

#243 - Lazy Genius Questions for the Start of 2022

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 243 - Lazy Genius Questions for the Start of 2022. It's the first Monday in January which always has some fun energy to it. Fun? Is fun the right word? It has an energy to it. The level of fun depends on your personality and circumstances I suppose.

But new years do offer deep breaths, clean slates, and maybe a little hope. Granted, when I went back and looked at this episode from last January, naming what matters in 2021, I was clearly under the impression that we were moving back into a state of normal again and had a lot more hope about that than actually happened. Life is still upside-down in many, many ways. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't hope.

So as we move into this new calendar year, I want us to do it like Lazy Geniuses. I want all of you listening to feel confident and grounded in any decisions you make about what you want to be a genius about and what you want to be lazy about. What matters? I also want you to kindly hold those decisions and not grip them into existence. Circumstances change. Expectations change. CDC requirements change. Kids change. Jobs change. Personalities change. As we begin, it's so important to be kind as we leave space for things to change. What you decide now will very likely shift before the end of 2022. It's just the way it goes. Remember from last week's episode, I did one of the seven things I set out to do last year. Just one. Things shift, and that's okay. This is simply naming an intention and living with it until things shift in whatever ways they might need to.

I have said this before, but I'm not naturally gifted at reflection. I'm focused on right now first, I plan second, and I look back in a very distant third. Side note: Emily P. Freeman is a fantastic guru for reflection, and if you'd like a guide for regular reflection, check out her Next Right Thing Guided Journal.

So yes I like to be where I am, make right now better, and then look ahead. But we look ahead better when we know where we came from. So I want to share a list of questions to help you think about 2022 like a Lazy Genius, and many of them focus on this last year, on 2021.

I listed 30 questions in a blog post called 30 Lazy Genius Questions for the Start of a New Year. The link will be in the show notes so you can access them easily. I'm not going to expand on all 30 questions in this episode, but what I do want to do is suggest how you can incorporate the answers to those questions into intentions for the next year.

Before we get into some of the questions, let's talk for a second about this idea of goals and growth and such. This time of year, I always think about Laura Ingalls Wilder and Little House on the Prairie. I think about Wendell Berry and just the general farmer from decades and even centuries ago. I always think about how this idea of new years and fresh starts seems so modern. Did people two hundred years ago set new years resolutions? Two thousand years

ago? I always think about it but never explore it, and this year I did. I read a couple of articles from the History Channel, so I'm basically an expert now. But yes, people have been making choices for the future and reflecting on past choices at the start of the new year as early as 4000 years ago. But most of those ceremonies or rituals were built around commitments to the gods or to capital G God. Commitments to pay debts owed, celebrations of another harvest year since the "new year" for a long time wasn't marked by January 1st but in mid-March when it was time to start a new season of planting. It's only been recently where these new year resolutions were made to ourselves for our own self-improvement.

Here's why I always think of Little House. I used to love reading those books as a kid. Paragraphs and paragraphs of how they cured meat, how they stored potatoes in the cellar, how they hunkered down in the winter and enjoyed being outside in the spring. I love the children's book *The Oxcart Man* for that same reason. It's a beautiful book about a man who takes his ox and a cart full of foods he grew, candles his family made, pillows his wife and daughter embroidered, and he travels for days and days to town where he sells all of those goods. Then he sells the oxcart. Then he sells the ox. And with a pocket full of coins, he goes back home where his family spends the next year growing more food, making more candles, embroidering more pillows, and the man builds a new cart for an ox that's growing up. It's so rhythmic and cyclical and beautiful. And the hopes and dreams and intentions are decided for this family by the seasons. The Ingalls family is the same way. They're not making resolutions to drink more water or get off their phones for very obvious reasons, namely they didn't have phones.

But this energy in the new year always leaves me conflicted. I have said before that I wouldn't mind living in an apocalypse as long as there weren't zombies or anything terrible after me. I wouldn't mind just living with very few items where the seasons dictated what I was doing. But then I think about how much I don't enjoy dirt under my fingernails and how much I adore Target pick-up and think yeah okay that's not really for me.

But the spirit is there. I think we all have the spirit of wanting to focus on what matters most, not on everything possible. This generation is one that has to work harder to figure out what matters. The answer to that question used to be a lot simpler. And maybe that's the simplicity I want to hold on to when I think about Wendell Berry and Laura Ingalls and the *Oxcart Man*. I wish it was easier to choose what matters. I wish there weren't so many options, right?

So our task as Lazy Geniuses moving into this new year is to kindly, honestly, and intentionally limit our options so that we're not constantly overwhelmed by what doesn't really matter.

I think a good place to start is with these questions I mentioned earlier. Again, the list is on the blog and will be linked in the show notes, but I'll run through a few of them here to give you an idea.

There's nothing super new here. Lists of end-of-year questions are generally the same. Ish. So you can use this list or any other that you like, but I'm going to highlight a few questions that I think are important.

I think it's good to name favorite things from the past year. Things like books, shows, movies, the obvious. But I also like asking what outfit I loved because that gives me a window into what was either comfortable or made me feel like myself. I ask what my favorite place was, what my favorite time of day was. Naming those things helps center you in your regular day and maybe prioritize those places or times of day in the future.

I want you to ask yourself what was restful to you and what was energizing to you. We struggle so much to create and schedule rest in the future, so name what was restful in the past. Name what was energizing, too! Even though that's not technically rest, the Lazy Genius definition of self-care which includes rest is doing whatever makes you feel like yourself. Usually things that bring us energy fall into that category.

There are also some questions about how you feel about yourself. What was hard at the start of the year that's easier now? How have you changed? What have you learned? How do you feel about yourself after last year? And what do you want to feel about yourself in the coming year? That's an important question because so much of the new year spin cycle we get stuck in is about becoming a certain kind of person who does a certain type of thing. To keep yourself out of that spin cycle, name really and truly how you want to feel about yourself. Is that feeling a kind one? Is it taking your season into account? Is it assuming you have certain tools or resources or abilities that you don't actually have yet or might not ever have?

So many of these questions are geared towards being honest about how you feel about yourself, giving yourself credit for the good you've done, celebrating the fun and the accomplishments and just the regular existing that you've done. And as you hold that posture toward yourself, hopefully it will help you move into intentions for a new year with more kindness.

We'll be right back...

Now let's park on the final handful of questions from the list of 30 that's in that blog post. The first I just touched on: *how do I feel about myself after this last year?* Name that in an honest way, and notice if there's any unkindness there.

Next question: *How do I want to feel about myself in the coming year?* What do you want your posture to be toward yourself? And as you answer that, let that be a filter through which you process any priorities or goals or dreams for this next year. Are you creating lists of things to do that align with how you truly want to feel about yourself? Not a trick or leading question. Just be aware of how your view of yourself impacts your goals.

After that, I'd like you to ask *what do I want to bring from last year into this year?* This speaks to different things you might have learned about your personality, observations about how you've changed as a person in big or small ways, how you move in the world, how you interact with people, that kind of thing. Or maybe it's a habit. Maybe there's something you started doing in 2021 that you want to keep doing in 2022. It matters now because you've experienced the positive effects it has on your life. So what do you want to bring from last year into this year?

Now here's where we get into the nitty gritty. The next question is *what do I think will matter this year?* Hopefully after answering the 20+ questions before, you'll have a better idea of what this answer could be. Personally, my answer at the start of 2021 was honoring my body and seeking after joy. Those were the two things that personally mattered to me last year, mostly because my body had been through a lot in 2020 and was tired and always the last on the list. And the joy part was because 2020 was so daggum depressing that I wanted to intentionally seek after and share joy. Those were the two things I named that I assumed would matter most. So what do you think will matter this year? If the year is too big which it often is, make it smaller. Break it down by season or quarters or even by month. What matters most this month? In this season of life that I'm in?

I realize this question is a big one and can be overwhelming because part of the problem is trying to make everything matter, right? But go back to our Laura Ingalls Oxcart Man line of thinking. Their lives were simpler - maybe not easier, but simpler - because their list of priorities was short. Even though the possibilities that could exist on your list are way longer than what Laura's family would have, that doesn't mean you can't make a short list for yourself.

Can I offer a slightly deep thought for you to consider? I was talking to my therapist the other day about my life and where I am, and we were doing a tiny bit of end-of-year thinking. I realized how my life is busier than it ever has been before but that I feel more calm than I ever have before. I've always thought that by managing my to-do list and my schedule and my circumstances and my habits that I can be better at life. And while learning those things is great and there are many podcast episodes right here on this feed that can help you with those things, the most powerful thing we can put intention toward is learning about our own patterns, telling our own stories, naming the tendencies we have that put us in less than ideal emotional circumstances. The more I learn about myself, the more I tell myself the truth about who I am, the more I believe that my value doesn't come from what others assign to me or what I do or how capable or perfect or fill-in-the-blank I am, the more grounded and whole I feel in my circumstances. The more I receive helpful tools to help me manage not so much my to-do list but the stress around not having it done. I am busier than ever, and I am also calmer than ever. Because I'm learning how to be, not so much what to do.

So if you're overwhelmed by the list of all the things that could matter, I would encourage you to think about what your year would look like if you prioritized learning about yourself. Go to counseling, explore some deeper levels of things like the enneagram, pay attention to when you disconnect from relationships and what's going through your head when that happens. Notice, adjust in the tiniest ways, seek out a tool or two to help you navigate that process of becoming

more of yourself. I think that's an incredibly helpful, transformative thing that can matter. Not who you should be but who you already are. Just brighter and without as much baggage because you're learning to name it and release it from the role it's had in your life so far.

Next question that can connect with what matters is: *what habits or rituals or rhythms would I like to see in my life this next year?* This is not about doing the things that everyone else says to do. But when you think about the answer to what your favorite time of day is or your favorite place to be, maybe a way to answer this question about habits or rituals or rhythms is to make that place or that time of day a regular priority for yourself. If you love twilight but find yourself having to rush through chores and dinner cleanup and kid bedtimes so that you always miss it, maybe you choose one night a week where you go outside and enjoy the twilight. I'd like to say every night, but I realize that might not be feasible for a lot of you, especially folks who are full-time working parents. A lot has to happen in the handful of hours you're home, so relishing the twilight might not be as realistic. But one night a week? That's a ritual you can probably do. What habits or rituals or rhythms would you like to see in your life this next year, and then pick one. Start small. Make how you do it even smaller. It's better to begin in a very small way and keep going than build it big and never start.

Speaking of starting, the next to last question is a pair of questions: *what would I like to finish? And what would I like to start?* I think it's important to have projects or goals or whatever word you want to use that aren't going to be A to Z in one calendar year. To me, that can be a lot of unnecessary pressure. But naming something that's already started that you'd like to finish? That seems reasonable. Naming something you'd like to start without the expectation of finishing in 2022? That also seems reasonable. What do you want to finish, and what do you want to start?

And the final question is *based on this last year, what advice would I give myself moving into this next year?* I love this perspective because it helps us be kind to ourselves. We've reflected and named a lot of things that matter, and now that we have another year behind us and we're in that reflection mode, what advice would you give yourself?

Then take that advice. Make it smaller. Remember it as often as you're able. If you want to take any of these answers or intentions or rituals or whatever you're bringing into the new year that's measurable, how do you want to maintain and measure that thing based on the advice you just gave yourself? Create the smallest rhythms with the kindest hearts, remembering that your circumstances are not what determine your life but how you respond to them. It's like Gandalf says to Frodo "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." I watched the entire Lord of the Rings trilogy last week while I wrapped presents, so all things Gandalf are top of mind right now. But that's still the truth. Our existence in this world is more rooted in who we are and how we are than in what we do. Resolutions are almost always based on what we're doing, and while I get the idea that our actions impact our thoughts, I also think that our world is so action-based that sometimes we need to focus less on that doing and more on the being. Just be. Just learn about yourself, kindly create opportunities to do that, be soft in the process, do what makes you feel like yourself, what gives you energy, what brings you rest. Be with

people who love you well in the midst of that. Try out counseling for the first time or go back after years away. Hopefully answering some of these questions will help you in that process of becoming more of who you already are in this next year.

And that's it for today. The link to the list of questions will be in the show notes as well as a couple of other past podcast episodes that might give you some encouragement. Also the next issue of the Latest Lazy Letter goes out on Wednesday of this week, and I'm going to share some of my own answers to these questions in that newsletter if you'd like to get it. Just a reminder, we do a giveaway every month for newsletter subscribers, one winner that's been on the list awhile and one that just signed up within the last month. Winners get their pick of anything from the Lazy Genius store, so be sure to sign up!

That's it 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!