

327 - 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 episode 327 - Lazy Genius Office Hours!

This is the second episode of this type where I take questions you asked on Instagram and answer them on the podcast. We've got a handful of great ones today, but a couple of thoughts before we jump into your specific questions.

First thing, I responded to a lot of comments on the Office Hours Instagram post with the particular episode for their question. We are on our 327th episode, so a lot of these broader topics I've already covered. So if you didn't get your question answered or are curious what was asked, a lot of the questions have answers in the form of podcast episodes. If you want to see, my Instagram account is @thelazygenius, and the photo is a golden-hued picture of me looking into the void. There are also great ideas from the community in those comments, too.

Second thing which will almost certainly always be a thing, you have to make your concern smaller. There were a lot of questions about new big seasons coming and things like "a better relationship with my mom or kid or partner." There were questions about how to Lazy Genius having kids in school and having a job and getting a degree all while someone is sick. Now all of those things I just listed are important. You want to be aware of new season, you want good relationships, and you want to navigate complicated seasons well. Of course those things matter. But the way to Lazy Genius those things is to make them smaller. They are too big to tackle, too big to tend, too big to figure out.

Now, I get it. We want to figure out the big things. We want to understand all the pieces and parts and make something that's hard not hard anymore. I get it so much. But that's just not life. Your goal is to stay connected to yourself, to be a kind whole person, and then figure something out one small step at a time. That's not the way most solutions are presented to us. Usually organizational, productivity, time management experts give you a big system to put into place, but you are not made to manage big systems. Life doesn't work like that. So if you feel overwhelmed by a huge transition or challenge in your life, make it smaller. Take a deep breath, remember that you can't control every aspect of your life, take another deep breath, and then name the things that matters or the thing that's driving you the most crazy. Keep making either or both of those things smaller and smaller until you have a solution you can actually do. We don't do things because they're too big, so make them smaller. A lifetime collection of the smallest steps will lead to a Lazy Genius life.

And third thing, there were a lot of questions about seasons and transitions. A lot. Just a couple of weeks ago, we did Episode 323: How to Lazy Genius a Big Change. Listen to that episode through the lens of whatever big transition you're going through.

Alright! Let's jump into today's Office Hours questions.

We've got three that are kid related and three that are not. I'll start with the not so that folks without kids who might want to skip those can just end the episode at the halfway point.

First up is @rebeccakshelton.

Rebecca writes, "Is it possible to go too small? We keep a fruit drawer in the fridge. We always have lemons/limes in it with the other fruit, usually loose. We use them regularly but not enough to buy large amounts like a bag at a time, so we often buy a couple of new ones while we still have 1-2 older ones. The annoyance is that we lose track of which is the oldest when we're cooking and just want to grab a lime. What matters is using the oldest first so they don't go bad."

First, it is never possible to go too small. In fact, the smaller you go, the better you'll be. I love something this small. Do you know why? Solutions are much easier to find. I don't need to give you any paradigm shifts or perspectives or pep talks about limes. We can just solve the problem of the limes.

The main problem is knowing which citrus is the oldest. We want to know what to use first or at the very least what *not* to use first. One idea is to put a little bin, like a lidless Tupperware in the vegetable drawer to be your "use first" produce. It's still in the drawer, but it's separated. You could also do it the opposite way. Put new citrus in the bin, and once the loose citrus is used, dump the bin into the drawer, leaving it empty for the next time you buy limes. Either way would work.

Another idea, especially if you don't mind working around the zest, is to grab a Sharpie when you're putting away your limes and write the date on the peel. That way when you're digging around and find a couple of limes with different dates, you grab the oldest one.

There are probably a couple of other solutions to this, but see how easy it is to solve this tiny problem? This is why we make problems small, people!

We'll be right back...

Okay, next up is @kelseydamron.

Kelsey writes, "It may sound goofy, but how to Lazy Genius finding a new sitcom to watch when we finish one. The problem is that we tend to go back to our old faves (Scrubs, How I Met Your Mother, etc) over & over. I do know that watching shows you know can help regulate emotions, but it does get old after a while. What matters: finding a new light-hearted, 30 minute show to change up what we watch in the evenings." There were some suggestions in the comments of what shows Kelsey should try. Kim's Convenience is one, and that is indeed a great show. But that's not really what Kelsey is asking here, nor is Kelsey's taste the same as everyone listening. What we really want to Lazy Genius is how to know what to watch next, especially if you're watching a show with someone else.

I used to think that the queue of my streaming service would be how I would do this. Just pick the next show! But that was in the early days of Netflix when there wasn't a bazillion options of premium content. There are so many shows, y'all. In 2021, there were 817,000 TV shows available on TV and across streaming platforms. And many of us have multiple of those. It's nuts. So it's actually a really relatable problem!

This won't work for everybody, but here's what I do. In the same way I make a seasonal dinner queue or a smaller list of recipes that work for this current season I'm in, I also have a very specific and short "next up" show queue. I have a list for myself and one for me and Kaz to watch together. Whenever we see a show advertised or notice it while we're scrolling looking for something else or hear about it on The Popcast or something, I'll add it to the note. I'll do the same for myself. But here's the thing: I only add it if it's legit something I would love to watch now. It's not a list of "oh, that seems like that might be good" or a list of "everybody's talking about this maybe I'll try it." No, it's a list of things that are full-on enthusiasm. "Yes, let's give this a try!" Does everything work? No, but you won't know what you love until you give it an episode or two.

Over the last couple of months, Kaz and I have watched the most recent season of Top Chef, Alone, and now we're on Jury Duty. Other shows on my list for when we're finished are The Bear and Pepsi, Where's My Jet. That's it. Are there tons of shows we'd love but haven't watched like The Good Place? Yep. And one day we might watch it. But you have to release the pressure that you'll watch everything. You also have to release the lowercase s shame of watching a beloved show again. We love watching The Office and Bob's Burgers many nights. There's nothing wrong with that. But having a tiny tiny list of next up shows is super helpful for me.

Another small approach, especially if it's a longer series you really loved and felt connected to, have a little closing ceremony for finishing that show. Watch the final episode with fun food or a toast or something. Just marking it is nice. Then do the same as you open a new one. Making it the tiniest bit special, even comically, makes the decision feel simultaneously more important and less important. You're just choosing a show, but the actual show is less of the issue. Being intentional together and having fun is what really matters.

And our final non-kid question comes from @markelajean. Markela has been in the Lazy Genius community for a long time and is just lovely. Team LG loves Markela. Markela writes, "How to LG finding time to do my nails. I love having them painted but to carve out the time somehow feels overwhelming." Again, I love how small this is. Having painted nails is fun and important, but finding the time to do it is hard. I think that's relatable for a lot of people, maybe not for nails but for something else that's in the beauty or self-care arena, like doing a face mask regularly or something.

Because doing your nails does take a little bit of time, especially if you want the manicure to last, it's hard to fit it into regular life. Chances are, regular life is pretty full. Even if you have chill evenings, very few of us are wandering around with all this excess time on our hands, wondering how we're going to fill it. Some people do, but that's not as common. So in this case, adding something that takes a little bit of time and is outside of your regular routine does feel like a challenge. I think the best way to add something like that to your life is to stack it on top of something you're already

doing. I've painted my nails during therapy. I see my therapist online, and during many of those sessions, I do my nails. It's quite lovely actually.

Maybe it's the carpool line you have to sit in for 45 minutes or a staff meeting where you don't have to show your face or while you're sitting with your kids as they do their homework. You probably only need to point then, so wet nails won't get in the way. First, look for a place where you're already doing something where nails can be added in.

The other thought I'd like to offer is weirdly to consider not doing your nails on the weekends. Pick a random day in the middle of the week, and do it at night while you're watching your show or listening to an audiobook or something. Weekends have a lot of fresh start energy where we have to get everything ready for the upcoming week. You're probably already planning your week, your meals, maybe doing some sort of meal prep, tidying the house, scheduling carpools, doing your facemask, all kinds of things. Frankly, adding your nails to that list feels like a lot. So even though you might think the weekend is the best time - which I get, Sunday night seems like a great time to do your nails in theory - I think a random weekday could be better. Stick it on a regular night after a regular day. Weekends are highly irregular which could be why you're struggling to fit in one more different thing.

For the specifics of nails, I would be remiss if I did not mention how much I love Olive and June polish and their mani system. I have a lot of their colors - like a lot a lot - and if you also have an overwhelming amount of colors, do what I do and make a seasonal polish capsule. I pick about six colors for the upcoming season, and I only paint from those. That way I'm not crippled by the paralysis of choice and end up running out of time to paint because I spent so much time trying to choose.

Now for our kid-related questions.

The first one is from @christinmbland, but Christin is really the spokesperson for many comments. Lots and lots of questions about this topic. Christin wrote, "Packing school lunch! Finding something that will be balanced-ish in terms of food groups, cost effective, and flexible enough to meet the ever shifting goal posts of a 2nd grader's preferences while also not consuming a lot of my bandwidth." We are in the throes of transitioning to school and a new season, so of course school lunch stress is coming out.

When I went to answer this question, it was a very long answer. I think there is a lot to say about school lunches, so much so that we are actually making a bonus episode that will come out this Wednesday. It'll be short, but it'll be separate for you to grab when you need. So look for that episode in a couple of days!

We'll be right back...

Okay, final two kid questions.

This one is from @johannagram24. "How to lazy genius where to take my toddler? We need to get out and decisions are hard because I get stuck with all the options but also want him to experience a lot of diff places/envirments."

If you have or have ever had toddlers, you know this feeling. Toddler season is the season you don't mind forgetting something at the grocery store because it means you have something to do the next day. Some parents are more emotionally equipped than others to be at home all day or to easily adventure out, but I was usually not one of those parents. If you do want to get out of the house with your toddler but get overwhelmed with the choice, Batch It.

You're going to sit down one time, and you're going to make a list of all the outings you could go on. Then I'd encourage you to triage that list into categories, either by the type of thing like a park, a museum, stuff with animals, playdates, whatever or by the energy or time required. Maybe you have day trips, quick trips, outings that are high energy and low energy, outside outings and rainy day outings, that kind of thing. By making a master list at one time, you make it easier to choose when it's time to choose. You're not choosing from every option ever, and you also don't have to use brain power to remember that idea you had three weeks ago. Make a list, put it on the fridge or in your phone or something, and just choose.

If you'd like to intentionally rotate, you can check something off when you do it, write the date next to the thing when you do it so you don't repeat too much, or have a house rule to not repeat until a category is done. That last one is only if the variation is the highest priority. Usually with toddlers, sanity is, but you do you.

I had a list like this when my boys were tiny, and it was the best. If memory serves, my categories were parks, bakeries and dessert places, places they can run inside (that category included the mall... I'd just let them run down the middle of the mall and it was amazing), playdate friends, museums or places to pay, stores to browse (places out of my regular food shopping rhythm, like Goodwill, or something fun like the pet store), and even toy stores but with clear boundaries about what we could or could not get. We have a tremendous local toy store in Greensboro with toys out everywhere. It's so fun to just go play. But it's also hard to leave without getting anything, right? So when we'd do that, I'd tell the kids - and still do actually - that we're going to play and find toys that we might want to buy for a birthday or Christmas but we can get something from the bouncy ball bin before we go. Those items are always less than three bucks a pop, so that would be well worth it to me to take the occasional trip to the toy store where the kids were happy forever.

Also don't sleep on making a trip to the grocery store fun for a toddler. You can look for everything that's the color blue (don't pick green or red because those colors are everywhere and you'll stop constantly), push the cart backwards so the kid feels like she's driving and leading you, give them light, unbreakable things to put in the cart themselves, stuff like that.

Parenting a toddler requires a lot of energy, but make it easier on yourself by using a burst of energy one time on a list. Categorize it based on what matters to you, and then go enjoy it.

Our final question for today comes from @jenalcook. "This feels very specific, but how to lazy genius the last hour before kids come home from school. It seems like this is *very important time* but I want to do all the things (clean, prep, rest, enjoy, eat) that I end up doing nothing. I feel like a "decide what matters" then a "decide once" is coming." Jena's not totally wrong there!

No matter how long your kids have been away, whether it's three hours at preschool, seven hours at regular school, or four days at grandma's, the last hour before they return has the weirdest energy. It's like a deadline. You are running out of time, and when we're running out of time, we try really hard to finish whatever was supposed to happen before the deadline. When you're dealing with a project, that's easy. A project is defined. But a random afternoon, especially if that deadline happens three to five days a week, doesn't need that kind of deadline energy.

So that's my first offering to you. Notice that deadline feeling, and tell yourself that you're not on a deadline. We do often feel this pressure to make every minute count, right? But that's a false deadline. That's manufactured. You don't need that in your life.

My next thought is to remember that what you do one day doesn't have to be what you do every day. Depending on the rhythm of your week or where you are in your menstrual cycle or the weather or the mood of your kid, you might need to make one kind of decision on the Monday and a different decision on the Friday. When you're thinking about this deadline hour, remember that you don't have to choose one thing for every day. If it's easier for you to do that then go for it! But sometimes that all or nothing pressure keeps us from making a decision at all.

Yet another challenge with that deadline hour is that we get to it and *then* feel like we have to react to it. We probably didn't make a decision early on when we were calmer, so now that the last hour is here, we start to mildly panic. If that's you, decide at the start of the morning how you'll approach that deadline hour. Name it now so you don't stress about it later.

Now, here's what I tend to do in this scenario because I definitely feel the pressure of the deadline hour. I give myself a cutoff. If I have to get my kids at 2:30pm, I stop doing anything productive at 2pm. For that half hour, I do what makes me feel like myself. I'll read, sit and listen to birds, go for a walk. Maybe for you it's when you call your sister or do something creative with your hands. It's not that you can't be productive in the deadline hour, but I like to give myself a humanity cushion in there. I consider my "day" over at 2pm every single school day so that I have half an hour to just be a person and take the pressure off.

And on the topic of productivity, I would ask yourself what task would most benefit your whole family once everyone is home. Is it a tidy living space? A snack ready to go? Dinner prepped so you can focus on helping with math homework? Think about what would make that transition home work best for your family, and use the first half of that deadline hour for that. Do what you can, and then stop.

A final idea here is to have theme days. Maybe Monday is errand day, Tuesday is food day, Wednesday is cleaning day, Thursday is organizational day, and Friday is a rest day. You use the time

when your kids are away for specific things, knowing that you'll have a break later, knowing that everything has its place. That usually doesn't work for me, but I know it works for a lot of people.

Ultimately though, the question to me isn't what do you do during that deadline hour. It's more how you think about it. It's not all or nothing, it's doesn't have to be the same every day, you don't have to spend the entire deadline hour on productivity, and the deadline hour energy has a faux urgency anyway. Once you keep those things in mind, the choice of what to do feels a lot easier.

And that's it for today's Office Hours! Thanks so much for all of your questions!

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Sarah Jane Nichols with a vacation laundry tip. "I wanted to share how I batch laundry on vacation. Because laundry never takes a vacation. I bring plastic grocery bags - some lighter and some darker. My family puts whites in the white bags, like Target bags, and darks in the darker bags. Then I pack the filled bags in our suitcase and just dump them into the wash when we get home."

I love pre-sorting vacation laundry, but I wanted to share this tip with the white and dark bags. I like this because it matters if you wash according to colors, but I also think it's great because it eliminates dirty laundry piles in the hotel room or vacation house or grandma's spare room when you're away. You're not leaving a growing pile of laundry in your floor, but you're also not having to fill giant trash bags. I really like the grocery bag idea, especially if you want the visual clutter of laundry to go away *and* if you wash according to lights and darks. A super simple idea that I think will help a lot of you. Thanks for sharing, Sarah Jane, 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!