

## 325 - Dealing with Differences on How Something Is Done

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 325 - dealing with differences on how something is done.

If this isn't a relevant topic that applies to literally everyone, I don't know what is! We all have situations where we disagree with someone on how something should be done, and we have to deal with that. We have to figure out how to emotionally move forward, how to navigate any relational issues, but also how to still get the thing done!

This episode is similar to Episode 235: When You Disagree on What Matters, but there is a particular difference. That episode is focused on the broader strokes of a disagreement, when what you disagree about is rooted on a philosophical difference as opposed to a practical one. So if you have a relationship where you and the other person fundamentally disagree on a topic that's fairly weighty, listen to episode 235.

This episode is more granular, more day to day. It's what to actually *do* when you and someone else are actively disagreeing on how something should be done in the moment. It actually has echoes of Episode 310: How to Pivot Around Any Obstacle. When we encounter someone who is doing something differently than how we would do it, it's an obstacle. It's not something we expected. And when we hit something we don't expect, we have to move around or through it. Sometimes that's super easy and almost instantaneous and other times it's a lot more complicated. So this episode is if the episodes When You Disagree on What Matters and How to Pivot Around Any Obstacle had a very practical baby.

There are six steps to dealing with differences on how something is done, and we'll go through each in detail. Those six steps are: breathe, access kindness, name what is different, name how much that difference matters, kindly communicate what you need, and repeat as needed, even in that same conversation.

Let's break it down.

Step one: breathe. This is how we should start most things, with deep, intentional breathing.

The best deep breath is in through your nose and out through either your nose or your mouth, but don't breathe in through your mouth. The book, *Breath*, by James Nestor talks about the many negative impacts of mouth-breathing, and it's fascinating. If you don't care to read the book, just trust me, and breathe in through your nose pretty much always.

So take a deep breath in through your nose, and you can hold that breath for a few seconds if you want, and then breathe out through your nose or mouth, whichever is most comfortable. I breathe out through my nose, too, because it helps me focus more. This is similar to box breathing which you might have heard of. Box breathing is breathing in for four slow counts,

holding your breath for four slow counts, and releasing your breath for four slow counts. You do that as many times as you need until you feel calmer.

This kind of breathing lowers your stress. It tells your brain that you are not under duress, and it fully oxygenates your blood which tells your lungs to stop breathing so fast and calm down. It is in that state that your rational brain kicks back into gear where you're able to access thoughts and feelings more helpful to the situation than panic, fear, and emotional survival. I'm telling you, if people would practice deep breathing before reacting, this world would be a tremendously better place. So that's step one: breathe.

Step two is to access kindness. This is our second step for how to pivot around any obstacle, too. The reason this is important is because if we go into a disagreement with someone, especially in the moment, without accessing kindness, we won't be kind. We won't listen, we'll get defensive, we'll let the disagreement become a fight, we'll take things more personally, we won't see the other person's point of view. Kindness matters all the time but especially in disagreements.

This particular step is crucial for me. Because I tend to have opinions about how things should be done and because I'm pretty direct in how I communicate, I can speak more aggressively than I realize if I don't access kindness first. I communicate like the main thing is getting this task right, not that the person, namely my husband, feels loved. And that's way more important than how something gets done. So access kindness. Release your desire to be right, consider that the other person likely has feelings about what's happening just as much as you do, and remember that it's not about winning. The goal isn't to get what you want. The goal is to be kind as you work through something. That's a much better life skill to develop.

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

Step three is to name what is different. Remember two episodes ago when we talked about navigating a big life change? One of the steps in that process is to specifically name what's changing. If you don't name what's changing, you'll just say "I'm moving to a new city" without recognizing that what's really changing is that your friends and family are staying behind. That's a lot different. Being specific about what's actually changing helps you navigate that change with more effectiveness and self-compassion. The same is true when you disagree with someone about how something is done.

If Kaz is doing laundry and folding the towels differently than I do and I think my way is better, if I don't name the specific difference - that he's folding the towels in half instead of in thirds - I will make that difference into something bigger like "I can't believe he doesn't know how to do laundry." Or "has he not noticed how the towels are supposed to go? Is he dumb or just not listening?" It becomes personal and often unkind. So instead of letting a situation become that fiery in your head, breathe, access kindness, and then answer in your own head the specifics about what is different. What is the actual difference between you and the other person in how something is done? Answer that for yourself first.

So breathe, access kindness, name what is different, and then step four: name how much that difference matters.

This step right here is key. How much does it matter that this other person is doing something differently than you would do? Now that you're calm and you're kindly naming the actual difference, how much does it really matter? It might matter a lot, and we'll get to that in the next step. But asking this question helps you get to the root of things. Is it really as big of a deal as I'm making it? Does this particular difference really matter? It might not, and you can move on. Well done. You've become a more integrated person.

If the difference does matter for whatever reason, you move to step five which is: kindly communicate what you need which is also a way of becoming a more integrated person. If the difference matters to me, there's a reason for that. You might do the task the way you do to help offset something else that this other person doesn't know or see. It could be practical, like putting halfway clean clothes on a chair so you'll wear them again and not do too much laundry, or you might even avoid doing a task a certain way because it reminds you of someone else who did it that way, and thinking about that person negatively impacts you emotionally. This is a pretty personal deep dive, but let's say that as a kid, you had to wash the dishes while your parent or older sibling dried and they talked down to you the whole time. If that happened to you, you might really hate washing dishes. You'd rather wash everything in the dishwasher even if it's not supposed to go in there. But if your partner doesn't know that's why you do that, you just seem unreasonable for not hand-washing stuff. And if you don't actively name why you don't like hand-washing dishes but still carry that important reason within you without sharing it, you're going to be at odds with your partner. So, kindly communicate what you need.

Now, the reason doesn't have to be super personal. It can be really simple and practical but impactful to you. Let's go back to the towel example. If I fold towels in thirds because they fit in the cabinet better than if they're folded in half which leaves more room for extra toilet paper in the bathroom, I think that's a pretty decent reason. We can't store toilet paper in the bathroom if the towels are folded in half. So instead of saying to Kaz, "Ugh, why do you fold the towels that way?" Or an annoyed "You know we fold towels in thirds, right?" or "Have you never noticed that we fold towels in thirds are you serious right now?" I might say, "Thanks for folding towels, babe. Can I ask you a favor? It's hard to fit extra toilet paper in the cabinet if the towels are folded in half. You mind folding them in thirds instead?" Kindly ask for what you need.

Now, step six is to repeat this process as many times as needed, even in the same conversation. Here's what I mean by that.

So I just kindly asked Kaz for what I needed, but let's say he doesn't respond the way I hoped. Let's say he says, "I don't think it matters that much" and then keeps folding the towels in half. Here's where we start the process over. I breathe. Otherwise, I'll escalate and get mad because he didn't listen to me. Then I access kindness. I love my husband, and maybe he's had a hard day. Or maybe he's just not breathing or accessing kindness himself. It doesn't matter. I'm going

to access the kindness I have toward him. Next is to name what is different. What's different now is that he doesn't see the towel folding with the same importance that I do, and that's making me feel like he's not listening to me. Okay, next is step four: name how much the difference matters. If the difference is that we're not seeing this towel situation the same way, how much does that matter? If it means I'm going to resent every time I see a towel folded in half or when I have to go get a roll of toilet paper from somewhere else in the house, then probably yeah. So the difference is that he doesn't see the importance of the difference the way I do.

So next is to kindly ask for what I need. Thus far the conversation has gone, "Thanks for folding towels, babe. Can I ask you a favor? It's hard to fit extra toilet paper in the cabinet if the towels are folded in half. You mind folding them in thirds instead?" And he says, "I don't think it matters that much." Now I might say, "It actually does matter to me. I've been stuck on the toilet without easy access to toilet paper, and I'd really love a way to keep some extra in that bathroom. The towels feel like the best option I've found."

Now I don't know where the conversation goes from here. Maybe we swap "stuck on the toilet" stories. Maybe we figure out another place to put toilet paper that I hadn't thought of before. Maybe he says, "Oh I didn't think about that. Sure, I'll fold them in thirds." But another route is that he dismisses me again. He says, "I'm not folding the towels in thirds stop micromanaging me." Which, to be honest, I sometimes do. And now we're not talking about towels anymore, are we? And we go through those steps again.

Breathe, access kindness, name what is different, name how much that difference matters, kindly communicate what you need, and repeat as needed, even in that same conversation.

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

Now, not everyone you deal with is going to have these steps in front of them. They're not going to be breathing or accessing kindness or recognizing the importance of naming precisely what's different, and that's okay. Depending on the relationship, particularly someone you're safe with, you can narrate what's going on. If you get to the end of the first round of steps and need to go a second round, all while the other person is clearly not trying to access kindness, you can say something like, "I can see you're getting frustrated with me, and I'd love to work this out without getting mad at each other. I'm trying to breathe and access kindness toward you, and it would mean a lot if we could do that for each other." Or in the situation where you're trying to pay attention to what's actually different, you can narrate that, too. For example, you might say, "I see that the difference here is that you were on time for pickup and I was five minutes late, but it sounds like you see that differently than I do." Which gives that person a chance to share that maybe the difference to them is that you're *always* late which feels disrespectful every time it happens. You don't have to be fully responsible for everyone's ability to deal with differences on how something is done, but you can also narrate what's happening rather than come across as bossy and teachy and like you know how to deal with this better than they do.

I remember when Kaz and I were newly married, we hung up the towels differently. I grew up folding the towel in half long-ways and then draping that over the towel bar. Kaz grew up differently. He brought in his way which is to drape the towel unfolded completely over the towel bar. We went through a few weeks where I would fold his towel and then drape it to leave space for mine, and then I'd walk into the bathroom later and find that both of our towels were unfolded and draped one across the towel bar and the other over the shower curtain rod. We did that silently and increasingly passive aggressively for awhile before we talked about it. He cares a lot about cleanliness and hygiene and felt like it was gross to have a towel dry while it was folded in on itself. He didn't feel like towels got adequately dry that way and therefore got moldy and musty. When he shared that, I remember thinking "Oh wow, that's actually pretty smart." I didn't have the language at time, but I realized that the difference between what we were doing mattered more to him than it mattered to me. So I let him have it. Now we just use towel hooks, but the same principle applies.

When you're dealing with differences on how something is done, it's so helpful to get to a place where you can adequately figure out what the difference is and who that difference matters to more. That's really what it comes down to. Kindly figuring out when to defer, when to compromise, and when to keep asking for what you need. And we're talking about practical things like towels and timing, not emotional availability or general respect for humans. You should always be respected and loved by your partner or people close to you, no matter what. That's not this. I'm not asking you to defer on disrespect. I am asking you to defer on towels though.

So in summary, think through this process. Breathe, access kindness, name what's different, name how important that difference is, kindly say what you need, and repeat as needed. I think this practice improves relationships, helping everyone to feel seen while still getting the thing done in the way that's best for everyone. And that's dealing with differences on how something is done.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Tracy Bajan who wrote this: "My husband and I have Lazy Geniused summer dating. We have a lot more babysitters available in the summer when college is out, so we went ahead and scheduled a sitter every Tuesday we're in town. My husband already made the dinner reservations each week, and I bought a box of frozen corn dogs to serve the kids which they love and look forward to every Tuesday. Deciding once has made our summer day nights a breeze. (Listen to this.) We can't do weekly date nights during the school year, but we are making the most of this short season while we can." Tracy! Y'all, isn't that just the best! I love the batching for starters. Scheduling the sitters and dinner reservations at once. Then the corn dog decision is amazing. But the thing I love the most is this idea of living in the season. Just because you can't do something all through the year doesn't mean you shouldn't do it at all. What a beautiful example this is of living in your season and taking advantage of having what you need. Love love love. Thanks so much for writing in, Tracy, 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!