

315 - Lazy Genius Office Hours!

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 a very exciting episode, the first of its kind and hopefully not the last! One of my favorite things about this job is helping you all Lazy Genius your problems. I do it sometimes on Instagram, in various membership communities over the years, in real life at events, and it is always the most fun, the most gratifying, the most connective thing. So we're going to bring that to the podcast in an Office Hours episode!

A week or so ago, I asked y'all on Instagram what your problem was and what mattered most about that problem. There were so many great questions, a lot of good solutions offered in the comments, but in this episode, I'm going to Lazy Genius a few of those specific problems from the comments, partially so the problem can get a solution but more so to show multiple examples of the process of how to Lazy Genius something.

There are some fantastic, specific problems that I can't wait to answer, but before we get to those, I want to address two categories of problems I saw in the comments. One is problems that are too big. Which is understandable. We easily feel the weight of big things, big systemic challenges in our homes or schedules. Questions about how to keep your house clean or how to limit clutter or how to find time to exercise. Those are all really relevant questions, but they are too big to solve. In fact, I think that about 70% of the problems in the comments were too big. If I responded to all of them, the first step would be to make the problem much smaller. So I want you to pay attention to that in your own life. It's not as fun or flashy to make a problem super small and then do the smallest step to help solve it, but I will say it until the day I die: big problems require big solutions, and big solutions do not work. The smallest of steps for the smallest of problems is the way to go. You might even think that your question was the smallest you can make it, but seasonal problems, system problems, routine problems, relational problems, transitional problems like new jobs and new schools and stuff, all of those are going to be too big. Always always. That's why they're overwhelming.

In fact, that can be a guide for you. If the problem is overwhelming when you think about it, it's too big. Small problems are more annoying than overwhelming. So take that overwhelming problem and try to find the most granular, annoying aspect to it. That might be the first problem you can solve as you work your way into a place where the larger problem feels more addressed over time.

Another type of problem I noticed were problems that are just naturally challenging, but there's some kind of expectation that it shouldn't be. That somehow, there's a way to eliminate the stress of a problem that in reality will be stressful no matter what you do. Some things are just hard. So remember that we Lazy Genius our problems, not to eliminate what is hard from them or to make them so seamless we don't even think about them or that we become a problem-solving robot unaffected by naturally challenging things. Some problems are going to

be hard. Instead, you can focus on what matters and try and make the problem a little bit easier based on how you approach it.

I mention both of these as a reminder to you when you're trying to figure something out in your own life. Are you starting too big? Do you have an unrealistic goal of removing every barrier from the situation? Those are two helpful questions, helpful markers to know if you're going to waste your time trying to solve something that can't be solved in the way you're trying to.

So that said, now let's get into some specific questions. The main process of Lazy Geniusing most any situation is with these five steps: prioritize or name what matters, essentialize or get rid of what's in the way, organize or put everything in its place, personalize or feel like yourself, and systemize or stay in the flow. These five steps are explained and applied in my book, *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*, and they are an excellent way to approach a lot of challenges. And also sometimes you only need one or two of those steps to find a solution. Or you need to apply one Lazy Genius principle to actually make more headway than you thought. So we'll use a combination of those things as we go through these questions!

Alright, our first question is from @anna.hammond. Anna wrote: "How to LG Objects Waiting to Leave. Looking at the cabinet by the door, I spy 1) a mug my husband wants to take to his office, 2) part of a toy that lives at grandma's, 3) a book I need to get back to a friend, 4) a shirt to return to Target, 5) a pie plate that belongs to my mother in law, 6) a letter I need to give to my sister. What matters most? Visual clutter - sweet spot between out of sight out of mind and if I look at that heap much I will lose my mind!"

I don't know many people who do not have objects waiting to leave. It doesn't matter who lives in your house, what your job is, what your personality is, you have objects waiting to leave. So let's Lazy Genius this. I think there are two aspects to this particular issue. One is where the objects go before they leave, and the other is the rhythm of getting them out of your house. And what matters to you, your routines, your storage options, and all kinds of things will impact how you approach those two aspects of objects waiting to leave.

If we look at the five steps of Lazy Geniusing anything, the first is prioritize and name what matters. For me, what matters is that I don't look out and see all of those things. I don't want to see them. I don't want the clutter of things that don't have a place in my home. The next step is essentialize or get rid of what's in the way. You all will have different answers to this, but honestly the thing that was in the way for me for a long time was the expectation of how quickly I moved things out of my house. If something stayed for longer than a couple of days or a week, I would lose my mind. Like, why is this taking so long? Why do I have to keep staring at this coffee mug that doesn't belong to me? Right? So I get rid of the expectation of quick removal. Some things take awhile, and that's okay. Because remember, my priority isn't that the things get out fast. It's that I don't want to look at them.

Enter step three: organize. Put everything in its place. I bought a big basket at some home store (I don't even remember where now), and anything that is outgoing goes in that basket. Amazon

returns, the borrowed mug, the book I finished that I want to hand off to my sister, they all go in the basket. The one category of outgoing things that doesn't go in the basket are things that still need to leave but can leave the house in my kids' backpacks. So things like snacks for the first grade class party or permission slips or whatever. Those are all outgoing things, but they already have a place. They go in the kids' backpacks so they'll get to where they need to go. But everything else that needs leave goes in the basket.

Step four is personalize or feel like yourself. That one is less relevant for this situation other than I bought a basket I think is pretty. I spent a few dollars more to get a nice basket I like. I don't want to look at the pile of outgoing things, but I don't want those things to be hidden by another ugly thing either.

And finally step five is systemize or keep things in a flow. The basket is in an area I walk past multiple times a day. It's actually where we keep the kids' backpacks as well, so it's a little bit of a hub of things are leaving. But if my sister drops by, I've passed the book several times that day and can say, "Oh hold on! I have a book for you!" Or if my mom comes by and she lives down the street from my sister and I can say, "Would you drop this off at Hannah's house for me?" If I'm running errands, I check the basket first and see what I can get out of the house. The rhythm is more of an awareness of the items that need to leave. And frankly, there are a couple of things that have sat in that basket for two months now, and it doesn't really matter. They're not urgent. There's not been an easy time to take that thing that no one is really waiting for, so it just stays. And it's hidden. Which is what matters most to me.

So that's my personal solution to the problem, but you can see how the five steps really help. And you can also see how I made that challenge that was already really small and more annoying than overwhelming, right? You can see how I made even that a little smaller by noticing the two pieces of where the stuff waits and then how it ends up leaving. So Anna, I hope that helps and anyone else who has things that need to leave the house.

We'll be right back...

Next question comes from @marymcg1. Mary says this: "Problem: I stay up too late because I don't feel like I have enough time to enjoy my evening and/or get all my chores done. Priority: Getting 7-8 hours AND feeling energized for an AM workout and full workday." Okay, so there were a lot of amens to this one, myself included! This is a real problem for a lot of people. But then Mary posted a followup to her own comment and said "As I type this, I realize one of my problems might be that my evenings don't actually have enough truly enjoyable moments built in."

Okay, first, I want you to notice this. This is important. Saying your problem out loud but with a grownup voice and not a whiny voice, where you really are curious about how to make this thing that matters to you better, that practice alone often unlocks a little bit more in your brain. You say it, you sit with it a minute, in particular if you say it to a friend and sit with it in conversation using your grownup voices, you'll see a way to make the problem smaller or you'll see a brighter

spotlight on what matters or you're realize "oh wait, now that I've said this out loud, I don't know that this matters as much as I thought it did." Speak the problem out. And like Mary, you might have a clarifying followup.

Okay, now to the problem itself. While this is small and while what matters is specific, this is a really good place to apply the Lazy Genius not principle but time management mindset of "Match your expectations to the energy you're willing to give." Match your expectations to the energy you're willing to give. I don't know your situation, Mary, or anyone else who resonates with Mary big time, but to me, that priority of getting 7-8 hours and having energy when I wake up and having enough energy and time to do a morning workout? For me, that's too many priorities, and they're not realistic for the energy I'm willing to give. So that's the first thing here, is your expectation incongruent with the energy you are giving or are willing to regularly give?

The next part of this is that I think this is too many priorities. This is making three things matter: 7-8 hours, waking up energetic, and having time to do a morning workout. And honestly that doesn't even include the priorities on the evening end where you get to relax and do something enjoyable and also get chores done, right? So this is an excellent example of how you have to do the work of figuring what matters most. Mary, you already know what does matter, and you listed them. But it's too many things because you don't have a clear direction on how to solve your problem because 3-5 things matter. Do you focus more on quality of sleep? Do you focus on a set bedtime? Do you adjust your morning workout so that it's quicker to get into in case you sleep late? Is that you adjust your evening routine and move chores to another day or whatever? You can't do all of those things. You can't make all of those changes because they will not stick. It's too many things, and even a lot of tiny things creates a big thing. And big things don't stick.

So rather than give specifics on how to address this, my advice here is to focus on one priority. And it sounds like you already did in your follow-up comment. Your evenings aren't as enjoyable as you'd like. So adjust that. Name something or a handful of things to choose from that you find deeply enjoyable at the end of the day. It makes going to bed more fulfilling because you've filled that bucket, right?

And one final piece of advice with this question: remember that what you choose from one night is not what you have to choose for every night. You can do chores every other night where there's a smaller amount of time to do that enjoyable thing, so you still get to relax and do something enjoyable but maybe for not as long on certain days. Same goes for bedtimes. I try really hard to not stay up past 11pm two nights in a row because then my sleep debt accumulates. So if I stay up late one night which happens a lot, like right now during the NBA playoffs, I try and prioritize going to bed earlier the next.

But ultimately here, match your expectations to the energy you're willing to give, and make one thing matter. Then you'll have a better idea of how to keep moving toward a solution that works for you.

Nugget break.

Next question is from @tinyclayjars. I'm calling you Tiny. Tiny says "Food containers! My Tupperware cupboard is an annoying disaster, and I don't have drawers in my kitchen so that's not an option. How do I keep lids from disappearing into the abyss but not have to put them on every container because then I can't nest them to make sure they all fit?!" First, I love how small this is. Love love love. I also love that Tiny said that was annoying. Did you hear that? Annoying problems are the easiest to solve because they're usually pretty small. Annoying is different than overwhelming. Solve annoying problems.

Okay, Tiny's priority is lid storage. She wants to keep the lids she has without putting them on the containers because otherwise she can't nest and they don't fit. This is a great example of a really small, really annoying problem that doesn't have to be taken through a whole process. You can just have an idea and try it. I have three.

The first idea is to use the principle Put Everything in Its Place and have a large container that's just for lids. You might already have this, but it's just where the lids go. When it's time to get a lid or put away a lid, there is one geographical choice. Super simple. You might even already be doing that.

The second idea is to see if you need all of the containers you have. Do you care enough about keeping lids to the point where you don't have to nest, or can you get rid of some you don't need as much? You can put the lids on each one, and stack them up. We don't like getting rid of things that still work, but if they impact how things are working, you can get rid of those things.

And the third idea is to perhaps keep the most used Tupperware pieces in the cabinet where they already are, perhaps with each lid on each container, and put the less frequently used containers that you still want to keep in a closet or something. Not every piece of Tupperware needs to stay in the kitchen.

So those are three of my ideas, and there are probably a lot more. But this is an excellent example of how the smallest most annoying problem is actually kind of easy to solve when you take the time to think about it.

Let's do one more as an example of something else that I think is pretty relevant to probably all of you at some point. This comment comes from @mrs_lopez05. Mrs. Lopez's problem is not relevant to all of you because not all of you work from home full time with kids, but Mrs. Lopez's perception of this problem is something we all do, and it's a wonderful thing to remember as we're solving our own problems on our time. She writes "Problem: Wall-to-wall summer camps will bankrupt me, and my husband and I both work from home so it's about to get real over here. How can I solve my dilemma of the only way to be a good employee during the day is to basically let my children run feral and destroy my house while I work which means after I've used my brain all day, I then have to turn my attention to cooking and righting the house which equals no time to relax and a lot of resentment? Am I allowed to have two priorities? A chaotic

space gives me literal hives so the opposite of that is a priority, but I want my children to feel cozy and comfortable in their own home. My girls are 4 and 7.” Okay, first thing. There were several suggestions in the comments, things like hiring a young teen helper, what are they called, like a Mother’s Helper? Also Boys and Girls Club camps that are generally a lot cheaper than most summer camps, and a routine for the kids. And all of those are great ideas. But here’s what I want us to focus on with this incredibly relevant question from Mrs. Lopez. Mrs. Lopez, you shared your problem in a very relatable, humorous way. Nobody wants feral children. But I want to point out all of the extremes that are in this comment. And this is not a judgment. Hear me with my whole heart. This is what we do when we are overwhelmed. We tend to make things extreme. Examples from this comment: “Wall-to-wall summer camps.” That assumes summer camps every day of the summer. Not necessary. All or nothing is not your only options. Next: “wall-to-wall summer camps will *bankrupt* me.” I know you’re being funny, but that’s also an extreme. “The only way to be a good employee during the day is to let my children run feral and destroy my house while I work.” So “the only way” is extreme. “Run feral” is extreme. “Destroy my house” is extreme. Another phrase is “I then have to turn my attention to cooking and righting the house which equals no time to relax.” “No time” is extreme. Again, Mrs. Lopez, I could’ve written this comment. Sometimes leaning into the comedy of it and exaggerating helps us be okay with it. But usually when we are overwhelmed, we make things very extreme, and you cannot solve extreme problems.

So my advice with this comment and any that might be like it is to pay attention to where extremes are stopping you from moving forward. If we take all of those phrases and bring them down a little bit, here’s what the comment could say: “I want to be able to focus on my job, but it’s hard to do that when the girls are around, and I’m afraid that too many summer camps is going to be too expensive. I want to have a couple of strategies in place so that my girls can enjoy their summer and I can, too.” Do you feel the difference in those two energies? It’s a shorter path to a solution when you’re not speaking in extremes because you have to do the work of removing them. You won’t find a solution when you’re bankrupt with feral children. So as you remove extremes from your own narrative, notice which one is the hardest to let go. There’s a chance that you just uncovered what the real priority is or what the real fear is. Extremes help protect us from what’s really going on. I’m not saying that Mrs. Lopez or anyone else is hiding a lot of emotional turmoil underneath a funny comment, but I have observed over years and years of talking to y’all that extremes are rooted in fear. It could be a fear of something specific, but a lot of times, it’s the fear of being overwhelmed. And anticipating that overwhelm. It often takes more effort and emotional energy to anticipate extremes than to solve realities. So notice any language in your own problem that’s extreme, and soften those edges a little. Notice the reality, and also see if the removal of any of those extremes is really hard. There’s something there that’s worth paying attention to and likely the place to direct your problem-solving energy.

We’ll be right back...

I’m so sad because I literally have five more questions I selected from the 200+ in that post, and we’re out of time. But I think that shows that we will never run out of ideas for future Office Hours episodes.

If you liked this episode, we'd love to know, and two of the easiest ways for us to know that are if you leave a review on Apple Podcasts and you can even say in that review "I love The Lazy Genius Podcast and especially the new Office Hours episode!" That's it. But that's something that's easily measured. Another way is for you to share this episode on social and tag @thelazygenius. That's a way that we always know which episodes in particular are resonating enough with y'all that you're sharing them. Not every episode gets shared at the same rate, and so if you really love this kind of episode and want us to do more, do one of those two things. Leave a review on Apple Podcasts or share the episode and tag me so we'll be able to see! And I'm going to save these other five questions for hopefully a next time! Because they're really great questions!

Okay, before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! It's actually from one of the comments on the post for this episode. So this is like a bonus question. So Rachel asked about reading with her kids. She said "My kids are 3 years apart. I've realized my younger child has not read a lot of the books I read to my oldest. This summer, I'd like to read through all of our picture books with both of them." I'm going to stop there and note the extreme use of the word "all." That's not bad to use all. Just notice when you use those kinds of extreme words. Okay, back to the comment. "But I can't wrap my mind around the best way to do it." Best can also be extreme. "What matters: I read to my kids every day and that a lot of my favorites are read. And that we don't have piles of books laying around the den." Okay, there were several responses to Rachel because this is a community that loves books which makes me very happy. But my favorite response was from Cassidy27 who said, "When we were having trouble making time for picture books, we had an early reading night once a week. We would get ready for bed an hour early. Grab some snacks and read." Cassidy, I love that idea so much. It's so very Lazy Genius in multiple ways. Number one, you named one specific, not extreme problem in "we were having trouble making time for picture books." It's about the time, it was challenging, but it wasn't destroying everything. Then your solution is small in that it's one night a week of getting ready for bed early to read. You made fun with snacks. But you worked it into something that already existed, being a bedtime routine. You just bumped it earlier. I love the simplicity of it and the kindness toward yourself in it, and I think it's something that a lot of people will really enjoy hearing. So Rachel, thank you for your very relevant and relatable question, and Cassidy, thank you for your lovely response to Rachel and being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

And as I close this out, I want to say again, in noting things about comments that are big or seasonal or extreme, I'm not calling anyone out. Ask anyone who knows me. I speak with so much hyperbole. I am very intense, very extreme. I can paint a detailed picture of the whole world falling apart. So I get it. I get it. And I want us to notice that in our speech, in our words, in our assessment of our situations. Because the more we notice it, the more we can see it as a helpful processing mechanism where we get our extreme energy in a colorful description, but then we can make it smaller and less extreme and come up with something that might help make it a little easier right now. So no one is being called out. We all do it. And we'll likely all keep doing it, but what I have noticed in my own life and often in yours is that the extreme energy doesn't stick around very long. We get to doable, practical, kind solutions a lot faster,

and we do that by moving out of that extreme, big language and not letting it linger for long. So thank you to everybody who shared comments and your willingness to share your personal challenges with this community. And I hope this episode was really helpful. I'd really love to do more, so again, if you liked it, share it or leave a review so we can have an extra boost in knowing you liked it so I can. I don't like making things y'all don't need or like. I think you'll like this, but since it is a new format for this show, I don't want to assume. So yeah I hope you enjoyed it.

Alright, that's it for today! Thank you 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!