

334 - How to Create a Relaxing Home Routine

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 334 - How to Create a Relaxing Home Routine. I am aware of the irony of using the word "relaxing" when it comes to a home routine, especially during this time of year which tends to be on the busier side. However, I'm into it. I'm into pursuing a relaxing home routine, especially if we frame it as feeling mentally relaxed. It's not that we're moving slowly or taking our time or even feel exceptionally calm when we're doing things in our homes. It's more about having enough of a structure to call it a routine but with a perspective that helps us relax around what we're actually doing. I'm excited to talk about this actually. I think it's a pretty special topic, so let's get into it.

I'm going to start with a few overarching principles for you to think about, and then we'll get into some practical specifics.

If we were in sixth grade learning to write a five paragraph essay, our main idea today is that your home is in a cycle. Your home is in a cycle. Always. What happens in your home is always on some kind of loop. That means that not everything is going to be clean all at the once, nor should it. If your home is in a cycle, you should have a reasonable expectation that it will not remain static. There's always a flow. We're going to dive a little deeper into those home cycles, but let this premise be your permission. Your home is in a cycle, and it's wonderful to embrace that rather than force rigidity in a place you're really going to get it. You can be kind to yourself by noticing where you are in your home's cycle and embrace it. What a gift that is.

Now, you might be like what do you mean a cycle? What does that mean? My guess is that most of us have some of the same cycles. Let's look at laundry. Laundry for sure is in a cycle. It is rare that every piece of fabric will be clean and put away all at the same time. You and your family if you live with them are not going to be hanging out naked on laundry day. They're literally clothes dirty while others are getting clean. So laundry lives in a cycle. Stuff gets dirty, it waits to get washed, you wash it, you wash it a second time if you forgot to dry it, you dry it, you maybe fold it or leave it in the basket, you put it away or leave it in the basket for people to pull from, and then you do it again and again and again. Laundry lives in a cycle, and you're always in it because you're always wearing clothes.

How about food? Food is also in a cycle. You have to decide what to eat, you have to buy stuff, put it away, prep it, cook it, clean it up, and do it again. Multiple times a day. That's a cycle we're all very familiar with.

Tidying and cleaning your house. This one has less obvious steps, but it's still a cycle. You live life in a room, the life gets all over the floor and surfaces, you eventually tidy the life, you might clean up some dirt, but you keep living. And it happens again and again.

Recognizing that your home is in not just one cycle but in multiple cycles is, to me, really freeing. It helps me understand why I can sometimes feel overwhelmed by all there is to do in my home. There are a lot of cycles moving at once and at different speeds, and sometimes the hardest part of each cycle conflates into one moment, and that's when you get Big Black Trash Bag Energy or BBTBE which is not an acronym that flies off the tongue, but no matter.

So what does this knowledge mean for us? How can we leverage this understanding of our home being in a constant series of cycles? I think we can use that to create a relaxing home routine. Which honestly might sound counterintuitive. I just said that multiple cycles are happening at once, and now I'm saying "that's so relaxing!" Can those two things go together? I think they can.

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To put this in real-time context, I want to share with you three of my specific routines, and after you hear me share this, I'd encourage you to do this for yourself. Sketch out your home cycles to see where you can make them feel less stressful and notice where they sometimes run into each other in a less than relaxing way.

So first, let me tell you about our laundry cycle. I already said what Big Laundry's cycle is - wear clothes, store them, wash them, dry them, put them away, do it again - but everyone has a specific way they handle that. This is ours.

First, Kaz takes care of the laundry. In our division of labor, he is the laundry captain. Usually on Saturday, he gathers up all the laundry from all the rooms, sorts them, and begins washing everything. We are a once a week laundry family for the most part. That's the routine that works best for us in this season. So Kaz gets everything clean and dry, and then he puts the kids' clean clothes unfolded straight from the dryer into their individual laundry baskets. We have three of those fabric circle bins with a handle that are sold literally everywhere. There's nothing special about the ones we use. He leaves those baskets in our dining room which is right next to our washer and dryer, and we generally have to prompt the kids to get their basket and take it to their rooms. Sam, my teenager, doesn't put his laundry away. He pulls clothes out of his basket and only goes to his drawers when his basket is empty. That's the cycle he's chosen, and that's fine with me. Ben will usually dump his clean clothes onto his floor and pull from them each day which I don't love and will sometimes prompt him on Monday or Tuesday to put his clothes away, especially if he's stepping on the clean ones, you know? Annie hates putting away laundry, and I don't blame her. So we tend to put her laundry away together, or she does it with my mom when my mom babysits the kids every Tuesday afternoon. Kaz puts his own clothes away and folds mine, and then I put mine away. I am working on this episode on a Tuesday, and my folded clothes have been in a pile on our dresser since Saturday. I have not put them away yet. Does that pile contribute to my bedroom feeling a little more scattered than I'd like? It does. Is my bedroom also during this season in utter chaos because half of it is covered in plastic because our primary bathroom is being renovated? Also true. So in this season, I'm less concerned about getting my laundry put away right away. But ultimately laundry is not actively

happening Tuesday through Friday. The cycle is somewhat dormant then, and all we're doing is adding to the dirty clothes pile.

Another cycle is food. Ninety percent of the time, I plan meals for the following week on a Sunday, and I make a grocery list and schedule a grocery delivery for Monday morning. We live and eat and do the thing, and almost always we get a second midweek delivery of milk, fruit, whatever else we've run out of because we have five people in the house, one being a teenage boy, so food goes fast around here. Then I'm back to planning on Sunday. If in looking at an upcoming week or if the fridge is full of things that need some Bizarro Food Prep which you can read about on my website or if I just feel like cooking on a quiet Saturday that weekend, I'll plan on Friday instead and schedule the groceries for Saturday so I can prep some meals. But that's our food rhythm.

One final cycle I'll mention is our house being clean. I've talked about this in a separate episode about hiring a housecleaner, but we do have a housecleaner who comes every two weeks to clean our house with the exception of the kids' bedrooms because I can't deal with having to fully tidy their spaces to prepare for cleaning. There's a whole thing about getting your house ready to be cleaned. It has to be pretty tidy for that cleaning to be effective, and I don't know if you've been in a kid's bedroom lately, but that is not a battle I'm going to fight. So this is our cleaning cycle.

We keep the L which is our main living area and the kitchen that is sort of in the shape of an L which is why we call it that fairly tidy. It's part of our daily routine - I talk about that in Episode 254: Chores I Do Everyday - so that space is rarely out of control. It's never more than one tidy away from being mostly fine because we tend to it daily. That is not the case everywhere. Other spaces, primarily my bedroom and the big dining table in the dining room are the catchalls. There's no real rhythm there. The cycle in those rooms is to clean it all completely and then keep filling it up until there's a reason to clean it all completely again. It's okay to have rooms like that by the way.

So we tidy the L every day, and the rest of home just gets lived in. Then usually on a Tuesday night, I'm feeling a little squirrely at the relative chaos that's built up in other parts of the house and will do a quick tidy across the board. Nothing major. It's rarely a full tidy or looks much different than it did, but it's a little better. I'm happy with a little better. Now, our house cleaner comes every other Thursday which means that every other Wednesday, the house has to be ready to go before we go to bed. So if I'm in a cleaning week, that Tuesday chaotic tidy will be more thorough in preparation for the house being cleaned. I'm getting things closer to ready so that when we do a full family tidy on Wednesday to get ready for our housecleaner, it's not as overwhelming. But ultimately we keep 20% of our home in a daily cleaning rhythm, and the rest piles up until it has to be tended to. That tending is generally when the house cleaner is coming.

Now, this is where the rubber meets the road and you can see in your own life how your home cycles could be adjusted to be more relaxing. There are times when your home cycles all run into each other. That happens for us on the occasional Sunday. We sometimes host our church

community group for dinner on Sunday nights, and if you recall, Sunday is where a lot of our cycles are at a pretty big stalemate. Laundry is out because that's when the laundry cycle is active, so clothes are in piles and being washed and are not put away. Sunday is when I meal plan, but if I'm also serving dinner to 40 people, my kitchen feels a little stressed. It is not a relaxing place if I'm also planning for the week on the same day. And if people are coming over on a Sunday, especially if it's in an off week from our house cleaner coming, there are piles in many places. Now, I'm not embarrassed to leave those piles out. Not at all. But if those piles are all over the dining table which is generally where they are and we need that table to be cleared because a lot of people are going to eat there, it's a good idea to take care of the piles, right? So our typical home cycles sometimes have a bit of three-car pileup on Sundays.

How do we avoid that? If you name what your individual home cycles are and you notice that a lot of things are happening around the same time, that those cycles are bumping into each other in a stressful way, you can adjust your cycles. You can pull this one back a little and push that one forward a little, and now you've added more relaxation to the home routine.

Your home doesn't have to be perfectly clean and tidy and meals prepped and everything washed and put away all at once to feel relaxed. *You as a person* can feel more relaxed when you notice where you are in your home cycles. Remember, staying grounded is better than staying on task. Learning to be with yourself and be okay when things aren't okay is so much better than stressing yourself out even more trying to clean everything and make everything amazing or follow certain rules you think you should in order to get the result of a clean house. I just don't think that's sustainable. Instead of using your limited energy to create a relaxing home, use that energy to engage in home routines while staying relaxed and fluid on the inside. A relaxing home will follow.

So remember, your home will always be in a cycle. You will never have everything done at once. Ever. And even if you do, that's when you get all weird about other people in the house and you won't let anyone wear shoes or eat something crumbly or pull out a game because the surface is finally clear and the game cabinet is finally organized or whatever. We hold onto order if we force into place, and that holding on is what causes the stress in our bodies and even in our relationships with the people we live with. Instead, if you embrace that your home is always in a cycle, that it's always holding multiple cycles that are at different points in their journey, and that you can adjust those cycles in small ways each week or even in the moment, you will relax more in your home. And again, a relaxing home itself will follow.

So if you're feeling encouraged by this possibility, here are some quick steps to consider.

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First, name your home cycles. What things are in a cycle? Not necessarily a routine. You could not have a laundry routine at all and just respond to the laundry whenever you can, but your laundry still goes through a cycle. Does that make sense? So name your cycles, not your routines. Not yet anyway. Likely cycles are ones I already mentioned - laundry, food, cleaning

and that could also be broken by rooms or areas of your home, maybe work, daily chores, paper - school papers, bills, stuff like that. Name things in your home that - think of this way - that always seem to sneak up on you. Projects are not cycles. Projects have an end, and then they are done until the next project. What in your home is in a cycle?

Second, name your routines. Do any of those cycles currently have routines attached to them? If it helps, write those routines down. I found it really helpful to do that as a circle and arrows, like a flow chart, where a circle is a week. Most of our cycles are right around a week. That's fairly common. But however you want to visualize it, visualize any routines you currently have, along with the days you do the things.

Third, what's working? What in a specific routine is working? What day does a task land that feels like it's a good day for you right now in this season of life? How do you see the overlap of certain cycles and/or routines working well together? What's working? You could use a highlighter to mark those things in one color if you wanted to. I love any excuse to use a highlighter. Particularly a Mildliner. I love those things.

Fourth, what's not working? What cycle doesn't have a routine? What cycle has a routine that no longer works for you? What routine is bumping up against another in an unhelpful way? You're basically looking for places and times where the cycle of your home and the routines within it are bunched together. That's where stress happens. So what's not working? What's missing? What's too close together? What needs to be less rigid so you can adjust? Where do you need help? What's not working? Use a different color highlighter for this one.

Fifth, what matters most right now? As you look at your home cycles and your routines, at what's working and what's not, as you seek to adjust that, what matters most right now? In the season you're in, what is your priority? You're allowed to leave the rest for later, for lazy, or completely undone. What matters most right now?

And finally sixth, what can you do right now to start small? Can you move when you grocery shop to a different day? Can you put clean laundry in a different spot? Can you stop sorting socks? There are so many ways all of you listening could start small, so what's yours? As you remember that your home is supposed to be in a cycle, that it's supposed to be at varying places, that it's not going to ever be all done and stay that way, that your home is alive because it's got you in it. It might have other people in it. By trying to create a certain kind of home a certain kind of home, we get all robot-y again and take the soul out of it. Your home has soul. It's supposed to be in a cycle at all times, and the more you notice that and adjust where you need to in very small ways, kindly and intentionally based on what matters to you in your season, you will create, not only a relaxing home routine, but a relaxing home and a relaxed you. It doesn't mean you're never stressed or overwhelmed or frustrated. But your mentality towards that stress and overwhelm and frustration relaxes a lot more quickly than it used to. You see the cycle, you adjust, and you live your life.

And that is how to create a relaxing home routine. Next week's episode is a practical arm of this one, and it will probably be called 7 Ways to Manage Daily Chaos. Because that happens no matter how great and relaxing your home routine is. Which is part of the point, right? It's better to pivot than to plan, and if you're a person, often your plans don't work out. That's in your home, too. So next week, we'll talk about that daily chaos and how to handle in a helpful, kind, even efficient way.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it is Hannah Winslow. I love this idea, especially in light of talking about home rhythms. Hannah writes this: "I loved a podcast episode a few weeks ago where the tip was to decide when you are going to have time for friends. I took this principle and applied it to my children. We now have Friday evenings open for play dates. We can host pizza and play dates at our house any Friday that our kids would like to have a friend over. My kids are only four and six but they love seeing their friends outside of school so 5 to 7 PM on a Friday works perfect for us! It was kind of my lazy night anywhere where the kids would just eat pizza and now they get to have a friend and eat pizza! One of our family values is relationships and I want to help my kids nurture those, but I was always struggling with the scheduling of it all. This has made it super simple for us." Hannah, I love this so much. I love that you are creating a rhythm around something that matters, and I can hear the joy and groundedness, even in your message. Things like this seem so simple, but they make such a huge impact in our lives. Thanks so much for sharing this idea, Hannah, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, y'all, that's it for today. Thank you 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!