

#246 - 5 Essential Mindsets for Time Management

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 246 - 5 Essential Mindsets for Time Management. I have done a lot of content over the last few years about time management, and it continues to be the most requested topic. We all have time, we all have expectations about how we want it emptied or filled, and we have a lot of hard, busy, stressful days that we need to manage so we don't lose our minds. It's a front-burner challenge pretty much all the time.

When we want to tackle that challenge, we look for hacks and systems and practical ideas to help us out. There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, here are some episodes you can listen to. Episode 197 is The Lazy Genius Plans a Day where I talk about flags, bunting, and chairs. Episode 198 is How to Lazy Genius Your To-Do List because so much of our daily planning is organizing the stuff we have to do. And episode 238 is How to Get Stuff Done When You Don't Feel Like It because that's very very real. Those are practical and helpful, but practical isn't the only piece of the puzzle. One of my foundational principles in my work is that we need both practicality *and* permission. System *and* soul. Telling you that you're doing great matters and makes a difference. Giving you ideas and systems on how to get stuff done also matters and makes a difference, but the two together are where we can start to see some real change. We all need both. So since I've already given you some really practical episodes on time management, today I want to go a bit higher level and share some essential mindsets or mantras that will impact your time management no matter what your time looks like. I have said all of these in fits and starts in different places, but this is your episode to have all of your time management mindsets in one place. So let's jump in.

Number one: your beliefs affect your time more than your schedule does. Your beliefs affect your time more than your schedule does. I'm not saying you need to manifest your time or that your appointments aren't actually real. None of that. Your schedule is legit. You likely have actual things to do. But what I want to encourage you in is that your beliefs about your time have a greater, deeper impact on how you spend it.

For example, if you tell yourself that you're a bad cook and can't get anything right in the kitchen and that your mother or mother-in-law or anybody that looked inside your fridge or watched you cook a meal would be so embarrassed for you, if you have that rolling loop in your head while you make a meal, it's going to take you longer. It's also going to feel like it's taking longer because you're weighing the time down with these harmful beliefs.

Less harmful but still an impactful belief is when you look at your overwhelming to-do list and you say "I'm never going to get all of this done." I often say that very sentence. But if you stay in that sentence, in that belief, and let it dictate how you plan your time, that is going to impact your schedule and your soul way more than the actual tasks will. That's part of why this episode is important and why these mindsets make a difference. You are choosing to believe new truths

about your time and how you manage it. We need these beliefs to help us craft our days in a helpful, authentic, kind way. So on to number two.

Do not judge every day against your best day.

I will say this until I am blue in the face. Do not judge every day against your best day. We all have experienced days where we're in the flow, where we're happy and light, we got stuff done, our kids or coworkers or whoever we're spending time with were all kind and easy to get along with, there were no ridiculous messes to clean up (literal or metaphorical), we took our vitamins and drank our water and got up without dragging and felt pretty and made dinner and all the things. It was such a good day, right?

A couple of things. First, my guess it's been a couple of years since you've had a good day like that. You might actually be chasing that kind of day without realizing you're doing it. But this season of the pandemic has likely taken away a lot of our past capacity to deal with hard things, so we don't really have "good" days anymore. Which leads me to do the second thing, the second subpoint under "do not judge every day against your best day."

What does best mean anyway? What is a good day? What is the measuring stick for a good day? We don't ask ourselves that question often enough, and our culture's answer that's more or less embedded into how we see and do things is that a good day is a productive day. It's an optimized day. And because it was productive and optimized, we're happier. Now listen, I think that optimizing your time is a great thing. I love efficiency and doing things in the right order. That matters. But you can't optimize every minute of every day, nor should you. I said this a couple of weeks ago and I got so many messages from all of you about it, but you are not an Instant Pot. You are not a programmable set-it-and-forget-it person. Optimization sometimes turns us into Instant Pots, and that is never more true than when we are using optimization and productivity as our measuring sticks for a good day. If we got stuff done, it was a good day. But is it? What about people who are home with tiny humans? Productivity looks really different there. What about those of you who have had to dial back your hours or have lost your jobs entirely because of the pandemic and aren't used to having nothing to do? Productivity can't be the measuring stick because it's not fluid enough. It's too rooted in things beyond your control and often beyond your season of life.

So yes, do not judge every day against your best day in that literal sense. Don't compare all your days to a really good one. But also what does good actually mean? Maybe it's that you felt grounded and like yourself. Maybe it's that you worked through the stress you experienced without disintegrating. Maybe it's that you barely got anything done on your to-do list but you were kind to yourself all the same. I think good days could be as simple as days we allow ourselves to be human and invite others to be the same.

We'll be right back...

Number three: Focus on the practice, not on the planner. Last week, I shared a photo on my Instagram feed of a tear-off monthly paper calendar. I use it to plot out things and plan, and often I throw the paper away when I'm done. It's like verbal processing but for planning. I said in the caption that I got the pad at Target I think but that the pad isn't magic. And still some of you had comments and DMs to me that assumed differently. You liked that calendar which is great - it's nice to have things that we like to look at - but the magic isn't in that particular pad. It's that I just did a thing using that pad.

We keep looking - myself included - for the perfect planner - which by the way I have an episode on choosing a planner, it's episode 127 - The Lazy Genius Chooses a Planner - but we get caught up in the planner and the pad and the system instead of in the practice. If you don't already make a meal plan let's say, having a cute dry erase weekly planner on your fridge isn't going to make you do it. The system and the tools are to support an already existing practice. That's why you get a planner and quit or buy a pretty notebook and write on two pages and then quit. It's not that planner or pad or system isn't working; it's that you don't have a practice. Focus on the practice, not on the planner.

Number four: Tend to the necessary before it becomes urgent. This is a hugely helpful mindset because it's like a decision compass. You see all the things in front of you and often respond to the urgent instead of something more rhythmic that probably makes you feel a little bit more human. Rhythms feel more grounded than putting out fires, right?

A few weeks ago, I shared on Instagram how I brain dump everything that's stressing me out and assign it one of four categories: Now, Soon, Later or Never Mind. I write everything down, everything that's on my mind - everything - I write it down in one big brain dump list, and then I sift. I decide what needs to be done now, what needs to be done soon, what can be done later, and what doesn't actually matter anymore now that I see everything listed out. That practice has helped me identify what's actually necessary and what doesn't matter but is holding my brain hostage. But one of the best things about doing that is seeing what needs to be done now so I can take care of it before it becomes an emergency. Now is this a perfect system? No. We're human. And remember systems aren't magical or perfect. But this one is simple and versatile enough that I don't feel overwhelmed by it, it taps into my humanity and doesn't make me figure out how to do everything right now, and it's an immediate litmus test for what needs to get done now versus scrambling at the last minute.

It's kind of like asking the Magic Question - what can I do now to make something easier later? What can I tend to now before it becomes urgent? Maybe it's having a file folder or a giant paper clip or binder clip in your mail basket so that when tax documents start coming in, you immediately put them in their folder or clip them together. That way when it's April, you're not scrambling trying to find everything and getting super stressed out.

Maybe it's laundry. I think sometimes we let laundry go until it's urgent. We're like we can make it one more day but then one more day is gone and you didn't do the laundry and you're tired but no one has clear underwear for tomorrow. Doing laundry a little earlier while it's necessary

but before it comes urgent helps you feel more human and not stressed out. (P.S. there are also two laundry episodes if you are so inclined. Episode 21 - an oldie - is The Lazy Genius Does Laundry and is a fan favorite, and there is also Episode 113 - The Lazy Genius Does Laundry Updated because it was over two years later and time to talk about laundry again. But all that to say, tend to the necessary before it becomes urgent. That mindset will impact your time management in practical, beautifully helpful ways, especially because it's primary objective is keeping you from task panic.

And number five: Don't do it all. Do what matters.

We know that no one can do it all, but we still kind of expect to. And when we get overwhelmed with that expectation, with that genius way, we swing to the lazy side of things and say "well, I'm not going to do anything." It's either all lazy or all genius. Instead, don't do it all. Just do what matters.

That's why everything we do here in Lazy Genius land focuses on naming what matters. When you name what matters most to you, you will focus more on that thing than on others and therefore do what matters most. Experiences will feel more complete because you did what mattered most. For example - and we're just going to insert our Lazy Genius of the week right into the episode because it's a great example. I got a message recently from Christine Lindstrom who is planning a family trip to Disneyworld. She wrote "I realized I was getting neurotic about trying to maximize every moment of this very expensive experience. Don't waste a moment. Don't miss anything! Then my 10 year old son said something about trying to make sure Disney was perfect and I realized I wasn't the only one setting myself up for disappointment. We sat down as a family and talked about what matters for our trip. What is most important? We'll do more than the things we listed, but if we don't see and do it all, we can know that we did what mattered to us." Christine's example is so applicable to all kinds of things, not just trips to Disneyworld.

When we name what matters about an experience, a day, a project, a meeting, an interaction, a list, we focus on that thing and therefore capture that feeling of doing it all because we did what mattered. So when you're managing your time in any way, this essential mindset will carry you far: Don't do it all. Do what matters.

I was about to point you in the direction of an episode on how to name what matters, but we don't have one. Wild. I talk about it throughout lots of episodes and instagram posts, I have episodes at the start of both 2021 and 2022 on ways to name what matters for the year specifically, and there's episode 235 - When You Disagree on What Matters, but there isn't a general episode on this topic which I think I need to change in 2022.

So to recap: our 5 essential mindsets for time management are your beliefs affect your time more than your schedule does, don't judge every day against your best day, focus on the practice, not the planner, tend to the necessary before it becomes urgent, and don't do it all, do what matters.

I hope this helps you feel better about managing your time, whatever your time looks like.

That's it for today! Thanks so much for listening, for sharing the episodes with your friends, and for being just lovely 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.