotic and trying to tightly control it and maintain order and routine in every area would lead me right over the edge.

Instead, the principles of this book are helping me prioritize what matters and let go of what doesn't. I'm doing my best to "live in the season" (principle 4). I'm feeling more organized than I thought because I'm "deciding once" (principle 1), "batching it" (principle 9) and "essentializing" (principle 10). I "let people in" (principle 8) ✨thank you ✨ @jakewienke and @alwienke for taking our kids 🙏 And most importantly, I'm trying my best to "schedule rest" (principle 12) and "be kind to myself" (principle 13).

[@thelazygenius](#) if you're looking for a hype girl, I'm her (she is me?) 🥳

Oh, and this may seem unrelated to my usual Intuitive Eating content, but I FIRMLY believe that had I not given up dieting and learned to cultivate self-compassion, I'd be a tightly wound mess right now. Letting go of perfectionism with food really does spread into other areas. Start small (principle 2) 🙏

Liz, I love every single dingdang word of this. Thank you for so generously sharing about the book but also showing us how to apply multiple principles in a way that supports what matters to you. This whole thing just made me smile so big, so thank you for being a Lazy Genius and encouraging your community and listening and reading and all the things. Congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

That's it for today, y'all. Thanks so much for listening, for following me on Instagram @thelazygenius, for reading The Lazy Genius Way, and for being generally awesome humans. 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!