

322 - What to Do with Random Pockets of Time

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 322 - What to Do with Random Pockets of Time.

Let's start off with appropriate credit and the origin story for this episode. My friend Katie - you know her as @whatkatefinds on Instagram and she's amazing - she was the inspiration for this episode. A few months back, because of an injury, she entered this season of appointments and physical therapy and whatnot where she had her days bisected in such a way that left her with what she calls Stupid Pockets of Time. And then one of her buddies who I also know from Instagram @currentlykherrington, Kherrington renamed Stupid Pockets of Time with a beautiful acronym. SPOT. Where do I have SPOTs?

Katie has a highlight on her account that's titled SPOT where she describes her process and how this came to be, but she said something in one of those story panels that feels very resonant for a lot of us. She said, "When this happens multiple times a week (this being having stupid pockets of time that feel wasted), I feel very frustrated, unproductive, and annoyed at myself." I think we can all identify with that feeling. Our time feels out of whack somehow, and there are these random pockets that don't feel good for much of anything, and because we don't approach them intentionally, they feel wasted, and then we feel bad about it. So Katie asked herself, "How can I reframe this and use these stupid pockets of time to my advantage?"

And that's what I want us to do today. I'm going to proceed with calling them random pockets of time because I'm not going to take Katie's phrase or acronym, and if I use it in the title or keep saying it, it will become mine. It's like The Daily Delete, the practice of deleting photos from the day so your photo app doesn't become unwieldy, and that is not mine! It is Miss Freddy's! But because I said the name of it on an episode, people think it's mine. It's not. So The Daily Delete is Miss Freddy's, and SPOTs or Stupid Pockets of Time is Katie's. So we will say random pockets of time with no acronym as we proceed.

Also the more I thought about it, I think that a stupid pocket of time and a random pocket of time are different. A stupid pocket of time is always a random pocket of time, but not every random pocket of time is a stupid one. Allow me to explain.

A stupid pocket of time can feel annoying. Stupid pockets of time have an air of inefficiency to them, like I have this appointment at 1pm and this other appointment at 3:30pm even though I wanted the second appointment to be at 2:30pm, I couldn't, and now I have this inefficient 45 minutes to an hour between appointments. Ugh. That feels stupid.

But some pockets of time feel emotionally neutral. They're not annoying. They're just random. A random pocket of time for me might be the 45 minutes between finishing up lunch and picking up kids at 2pm. I'm not annoyed by that time at all! But it is random and could be a little trickier to know how to spend.

So I'm going to use the phrase random pocket of time even though it doesn't provide a good acronym like SPOTs does; we'll leave that for What Kate Finds. But also I think this phrasing might be more inclusive to a lot more experiences and can offer a name that covers a wide range of frustration levels. Random, stupid, what have you. So let's talk about how to approach that time.

Here's something funny as we begin. When I was working on this episode, I tried to come up with this system, this path, this list of questions to help you figure out what to do with your random pocket of time. But I started to realize that in some cases, thinking through the questions would take up all the time. And really, the reason I had questions was to help you feel confident to choose what you want to choose. But you know what? I want you to feel that confidence without needing a handful of questions to get you there. You can just pick something. And even if you look back and think, "Oh man I wish I had done something differently with that time," it doesn't mean your original choice was a bad one or that you can't trust your choices or that you have to knock it out of the park with what you choose every time. Basically, the system I created took more time than the pocket of time might, *and* it was holding your hand too much in getting you to the place where you can be a grownup and choose something.

So I'm going to say it right now: you can just choose something. I'm going to give you some ideas in this episode, but you don't need a complicated system for this to reassure you that you can just choose something. You can just do it. You're really smart. You're also allowed to spend your pockets of time doing what feels right in the moment, and if after that moment, something else comes to mind, you don't have to feel bad about that.

So instead of a complicated system, this episode is going to use a ton of the 13 Lazy Genius principles which I might shorten to LGPs like I did in my second book, *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*. When you're talking about a lot of them several times, saying Lazy Genius principles over and over again can get a little tongue twisty, so it's LGPs when I remember to say it. But we're just going to apply a lot of LGPs to your random pockets of time, and you can notice which ones give you an idea of how to approach your own time.

We'll be right back...

So let's start with what I already alluded to: be kind to yourself. That's the final LGP in *The Lazy Genius Way* and one that is maybe the most important for this topic. It's wild that so many of us have such wonky feelings about time and how we spend it, but we do. Think about it: it's rarely exciting to have extra time or free time because we feel like we *should* do something productive or helpful or something that gets us ahead. And sometimes that's true! But it's also okay to do something fun! You can choose to rest or play or veg or have fun in whatever small way you can for that random pocket of time. But the point is I want you to be kind to yourself with whatever you choose. If you carry that with you, you'll have a much more positive experience with all of this for sure.

Another LGP that could be helpful here is to Ask the Magic Question. When you have a random pocket of time, ask yourself “what could I do now to make something easier later?” Depending on the time of day or where you are, the answer will change obviously. But that’s an excellent LGP to apply to a random pocket of time. Do something that has to do with the food you’ll eat that day, gather up the bills or paperwork you’re wanting to take care of later, track down the receipt of that thing you were going to return when you run errands later, find your kid’s binky and put it in her bed so you’re not searching for it at bedtime in a little bit. The Magic Question is super helpful, especially if an answer quickly comes to mind. If it doesn’t, maybe that’s not how you need to spend this random pocket of time. But if that question is already in your rhythm, ask it. What a great LGP for this.

Another obvious one is Decide Once. You can decide a lot of things one time about your random pockets of time. Maybe you make a list like Katie did and also choose something from that list. We’ll say more about the list in a minute. You can do what I do and make your Decide Once reading. If I have a random pocket of time and there’s nothing productive that I know would serve me well to do now, I read. Reading is my Decide Once for so many things. Or you can decide that you’ll do one quick productive thing followed by something that’s fun for you. Decide once. It doesn’t matter what. This LGP is so important and helpful here because the whole idea of this episode - what to do with random pockets of time - is about what to do. It’s about a decision. So if the hardest part of this is the actual decision-making, decide something once. See how it works.

So we’ve talked about three LGPs so far: be kind to yourself, ask the magic question, and decide once. Now let’s mention Batch It. For those of you who always giggle when I say that, I hear it, and I hear you.

You’re already familiar with batching. It’s doing the same kind of task all at once instead of over and over again. This is where the list comes in. You can batch a list of possibilities to spend your random pockets of time. Katie has one in her SPOT highlight that’s excellent and actually divided into categories. Her categories are Connect, things like text or call a friend or family member; Errands and To-Dos, things like returns and go to the post office and choose what’s for dinner; Self Care, she actually mentions the Lazy Genius 17 minute nap which is amazing, painting your nails, going outside, reading which is my favorite; and Clean, things like water the plant, pick up stuff around the house, tidy a messy drawer real quick. You can again find Katie’s list in her SPOT highlight [@whatkatefinds](#) on Instagram.

Some other ways to think about your list is based on how much time you have. You can have lists of things that take 10-20 minutes, 30 minutes, an hour, whatever. Maybe that’s part of your own challenge in figuring out what to do. It’s thinking about how much time something will take. And let’s say you don’t know. When you do something during a random pocket of time, notice how long it took or how it felt inside that random pocket. It could be that cleaning out that junk drawer took 30 minutes and also felt so good to get done in 30 minutes, like wow what a great

use of my time. Put it in a time category or put a 30 next to “clean out a messy” drawer so that you’ll know next time how well that thing could fit.

You could also make your list in a batch and group it by things when you’re home and when you’re not at home. Sometimes we have a random pocket of time when we’re out. Maybe that errand didn’t take as long as we thought, but you have to pick up a kid in 25 minutes and it’s not worth going back home for. What do you do? Maybe batching a quick list of things to do when you’re out could be helpful.

By having a list of options, especially a list that’s categorized in a way that’s helpful, makes the decision easier. It’s curated decision making.

We’ll be right back...

Our next LGP to think about is Put Everything In Its Place. Now that could actually be how you choose how to spend your pocket of time. What is out of place that could be put back? But that’s not the only way to think about this principle. Putting everything in its place could mean your list. Put your list in a place that you’ll always have access to. It could be a Notes app list or something on your phone. But if you are an analog person or maybe your process is naming the kinds of things that are great for this week’s random pockets of time, not ideas forever, you might write down those options and then take a picture of that list so that if you don’t have your planner or the piece of paper with you, you likely always have it because it’s still on your phone. But if you make a list, put the list in its place.

You can also think about this principle in light of the types of things you often choose to do with your random pockets of time. For example, I have an outgoing basket. I’ve mentioned it before - it’s a big basket where I put returns and things that need to go somewhere not in my house. By having those things in their place, I can just grab them when I have a random pocket of time and tend to them. Return them to the store or the friend or wherever, but because those things are already in their place, it makes it much easier to act on them when I have a random pocket of time that I want to use on errands. So there are a lot of ways to apply the LGP Put everything in its place.

Another one is Essentialize, and we talked about this a couple of weeks ago in the episode How to Feel Good About Free Time. Essentializing is getting rid of what’s in the way, and there could be a handful of things that are in the way of knowing what to do with your random pockets of time, but most likely one of the biggest roadblocks is your guilt. Get rid of it, please. If it looms large, talk to someone. Talk to a therapist, a friend, a partner, a journal. Try and figure out why you feel so badly using your random pocket of time to read or rest or do something that doesn’t produce in the way you think you should be producing. That is an unhelpful, unkind way to look at yourself and your time, so open yourself up to getting rid of it. It’s in the way, pal. Get rid of it.

What about the LGP Go in the Right Order? There is a right order for a lot of things like cleaning the bathroom (dust first please!), but a general right order for a lot of situations is to name what

matters, calm the crazy, and then trust yourself with what comes next. This feels like an excellent principle to apply to random pockets of time. When you're presented with one, ask yourself "what matters right now?" Maybe you need a beat to calm your body or do something that makes you feel like yourself because the day has been long and tough or tiring or whatever, and you could really use this little break. What matters is that you come back to yourself for a bit. Okay, next. Calm the crazy. What crazy is preventing you from doing that? It could be a thought. It could be that the couch you want to sit on is covered in stuffed animals from playing veterinarian with your kids. Throw the stuffed animals in a laundry basket, move it out of sight, and sit on your couch. Third, trust yourself with what comes next. Trust yourself to sit in silence, to watch a video that makes you smile, to read a book, to take a nap.

What if the answer to what matters is that you eat dinner on time because you have to be at an evening event? Okay, now calm the crazy. Maybe the kitchen itself is crazy, still covered in the remains of breakfast and lunch. Making dinner on time will be hard when all of that is there, so calm that physical crazy by tidying up the counters. And then trust yourself with what comes next. That could be enough for now. Or maybe you'd like to go ahead and chop something or mix something or pull cans out of the pantry or whatever to get things a little closer to ready for that dinner. Trust yourself with whatever comes next. So that's using the LGP go in the right order when you have a random pocket of time.

And let's look at one more before we go, and that's schedule rest. A great way to use random pockets of time that you know are coming is to schedule rest into those pockets. It doesn't have to be long rest, and it doesn't even have to be at home. But when you see a pocket, turn that pocket into scheduled rest. Even on your calendar. Go get a cup of coffee from a favorite shop and sit there with a book. On purpose. Plan it. Schedule it. Schedule a nap. Schedule alone time. Schedule a phone with a friend. Schedule whatever you want to experience the kind of rest that you need. We are really bad at scheduling rest, so what a gift to use random pockets of time as an opportunity to do that.

So really we don't need a system to do this, to decide what to do. Just choose an LGP that makes sense for you, and see how it lands for you. Some things need systems, and other things just need a quick tool to help. These principles are made to do that for you, and I hope that seeing how they can be applied to your random pockets of time not only helps you decide what to do with those but how the principles can work in other ways too. And that's what to do with random pockets of time.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week!

This week it's Marie Noel who shared this excellent food idea. "Hi! I really enjoyed this week's episode on foods we stock in the summer. Your comment about cereal made me think of a trick I use to make easy fruit crumble: I use cereal that my kids won't eat as the topping. I mix it with whatever I have on hand to bind it - butter, an egg, milk - and any other ingredients like oats, flour, nuts, or seeds if I feel like it. It's fast, and it helps reduce waste." Well, that is just brilliant. I can't think of too many cereals that wouldn't work for that. Maybe something like Fruity Pebbles,

but even if those are mixed with oats and used on top of a berry crumble? I think that would actually work. I had to share this as we're all likely dealing with a bit of that summer fruit bounty and needing to use stuff up. What a great approach to using both fruit and uneaten cereal. Thanks for this tip, Marie, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, y'all, that's it for today! 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!