

## 311 - What's Saving My Life Right Now

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.

This special episode is presented by KFC and Acast Creative. KFC chicken nuggets have made their debut and they truly are the perfect chicken nugget. Each one is hand-breaded with KFC's Original Recipe and absolutely packed with flavor. So basically what I'm saying is...KFC took all the magic that is a bucket of chicken and packed it into one small but equally amazing chicken nugget.

And since KFC chicken nuggets are something that saves dinner for my family, I thought I'd share more examples of that in today's episode, number 311, What's Saving My Life Right Now.

We love doing these episodes, but just in case you're new here, let me briefly explain what this is and why we did it so often. Barbara Brown Taylor originally asked the question "what's saving your life?" and its simplicity struck gold. We all realize that not only are there things in our lives that save us but that it's also so valuable to name those things. We do an episode like this every quarter or season, and that's because as Lazy Geniuses, we live in the season. That is one of 13 Lazy Genius principles that everything is based on, and what saves your life in one season might not in another. So we name and celebrate those things. I love getting messages and seeing Instagram posts about what is saving your life right now, and I hope that this week, if you do share your list anywhere, you'll feel encouraged in the process. Also tag me! I'd love to see.

Okay, let's jump into my list. Today, I have seven things.

Number one: the Merlin app. First, let me talk about my weird relationship with birds. I both love birds and am terrified of birds. I find birds as a concept to be so strange and also spectacular. I never want to touch one, but I will never tire of listening to them. If one got caught in my house, I'd be terrified, and yet when a bird comes to my birdfeeder, I make everybody stop moving so I can stare for as long as possible. Me and birds have a hot and cold thing going.

But I'd say mostly, I love birds, especially songbirds. I live in a fairly suburban neighborhood with a good number of trees and not a lot of city noise, so the birdsong, especially in the mornings and evenings, is so beautiful and loud.

I don't remember where this happened. I think I mentioned my love of birdsong to our Lazy Genius private community, The Neighborhood, and several people in there (at least I think it was them) suggested the Merlin app. It's an app that helps you identify birds visually and with sound. You have to download the bird pack for wherever you live, but then you just press the record button when you're standing outside, and the app will show you what birds are singing. It'll even highlight the name when that particular bird is chirping, a lovely thing when it's just a cacophony of birdsong. I use this thing almost every day. It's pure joy. My kids love it, too. We'll sit outside on the porch or walk down the street to a little patch of woods and just listen. We'll count how

many birds are chirping at once (our record is 15), and it's also fun when something more rare pops up. The other day, we heard both a peregrine falcon and a Baltimore oriole. I can now easily identify the Carolina wren. It's just the most fun. And it's free! It's a free app. I'll just sit and listen to birds, and that is so good for my soul.

So that's the Merlin app. Merlin, like the wizard.

Number two, Olive and June press-on nails, especially for traveling. Kaz and I went on a European cruise a couple of weeks ago, and I decided to wear press-ons. My nails were pretty stubby at the time, and I didn't make the time to give myself a manicure before we left. I also didn't want to use coveted quart-bag space for a bottle of nail polish, even a mini, for touchups and stuff. So I opted for press-ons.

Amazing. I think I might have unusually shaped nailbeds because I have to file every single press-on I ever use, but it's worth it. I put on HZ press-ons in extra short round that I got at Target the day before we left, and I wore those things for ten days and they did not budge. Plus my nails just looked really nice all the time walking around Florence and Monaco and the French Riviera, as one does. It was my first real foray into press-ons, and I will now always wear them for a trip. Always always. They saved my life then, and they absolutely will again.

Number three, The Essential Calendar. Y'all, I love this thing. The Essential Calendar is the name of a small business and the product I love so much. This business was started by two busy moms, Crystal and Lindsay, and they make these amazing high quality wall calendars that span at least three months at a time. I think at first they just had the typical seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter, but as they developed the product, they expanded the types of calendars to make it easier for people to really plan and see the season they're in. A recent new calendar was the Summer Break calendar that I think started last year that spans Memorial Day to Labor Day. So if you're a teacher or a parent of kids, that's a great way to look at the summer. They also have some new calendars that I am literally obsessed with. One is literally labeled Busiest Time Ever and spans mid September through the end of December. It's like the Holiday Docket timeframe on one page. There's also a Home Stretch calendar for next year that covers the last three months before school is over. But again you can just get ones that are standard seasons. The point is that these calendars span a season in one glance, and they are so helpful.

The paper is the highest quality, super easy to write on. And The Essential Calendars sells several options for displaying the calendar, like giant push pins or, the one we have, which is the wooden magnetic frame. I just cannot explain how easy this thing is to use and how helpful it is. Ours hangs by the back door, and my kids, Ben especially, marks off the day previous as part of his morning routine. We use our calendar for things that the kids would want to know. Night meetings I have, trips I have to take. I literally write "Mom is gone to Nashville." We write camps and band performances and when we get to see the Harry Potter symphony in June. It's our big picture for things that are outside of our ordinary, and I never want to live without it.

We'll put a link in the show notes to The Essential Calendar shop, and be sure to use code LAZYGЕНИUS for 10% off your order! I've never met anyone who got one of these who didn't love it. Truly. They're just fantastic and will absolutely save your life.



Alright, back to the list of what's saving my life! Number four. I hired my mom to be my personal assistant. You might remember that a year or so ago, I did the same for my sister, and it was amazing. Then my sister got an actual job with a salary and benefits and stuff, which was great for her. And I thought I might be able to swing it without help. And I can. But the swinging took so much energy from other things that matter. So I asked my mom who doesn't work if she would want to be my assistant. Y'all, my mom was made to solve my problems. Every week, after I do my brain dump for the upcoming week and look at my calendar and plan all the things that are going on, I pull out the things my mom could do for me instead.

She goes to Costco for me. She returns packages and checks my PO Box. She organized my pantry. She got quotes from tree guys to take down dead trees in our yard. She's going to defrost my freezer. I told her that one of Sam's blinds in his room was broken, and she measured the windows and is getting new treatments and will install them. Our vacuum is on the frist, and I'm literally going to pay her to research vacuums for us and find the best one for our needs.

Now, this is an excellent place to remind everybody that I'm not sharing a list of things that will save everyone's life. These are the things that save mine. I realize that not everyone can get an assistant or has a willing family member three minutes away who has the space to do these kinds of things. I share this not to flaunt. I recognize it is absolutely a privilege. Absolutely. My mom is here, and I can pay her. That's not true for everyone.

But I am here to share the types of things that are saving my life in the hopes that it will spark ideas and recognition for you. Even hearing me say that I have outsourced someone to fix my son's broken blinds can be a comfort to you as to why your broken blinds are still hanging there. Broken blinds and whatever else can go in that category are annoying, are hard to fit into regular life, and will often just exist because you don't have the margin to fix them. Neither do I. I'd rather read or go to bed early or play Monopoly Deal with my kids than fix Sam's broken blind that functions well enough. But I also am enjoying the benefit of having those broken blind-like things tended to. Maybe your tending looks different than mine does, but the tending to those things? Totally saving my life.

Okay, back to what's saving my life! Number five. Strawberry season. Holy moly, strawberry season. Strawberry season might be one of the best times of the year for the Adachi family. We are obsessed particularly with Rudd Farm strawberries. If you're local-ish to Greensboro, you probably feel the same. There is nothing like a Rudd strawberry, and we buy at least one bucket a week. I have photos of my kids sitting on the farmers market floor the minute we got our first bucket and just going to town. This year, we tried going twice, but the rain kept us away and no

strawberries were available. This past week was the first real week they were out, but I did not have a free morning to run to their farm stand because it's almost 30 minutes away and they sell out usually before lunch. So I asked my personal assistant to go get us some. Best thing ever. The kids came home from school last week, all three at three different times, and every single one threw their arms into the air and shouted varying exclamations of joy at the sight of our first bucket.

Strawberry season saves my life because it reminds me of life in that way seasonal food does. It saves snacks and lunches and sides at dinner because everybody just wants to eat strawberries all the time. And it saves my life because it unites our family around something we all love, honestly a tough thing these days as our kids' year difference stays the same but the age difference feels wider and wider. Strawberry season is definitely saving my life.

Number six is the band Poor Bishop Hooper. There's always something music related for me on these lists, so this is no surprise. This is a Christian band, a husband and wife duo, and they started a project in 2020 as many of us did where they would record one song a week from the Psalms. The longest chapter of Psalms, chapter 119, has several songs part of it, but they wanted to make every psalm singable as it was meant to be.

I don't talk about my faith a ton on this show - if you want to know why, there's a recent Instagram post where my daughter Annie is jumping off a curb that says a few words about it - but I am a Christian, and my faith is the most important thing to me. Listening to these songs, these psalms, has been more impactful than I expected. The presence of Biblical scripture in my thinking matters to me, and adding it to my life in the form of these really beautiful songs has been so great. So that's the band Poor Bishop Hooper. Somebody made a playlist of every psalm since there's not really an album of them. We'll put a link in the show notes.

And whether you're a Jesus person or not, there's a bonus link in there of my Sparkle Sounds playlist, a short little playlist I really don't want you to shuffle that just adds the best sparkle to any day. It has Harry Styles and Bill Withers, and you can't help but smile when you listen. That link will be in the show notes too.

And finally, the number seven thing that's saving my life is night braid time. What is a night braid? A night braid is the braid I put into Annie's hair, my seven year old daughter, every single night before she goes to bed. She watches her weird YouTube videos, and I comb her always tangly hair and put it into a braid so it's less tangly when she wakes up. It's just the sweetest thing I get to do every day. I sit up in her bunk bed with her, I take my time, I get to be close to her, and we both miss it if it doesn't happen. It's just as natural and regular as brushing teeth.

When Kaz and I went on the cruise, my mom stayed with my kids, and she said that night braid time was one of her favorite things she go to do, and I totally understand why. Those tender little moments with the people we love that become so regular that we can forget about them need to be remembered. So this is your reminder to notice those things that probably do save your life that you might not even notice anymore.

And those are the seven things that are saving my life right now.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week, it's Ryan Ein. Sorry, if I'm mispronouncing your name, Ryan! But look, it's a dude Lazy Genius of the Week! I believe this is a first.

Ryan sent this recipe for Lazy Homemade Macaroni and Cheese, and I would be the worst if I didn't share it with you. Granted, I have not made this, but when you hear the ingredients, you won't be upset.

Ryan first writes this: I love homemade mac and cheese, like really love it but hate making it because it's such a long process. So if you're like me, follow this recipe and thank me later. It's seriously a huge hit and my family begs me to bring it everytime.

Okay, y'all, you have a pen? Pause the episode, and grab a pen. In a 13x9 baking pan or disposable foil pan, mix together the following ingredients: 16 oz uncooked elbow macaroni, 24 oz of shredded cheese, whatever cheeses you like for mac and cheese, 16 oz of heavy cream, 3 cups of milk, and ½ stick or 4 tablespoons of melted butter. You just stir it all together either in a bowl or directly in the pan (I vote directly in the pan), and then bake it at 375 for an hour. You can add extra shredded cheese on top and broil it a little at the end, too, I bet. Then let it sit for a few minutes as you always should with mac and cheese. Ryan says we'll thank him, and I think he's right.

This recipe reminds me of Ina Garten's mac and cheese I made for Thanksgiving last year. It was similar except you could let the pan of uncooked mac and cheese sit in the fridge overnight. I think that even helps the noodles soak up the liquid. Then bake it. And it was the best mac and cheese I've ever had. My only thing I'd probably add because I'm me is a little salt. The only salt in this is from the cheese, and frankly, that's not going to cut it for me. I have a pillow with the word salt on it; I will probably add salt. But thanks for this definitely lazy recipe, Ryan, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

If you did not have a pen to write down this recipe or you lose the paper you wrote it on, remember, that is why we have the Latest Lazy Listens email. It's an email that goes out every other Friday, and it has the most robust summary of episodes and even tips from the Lazy Geniuses of the Week. So in the next one, you'll have the list of the seven things saving my life plus Ryan's lazy mac and cheese recipe. It's a great email. Super consumable and short. Easy to know what you need and skip what you don't. I think you'll really like it, so sign up at [thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens](http://thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens) to get on the list so you can have Ryan's recipe and all the other good things that come out of the podcast.

And don't forget to go get those calendars from The Essential Calendar and to use code LAZYGNIUS to get 10% off your order. I get so giddy over those things, and I'm giddy on your behalf that you'll soon get to enjoy them.

Thanks again to KFC and Acast Creative for making this episode possible. I loved getting to chat with my kids after school over chicken nuggets as part of my job this week. So fun! And thank YOU for listening! 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!