

285 - How to Parent When Kids Constantly Change

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 285 - how to parent when kids constantly change. If you're not a parent, let me speak to you first. If you have kids in your life in any way - students, nieces or nephews, neighbors, whatever - and want a Lazy Genius perspective on just being a person around a kid, I think this episode could be helpful. Obviously, parents and full-time guardians are the ones who are on the front lines of kids constantly changing, but this isn't just a parenting episode. It's really about how to be a person around kids who are trying to figure out how to be a person. You can also skip this episode if you'd rather not listen and go peruse the new Lazy Genius gift guide on the website. That is also an excellent use of your time.

By the way, that gift guide is up on the website if you click on "blog" and it's items across three price points that are things I either use, have given, or have used or given enough from the company that I know the thing is trustworthy. So that exists if you're interested.

Okay, to the episode! Here's the challenge. Kids change at a crazy fast pace. The minute you think one parenting approach works, it doesn't anymore. The minute you think "this is how we communicate," you don't anymore. The minute you get them a pair of shoes, they don't fit anymore. We will not actually be talking about shoes in this episode, but I want to say that physical changes happen fast too and these children need to stop growing out of things. But again, not today's episode.

Being with and loving and helping guide kids is a privilege, a challenge, and can be exhausting. What works today won't work tomorrow. What works for this kid won't work for that kid. What works for you when you have energy doesn't work for you when you don't. There are a lot of things that are in constant shift when it comes to adults being in relationships with kids. So today I want to offer some words about that shift and then offer two simple "start small" steps that you can take today to begin connecting more with your kids who are constantly changing.

Also full disclosure if you're new here. I have three kids. I have two boys who are almost 13 and almost 11, and a daughter who is 6. And by almost 13 and 11, I mean my boys both have November birthdays, so we are a whisper away from having a teenager. What is happening. Yes, I have kids, but I am not a parenting expert. I'm not sure anyone is really because kids are too different to be an expert in all of them. I'm also not really sharing parenting advice. I'm not qualified to do that, nor is that the purpose of today. I want to offer some perspective and then a couple of small steps.

So first, let's talk about the challenge of changing kids and see if we can't get a little more perspective on it.

I already said this, but how we interact with kids is constantly changing because so are the kids themselves. This is important to remember. It's very simple but very important to remember.

One of the 13 Lazy Genius principles is to live in the season. What can be strange about parenting specifically is that parenting itself is a season. A long one. But within that season are mini-seasons that don't give you a warning of when they will start or stop. You're just trucking along and then bam - you have a walker, you have a talker, you have a teenager who used to talk but doesn't at all anymore. You can be hit with a ridiculous number of changes on a dime. The season of parenting is full of mini-seasons, and it can be hard to navigate that with grace. To you and your kid. So let's just name the reality. Kids change. So will you. So will your relationship with that kid.

Next thing: it's very easy in parenting and caregiving to feel behind. The point of raising a kid is to help them be a person in the world, to eventually leave you. Oh my goodness, there are so many things a person should know in order to leave the supervision of reasonably responsible adults, and so often those skills feel like too many and that you're running out of time. As each transition occurs, as your sweet little elementary school kid is suddenly halfway through middle school and closer to getting a license than ever before and that same kid still asks how many seconds to microwave a hot dog, you worry, pals. You worry. It is very easy to feel like you are always behind, that you've forgotten something, that you're failing your kid, and that you missed your chance during that last season of life. Did you forget to teach them Spanish when they were three and now they're eight and it's just too late to capitalize on that malleable toddler brain? There are so many ways we can struggle in feeling behind in a wide spectrum of reality. Because frankly there are things our kids need to learn. Eventually at least. But what's the order? How comprehensive should those skills be? Does a kid need to learn to cook everything? Ten meals? Three? And by what age? Twelve? Eighteen? Are they still calling you from college or their first apartment asking you how long they should microwave hot dogs? It's a lot. I don't have any solutions to the "a lot-ness" of it, not in this episode at least, but I am here to say that it is a lot. You are not behind. You are not failing. You have not lost your chance. And even if you argue with me that you have lost your chance because something very specific has passed its time, the perspective of "I lost my chance" doesn't do much except make you feel ashamed. So maybe don't let that idea linger too long. Your kids are fine. They will be fine.

We'll be right back...

So kids are always changing, and consequently we feel very behind. One final perspective I want to offer you is that your kids, whether yours by birth or law or proximity or profession, are trying to figure out how to be a person. Just like you are. That journey never stops. I think the sooner we embrace that as adults, the better we can love and support the kids around us.

Obviously there are some fairly universal things that we hope all kids experience. We want them to learn to exist as kind and faithful citizens wherever they live. We hope they have empathy and understand other perspectives. We hope they can pay a bill. We hope they know to not put aluminum foil in the microwave. We hope they can cook an egg. The list is so long, y'all, and we feel the pressure of helping them be a person. And for some things, there are limited paths to get the thing done. Aluminum foil in the microwave is a binary choice. Don't do it. How you pay bills? There are a few options. Cooking eggs? Maybe a few more than that. But how our kids

exist in the world is likely going to be deeply personal to them. How they feel around other people, what makes them happy, what makes them feel comfortable enough to speak in front of a group, how they get their energy, what matters *to them*... they're just trying to figure out who they are where they are with what they've got. As the adults in their lives, we can be part of encouraging them and teaching them and making sure they know about the foil in the microwave. But we cannot make them into a certain kind of person. We do not have control over who they are and what they do, not really.

Plus, if you are a parent and you're trying to figure out how to do this whole raising kids thing one day at a time, it deeply impacts who you are as a person. It changes how you see the world, how you prioritize your time, how you interact with other people. You are also learning to become a person. When two people who are trying to figure it out bump into each other, sometimes sparks can fly. It can be frustrating, even explosive depending on the personalities. So this is me reminding you - and myself - to have grace for that process. Our kids are trying to figure it out like we are, but they also have way fewer tools and way less knowledge to do it. So we can be a little softer in that process.

Now those are some large perspectives without a lot of practical takeaway help. I understand that. So as we close, I want to offer two simple things you can start doing right now. These two things do not require anything from you except you. You don't need books or to follow new parenting accounts, although both of those are great. But sometimes we think that what we need is to add something new, and I'm here to tell you that's not always true. In many cases, you already have what you need.

So here's the first thing I'd love for you to do. When you are with your kid or a kid, I want you to simply pause and affirm their humanity. Just look at them and embrace that they are a little person trying to become a slightly bigger person, and that you care about them and you care about that process. I think the more that we do that as adults, the more we take the slightest pause to notice that our kids are real people with big hearts and lots of ideas and more fears than they probably let on, *and* that we do not have all the answers for them or know the right way all the time and that that's okay, the more we pause in that mindset, especially in the midst of those hard transitions where our kids are changing and we feel like we're talking to a stranger or just making it up as we go along, the more we stay grounded. The more we stay loving. The more we stay connected to them and to ourselves. So that's the first very small step: pause and affirm their humanity. They matter. As people, they matter.

The second thing is to seek the wisdom of right now by asking what matters? If you're feeling stressed out or overwhelmed by something parenting related, especially when it's a new season of parenting and your kid changed without telling you first, I want you to affirm their humanity and then ask *what matters most right now?* Seek wisdom for this moment and this moment only. There will be time for you to try and build it big, for you to take the parenting class or read the book or create the system. You're very good at that energy. The energy you're probably less proficient at is this much smaller energy of just seeking wisdom in the moment. What matters right now? What does my sweet, changing kid need right now? You don't have to have the

answers of how to properly navigate yet another scenario where your kid is changing, not all at once and not right now. Maybe right now, you can see them as people and then name what matters most and seek wisdom for that singular moment. Big systems and choices will probably happen without your having to work hard. This small work is worth doing.

So our kids are constantly changing. In fact, it's hard to live in the season of parenting because of all the sudden mini seasons. And it's also easy to feel very behind because of it. So instead of wallowing in your own deficiencies as a parent (which I bet are significantly lower than you tell yourself), affirm who they are. See them as little people that you love. And then name what matters right now. Seek wisdom for right now. And then do it again and again and again. That's not a comprehensive way to parent when kids constantly change, but it sure is a necessary part of it.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Bri Pepperman! I actually featured Bri's idea on Instagram last week because it was very relevant to last week's episode about email, but it's too good and too timely not to share here. Bri wrote me this: "On Black Friday every year, I go through and unsubscribe from any promotional emails I don't want to get anymore. Typically any retailer that has your email address will email you that day so it's super easy to see which ones you get and want to stop getting. Takes about ten minutes and really quiets my inbox." Bri, this is such a great tip. I love it so much. Yes, every company will email you on Black Friday. No question. So you can just know that that's your day to unsubscribe. I think it also helps you see what content in those emails really matters too. Every company understandably wants you to buy from them on Black Friday, so if you have the mindset of essentializing, of getting rid of what's in the way, you'll be more likely to use that as your filter rather than the shopping filter. Not that you shouldn't buy stuff on Black Friday or be interested in someone's sales email, but if your point is to eliminate rather than add, you'll be far less likely to add with stuff and can clear out your inbox at the same time. So great. So thank you for sharing, Bri, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

That's it for today, y'all! Thanks so much for listening, for sharing these episodes, for buying the books, and for just existing. I'm so grateful for every one of you. Until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra. I'll see you next week!