

## 317 - 5 Steps to a Routine That Actually Works

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 317 - 5 Steps to a Routine That Actually Works. You might be itching to get into your carefully planned summer routines, or maybe you know you want some but haven't thought about what they are yet. Regardless of where you are, you want your routines to work! You want them to stick and do what they're supposed to do! So today I want to share with you the 5 steps to get to a routine that actually works.

We're hanging out with a handful of the 13 Lazy Genius principles today, but one I want to highlight at the top is principle #11: Go in the Right Order. So often, you have the right ingredients for a situation. You're not missing anything. You're just doing them in the wrong order, and routines are a prime category of that. And if you go out of order in your routine, it for sure won't stick. And I'm not talking about the pieces and parts of the routine, if you do this thing before that thing. I mean the actual creation of the routine, the thought process behind making one. You need to go in the right order in figuring out your routine so that you create something that actually works the way a routine is supposed to based on what matters to you.

So let's jump in!

The first thing we need to do is define what a routine is. Most of us think that routines are a series of things done in the same order at the same time of day. And while that is kind of true, it's only partially true. I have a whole chapter in my book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, about building the right routines, and the purpose of them is a little different than just the same things in the same order at the same time. The purpose of a Lazy Genius routine is to get you somewhere. A routine is an onramp to some kind of destination. Now, that destination can be a few different things. It can be tangible, an actual physical objective, like getting out the door. You have a routine for getting out the door. But your objective might also be emotional or about your energy. A routine that gets you out the door but you're mad or frazzled or frustrated when you do it is not a routine you likely want to keep around.

I think the point of a routine is often way more emotional than we give it credit for. You are moving in the direction of what feeling, of what experience, of what energy? That feels very different than a routine to start work or get out the door or go to bed. *How* do you want to start work or get out the door or go to bed? How do you want to feel during that process and at the end of it? Your routine, when thought through in the right order, can help create that feeling.

So a Lazy Genius routine is an onramp to something else. It's not the actual destination, and that's a very important distinction. Why? Because if you make the success of the routine about its completion, you're setting yourself up for disappointment. If you have a routine of four things and only do two or even do zero, you'll say the routine failed. Or more accurately based on how a lot of y'all think, you failed it.

But if instead, you see the routine as an onramp to a certain feeling or energy, you can actually feel that feeling or energy without the entire thing and maybe even without it at all. When you go through the five steps I'm about to share, you'll find that the you can get to where the routine is supposed to take you without even the existence of the routine. Sure, the routine itself is a delight and you'll love having it every day, but having it every day isn't the point. Naming and prioritizing where you're going is much more helpful in the long run than checking things off a list.

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

All five of these steps start with the letter P which I did not know would happen, but I'm here for it. The five steps to a routine that actually works are placement, purpose, person, parts, and pivot. Placement, purpose, person, parts, and pivot. What a weird tongue twister.

Okay, let's start with the placement. That's our first step. Where in your day do you feel like you need a consistent emotion, energy, or met objective? Where in your day, day in and day out, do you see the value for a consistent attitude, energy, or result? It can be a certain time of day, actually attached to the clock, or it could be a relative time, like a routine for leaving the house or coming home from the pool or going to bed. The time on the clock is less important, but it's still something that happens often.

There are probably lots of options for where you could put a routine, and you're likely listing out a dozen right now, but instead, just pick the one that feels the most valuable to you in this season.

By the way, once we walk through all five steps, I'm going to choose a routine I need in my life and apply the steps in order, so hang tight for some specific application to help you think yours through.

So placement is first. Where do you need a routine?

Step two, what is the purpose of the routine? You have the placement, and now you need the purpose. Why is it there? Is there a feeling or energy or objective that you want to experience pretty much every day in the particular part of the day you chose?

And I think the simpler your answer, the better. But prioritize thinking about your energy or your emotions or your attitude (or someone else's) instead of just the action. So if you want a routine for getting out the door, maybe it's more specifically getting out the door without yelling at each other. Those are two very different objectives honestly. I can get us out the door with plenty of yelling, even without a routine! I can knock that out of the park! So really, the emotional piece is pretty key here. What are you wanting to feel, to experience, to notice in your body as you do this thing? What's the purpose?

Step three is the person. Who is this routine for? You might think that getting out the door is for your whole family if you have little kids underfoot. But maybe what you really need is a routine for you to help your own attitude as you navigate whatever shenanigans the kids do. I'm not saying the get-out-the-door routine can't be for your kids if you have them, but it doesn't have to. Be specific about who your routine is for. For our family in the morning, there is one particular kid - I won't name who - who if they have a bad morning, everybody does. Everyone else is pretty okay with their attitude and getting out the door, but this one kid has a lot of variables that could go haywire, causing a blip in the Matrix. So I have a particular purpose for a morning routine that relates specifically to this kid. It might look like it's the whole family, but it's really for this one person. Does that make sense?

I share that to remind you that don't say the obvious answer and just move on. The person this routine is for might be a little more nuanced than you originally thought, and it might even be why a routine you do have isn't working as well. Maybe.

So first, placement. Where do you need a routine? Second, purpose. What's the point of the routine? Third, person. Who's it for? Now to step four, parts. What are the parts of this routine? Or more specifically, what *could be* the parts of this routine?

I personally think it's really important to name parts that are not directly tied to each other. If the second part can only happen if the first part happens, my personal experience says that's a recipe for disaster. It's less about this then this then this and more about choosing and doing things that support your initial purpose.

Now is there a right order for stuff? Clearly yes. I love the right order so much. But the purpose is not to execute your routine in a right order. We're creating one in the right order now, but when it's time to do it, there might not be a right order. And if there is, notice if the right order is in conflict with the purpose.

For example, when our family comes home from the pool, my purpose is for everyone to get clean and then get alone, usually doing some kind of screen time, without a lot of help from me. Now, I also want to get clean and then get alone, but there are a lot of pieces and parts to coming home from the pool, right? There's hanging up the towels and wet swimsuits, there's putting away the pool bag, tidying the flipflops that were just chucked, washing hands, showering, getting a snack, and eventually being clean and alone. Now in my mind, there is a right order for all those pieces and parts, and if I was alone coming home from the pool, I'd go in the right order. But I'm not alone. It's me and three very different kids. And did you catch one of the phrases from my purpose? I want them to get clean and then get alone *without a lot of help from me*. That means I need to prioritize that above the right order. If my kids leave their wet stuff in a pile on the floor, but they leave it while they go shower on their own without my asking and then come back and pick it up after, I'd rather do that than use my sun-drenched energy to force an order that doesn't really matter. Does that make sense?

So the pieces and parts matter, and you want to think them through. But see if you can disconnect them from each other just a bit, especially if you have other people involved in the routine. Other people don't always appreciate your order, and you want the routine to actually work. So be loose with the order, and instead focus on the parts just happening however they happen. *And* always lead with the purpose. You can depend on the parts being the supporting role.

And finally, step five is the pivot. Pivot!

There are so many things that can get in the way of your step-by-step routine hitting all of its steps. So many. If you wrote down all the barriers to getting out of the door with tiny kids, you would run out of paper. And because there are so many barriers to the execution of the parts of our routines, you cannot possibly troubleshoot all of them. There are likely too many secondary systems to the first one you already made. So instead of making Plan Bs for all of your scenarios, learn to pivot. Learn to hit a barrier and not let it knock you down.

I've mentioned this episode a couple of times recently, but Episode 310 is called How to Pivot Around Any Obstacle. A missed routine is a great example of a daily obstacle you'll need to pivot around. There are clear steps to pivoting, and if you don't remember them, listen to that episode again. It's one of my favorites because of how helpful and necessary it is. But in that process, you breathe, you access softness in yourself, and you remember what matters. That practice of kindly remembering what matters when something in your routine doesn't go according to plan will actually make your routines stick around.

We drop things like routines because they "don't work," but really we give up because we can't execute them perfectly day after day. I think it's better to have a routine, go through this process of naming *why* you're doing and how you want to feel or support a good energy for a certain time of day, *not execute any of the parts*, but still kindly pivot around that than to execute the routine over and over again. Going through steps does not make you human. It makes you a robot. Being able to live in and around and underneath those steps, no matter if you hit them or not, is the goal here. You are trying to be a person, not someone who can press a button on a day and execute it to a 98% success rate.

This is why we don't start with the steps. They are not the important thing. Actually, maybe of the five of these, they're the least important thing. If you start with the parts of the routine, you're missing everything else that really matters.

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

So let's put these steps into practice.

Step one is placement. Where do I need a routine? One time of day that I struggle with is going from work to being a mom, and I'm not sure what that will look like during the summer. What usually happens is I go to my office which is in our detached garage, and I work. The kids

generally give me space and ask their dad or grandma or babysitter their questions. They're actually really good about letting me work. Now, that wasn't always the case, so for those of you parents who work from home, take heart. They'll catch on.

But when I stop working and go into the house, it can sometimes feel a little stressful to *me*. I don't know what the kids are doing. I don't know if there are plans to do something else that will involve me. I don't know if they finished all the strawberries and no one wrote it down on the grocery list. I don't know the state of the house. I don't know what the kids' attitudes are or if they're fighting with each other or all introverting or whatever. As I'm listing things in real time right now, the thing that's stressful is that I don't know anything. That's the commonality of all of this. I've been out of the house for 3-6 hours, and I don't know anything. And for those of you who have kids or hang out with kids, a lot can happen in three hours. So that's the placement - going from my office to the house.

Next is the purpose. What is the purpose of this routine? I would like to not feel stressed when I walk into the house. I would like to feel grounded and present and not worried about what I might find or what is sprung on me or how loud everyone is. I'd like to feel centered as much as possible going into the house. Cool.

Next is the person. Who is this for? Me. Clearly. Which means I'm not going to make my kids do something different to accommodate me. This routine is for me. I can figure out a way to exist well around however they are existing at the time. And even that awareness is important. They don't need to bend to me. They don't need to clean up beforehand or be quiet or not ask me questions for ten minutes. All of those things could be fine, but they're not what I'm choosing here. I want to bring my best self into the house, and I personally struggle doing that when I don't know what I'm walking into. That has always been hard in a lot of contexts, and I'm not going to force myself to be different. I'm going to honor it but prepare kindly for it.

Our fourth step is the parts. What kinds of things could I do to create that sense of groundedness and preparedness when I go in the house? Well, one thing that came to mind when I was thinking about all the things I could walk into is just asking the adult that is with the kids to text me a quick status report of everybody. That might seem extreme or like it's a lot to ask of the person, but I know all three adults - Kaz, my mom, and our delightful babysitter - and I know that all of them would understand and honor that need in me. And obviously I could let them know ahead of time that this is something that would be really helpful.

So maybe the routine is centered around a status report. That's the main part. Let's say 15 minutes before I'm heading inside, I text the person and ask what's going on, what might be good to know, and if there's anything happening once I get inside. Then I can prepare mentally for those things. That alone is kind of a relief to think about. And that's how you know that you've found your central part.

The many parts are less relevant like I've already said, but if there is one singular part that really makes a huge difference in supporting the purpose of your routine, you know where you focus your limited routine energy if and when it's limited.

What are some other parts I could consider for my routine outside of the status report? If my purpose is to be present and it's about what's happening in me, not changing what's happening in my house or with my kids, I could take a few moments to breathe and remember that before leaving my office. Depending on the weather and the expectation of my kids, I could take a walk around the block between leaving the office and going in the house. I want to be a person who isn't working or momming for at least a few minutes. That transition of a quick ten minute walk around the block could help.

And finally, another part could be looking at that status report and making a choice about what I'm going to do when I go inside. Is it lunch time? Is it that we're about to leave for the pool? The status report not only shows me what's going on in the house and what to expect, but it can also tell me what I might actually *do* once I get there. I'm a doer, and not knowing what I'm going to do is harder for me.

Now, let's pause for a second. How are you doing? What are you thinking right now? I know that some of you think this is a little too intense. The parts of the routine aren't intense. Asking what's going on and taking a quick walk to transition from one role to another is not a big deal. But I know that some of you find this level of thought and intention around something so small to be a bit much. Or you might be someone who doesn't think this kind of intentionality really works or makes a difference! Both of those responses are okay and normal, and you're not alone in them. And you don't have to do it this way. We all get to do what matters to us, right? I fully support that. I just want to say that if you're feeling resistance to this for some reason, I invite you to give this a try. It might work better than what you've done before, and if it doesn't, you're in no different place than before. But I can also tell you that this level of intention, even in these seemingly small places, is how to live a wholehearted, grounded, present, full life that matters to you. These are the kinds of choices and rhythms that, over time, create a life that has white space and joy and productivity and all the things a full life has. I really believe in this process as something that can slowly adjust the way you live each day, making it feel more alive and like you over time. Okay, pause over.

Now as we close, let's put the parts in a possible order if I were to do all of them. First, I text the adult in the house, say I'll be in in a little bit, and ask for a quick status report. Once I get that, I can decide what is probably next for me to do when I get inside. That thing could be wildly different day to day. I mean, if everybody is watching a TV show or the rare movie they can agree on, my thing I do when I go inside is sit on the couch with them and do whatever they're doing, you know? So I get the status report, I make a call on what will probably be mine to do when I go inside, and then I either take a few deep breaths and remember the purpose *or* I extend that with a walk around the block before I go inside. I mean, I don't know about y'all, but that feels like an excellent work-to-parenting routine.

And if the only thing I can do is the status report? Totally fine. If it's only a walk because the adult didn't hear my text? Totally fine. And if nothing happens at all and I walk into chaos without knowing what's happening, what I'm doing, or without any moment to center beforehand? Also totally fine. Why? Because of step five.

Pivot. You learn to pivot. You learn to be okay it not being okay. If it doesn't go the way I want, I can pivot and be okay. If I am feeling off because of hormones or a stressful work day or not a good night's sleep the night before or anticipation of something later that I really don't want to do, it'll be okay.

Remember that the steps to pivoting help us emotionally navigate those daily situations that just knock us off the beam a little. I mentioned the episode How to Pivot Around Any Obstacle, and this is a reminder that obstacles are not the same as trauma or navigating truly difficult seasons of life, like going through cancer treatment or a season of being without a job or chronic illness. I'm not saying you can breathe your way through trauma. Breathing is important, and so are other more comprehensive tools offered by professionals. So hear me that pivoting is not really that. Sure, we do sometimes have to pivot in difficult seasons, and the tools we use are broader and more personal probably than what is in that episode, but I'm talking about pivots when you're tired and a little extra stressed and your husband doesn't text you the status report you asked for. Pivoting around that and learning over time to be okay when things aren't okay is how we become more wholehearted people. It's how we exist as we are, where we are, and are kind to ourselves and the people around us. It's how we can more quickly let it go when someone doesn't show up in the routine the way we hoped they would. If you set up a routine, even in this order, but don't remember to pivot when it doesn't work, not only will you get mad at the guilty party, whether it's yourself or someone else, but you will see that the routine doesn't work at all because it didn't work today. And then you'll quit something that was actually working sometimes.

That's why these are the 5 steps to routines that actually work. You create them in order, with purpose and specificity. You don't focus on the parts so much. And you remember the value of pivoting. When those things are in place - all five of them in that order - you will actually keep routines going, and they will work for you. A working routine doesn't mean all the steps are followed every day. A working routine supports what matters to you, and even when it doesn't, you can move through that kindly. I hope this perspective helps as you start to think about a summer routine you could use. So that's the 5 steps to a routine that actually works!

Before we go, let's celebrate The Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Kate Gold! Kate Gold sent me this DM a few months ago, and it is a gem for this episode about summer routines. Kate writes, "The week after a vacation away from home is always a little hectic for me and my family as "remember" our routine after being out of it for a week. So to make things easier on me, in the weeks leading up to our time away, I double batch what I'm cooking so I can freeze half of it and have easy dinners the week we get home. It helps soften the blow of getting back into the groove of things." Kate, this is such a great idea that a lot of us forget about doing. For any of you who are traveling or even just entering a season this summer where things are out of

routine, like if your kid has a three day long swim meet or a traveling volleyball tournament. Or maybe kids are in camp for the week or you have a huge project due at work that's going to throw everything off. There are lots of times where a week that's different impacts the weeks that are more routined. When that happens, double 2-5 dinners and freeze them. It doesn't have to be a ton of food. Even just cooked meat or something. But thinking intentionally about this *before* your busy week is so helpful when you're trying to get back into the swing of things. Thanks for this great reminder, Kate, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Alright, 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!