

#224 - When Things Don't Go According to Plan

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 224 - when things don't go according to plan. There are plenty of opportunities for that to be true, and today, I want us to figure out some strategies to deal with it.

This episode was inspired by last week's episode The Lazy Genius Gets Out the Door. One of the reasons we all have trouble getting out the door is things not going according to plan. There are so many variables, so many things we can't control, that shift the whole plan. Like a kid suddenly having to poop right as you're trying to leave. Or someone throwing a tantrum because they didn't get to feed an imaginary breakfast to their stuffed bunny. Getting in a tiff with your partner. Spilling your coffee on your pants because your ability to carry everything failed you today. And of course, things don't go according to plan in plenty of other situations, not just ones involving getting out the door. The list is endless.

So what do we do? How do we move through a situation that is out of our control and also messes up our plans? Makes us late? Makes us mad? Makes us resentful of people who can't get their ish together? It spirals fast.

A lot of what I'm about to share is from 150ish episodes ago, episode 87 - The Lazy Genius Guide to Flexibility. That was created during the holiday season where we have a lot of grand plans that can sometimes fall apart. There are three steps to flexibility in that episode, and we're going to adjust them to fit our conversation today. Again, we love to live by principles because they are helpful and specific but also versatile. Things change. We need our tools to always be able to come along for the ride.

So step one when things don't go according to plan is to remember that plans are intentions, not pass/fail. Plans are intentions, not pass/fail. I personally struggle with this because I like being on time. In fact, when I'm late, I feel like I'm being disrespectful to the other person. It becomes a source of personal value that I am where I'm supposed to be when I'm supposed to be there. Being late is antithetical to how I'm wired. I hate it. I hate it! And also sometimes I am. Sometimes other people are. Sometimes things happen that make us late. Literally this very morning when I came to work to record this episode, my babysitter was 20 minutes late because she overslept. And I was totally fine and get it. I don't want her to feel a bunch of shame because her alarm didn't go off. That happens to everyone! All of our alarms sometimes don't go off or we set it to PM instead of AM or we hit stop instead of snooze and fall back asleep. We are human, you guys. We're human. We're going to be late. We're going to encounter things in our plan that don't work out and make it a little harder to be on time.

I'm not saying you can't care about being on time. I do. But what I want us all to remember is that our plans to get out the door or whatever plan you want to consider is not a judgment on our character. It's not a pass/fail situation where we get to beat ourselves up or the other people

in our family for being late or having to poop or dropping the jar of strawberry jam and it busting all over the kitchen. Stuff happens.

Rule or principle or perspective number two. Your attitude sets the tone, both ways.

I always try and think about how I would want someone else to treat me if it's time to leave and I have to poop or I drop the jar of strawberry jam or I spill the coffee or I oversleep. How would I want my people to treat me? How would their attitude impact mine? I would want them to be patient which would help me to be calmer. I would really appreciate it if they didn't make me feel bad for my choice or mistake or oversight. I'd rather not be shamed because if they don't see my being late as a shameful thing, it'll be easier for me to not see it that way, too. I'd even go so far as to say that I'd be very appreciative if people didn't dramatically sigh while they're waiting for me. I'm not trying to make us late. Sometimes things happen. And when they do and I'm to blame so to speak, it would mean a lot to me if my family wouldn't make me feel bad about it. I'm trying to get out of the house just as much as everybody else, and other people's attitudes toward my actions make a huge difference.

When I think about that, about how I'd like to be treated, it helps me consider better how to treat my people. My attitude matters. Big time. And I'm not saying this is easy or comes naturally for me. It very much does not. Two of my three kids are stragglers. They often forget things, they can't find shoes, Annie sometimes wants to bring her literally giant bed comforter with her in the van and I do not have the patience for such a request we've got to go, girl! But for whatever reason, bringing her bedding matters to her. I'm not saying we bring it, but rather than being huffy and sharply saying "No, put it back we've got to go" which leads to tears anyway, I really try and ask her "Can you tell me why this matters today?" She might need comfort, and maybe we find something smaller as a substitute. She might feel a little disconnected from me because I've been working and she's home during the summer instead of in school and is weirded out by the fact that I'm gone most mornings, so taking her bedding is calming to her when she has to be with another babysitter. It might be worth it on those days. I want her to feel confident in her needs, confident in sharing them with me, and confident that when she does, I'm going to meet her with kindness... which helps her be kinder towards herself and those needs. Whereas if I dismiss her quickly, she's going to feel that. She's going to feel dismissed, and there goes our connection.

Remember what matters most. People. People and their souls. Yours, too. You can still care about being on time, but starting with this idea of plans not being pass/fail is vital to putting you in the right perspective about the whole thing, and then you can remember the power of your own attitude towards yourself and your people. Remember what matters most.

And then third is to pivot. Okay, let's get practical here. I want you to focus on a scenario where you often feel like you have to pivot. It's good to have a practical, tangible example to think through as we talk about the steps of pivoting. So maybe you can think about getting out the door which again is what inspired this episode in the first place, or think of a situation where you feel like you have to pivot on a regular basis. Maybe things don't go according to plan when you

go grocery shopping. It takes longer than you think, you forget your list, you forget to make a list, you forget the one thing you needed the most, something like that. It could be related to work, a person, a day of the week, any number of things. I think we all have a situation in our lives where we feel like our plans never really pan out, so try and name what that situation is for you as we break down how to pivot. And remember, I can't give you an actual literal plan B or pivot specifics because everyone has a different plan A and needs to pivot based on different needs and personalities and priorities and all the things. I will not give you specifics because I simply can't, but I will give you some specific tools and steps to more easily figure out what your specifics are.

The first step when you need to pivot is to feel grounded. By grounded, I mean that you are connected to where you are and what matters before you spin out of control, whatever that means for you. Maybe you need to calm down because you're escalating. Maybe you need to focus because you're shutting down and withdrawing. Maybe you need to smile because your anger is strengthening. Maybe you need to step outside and sense some nature to help you connect to the world around you. This is a real therapeutic technique, you guys. Grounding yourself is an incredibly important part of managing a situation when things don't go according to plan. Use your senses. Take deep breaths. Smell your coffee. Listen to a bird or a song. Look at the sky. Look at the face of the kid who is making you late and smile at them. Take a deep breath and say to yourself "my child has to poop and neither he nor I are failures because of this." Just tell yourself the truth and stay grounded in where you are. It sounds too simple and maybe even a little annoying - trust me, I have felt that way - but believe me when I say it really helps. So first step is to stay grounded.

Second step in your pivot plan is to ask yourself who needs to know? Who needs to know that your plans are changing? If you're on your way to work and you have a meeting pretty much right when you get there but a kid is currently evacuating his bowels, you might want to tell your boss or a coworker or someone that you will be there as quickly as you can, but you literally cannot make your kid poop faster.

Also side note, you cannot make your kid poop faster. And in fact, hounding that kid to poop faster might make them poop slower. They get stressed and tense and you need to relax to poop. That's just a side note. Try and be chill with the whole last minute pooping situation.

But yes second step. Who needs to know? A great part of this step is that if no one needs to know, maybe it's not such a big deal that you're running late or that the plan changed. If it's not really affecting anyone but your own plan, you can breathe and keep grounding yourself and realize that it's not as big of a deal as it feels.

Step three: ask yourself the magic question. What can I do now to make this change of plans easier later? Is the changed plan or late exit likely going to make you get home later around dinner time? Maybe you can pull out a couple of pantry ingredients for dinner or fill the pasta pot with water or pull out the Instant Pot from the closet or whatever else while the straggler is finding her shoes. What can you do right now to make this change of plans land easier later? Do

that one thing. One thing. Not seven. Start with one. Likely end with one. But don't make yourself even later by giving yourself a sudden to-do list that you'll feel bad for not completing even though you didn't have it until just the minute.

So step one, stay grounded. Step two, ask yourself who needs to know. Step three, ask the magic question. And finally step four, do step one again. Remain grounded. Use your senses. Take deep breaths. Remember what matters most. You guys, plans change all the time. If we hold so tightly to those plans that we forget to be gracious, flexible humans, we will be so annoyed with ourselves and our people and our failed planning and our kids' choices and our partners' apathy and the list goes on. Stay grounded. Remember what matters. That will serve you far better than detailed plan B's and checklists and whatever else. Because, listen, those things can actually super help you with your shifting plans but not without the pivot steps coming first. If you try and execute a detailed plan B without being grounded and present, without remembering that plans are not pass-fail, without valuing your attitude and how it impacts your own soul and the souls of your people, your plan won't matter. It just won't. It's valuable but only when those other pieces are present first. And speaking personally, when those other pieces are present, the plan B loses importance. It doesn't matter nearly as much as it did before. That's why the pivot steps are what they are. The only real practical parts are to let people know if they need to know and to ask the magic question. Super simple. Keep it simple, y'all. The complicated stuff just makes life more complicated.

And that's what to do when things don't go according to plan.

I hope this episode is helpful, and I think it could get a lot of practice in these next few weeks as we all transition into fall and new schedules and routines and all the things.

Okay, before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the week! Y'all aren't ready for this one. Heather Lenox at @hopeandhilarity shared this idea last week maybe, and it might be one of the most brilliant ideas of all time. She posted a photo of her in a laundromat with her feet up, and this is the caption: "Time for my home-from-vacation tradition and one of my favorite life hacks: vacation laundry does not enter the house. It stays in the baskets and goes straight to the laundromat. Mom brings a book, puts her feet up, and gets a solid two hours to herself to come out of the post-vacation hangover, plus gets all that gross and stinky wet laundry done at once. This is the best "decide once" lazy genius type life hacks I've ever implemented. It makes coming home from vacation that much less daunting." YOU GUYS. HEATHER WINS AT LIFE. This is brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. We always fill one suitcase or duffel bag with everyone's dirty laundry so that we don't have to unpack everything before we start laundry, but the idea of doing that outside of the house? With quiet and a book? I am on board with this idea so much. Thank you for sharing, Heather, and thank you for being this week's lazy genius of the week!

Okay, y'all, that's all for today! Thanks so much for listening, 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!