

323 - How to Lazy Genius a Big Change

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 323 - How to Lazy Genius a Big Change.

One of the most common questions I get is how to Lazy Genius some kind of big change. A new city, job, kid, or relationship. Leaving a career, a friend group, or a religion. Losing a spouse, parent, or the connection with your kid now that they're a teenager. Becoming a stay at home parent. Going back to work. Becoming an empty nester. Going through a terrible breakup and suddenly being alone. I mean, holy moly, right? There are a lot of big changes we all experience, and none of us are immune. Also reading that list makes me heavy inside. Those are some pretty major things, and even imagining navigating them takes it out of me. So what happens when that's your actual life?

So today, we're going to talk about how to Lazy Genius a big change.

The reason I've never done an episode like this and why it's hard to answer questions about big changes in DMs and emails is because there's not a simple answer. There's not really a formula to get your head around the whole thing, around the whole big change, and make it make sense. That's why it's challenging, right? It's enormous and we want it all to make sense, but it can't in the way we want it to. But we also don't want to just sit there and let the big change happen to us without doing anything to prepare for it or navigate through it, right?

So here's what we're going to do today. First, I'm going to share four principles of a big change that I want you to remember and repeat and internalize until they become more natural. Second, I'm going to give you two questions to help you create some understanding around your big change. And third, I'm going to give you two choices you could make after you answer those questions. Lots of numbers.

Okay, let's start with the four principles of big change.

Number one: I don't have to wrap my head around every part of this. I don't have to wrap my head around every part of this. Please just give yourself permission to not figure every single detail out or to think that you should. Big changes, life transitions, overwhelming circumstances that mark a before and after have a lot of layers and details and things you could consider. That doesn't mean you have to understand every single one right now. So number one, I do not have to wrap my head around every part of this.

Number two: I don't have to anticipate every need. I don't have to anticipate every need. Isn't that why we want to wrap our heads around the whole thing? It's because we want to know what roadblocks are coming, what needs we'll have, and have things in place immediately so the change goes more smoothly. But that uses a lot of energy, often very unnecessary energy. And before the big change has even come, you've used up everything you've got on trying to

prepare for all the scenarios. Sometimes you only do that mentally, but it still takes its toll. I'm not saying you can't anticipate needs, but the principle here is that you don't have to nor should you try and anticipate every need. You can't, and even if you could, things change too much and too quickly for all of that work to actually count. Don't anticipate every need.

Number three: I don't need to expect everything to be smooth all the time. I don't need to expect everything to be smooth all the time. But smoothness is the goal for a lot of us. We want life to be easy and without bumps where we press our red button to start our well constructed, optimized life, and it just rolls, almost without our help. That is not how life goes, nor do we really want it to be that way. It's the pivots, the transitions, the struggles that make us more ourselves. It's not always fun, but learning to pivot is way more important and helpful to being wholehearted human beings than learning to plan. So if you go into a big change with the expectation that everything will and should be smooth, you will not only have to pivot but you'll have to do it while having unmet expectations and a lot of disappointment. Don't expect everything to be smooth all the time. Give your life permission to do what it's going to do.

And number four: I don't have to have all the answers right now. I don't have to have all the answers right now. The first principle, I don't have to wrap my head around every part of this, might sound a little similar, but that one is about what you know or think you should know. This one - I don't have to have all the answers *right now* - is about time. In this moment of stress or excitement or wonder or fear or all of the above, you don't have to know everything. You don't have to have all the answers in this single moment. You don't have to have all the answers at any time ever. I mean, you won't. We already established that. There's no world where anyone has all the answers, but you definitely don't have to know as much as you want to know right now. Right now can be for right now. It can be for one thing, for whatever is next. But right now is not for all the answers.

Now, with those four principles as the undercurrent of our transition into a new stage of life or big change, there are two questions I want you to ask yourself to help you see where you are a little better.

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The first question is what's changing? And the second is what are you worried about? Those two questions sound pretty simple, and they are. But they also hold a lot of goodness, so let's look at how they can help.

When we enter a new stage of life or go through some kind of big change, we focus on the label we give that change. I'm having a new baby! I'm getting a new job! I'm moving to a new city! I'm getting married! I'm going back to school! And while those are accurate labels, they don't do a lot for us. They tell you what is happening, but there's nothing about what is *changing* or especially what is causing you to worry about it.

It's really important that you specifically name what is changing. If you keep it broad with just the title of the change, you won't know how to help yourself kindly and gently and effectively transition through it. So what is changing? Make the list as long as you need it to be.

Then I want you to look at everything that is changing and then ask yourself, what am I worried about? For each individual thing that's changing, what are you worried about? Worry is what causes us to plan. Worry is what causes us to try and figure out what will happen. We worry that we won't be ready for what is coming and that something bad or negative will happen because of it. That's what gets us all upside down and inside out about needing to know everything and know it now, right?

So write down specifically what is changing and then what is worrying you about that change. Then you'll be able to see what actually needs your attention. You've made something that was big into something much smaller. We can't solve big problems, but we probably can solve small ones.

Okay, so we have our four principles of a big change: I don't have to wrap my head around every part of this, I don't have to anticipate every need, I don't need to expect everything to be smooth all the time, and I don't have to have all the answers right now. We also have a way to make this big change smaller by naming specifically what is changing and then what we're specifically worried about for each of those smaller changes.

Now what? Now you choose the part of the change you're most worried about, the one that takes up the most space on your list and in your head, and you Lazy Genius that specific thing. Depending on what it is and how long it might take, you can then tend to another worry on the list. But you can only solve one problem at a time. You are one person. If you have other people who are part of your big change, you can invite them to take one of those changes and work on a solution for it. You're not the only one who has to navigate this big change. If you're a woman, you might be like, "Wait, what? I don't? All of this invisible labor doesn't have to fall to me?" No, it doesn't. Does it usually? Probably. And we tend to stay with what's normal. It's been normalized for women to take care of things like navigating a big change in a family or a partnership or what have you. But you don't have to be the only one to tend to this. So don't try and solve everything yourself all at once - just start with one - but someone else can start with a different one, too.

Now, how do you Lazy Genius this smaller problem that is causing you this specific worry? You can do one of two things: you can either apply a Lazy Genius principle or two directly to that problem or worry, *or* you can be a little more thorough, especially if it's a more complex worry, and apply the five Lazy Genius steps to it. I talk about those five steps in the most detail in my book, *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*, but I use them in tons of episodes, too. The best breakdown is in a great buddy episode to this one: Episode 259: 5 Steps to Lazy Genius Anything. I love a good buddy episode. Because that's there, I won't go into it in too much detail here, but quickly, the five steps in order are: 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.

Some problems don't need those steps. You can just slap a Decide Once decision on one of your worries and call it good. You don't have to take it through a process. But some things do need more of a process, so you have both options.

In a second, we're going to walk through a specific example from start to finish to see how this works, but first I want to show you *why* it matters at all. Because maybe you think this is all a bit obvious. Maybe you think that if you're getting a new job, the issues are clear, and you don't need to break anything down. For the sake of this one-sided conversation, let's say we have three people who are all going through the big change of getting a new job. All three have their principles on repeat in their heads, and now it's time for them to name what's actually changing. They could easily all say something different.

What's changing for one is more responsibility. For another, it's going from a work environment of camaraderie to a new unknown dynamic. For the third, it's that they're the sole breadwinner in the home now. Already you can see that even with those three people, we can't approach a new job the same way. While the label of the new job is the same, what's changing is different.

Which takes us to the second question: what are you worried about? You might think you know, but it's wild how naming it really shows now answers there could be and what yours actually is. For the person who is getting more responsibility at work, maybe the worry is that she can't measure up to the expectations or that she's worried she's going to burn out. For the person who is going from a great work environment to a new one, the worry is that she'll be alone and never have the same kind of relationships in her workplace, or maybe she's worried that if she does have great workplace relationships that she'll lose the friendships from the other job. For the person who is now the sole breadwinner, the worry is that she won't be able to sustain this job and therefore can't support the family. Or maybe she's worried about resentment that she's the only one who the family depends on.

Now that we're getting even more in the weeds, do you see how "a new job" presents very different problems from each other? We could do six episodes on just that last paragraph? It's not as simple as how to navigate a new job? Do you see why these questions matter? You need to know what exactly is changing and then more precisely what you're worried about.

Okay, let's take this all the way through the process and see where we land. There are so many big changes, but one that we all experience is getting older. It doesn't matter if you're 22 or 82; you're getting older, and you might have some worry around different parts of that transition.

I experienced that feeling of "oh wow this is a big change" when I was 20 and got married and was an adult. But let's be honest not really because I was 20. I experienced it when I was 33 and my body just started changing. I was also pregnant with Annie at that time, so there were so many changes happening in my body, particularly ones that would've been different if I was five

years younger. The same happened when I turned 40. I love being 40 (now 41) from an emotional standpoint. I mean, I've felt 43 on the inside for the last 15/20 years. But physically, I definitely feel like I'm getting older.

Your big change of getting older could be existential, like I'm whatever age, what am I doing with my life? Or I'm whatever age and this hasn't happened yet. Your ideas of getting older could be about experiences, that there are so many things you wish you had done by now or want to do and what if you're running out of time? It could be physical, especially if you're a woman. Things like perimenopause and menopause are no joke. If you've had babies and your hips are just shot like mine are, that's a whole thing you feel more and more as you get older. Plus creaky knees and changing eyesight and suddenly you can't eat dairy anymore without taking medicine beforehand. There's also the idea of invisibility. The older you get as a woman, the more invisible you seem to become, and that can be tough to go through.

I remember sitting on a beautiful restaurant patio with Anne Bogel a year or two ago, and we were having the best time. Well, a car pulled up to the restaurant right where we were sitting, and half a dozen young 20-somethings got out of the car. They were decked out. Looking good. The coolest ever. They looked around and surveyed things, passing over me and Anne like we were not even there, and then walked inside the restaurant. Because the car had pulled up right where we were, we both had stopped to look at these beautiful people, and as they walked past us, I turned to Anne, and said, "Well, that was eye-opening." And she said something like, "Yep, I think we might have just reached our invisible age." It was the smallest moment and mostly funny, but it was also kind of jarring. Like, wow. I am definitely getting older. It's not a bad thing, of course, but it does cause some upside-down-ness sometimes, depending on what you're specifically going through.

And that's the point of the process: the specifics of what you're going through. So let's say you're experiencing this big change of getting older. As we already laid out, there could be many elements to that. First, remember the principles of a big change. I don't have to wrap my head around every part of this, I don't have to anticipate every need, I don't need to expect everything to be smooth all the time, and I don't have to have all the answers right now. Cool.

Next, what is actually changing? I'll answer this for myself. The way that my body processes food is changing. I can't drink the same, eat dairy the same, sometimes even gluten which makes me so sad. Caffeine hits me differently, the intervals and rhythms I used to eat meals and snacks feel off somehow. Essentially, what's changing is my body's relationship with food. There are other things that are changing, but that's the one that stands out the most right now.

Okay, next question: what is worrying me about that change? The transparent truth is that I'm worried that any adjustments around food or amounts of food or timing of when I eat food will put me back on the horrible spin cycle of diet culture. I also have a history of disordered eating, and anything that is restrictive in any way takes me back there, even in tiny ways. So that's my worry. My body is changing how it responds to certain foods, and I am worried that tending to

that is going to impact my mental health and even make me feel like a fraud because I'm making choices around food in a way that possibly feels adjacent to diet culture.

That is obviously way more specific than "I'm getting older," right? This is why these questions matter.

Now what? Now I want to Lazy Genius this. I want to be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. So I can either go ahead and apply a principle to the situation, or if it feels like it needs more of a process, I can do the five steps. For this one, I think I need the five steps.

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First, prioritize. What matters most? This can be hard to name, especially when multiple things matter. Two things that matter to me about my body's changing relationship with food is that I want to stay rooted in the truth about my body's goodness and not get sucked up into my old ways of thinking, and I want to honor my body. I want to tend and listen and give her what she needs. At times, those two priorities feel at odds with each other, which is why I need to pick what matters most. For me, it's that I'm honoring my body. That's the highest priority.

Second, essentialize. I need to get rid of what's in the way of what matters. So what's in the way of honoring my body? I know it immediately. It's this idea that if I make intentional choices around food that I'm giving into diet culture. If I limit how often I eat ice cream because the dairy puts me in a bad place for at least a couple of hours after, I am just back to a place of being in bondage to disordered eating. And honestly, that's not true. We go through phases and stages of needing to tend to and care for our bodies in different ways, but deep in my heart, what's in the way of that is the fear that I'm either giving in or that I'm on a slippery slope back to old patterns.

Third, organize. Put everything in its place. What needs to be in place here? Well, I think mindset. What needs to be in place is the truth that I have not struggled with disordered eating in 20 years. I need to remember that while my mind might be a little afraid, the reality is that I have lived the last two decades without going back to those patterns. Intentionally limiting a certain kind of food because it causes pain or discomfort and therefore affects my sleep and how I spend my time, aka on the toilet instead of on the couch reading a book, is not bad! Intentionally limiting things that are now a little more harmful than helpful is a kindness to my body, not a cop out or giving up or seeing the last 20 years as something that doesn't count because I don't eat as much ice cream anymore. So while I could put boundaries in place, really I just need to lock in that mindset and the truth of the situation. I'm very good at listening to my body, so the boundaries are less important since I already know what's best for me. It's the believing it's best that gets me. Mindset needs to be in place.

Fourth, personalize. How can I feel like myself in this? Whenever I make a conscious choice around food, I sit in that choice and persevere on it. I worry and feel bad and dwell on

something that doesn't matter. And that for sure doesn't help me feel like myself. I'm a confident person. I love trusting myself, being grounded in who I am, knowing that the choices I'm making for my own needs are honoring to my body, circumstances, and soul. So when I'm questioning that and dwelling on that, I don't feel like myself. In fact, I feel like the worst version of myself. So a way that I can feel like myself in these times of honoring my body and how it's changing around certain kinds of food is to make sure I do something else that makes me feel like myself. If I decide one evening after listening to my body that eating ice cream is not the best call tonight, rather than wallowing in that and worrying that I'm back on the assembly line of diet culture, I do something else. I read, I paint, I play a game with Kaz or one of the kids. I seek to feel like myself in another way so that I can stay grounded in what matters.

And finally, the fifth step is to systemize or to stay in the flow. This is where you can apply a Lazy Genius principle but to a very specific problem now that you've found it. Some things need to go through the process before you can really see what needs your attention, like this situation, and now that we've gone through the other four steps, I think two principles come to the surface for me to help me stay in the flow with this thinking. The first is be kind to yourself. I want to be kind to myself as I'm getting older. I don't want to be unkind to my body because of this poor mindset. I also don't want to beat myself up when I do get into a little shame spiral about eating or not eating the ice cream. Because there are shame spirals with both sometimes which is the worst! So instead of that, I want to be kind to myself. Gentle, compassionate, and kind.

The second principle that comes to mind that's more practical is Decide Once. My issue isn't deciding once about what I'm going to eat or not eat. That's actually not the flow I need to be in. My issue is deeper and more personal. I want to feel like myself in whatever decision I make to honor my body, so I'm going to decide once that if I find myself in a situation where I need to say no to a certain food at a certain time because I know it will wreak havoc later, I'll paint. Painting is such a centering hobby for me, and it makes me tremendously happy. So that can be my Decide Once. If I'm feeling even a little wonky, I'll go paint. And if I'm not in a place where painting can be the option, I can read. Reading is almost always an option. And on the rare occasion that neither is available, I'll just lean back into that kindness.

Now listen. Let's look at this. What are the real actions happening here? I'm going to listen to my body and honor it in the way I'm already trying to do, and when that leads me to a potentially uncomfortable place, I'm going to paint as a way to help me ground and feel like myself. If I hadn't gone through this process of remembering the four principles of a big change, of asking myself what's really changing and what am I worried about, and gone through those five Lazy Genius steps to figure out what's actually going on at the center, I would probably have created all kinds of rules about what I can eat and when, maybe some kind of big workout plan, I might go online and look for supplements or something to solve my problems. All big, complex solutions to a big, complex problem. But when I made the problem smaller, the answer is actually very doable. My answer is to be kind and paint. I mean. That's way better.

So as you're going through a big change, take the time to name what's changing, to name what you're worried about, and create a smaller problem with a kind solution that will actually serve who you most deeply are.

And that's how to Lazy Genius a big change.

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

This week it's Elizabeth Dean who shared such a great perspective on a way to solve a problem in her own big life transition. "I have a baby who had colic, and for several weeks, the hours between 6 and 11 at night were truly awful. I felt like I was at my wits end and thought what would Kendra tell me to do?! A good part of my stress was coming from not having my own needs met in that time, so it felt like a good time to apply the Magic Question. What can I do not to make things easier later? With that in mind, I started doing all my nighttime jobs by 5:30pm. I'd shower, take off makeup, take out my contacts, etc. and ate dinner earlier too. I also put snacks, my nighttime medicine, and a full water bottle on my nightstand. Even though the baby screaming was still a lot to handle, I felt so much better doing it when I had already taken care of myself. And when I finally got him settled (which was often on my chest in my bed), I didn't have to upset the balance by getting up to do things like eat or get ready for bed. It was truly a game changer for me in a really challenging season." Y'all, when I read this, I teared up a little. Crying babies who have colic is such a hard season to be in, not to mention it's usually right on the heels of or in the throes of a huge life transition of a new baby in the house. It's so hard to work through that, and it feels overwhelming. So I love this message from Elizabeth because she's honoring her season and making small choices for the hardest parts. It doesn't make the problem of a crying baby go away, but it did make that hard transition a little easier. I just love this, and what an honor to be in your head enough, Elizabeth, for you to think about what I would say. And what I love about the 13 Lazy Genius principles is you don't need me to tell you specifically what you to do. You don't need a podcast episode or a step-by-step. You can take a principle and apply it to your life because you know your life way better than I do. So every single thing about this makes me just tremendously happy. So thank you for sharing, Elizabeth, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

If you'd like to get a summary of this episode and all the other episodes, along with some extra episodes to listen to or stuff to read, you should sign up for our biweekly Friday email, Latest Lazy Listens. It's a podcast digest so you can get the gist of the last two weeks' worth of episodes with helpful resources and even the Lazy Genius of the Week tips! So if you're a podcast notetaker or wish you could be, you can save yourself a little energy by getting the notes taken for you in this email. The link is in the show notes, or you can go to thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens.

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!

