

# 301 - How to Kindly Navigate a Changing Body

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 301 - how to kindly navigate a changing body.

First, I want to say words to the handful of men who listen to this podcast. I encourage you to listen to this episode. Maybe this isn't a huge issue for you, but it likely is for the women in your life, for your wife or sister or daughter or friend. I want you to listen to this episode so you can get a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be a woman with a body in the Western world.

Now if you're new here and you got sent this episode, you might be a little worried. You don't know me, and you don't know what I'm going to say. First, welcome. Second, this episode isn't about how to kindly change your body. It's about kindly navigating the fact that your body is changing. Those are two very different things. And in some ways, navigating is harder. It's less clear, right? Changing our bodies? We understand what that means. It's a huge industry. There's no deficit of information for that process. But navigating the fact that change happens and what we do with that? That's a little trickier. So today's episode is clothed in kindness because it needs it. Our bodies are present with us at all times, and yet we often have such strange, sometimes even contentious, relationships with them. I want to relax that tension today in how we talk about changing bodies because my guess is you're already hard enough on yourself about it, and I for sure will not add even an ounce to that. So if you're new, I hope this is a kind, safe place for you.

Before we jump in, we've done a handful of episodes about bodies over the years, so you can find those in the show notes. We'll also have a body playlist in the next issue of the Latest Lazy Listens, the biweekly recap and resource guide for the podcast. It's emailed out every other Friday, so if you'd like to get any extra words or resources about this episode or any episodes, you can sign up at the link in the show notes or at [thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens](http://thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens).

The very first thing I want to say out the gate is that external solutions will not solve internal problems. External solutions will not solve internal problems. We'll dive into this more, but it is rare that a changing body or your reaction to your changing body is only external. It is almost impossible to escape the internal messages about what our bodies are supposed to be, but we don't tend to those messages. Instead we tend to the body itself, to the external. Essentially, we're going in the wrong order.

Now, can you experience some inner healing by tending to the external, whether it's in your body or your morning routine or your relationship with a partner? Sure. External solutions aren't bad, nor do you have to be completely at peace with whatever inner struggle you're having to pay attention to the external of anything. They run congruently. However, you will not experience the fullness of your external solution if you do not strongly consider and even prioritize the internal problems. If you don't pay attention to the internal messages and work on kindly

shaping them into something new, you will never fully experience freedom in whatever body you have or freedom in whatever external solution you're trying. So that is our foundation: external solutions will not solve internal problems.

Next, let's look at what I mean by a changing body. There are so many ways your body could change. Pregnancy, postpartum, aging, illness, injury, stress, hormonal shifts... a lot of things impact our bodies, how they look and how they perform.

I'm pretty sure I said this in some earlier episode about the body, but I find it really interesting that most, if not all, of the struggles around the changing body do not exist for people whose bodies are getting smaller. Or stronger. If your body is changing in a way that is aligned with the culturally acceptable version of a body, especially a woman's body, this change isn't seen as a challenge or struggle. It's exciting. It's liberating. It's fun to buy new clothes. In the decades of being entrenched in diet culture, of going on diets, of being around people who have had changing bodies, I have never heard a single person mourn that they have to get new clothes for their smaller body. It's not a financial hardship. It's not an annoying errand. It's not irresponsible. Isn't that interesting. In general, bodies that get smaller are rewarded for changing, even within ourselves. You might say that you're trying to keep your body from changing so you can fit in your clothes. But what if your body got smaller? I don't think the perspective would be the same. You'd sell your current clothes and buy smaller ones. Or if you do actually have the money, my guess is that your perspective toward that money would be fairly different if you're buying smaller clothes versus bigger ones. That's just something I want you to notice in yourself as we talk about this.

Because what does that communicate, guys? That smaller bodies are more valuable. We intrinsically believe that. You might be the rare person that would feel just as frustrated having to buy smaller clothes versus bigger ones, but I have not yet met that person. We have been taught for decades that smaller bodies are better, more valuable, more worthy of attention and celebration, and the finish line to cross. That's why women spend their entire lives dieting and managing and tracking and counting and limiting. Smaller bodies are more valuable.

Someone asked me recently in a comment how many calories were in a serving of some kind of food I shared, and it was the weirdest thing because I haven't thought about or looked at a calorie count in years. Years. And there was a lovely realization that happened in me, that this thing that was so pervasive and constant and just in the water all the time is so much farther from my thinking than it was. And maybe that's the case with a lot of you as it relates to food. Maybe you have embraced intuitive eating or you realize that diets are frustrating for you or that you just want to spend your energy on something that matters more. I get that.

But - and here's where this episode will really find its skeleton - you can have a healthy relationship with food but still struggle with your body. You can still trust that your body is hungry when it's hungry and full when it's full. You can enjoy food and trust that your body knows what it needs. You can value tending to your body while also releasing the pressure of following a restrictive meal plan. You can do all of those things and still struggle with your body, especially

when it changes. So let's talk about that. Let's talk about that next frontier - kindly navigating your changing body.

### **We'll be right back...**

Just a content warning for this next part, I'm about to share part of my own story, and part of that story is disordered eating and sexual abuse. So if you aren't in a place to hear words about that, skip ahead about five minutes or go do something else that's kind for where you are right now.

So, my story. My dad wasn't great. He was sexually and emotionally abusive, and I grew up with the message that my only value came from a man's approval of me. And since men were primarily interested in women as sexual objects, my value therefore came from a man's approval of how sexually attractive I was. My body was the only thing that mattered, but it also had to be a certain kind of body.

This is still such a tender memory and I've done a lot of healing in it, but I still remember it like it was yesterday. When I was in high school, my dad told me that things would go a lot better for me if I looked like one of my friends. Let's call her Sally. He said - and I quote - "things would go better for you if you looked like Sally." Now for those of you who don't know what I look like. I'm 5'3 even though I do have very tall energy. I have brown hair and at that time the mousiest brown hair that hadn't seen a proper haircut in awhile. I would never categorize myself as any sort of body shape as better or worse because that's not a thing, but for the majority of my life, I've been the before in a before and after of flat stomach ads. My body has usually been the before, the thing to change. I also have the skin of Snow White that will practically catch fire if in the sun too long. So that's me. Neutral information. Now let me tell you about Sally, also neutral information. Sally is almost six feet tall with the most beautiful golden brown skin that tans if she walks to the mailbox. Sally has blond hair and at the time, it was long. She's also an athlete, so she's always been fit and strong. Also for the record, Sally is a delight. I love Sally. I don't see Sally much anymore because obviously we went to high school together and that's all, but I loved her then and I love her now. This isn't Sally's problem. Sally is awesome. My father was the one who wasn't awesome. This man who contributed to the creation of my life and was tasked with loving me and teaching me about the world told me when I was sixteen years old that it would be better for me if I could grow eight inches, tighten up, adopt a completely different skin tone, and change my hair to blond. No big deal. Now imagine what that did to me. Many things obviously, not to mention the other abuses, but the message I carried out of that about my body was that my body was not correct. And I'm an Enneagram One, so those all or nothing binary thoughts are easy to cling to. If Sally was right, that made me very very wrong. So I hid my body. I wore baggy clothes and didn't focus on my appearance. And I even looked down on my peers that did. I acted like it was shallow to care about your appearance and your body, but the truth was that I wanted to care so badly. I wanted something I couldn't have. I couldn't access the body I thought was valuable, and that meant I was doomed to live a life where I would miss out on my value and affirmation. Because the people who were supposed to give it were men, and men only saw your value if they thought you were hot. That was my formula, and not to be too on the nose with this, but I wasn't the answer.

Fast forward to college, and I got sucked into diet culture. I had always thought I couldn't have the body I was supposed to have, but then the messages I received told me that maybe I could. Maybe I could change my body to fit this narrative. I mean, there were so many tools to help me! I did the things you're supposed to do, the eating and exercise and salmon and leafy greens and almonds for a snack and crap like that. But my body didn't change. So I developed a lifestyle of disordered eating. For almost a year, I ate maybe 400-800 calories a day, and that was it. My body absolutely changed then, and I was praised for it. It was easier to find clothes. It was fun to get dressed. I felt like I was pretty and valuable to men. But as is the story with pretty much everyone in this situation, it was empty praise, and I started to realize how dangerous my choices were, both physically and emotionally. So slowly over the next few years, I started to feel loved for being me, not for what my body was and how appealing it might be to a man.

But through that process of emotionally growing, my body physically changed. I started having babies, and that'll do it. I resented my belly so much. I couldn't get it back to where I thought it should be after I had Sam, and Ben came just two years, almost to the day, later. I never recovered from one, let alone two. So I got back on the management train to change my body. Not my mindset or my perspective on myself. My body. My body was changing, and I had to change it back. Back to what? No idea, but to something other than what it was. I would say I wanted to feel healthier or fit into my clothes so I didn't have to get new ones or that I just feel better when I don't eat sugar. I'm going to shoot you straight right now. That is not my story. I do not feel better when I don't eat sugar. That's not the case for everyone, but some of us just believe the lie and I was one of those people. I was trying to solve an internal problem with an external solution, and nothing worked. Because it never does.

Then I had Annie. I had a daughter. And I didn't want her feeling about her body the way I felt about mine. So I started learning a new way to be. I read books and followed people on Instagram and listened to podcasts and learned how I had been held hostage by this idea that my body needed to be a certain way in order to be okay. If it didn't meet the standard, it required management and adjustment, and I was shook by how much energy and time and thought and money and angst I spent on resisting my changing body. It made me sad. So I slowly changed my relationship with food first and eventually - and even still - my relationship with my body.

Now listen. My body is still changing. It's gone up a couple of sizes in the last two years, and I have struggled through that. I care for my body and tend to its needs and move it and feed it and honor it as best as I can. And my body continues to change, currently by getting larger. And there are days, often triggered by hormones, where I have to fight so hard to kindly navigate that change. I have to tell myself that my body is good. I have to remember that my being sexually attractive to a man is not my measuring stick. I have to look ahead at the summer and name practically that I need some new swimsuits that fit me better and also that my assurance of my worth body, mind, and soul is more important than the fictional woman at the pool who notices that I am in a bigger body this summer compared to last. The work is still there is what I'm saying, but to me that work is worth it. I could go back to the management of trying to change my changing body. I could. I know how to do that. But it is so much easier and kinder

and more grounding to honor my body as it is now, to speak to the internal challenges that exist, and resist the urge to fix those internal lies with external solutions, especially when those external solutions are simply for making my body smaller. Both approaches are challenging, but one is also good.

So I've talked a long time already and we haven't even gotten into the particulars of kindly navigating your changing body, but I hope that my story reminds you of the nuanced, sometimes sneaky difference between kindly navigating a changing body and trying to change a body you have not truly welcomed. Everyone can have autonomy in how they present their bodies and themselves to the world. You are not automatically a liar if you say you're trying to lose five pounds so you can have more energy with your kids. That is not my call to make because I don't know you and also that's not kind. But I want to remind you today that there is a difference. It's a nuanced, slippery difference. But there is a difference between kindly navigating the fact that your body is changing and quietly applying external solutions to internal problems you haven't adequately named yet. Weight is not health. Size is not health. Even health is health. Health is not the rule. One of the reasons our bodies change is because of illness or injury, whether temporary or chronic. And if your changing body will very likely not change back to what it was before, you want that "after" to be full of kindness and confidence. It's not that you're happy you have to navigate chronic pain or that you can't move the way you used to or that your hormone imbalance has caused weight retention in an unexpected way. You don't have to throw a party for those things. They're challenging and hard. That's why the title of this episode isn't "how to accept your changing body" because that is a spectrum and lifelong work, likely with no finish line. But navigating? Working through? Paying attention to it in the moment? And doing that kindly? That you can learn to do.

### **We'll be right back...**

As we close, I want to share a few situations where your body might be changing and help you name the internal belief and the external response. Hopefully seeing this will help you find yourself in the narrative and also give you kinder eyes to find tools that actually support what matters to you, not just tools to change your body.

The first change: pregnancy. This can go many ways. When I was pregnant, my internal belief was "I'm valuable now because my big belly is accepted." I loved being pregnant because it removed the obsession I had over my stomach. My stomach was supposed to get bigger, and I loved that freedom. But there are other internal messages when you're pregnant, maybe that you'll never look the way you once did again or that everything will be different from now on. It's the whole narrative of pregnancy ruining your body. Does pregnancy change your body? Absolutely. Is your body supposed to naturally bounce back? No. Is it okay if that happens to some bodies and not yours? Of course. Is it okay if it happens to yours and you feel weird about it? Of course. But believing the narrative that your body before pregnancy is good and your body after pregnancy is just a holding ground to get back to that form of good, that's a belief that will create a huge barrier in the kind navigation of your changing body. But the external solution we apply to the belief that our body will never be that way again is that we lean into the

frumpiness of pregnancy. We use our discomfort as a channel for the real hurt. We say we have back pain, but really it's back pain plus discontentment and fear for the future. But we only treat the back pain. Or exercising through the pregnancy so we'll be able to have a healthy delivery when really we're desperately hoping we won't look pregnant from behind or pregnant much past delivery. Which leads to postpartum changes. Lots of changes postpartum. You believe you're not pretty anymore, maybe you've lost yourself a little bit in the chaotic constancy of motherhood, so you immediately respond with the external solution of changing your body instead of paying attention to the lie that you're not pretty or valuable or that you have an identity beyond a mom anymore. External solutions for internal problems.

What about aging? That's a change we all go through over time. You could have the internal belief or challenge that your body is no longer valuable if you don't have people say you look good for your age. Or that you don't look like your age at all. So you work hard to maintain that. But what happens when that very aging body doesn't respond the way it used to? You grasp control even more. You're trying to change a body that is already changing but in a different way while the real issue is your belief about the value of that body.

Let's say your body is changing because of injury. Maybe you're a runner and you hurt your knee or ankle and haven't been able to run for weeks. And even when you're able to run again, you know it'll be gradual. Usually when we encounter some kind of external change, like not being able to run every day or every other day or whatever like we used to, our bodies will also respond. So maybe you're experiencing resentment about your injury or about not being able to do the thing you love or about the changes your body is experiencing that you didn't sign up for. Your external solution will almost certainly be something that is about controlling your body. Controlling its changes through food since you can't through running, controlling its healing by being so vigilant it's putting you at risk, controlling your relationships because you will not be helped in this because you will get back to the way things were.

You see what I mean with this? Every change your body goes through, whether temporary or long-term, brings with it some kind of internal messaging. There is something in your brain or coming out in your emotions that is telling you something is wrong, that you should resist this change.

Hear me. Taking steps to tend to your body externally and even changing its size or shape is not inherently bad. Not at all. You get to decide what you do with your body. But what I'm offering today is that the way you kindly navigate a changing body is that you pay attention to that internal challenge and don't automatically throw an external solution at it. Work on the internal stuff either first or alongside. Fixing the body, whatever that means, will not fix the belief. Ever. And then you'll go through another change and deal with it all over again. External solutions will not solve internal problems.

But also on the kind of flip side, internal growth will impact external perceptions. As you grow and change within and gradually see yourself and your body more kindly, whatever it looks like and however it functions, you will actually see its appearance and functionality and existence in

the world differently. What matters most will rise to the surface, you'll feel confident in those priorities, and how you live in your body will match it. It will. Maybe not at the same strength every day, but you will experience your body neutrally as a part of who you are. So external solutions will not solve internal problems, but internal growth will impact external perceptions.

I know you want answers on what to do with your clothes of different sizes and how to dress postpartum and any number of external solutions. I'm not going to give you those because they will not solve what you want to solve. Not really. Yes, figuring out how to dress a postpartum body, for example, is an external challenge that is worthy of a solution, but please create that solution through the lens of honesty about your internal messaging. Then simply apply the five Lazy Genius steps to your challenge: prioritize, essentialize, organize, personalize, and systemize. Episode 259 is called 5 steps to Lazy Genius anything, and it'll be your guide through those steps if they're new to you.

Your body is good. Your body is part of you, not a detached thing to control. Your body is not measured by size, shape, or even health. Your body is not the indicator of how valuable or desirable you are. Your desirability isn't a good measurement anyway. And one final word and a way you can kindly navigate a changing body is to treat other people the way you would want to be treated. Don't comment on anyone's body. Just don't do it. Let it exist in the world without assessment. Examine what you mean when you say that something is flattering. Don't apologize for taking up space. Don't tell a fat woman that she's brave. That's so insulting. You are always living in a changing body, so live in it kindly.

Before we go let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Sadie Steffens! Sadie has a great Lazy Genius moment with her daughter getting dressed. Here's what Sadie writes: "Hello! Just wanted to share how I lazy geniused my daughter's morning routine. She loves to wear dresses every day, but she's four and can't reach the bar in her closet to get the dresses down by herself, so we always have to help her choose her dress in the morning. I thought about choosing the dress the night before and laying it out, but she likes to have all her options available to her in the morning. I researched closet bar extensions to drop the bar lower so she could reach, but that wouldn't work with other storage in her closet. I felt like I had no other options and would have to live with it, until I realized that I never started by asking what matters most. What matters most is that she's able to get dressed by herself in the morning, not that her dresses are hanging in a closet according to conventional wisdom. She has drawer space she can reach, but it was currently housing a bunch of shirts that she never chose to wear. I switched up the system, hanging the shirts in the closet and folding the dresses in the drawer. Now she can get dressed every morning without our help. A simple change but a big impact to our morning routine." Sadie, this is so good. Y'all, this is my favorite kind of Lazy Genius moment because of how well it demonstrates the power of naming what matters first. We can be very active in our problem solving but not necessarily productive unless we name that. We have to name what matters most to actually make an impact, especially in those tiny daily things. We think the big problems are the ones to solve, but think about how much easier Sadie's morning is because of this small choice that will offer a longterm solution in the season that she's in. So good. Thanks for sharing, Sadie, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Don't forget about the Latest Lazy Listens email. It goes out every other Friday and has words from me that aren't on the podcast, extra resources, summarized episodes, the messages of the Lazy Geniuses of the Week, and a lot more. But also not a lot a lot. It's a weirdly robust email without being long. It packs a punch and is something we've been really excited about making, so I hope you sign up. The link is in the show notes, or you can go to [thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens](http://thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens). Okay, 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!