

#266 - How to Lazy Genius a Summer at the Pool

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 266 - how to Lazy Genius a summer at the pool!

I try to not do too many episodes that are not relevant to everyone in some form, so I'm sorry if you don't ever go to a pool or live in another hemisphere where it's winter right now and a pool is the last thing from your mind. If you have no desire or opportunity to be a pool person, hello, I have two things to offer. One, if you'd like to still listen, sometimes it can be fun to hear how Lazy Genius principles can be applied to things not in your life because they spark ideas for what you are actually experiencing. It's like cross-training but for your brain. Two, if you're like "no, I don't want to listen to this episode but I do want to listen to *an* episode," maybe scroll back in your podcast app to this time last year. The episodes in late May were 209 - how to keep your surfaces clear, 210 - how to lazy genius kids' screen time, 211 - how to plan a summer day, 212 - a guide to summer house rules, and 213 - create a summer reading club. Maybe something in there sparks a little curiosity and fits this time of the year for the majority of listeners but isn't pool related.

Okay, let's jump into lazy geniusing a day at the pool!

First, there's a different strategy when you're visiting the pool once or twice versus going to the pool again and again. If you're going as a guest, you pack your bag with towels and snacks and whatever you or your kids need for the day, you go, you have fun, and you come home. One-off experiences are generally a little more forgiving. It's the repeated ones that can be a bit frustrating, so this episode is going to be focused on spending multiple days a week or basically spending the summer at the pool. There will be some great tips for people who only go once or twice or maybe go to the beach or just summer outings in general, but the focus here is going to the pool again and again.

Now full disclosure, this is only our second summer being members at a pool. We go to this sweet member-owned pool where a bunch of our friends and family go even though our literal neighborhood pool is down the street. One of the biggest things about going to a pool is having friends there, and you can make friends for sure and often do. But last summer when we were considering joining a pool, it was either the convenience of the neighborhood pool or the existing friendships with some dear people in our lives. We picked the people and have never looked back. We love our pool. But the point is that I'm not some expert pool mom. This is only my second summer. But we have gotten a great pool rhythm down that feels worth sharing. I'm going to give you some of the choices we make and the Lazy Genius principles that impact them so that you can choose what works for you and apply the principles in your own way! First, I'll share a few static choices and then our pool routine.

First up, we use the principle Put Everything In Its Place for our pool stuff. We have one giant pool bag which I'll link to in the show notes where we put pretty much every single thing. It's

from Target, from the Shade and Shore line, and it's a giant mesh tote. It's huge which I love because we can fit pretty much everything in there. It's mesh which makes it easy to find stuff because it's kind of see-through. It's light and thin but sturdy. It has outside pockets. It comes in fun colors. It's just a really great bag. But the point is less about the bag and more about the concept of putting everything in its place. Everything goes in there and stays in there. Goggles, sunscreen, pool toys... all of it. Those things are never removed from the bag. If a kid is holding their goggles, I'm like "put it in the pool bag." Everything stays in there when it's not being used. In fact, at the end of last summer when pool season was done, I put our towels which I'll talk about in a minute into the bag with all the pool stuff and put the bag in the closet. Fully packed. When the pool opened a couple of weeks ago, I just grabbed the bag. Everything was there. That bag is its place. So keeping everything in there is so helpful. Put everything in its place.

Next up, let's talk about a Decide Once I have which is that I don't like to take more than we need and I also like things to be compact and small. The less I have to carry, the better, so I choose to get the smaller, thinner, or lighter version of just about anything. That means we have pretty thin towels. I'll put a link to those in the show notes, too, but they're huge, thin, colorful, and microfiber. They absorb water so quickly but also dry quickly. We have five, one for each of us, in five different colors so that everyone knows which towel is theirs. They're just super great towels that we love. But I took the time to find thin, functional towels because not having a lot of stuff and especially bulky stuff matters to me. So I decided once - if we can get that thing but lighter, let's go lighter.

Next, let's talk about food. Some of my favorite memories as a kid were having snacks at the pool. There's something so pure about it. We have a snack bag which at the time I'm working on this episode, I haven't put it together yet, but we do have a snack bag. It's a separate smaller bag that only has snacks. Now here's the important thing for me. I don't want to give myself something else to manage or monitor. Anybody remember that Instagram post from a long time ago where my friend Elizabeth said that? "I don't want to give myself something else to monitor." Brilliant. So don't. I mean, you can monitor whatever you'd like, but I'd like to limit my monitoring energy, so our snack bag is full of snacks that I don't care that my kids eat. There's very little that I care they eat to be honest, but we have convenience snack packs of chips and crackers and fruit snacks and applesauce packs. I also get my own baggies and bag up a bunch of Goldfish and those yogurt covered cookies and veggie straws and whatever else. I'll throw some clementines in there because those last awhile and don't get gross. We just have a big bag of snacks, and I use the principle Put Everything In Its Place by having one place for those snacks, but I also batch it by packing a giant snack bag just a few times a summer. It's so easy.

What about how many snacks they can have and what about the snack bar and what if you're there for lunch or dinner? These are valid questions that can become frustrations, so we have a couple of pool rules, kind of like house rules which setting house rules is another Lazy Genius principle. Our rule is two days a week, you get something from the snack bar. I haven't landed on the actual days yet because frankly at the time I'm working on this, we still have a couple of days left of school and we're not into a weekly pool rhythm yet. But last year, I think we did

Tuesdays and Fridays. If the weather got in the way, we'd shift to another day. But the kids can get a snack bar snack - whatever they want - twice a week. Otherwise, hit the snack bag.

In terms of how many snacks they eat, swimming and playing in a pool is hard work for a kid, so I usually don't deter them from eating. Most pools have a break at the end of each hour, and the default reaction of my kids is to get a snack during that time. But if we're there three or four hours, they might not really need a snack at each break. So before each break, I make a quick assessment. What time is it? When was the last time they ate? If they ask for a snack, is it pretty likely that they're legit hungry and not just doing what's automatic? So I'm ready - which is asking the Magic Question, right? What can I do now to make dealing with the snack questions easier later? I'm going to think about what's going on and what I'll say. So when they come over to me at break and say "Mom, can I have a snack?" I'll almost always say yes. But if they just ate or it's really close to a meal time, I'll usually ask the follow-up question of "Do you think you can wait until the next break or dinner or whatever the next thing, or are you super hungry now?" Most of the time, the kids are honest about it. "Yeah, I can wait" and then they run off to play foosball. I'm not telling them whether or not they're hungry but more just reminding them to listen to their bodies and think about it. If they say no they can't wait, then I'll point them to the snack bag and go back to my book.

I think the deal with snacks and the pool is to remove as much friction as possible. Remove the monitoring. Remove the decisions. Remove the daily packing. Batch it. Put everything in its place. Set house rules. They're so helpful.

We'll be right back...

Now let's get into the routine / rhythm aspect of this. We generally stay at the pool for 3 hours. Two of my kids would stay for four or five. The other is a solid 2 hour guy. We tend to compromise with 3, at least we did last summer. This summer, we might have a different rhythm because my middle two-hour kid can stay at home by himself now and we might just run him home and leave the others under the supervision of one of many adults we know at the pool. But in general our rhythm is three hours.

We usually go between meals, maybe 1-4, but this summer, we will likely shift those hours to include dinner because cooking dinner in the summer is gross and our snack bar is solid. So we might move some days to 3-6 or so. But knowing that we'll be there for about the same amount of time each time we go helps with expectations.

When it's time to go, the kids get their suits on, and then we use lotion sunscreen to get them all greased up at home right before we leave. If you have tiny humans, the starfish sunscreen technique sure is a sweet little hack. Just scream "go starfish!" where they spread their legs and arms wide, and you are racing against the clock, maybe even against the ocean waves that are coming fast we have to hurry! It's generally a better energy than being like "come on let's get your sunscreen on." Some little kids need it to be a game, and go starfish worked well for us. My kids are mostly old enough to do 90% of their own sunscreen, so it's shifted into being easier

which is nice. But putting sunscreen on at home before we leave is way better than trying to keep them from running into the pool the minute we get there and then having to drag them out to do something they don't want to do. It's part of our "going to the pool" routine. Swimsuits, pee, sunscreen, and then fill up water bottles. I grab the pool bag and snack bag and the dried towels, and we're off. We try and time our arrival at the pool to be just a few minutes before break time is over so my kids can find their friends outside of the water. I claim a spot, and off they go.

Now what about the routine of leaving? The breaks are such helpful markers for that. You're never more than 45 minutes from being close enough to talk to your kid, even if you're not in the pool the whole time. At the likely second to last break when my kids come for a snack, I say "let's do one more swim, and then we'll leave at the next break." Done. It's a built-in expectation. It's also easier than leaving in the middle of the hour when a kid's friends are still playing and having fun. If everyone is getting out of the pool at the same time, there's a natural break of play and opportunity for my kids to say goodbye. My guess is y'all do this too. It's not rocket science. But I think it's good to name the reasons why decisions like this are helpful. We leave at breaks. We give reminders that we're leaving at the next break. We have a routine of mental preparation so we're not dragging kids away kicking and screaming, right?

So the break whistle sounds, and I usually have us packed up before the whistle. Then I herd my cats, drape their towels over their shoulders, have them put on their shoes, and we walk out. If I am gathering up stuff and packing up the pool bag and the kids are waiting for me, I will lose minimum two of them to the hubbub of their friends in less than a minute. It's a good idea for me to be ready when I tell them we're leaving. Then they sit on their towels in the car (that's a house rule), and we go home.

Once we're home, we have a coming home routine. We have one of those foldable laundry racks that we only pull out in the summer. It just sits out in our dining room for three months, and it's part of our summer vibe. The kids know to put everything in its place or at least know what to do when I remind them because I do often have to remind them. They hang up their towels first. I put the pool bag right by the drying rack, and that's where it stays until tomorrow or whenever we go again. Then the boys head to my bathroom to take a shower, and Annie takes a bath in the other bathroom. We do have two bathrooms, so that makes our routine a little easier, but the point is we have a routine and an order of who goes where. The routine is so helpful. Then once the kids get clean, I have to remind them usually, but they know to hang up their swimsuits on that same drying rack. That's where all the pool stuff goes forever and ever amen. Then since most of the time we come home from the pool right before dinner, they have screen time. As soon as they're done getting ready and hang up their stuff, they can start. It's a really solid routine for us. The same will happen when we stay at the pool for dinner really. We'll come home, shower and stuff, and then they can have screen time. We love our routine.

Now here's the thing about routines. Remember that it's about where you're going. What do you want to experience in your home or feel in your soul? I don't want to feel frazzled or frustrated with my kids. I also want to lean into having our pool stuff out but not have it literally everywhere.

So part of our routine is having a set place for all that stuff. Part of our routine contributes to repetitive steps so that the expectations are clear and easy and I'm not either trying to decide in the moment if someone can have screen time or not or what somebody should do with their dripping suit or if they have to take a shower. Our routine eliminates all that stress.

I think the key here, no matter your specific pool situation or even life situation, is to limit your decisions as much as possible. You're not automating the life or the sparkle. You're automating everything else, and you can do that through simple routines that you build one step at a time.

One final little tip I'll share is for the question "can we go to the pool today?" Or really any question of "can we do this today?" when you're not prepared to answer. Instead of saying "I don't know yet" or something vague like that because you don't have the energy or information to decide, you can answer, "I'll let you know by 11am" or "I'll let you know by lunch" or "I need to check on a couple of things before I know if we can, and I should have an answer for you in half an hour." Give them something concrete or else they'll nag and ask again because they want to go and you'll resent going and everything will explode inside and maybe even outside and you're like why is summer the worst?! Try giving them a more specific timeframe of when you'll answer them. Validate that they want to know, and honor that within your own boundaries. Sometimes I also say "I don't know yet, but I'll have an answer in half an hour. In the meantime, think about something else to suggest for the afternoon if it doesn't work out" so that they're a little bit prepared for the possibility of being disappointed and are learning the skills of pivoting to something else.

Oh! And one other thing. Friends. Remember that you do not have to make all of your summer pool friends right away. This goes for your kids if you have them and you. Say hello. Say "I've seen you here a few times. I'm Kendra." Introduce yourself as many times as you'd like. Even saying hello and making eye contact with people in passing for three or four weeks makes that one time you and this other person are throwing diving sticks into the 3 feet area for little toddlers more pleasant. "Your name is Kathy, right?" Just last week, I saw a woman that I met last year right at the end of summer who I really liked, but I couldn't remember her name or her kids' names or really anything about her. I just remembered we had met, chatted a bit, and I enjoyed her company. She was in the pool, and I went up to the edge and said "Hi, I don't know if you remember me, but we met last summer!" She did remember me, we reintroduced ourselves, and then I sat back down. Now we have a baseline set and will chat again the next time we're both there. I know that introvert energy is real. I know that it's scary to introduce yourself to someone. I know we all feel like 15 year olds on the inside when it comes to making friends. But remember you don't have to make your friends all at once. Friendships don't work like that anyway. They might not be deep even. But it's nice to know a few names at your pool. Also keep an eye out for people who don't seem like they have any. Introduce yourself to them. Help them feel welcomed. Just say hi. Like our beloved Shannan Martin will teach us in her next book that doesn't come out until October but I'm so excited about it, start with hello. That's the title of her book. Start with hello. In other words, start small. It's where we all begin, and it all counts.

And that's how to Lazy Genius a summer at the pool.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! Now, let me tell you real quick how I choose these. Team members will see good ideas and put them in a document for me to look through when it's time to choose, but I also will screenshot Instagram DMs that are great ideas. When it's time to choose a Lazy Genius of the Week, I just go to my photo app and pick the earliest one. It's crazy how often they line up with the topic, and none more than today. Today's Lazy Genius of the Week is Kathryn Couchman who shared her tip on swimsuits! How weirdly appropriate. Here's what Kathryn says: "Hello! Congrats on the book launch! (Thank you, Kathryn!) I wanted to share my LG decide once as we approach summer in case it could help anyone else out there. A friend and I both only buy swimsuits in a specific color. Hers is navy. Mine is black. That way I can always mix and match pieces when one piece needs to be replaced, and I don't have to go buy a whole new set (looking at you, swim bottoms who faded into see-through). It also keeps me from getting overwhelmed by all the options every year. I just narrow it down to "it has to go with black." Like I said, my bff does the same but all her pieces are navy. Just thought I'd share as we get closer to swimsuit season." Thank you for this idea, Kathryn! I think this is such a great idea, especially if choosing and thinking about swimsuits is stressful for you. Just decide once - my color base is this. It's like choosing a Monday uniform or to always get takeout on Thursdays. Just make the decision and keep making it until it doesn't work anymore. Maybe there's a time Kathryn will change her approach, but it's working for her now so she's keeping it and reaping the benefits of limiting her decision-making stress. This is great, Kathryn! Thank you for sharing and for being this week's Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, everybody, that's it for today. Don't forget that The Summer Docket is still available and will be all summer, but if you're a couple of weeks in and feeling a little frazzled with how things are going or like the season is getting away from you, check out The Summer Docket. It's available in the Lazy Genius store. Thanks for listening, everybody, 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.