

#265 - How to Come Home from Vacation

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 265 - how to come home from vacation.

I am very excited about this episode, you guys. I think there are so many opportunities to just Lazy Genius the mess out of coming home from vacation, so we're going to do what we often do which is have a nice little mix of practicality and permission.

As we get into this, I want to say that the frustrations that you have coming home from a trip are shared. They are almost universal, at least in this community. I put a poll up on Instagram of what your biggest frustration was in super broad categories - unpacking, food stuff, whiny people, and resentment of your life because you're home now. And the results of those were bizarrely almost equal which doesn't happen. And I also asked for any other broad categories I missed, and a consistent one was just getting back into the routine of regular life. Also rest. Many of our vacations aren't super restful, but even if they are, you're kind of dropped back into life right away, and that can be tough. So first, we're all dealing with the same general struggles here and almost at equal weights. If we solve the unpacking laundry problem, great, but there are still several equally frustrating problems to deal with. It's not as simple as fix this one thing and you're good. It's likely a broader experience for a lot of us.

As I started to break this episode and kind of map out what I wanted to say, it got real big. It is real big. I mean, we could do seven episodes on this. Truly. So instead of coming at this from every possible angle with every possible solution for every possible trip in every possible family scenario, I have created a very simple little thinking tool that I'm calling The Trip Matrix. I really dig, and I think you will too.

Now before we get into The Trip Matrix, I want to lay down some broader, human, permission thoughts here. I do not believe that coming home from vacation or taking a vacation or planning a vacation or doing literally anything having to do with living your life, leaving it for awhile, and then coming back is easy. I do not believe that it will ever be easy or completely seamless or pure joy the entire time. Leaving for trip, being on a trip, and coming home from a trip, even with the best tools and attitude and expectations and planning available to you is work. It all takes work. Intention requires effort. Which is annoying I know I'm sorry. But if we go into any aspect of a trip with the expectation that everything is easy and shiny and happens without any sort of friction or else the trip was a waste and too hard and didn't go well and all of that, we will not experience trips and togetherness and experiences and new places and even the energy of feeling like it's good to be home, we will not experience the goodness of those. If our expectation is that everything has to be easy and automated in order for something to be worth it, nothing will ever be worth it. I said this in a recent episode, but the goal is to set and forget your life, right? It's too dynamic for that. The goal is to pay attention to how you can make one area a little bit easier this time. It's just one choice by one choice, all under a very reasonable expectation of things being a little more pleasant, a little smoother, a little more fun, a little bit

easier. So as I talk about The Trip Matrix and share some of these broader categories, keep this in mind. Start small. Don't attack all of this with Big Black Trashbag Energy where you're just all or nothing. Everything's getting fixed or we're not going anywhere! No, just take a breath, choose an area that would be helpful to you personally in making coming home from your trip easier and be kind as you try things.

Also I want you to tell yourself the truth. We tell ourselves we're not good at this or that. We're just not wired that way. We don't have the ability to plan like that or the ability to relax! We expect that our families will respond only one way and don't give them any credit when they surprise us, even in tiny ways. We can just get in our own heads and in our own way. So if you're telling yourself a narrative that this is always bad or you're never going to be good at this or coming home from a trip has to work this way or it's not worth going, if there's anything that's very this or that or all or nothing or my way or the highway or I'm a piece of trash and can't figure this out, I want you to just stop and breathe and remember to be kind to yourself and honest with yourself. It's likely not as binary as you think.

Okay, let me explain this very simple but pretty rad Trip Matrix.

I want you to get a piece of paper or a spreadsheet document if you love spreadsheets and make five columns. You can add however many more you want depending on what you need after we got through this, but the baseline is five.

Column one is where you put the thing, the thing that would make coming home easier or the challenge that makes coming home hard. For example, you want to come home to a clean home. Put "have a clean home" in the first column. That's your end goal. Or put the frustration in that first column, like laundry. Down that whole first column, brain dump the things about coming home that you either want, you wish didn't happen, or the things you have to do that you find frustrating. Column one is essentially the problem you're trying to solve.

In the spirit of being a Lazy Genius, I think it's important for you to make that broader problem or goal smaller. So maybe it's not have a clean home, maybe it's have a clean kitchen. Or maybe it's have a clean bedroom or bathroom or have clean sheets on the bed or whatever the specific thing might be. And it could be a few specific things. One general entry could be getting back into the swing of feeding people at your house. What are the smaller challenges there? Knowing what you'll eat for whatever meal comes after you get home. Seeing what's in the fridge. Getting groceries. Making a meal plan. There are lots of smaller challenges to getting back into the swing of eating in your house again, right? So in that first column, imagine writing down all of those things, all of those end results you would like or the problems that you want to solve. Okay?

Column two is where you write what matters most about that thing. You could put laundry in the first column, but what matters could be very different depending on the person. Someone might want the laundry done within 24 hours, another might not want to do the laundry all alone, and another might not want to touch all the dirty clothes but doesn't mind getting them when they're

clean. That's a real thing. So as you make the challenge or goal more specific, be even more focused by naming what matters most to you about that thing. Try and keep it to one thing, maybe two if you have to. But make it smaller, smaller, smaller.

We'll be right back...

Now, there are three more columns, and those three columns are labeled before, during, and after. Before, during, and after. What could you do before you leave to help with whatever is in that first column? What could you do during your trip that might help with what's in that first column? What could you do when you get home to help with what's in that first column? That's it. That's the Trip Maxtrix. Name the problem or the goal, and think about what you could do to make that thing feel easier before, during, and after. And here's why it's helpful, despite its simplicity. It's breaking down this bigger energy of "there's so much laundry to do" and "I feel really behind when I get home" and "jumping right back into regular life is exhausting" and "vacation wasn't actually restful" and "the car is a disaster" and "the house is a wreck" - it breaks those things down in a few important ways.

One, it makes them smaller. "The house is a wreck when we come home" can be turned into "I'd like the kitchen counters to be cleaned off" or "I'd like my bed to be made" and "I'd like the house to be temperature controlled when I walk in the door." You can have several of those, but making them smaller makes them more solvable.

Second, the same is true of the time breakdown. You're considering how you might make that challenge easier to get through or that goal easier to accomplish by breaking down when you do it. You're not trying to solve the thing immediately when you walk in the door. Things have their place, right? That's a Lazy Genius principle. Put everything in its place, and that includes tiny tasks that help you support what matters, which in general is coming home from a trip in a way that's a little more pleasant.

Third, you're thinking of small ways that you can solve this problem before they become a problem, before you walk in the door and are stressed out, before you've had to drive ten hours in a minivan with children who are bored and ready to go home, before you get behind in your work inbox. By thinking this through before the actual stress, you'll be able to make more rational, helpful decisions.

The Trip Matrix is basically a way to put all of your coming home from vacation stress in its place. Give it a place, give the solutions a place, give the time that you might do things a place, particularly a more specific place of doing something before, during, or after the trip.

Just to be clear, I do not have a printable Trip Matrix available, but this is really just columns and lines. It doesn't have to be cute or fancy. Just what's the thing, and then what can I do before, during, or after. Not every box will be filled, some things will hold a few ideas and you only pick one, but it's a place for you to almost have like a controlled burn of these stressful things, but

you have tools to contain the stress, to manage the solutions, to put things in their appropriate place before you just feel overwhelmed by everything all at once.

One of the fun things about doing this is seeing how different rows of entries talk to each other, how they interact with each other. For example - and I will always share this tip because it's just so good - let's say a goal when you come home is to recover by being in silence for a few hours. That's a big ask if you have kids and have just gotten home, but write it down anyway because it's important and maybe you can figure out a solution. Let's say another thing in that first column is to unpack and get the laundry done and put away as soon as possible. What matters is speed, not everyone helping or spreading it out. It's getting it done. During the trip, you can impact that laundry one by packing all of the dirty clothes in one bag or suitcase so you don't have to sort through everything to find every dirty sock, and in the after column on both silent alone time and get the laundry done fast is you do one of my favorite tips I've ever heard which is leave your house almost immediately after getting home, take all your laundry to the laundromat, and do it in silence. Someone shared this a couple of years ago, and it will always be one of my favorite ideas. But it captures both being alone and recalibrating after being in a car or a plane with loud humans and getting the most annoying or important task done as quickly as you're wanting.

I think this will happen often as you look at your whole Trip Matrix.

For example, what if you fill out your Trip Matrix and you notice a number of things in that "before" column that are all pretty simple things that happen when you're home? You could batch those things. Take one or two or five hours the day or so before you leave and do them all at once. Let's say you look at the after list and notice that a number of those things don't have to be done by you. They just need to be done. So you can divvy out the jobs. Everybody has their task once you get home. You could even give everyone in your family a color and color-code their entries on the spreadsheet or highlight each task with a different color on your paper or just write their names on the paper. Then you could make a list of each person's individual before, during, and after tasks if that helps your own people process those tasks. Whatever works for you if it even works for you.

And going a little deeper with that, in the same way that we're anticipating what we can do to make coming home from a trip a little easier, also anticipate how you can make expectations of your people a little easier too. Maybe even give it its own row. What can you do before the trip to help with tiny human attitudes or expectations? Remind the kids what they'll do when they get home. Remind them how fun it is to get back home and be cozy in their room and encourage them to clean off their bed so that when they come back, they can unpack their suitcase or whatever. Cleaning off the bed is the thing they do before. Opening their bag and taking everything out and putting it in piles of clothes, shoes, and toys or whatever your kids can age-appropriately handle is the thing they do after. If you get home and then start shouting orders without preparing your people for *your* expectations before or during the trip, you'll make things even more stressful than they already are.

A couple of thoughts as we close. First, live in the season of reentry. It could be a season that lasts a few hours or a few days, depending on the kind of trip you took, who was with you, how things were when you left, and what is in front of you when you get back. But regardless of those factors, your season of reentry will exist. It will be a little challenging. It always is. So expect it to be challenging, but also celebrate that there are a few things that will show up on your Trip Matrix that will make it easier.

Second, consider scheduling rest after your trip. Maybe even before, too. I personally would rather take a week off but have a day on either side of that trip for preparing and reentry and take a four or five day trip than take a seven day trip and feel rushed or behind or stressed. Just because you take a week off for vacation doesn't mean you have to spend every single one of those days on actual vacation. Consider the on and offramps, too. Those count as part of your vacation mentally, so if you're able, make them count logistically, too.

And third, it's so common to get home from vacation and feel like you're behind in every area - your home, work, food, all of it - and everything feels urgent. Consider our Lazy Genius brain dump approach. When you get home and you're feeling this way, take a beat and write down everything that's stressful and on your mind, everything you feel behind on. Big, small, everything in between. Then mark those things as now, soon, later, or never mind. If you have enough food in the house or have access to takeout for dinner tonight and have stuff for breakfast tomorrow, grocery shopping can happen soon or later. You don't need to think about that right now. Make your now, soon, later, and never mind list to help put your thoughts in their place.

And one final reminder, this is in The Lazy Genius Kitchen book and in a post on Instagram, but I divided up the 13 Lazy Genius principles into three categories for when you're out of order, out of rhythm, or out of sorts. Again they're in The Lazy Genius Kitchen and in an Instagram reel that's not too far down in my reel feed named "how to choose the right Lazy Genius principle for you." Out of order principles for a quick win to restore a little chaos are Decide Once, Start Small, Ask the Magic Question, Put Everything in Its Place. Out of Rhythm is when you need things to feel like they're flowing more. Those are Batch It, Essentialize, Set House Rules, Go in the Right Order, and Build the Right Routines. Out of sorts are when your insides are a little upside-down. Those principles are Let People In, Schedule Rest, Live in the Season, and Be Kind to Yourself.

Okay, so this episode has practically zero specific tips or strategies for coming home from vacation, but I think this Trip Matrix will be a more helpful tool for you anyway to name what matters to you and specifically help you with it. However, practical ideas and tips are super fun, so I'll be creating some space on Instagram this week to share some of your ideas with the community, so be on the lookout for that. I'm @thelazygenius on Instagram.

And that is the gist of how to come home from vacation. Put your thoughts and strategies in their place using the Trip Matrix and see how those entries can talk to each other and create some great solutions for your specific situation. Live in the season of reentry because it's real

and won't disappear now matter how hard you work, but you can make it a little easier. Consider a now, soon, later, and never mind brain dump when you come home if your brain is still swirly. And use Lazy Genius principles to create the space and solutions and systems you need, maybe through that lens of if you're out of order, out of rhythm, or out of sorts. You're doing great, and I hope this was helpful!

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Jenna Colavito! She shared an idea she had about traveling, so it's perfect for this episode. Jenna wrote this: "Life hack inspired by your episode that talked about giving certain categories of things their own bags. My family went on a weekend getaway to upstate New York where it is already very cold. (Jenna wrote this a few months ago by the way.) I used a bag exclusively for hats, gloves, and scarves - basically all of the cold weather accessories that end up getting thrown at me the second we get out of the cold but that they all need again quickly as soon as we get to our next stop. Game changer! I left the bag in the car all weekend and it was super easy to find everything every single time we needed to quickly bundle up, and I didn't feel like I was always having to figure out what to do with all the tiny pieces of clothing."

Jenna, this is so great! This is a combination of two Lazy Genius principles - batch it and put everything in its place. It's batching because you're doing the same task - finding your winter stuff and getting bundled or coming in from the cold and taking everything off - all at once, and you're putting everything in its place which helps you easily make the decision of where things will go and where they are when you need them again. This is such a great idea, and I love - like a lot of these Lazy Geniuses of the week - how simple it is. You just put the winter accessories in a bag. It's not rocket science. But we overcomplicate a lot of things simply because we don't take the time to think about how we might name what matters, calm the crazy, and then apply a principle that makes the most sense. I love this, Jenna, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Remember too that it is not too late to get The Summer Docket, a digital downloadable guide to helping you name what matters about your summer and have fun doing it! It's available at thelazygeniuscollective.com/store. Also it's been so fun getting your DMs and emails about your experiences reading The Lazy Genius Kitchen. You're cleaning out cabinets and fridges and realizing that you can stop buying vegetables you won't eat or planning meals that don't work for your season or being nervous to gather people together because you're not good at it. It's just the absolute best seeing the freedom and enjoyment you're experiencing in your kitchen. Thank you for buying the book, and if you haven't gotten it yet, there are some reviews on Amazon you can read that can help you know if the book is for you. Which, frankly, I think it's for everyone, especially people in a tough season of life or in a transitional season of life. It's a great tool, a great gift, a great read, and y'all are great for supporting me and it.

Okay, friends, that's it for today! Thank you 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!