

## 304 - How to Rest When You're Caring for Everyone Else

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 304 - how to rest when you're caring for everyone else. The irony of this episode is that today, on the day I'm starting to put these words together, not necessarily speaking them into this microphone, I am home from work (even though I work from home) with a stomach buggy kid. I am caring for someone at a time when there's a lot looming and little time for rest. Then other parts of this episode will be written after having gotten the stomach bug myself and being cared for. So I find the timing of this episode to be both ironic and lovely.

Let's start by naming what I mean by rest, caring, and everyone else.

There are so many kinds of caring and so many frequencies of that care. Some of you are daily caregivers. You're home with little kids, you're home with big kids you homeschool, you have a parent living with you who needs daily care, you have a child with special needs that requires a lot of daily care, you're a working mom and probably carry a lot of that invisible labor even though you're not directly caring for your people every day, or you're in a helping profession where you're literally caring for people all day and have a hard time transitioning out of that when your work comes to an end. And my experience is limited, so there are many other kinds of daily caregiving, so if you see yourself in any of those, this episode is for you.

We also need to consider surprise caregiving, like a sick family member, a friend in a crisis, or anything else that compels you to care for others in the moment, and sometimes that surprise caregiving, while something you want to do, also creates a deficiency in you of energy, time, or resources. That's the nature of surprise, right? It can create something that is unplanned.

In both cases - daily caregiving and surprise caregiving, you can simultaneously love caring for someone and also experience difficulties in that care. Both can and often are true at the same time, so don't feel badly about that. You're not a bad person for feeling tired or drained or annoyed about the caregiving. Because I think when you ignore the reality of what's happening, you actually create resentment within yourself, and resentment isn't good for anybody. So practice holding both at the same time.

In fact, let's take a minute to validate the complexity that is caregiving. It's loving and fulfilling and something we're probably honored to do. Most often, we're caring for people we deeply love, who are desperately important to us, and when pressed, we'd likely say it's an honor and privilege to care for that person or people.

But caregiving is also constant and often draining. It takes so much energy to be on for people pretty much all the time, especially when we're tending to their needs more than our own. There's also the monotony of it which drains us in a different kind of way. And depending on the

kind of caregiver you are, you might have less community around your personal struggle. Some communities, like moms of young kids, have more accessible resources for solidarity and affirmation. There are in-person groups, a ton of online content and community, and a more generally understood respect for that kind of job. I'm not saying that more resources makes that kind of care easy because it very much doesn't. And not everybody has the same kind of resources depending on their personal situation and even where they live! In naming that though, there are generally more places for that kind of community than say for stay at home dads, folks who have a parent living with them, parents of an adult kid with special needs, that kind of thing. It's hard to continue in the work of caregiving with the kind of joy and attitude we might want to have when it's not generally recognized by others or when we're doing it mostly alone because the community aspect is harder to find.

So all that to say, caregiving is complex and nuanced and takes on many faces and feelings, often in the same day.

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

This episode is called How to Rest When You're Caring for Everyone Else, and we've talked about the word care. We've also touched on who the everyone else might be. Now let's dive into the main point of this episode, the part about rest.

I believe that if you are a person who tends to care for everyone else and you do not have rest as a regular part of your life, it will be far too easy for you to spiral into a couple of challenging, maybe even harmful mindsets. The first is resentment which I already mentioned. If your mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion isn't tended to on a regular basis, your exhaustion will almost certainly lead to resentment. Your body and soul need a break. You need rest. You *need* rest. It is a need. And the reality is that if you have a need that isn't being met and especially when that need isn't met over a long period of time, not only do you not refuel and recover from the caretaking, you start to resent the experience. Your reserves are not replenished. Your value is not validated. Without rest, the entirety of who you are might feel undervalued. You're just a "fill in the blank." You're just a mom. You're just a dad. You're just a person with an aging parent. You're just a parent of a special needs kid. You're just a nurse. You're just a grandmother taking care of her grandkids. You're just a whatever as opposed to being that *and* a complete person. If we're reduced to only our caregiving, even though that job so often is one of the best we have, it feels thankless and frustrating and over time, we're resentful.

The other challenging, possibly harmful mindset, is the common all or nothing mindset that many of you listening have. I have it too. We think that it will always be this way, that we will never get a break, that others never help out... lots of never and always. Never and always are rarely realistic. Now hear me; they do make sense when we're overwhelmed. Never and always come from a place of stress. It's hard to see things rationally when we're stressed, when we're under water. That's one of the unfortunate parts of our brain chemistry when we're experiencing stress. We cannot see things the same way. But if there's enough space to come out of that overwhelm, to ground ourselves in a small way, to remember the season we're in, we can see

never and always for what they are - understandable responses to a difficult situation. Never and always aren't true, but they feel true. We can validate those feelings in ourselves and agree that they're understandable responses to a difficult situation. Just being aware of that is so helpful.

This is why I deeply value the Lazy Genius principle of living in the season. Rather than recapping that, I'm just going to read you a part of that chapter in *The Lazy Genius Way* which is the first book I wrote that breaks down the 13 Lazy Genius principles, one of them being live in the season. I'm starting to read from page 61.

"If you're in a challenging season of life, you probably want out.

You may be tired of waiting for whatever sits on the other side of the longing and feel exhausted by the guilt of longing for something else. Maybe your challenge is a job you hate, kids that make you tired, or no money in the bank. Maybe you're waiting for a spouse, waiting for a divorce, or waiting for an adoption to finally go through.

Frustration with your present circumstances is real and okay, but if you habitually look behind and beyond where you are, discontentment will be an eager companion whispering in your ear.

*It will always be this way.*

*There's no way out.*

*How on earth can you do this for another day?*

The lazy response is to disengage, to leave the present to its own devices. You avoid the grief, ignore the life lessons, and just put your head down. No one looks at a difficult season and decides *I want to be miserable until this is over*, but by disengaging, you're still choosing it. The tension between resignation and hope feels like too much to beat, so you simply shut down.

The genius response is to force one season to look like another. You don't like change or letting go, so you grip tightly to the way things were and demand that your current season match it, or else. Maybe you're the well-meaning pregnant woman declaring that you're not going to let a baby change your relationship with your husband. *We're still us*, you silently vow. This is true, but now you're *us* with a baby. And a baby brings big changes.

What do you do with that? How can you deal with the tension of a hard season, of long stretches where you wish life were different, of changes you weren't anticipating?

Thankfully, you don't have to disengage or resist. Instead, live in your season.

As you live in your season, embrace being honest about how you feel *and* be willing to learn from what you find. Pay attention to what's in front of you and stop trying to see every possible step ahead.

Emily P. Freeman says to do the next right thing in love, and I'm telling you, there's not a more powerful mantra for living in your season.

Don't get swept up in what was or what could be. Start small with what's right in front of you.

Do the next right thing. Think the next true thought. Wash one load of clothes and don't resent the other six. Wipe off a single kitchen counter. Open a window. Call a friend (and promptly tell her no one is dead when she picks up because that's what we all think when a friend calls us these days).

Start small.

Sure, your difficult season of life won't always be this way, but when it *is* this way, pause. Instead of forcing yourself into a more palatable set of emotions or ignoring your longings, be aware and gracious. See your season as an invitation to be human, to name what matters, and to strengthen who you already are.

You don't have to be afraid of stress or sadness. You don't have to panic when things fall out of order. You don't have to run away from a season of life that seems to require more than you have to give. Staying engaged with the sadness but not letting it dictate your decisions is a practice in being a genius about what matters.

Living in your season reminds you that beginnings, endings, and middles all deserve your attention and kindness and that you don't need to rush through them.

Just do the next right thing.

Like our national treasure Mister Rogers once said, "Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else."

Maybe your something else is growing stronger in who you already are, one season at a time."

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

Now as we close this episode, I want to give you two easy tools to rest when you're caring for everyone else.

The first, I'm calling The Basic Three. What three things do you need today to be able to care reasonably well in whatever kind of caregiving situation you're in? What do *you* need in that caring, and what do you need specifically today? Stay basic, realistic, and doable in this answer.

I think it's so important to pay attention to what we need on a daily basis and give ourselves permission for those things to change. That's the problem with big machines. We create this big solution for our problems, but on top of big machines being too hard to maintain, they also don't

take into account the intricacies of our daily needs. Your Basic Three will look different on a Monday versus a Friday, on a day when you're on your period if you're a lady compared to a day you're ovulating and ready to charm the heck out of everybody, on a day when you didn't get a lot of sleep the night before, on a day after a long weekend of lots of socializing, and even that one will look different if you're an introvert or an extrovert.

Even the most repetitive Groundhog Day lives still have daily nuances that we need to pay attention to. So create a reminder for yourself either each morning or the night before to ask yourself, "What are my Basic Three today?" Maybe you write them on a sticky note and put them on the fridge or somewhere you look often. Maybe you type them into your notes app or make a story panel on Instagram that no one else sees that you just save as an image and make your phone's wallpaper for the day so you can see your three. Maybe you have someone else in your life that you check in with who's in a similar enough situation and every morning you share with each other your Basic Three. Maybe you have a standing alarm on your phone two or three times a day that reminds you to check in with your Basic Three.

So one morning, you might name that today in order to kindly support your caregiving, you need a walk around the block, even if it's with your toddlers and takes forever, you need a lunch that feels on purpose and makes you feel good, and you need to call a friend at some point to talk to a grownup. Prioritize those things alongside the caregiving that already has its rhythm, and that's it for today. And even if you only do one, you did one. And even if you don't do any, you're practicing naming them and will try again tomorrow.

The Basic Three is a really simple question with significant daily consequences. What three things do you need today?

The second and final thing I want you to notice and name is what kind of rest you need. There's an episode you can listen to called *The Seven Kinds of Rest and How to Know Which One You Need* that we'll put in the show notes, but knowing the kind of rest you need at whatever interval you need it is crucial.

If you just say you'll rest but don't specify what that really means for you, you'll feel like that rest time is wasted because you don't know how to fill it. The episode talks specifically about what the seven kinds are and how they might be fulfilled differently, so I highly recommend listening to that. But real quick, the seven kinds I listed are relaxing, resetting, recharging, needing a break, resting before something busy, resting during something busy, and resting after something busy or recovery. Knowing what you need in the moment and also naming the kind of rest that would be most helpful for you longterm as a caregiving would be so helpful.

My guess is that most caregivers need a break. You just need a break! You need to step away from your responsibilities for a short time on a decently regular basis so that you can do something else. You can be a different part of yourself. You can make a choice without considering what the person you're caring for needs in that same moment. Whatever kind of rest you need, naming it makes such a huge difference.

These two things - The Basic Three and naming what kind of rest you need - aren't very systemized. They're not big machine processes. They're daily attentions to what you need at that time. Those are honestly some of our most annoying solutions when we're in a hard season because we want something big and grand to take us out of what is hard.

But caregiving will always be hard. It is by nature a difficult thing. Can you see its value with practice and compassion? Yes. Can you sometimes enjoy parts of it? Absolutely. Can you really dislike the particulars of it while desperately loving the person you're caring for? Yes. Caregiving is a complex thing, but it doesn't require a complex solution. Perhaps it doesn't require a solution at all because that means there is something to fix.

Really what you need is to rest, is to pay attention to yourself amidst that caregiving so that you can engage with the person or people in a way that is kind and compassionate. You will be more equipped to do that if you are rested in whatever way you need to be.

So consider how you can daily ask yourself what you need today. What are your Basic Three just for today? Naming them is more powerful than not naming them, even if you don't do them. And even if you do one, it's better than doing none. Small steps.

And also consider the difference in the kinds of rest you might need, and prioritize scheduling those. *The Lazy Genius Way* has a whole chapter on scheduling rest which is another Lazy Genius principle, and there's that podcast episode I mentioned.

We'll also put more resources in the next Latest Lazy Listens email if you want more words around rest. We need a lot of encouragement in this area because it's so easy to just go go go, but if you go go go without a stop stop stop, you'll crash crash crash and then burn burn burn and then resent resent resent. No thanks. Let's find a different way. Hopefully this is a different way that could work for you one small step at a time.

Okay, before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week, it's Anna Howard Miller who wrote me this on Instagram: "I wanted to share a way I have Lazy Geniused my laundry. I do laundry once a week, and when bedtime comes on wash day, the laundry isn't yet folded, and I used to get so annoyed digging through baskets full of clean clothes looking for matching jammies. Recently I started doing an entire load of just pajamas. It's always the 2nd load I wash (hots go first) so that I know without a doubt that come bedtime, I will have this load complete. Now all I have to do is look in the clean pajama basket and it's much less stressful!"

I love this, Anna! I share this example of Lazy Geniusing a situation because it's another version of doing something in an order and way that makes the most sense for you, even if that way is a little off center of how we've been taught to do things. Anna washes all the pajamas at once because accessing clean pajamas matters. I wash all our hanging clothes together so that it's easy to just grab the whole load and go straight to the closet. Some of you do that with towels or athletic gear or by kid or whatever it is. I just love that we can adjust within the system of laundry

to make it work best for us, and Anna was a great example of that today. So thanks so much for sharing, Anna, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, that's it for today! Remember to sign up for the Latest Lazy Listens email that goes out every other Friday! It'll have a recap of the episode with important bullet points, extra resources, and a note from me. It also has the Lazy Geniuses of the Weeks listed out in case you couldn't remember that one tip you heard. It's a great little email, and we'd love for you to check it out. The link will be in the show notes, or you can go to [thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens](http://thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens).

Thanks 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!