

335 - 7 Ways to Manage Daily Chaos

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 335 - 7 Ways to Manage Daily Chaos. Last week's episode was about how to create a relaxing home routine, and we talked about the cycles of our homes. Our homes typically contain projects and cycles. Projects are one-off things with an end, and cycles are, you guessed it, cyclical. Things like laundry, food, and cleaning repeat again and again. They never end. That can be frustrating, but that can also be liberating if you recognize that your home will always be in flux. You will always be in different parts of different cycles, and embracing that releases you from the pressure to always have everything done at once. If you haven't listened to last week's episode, I would definitely encourage you to do that! This episode is fine to listen to on its own, but if you want a more comprehensive look at the rhythms, routines, and cycles of your home, check out episode 334.

Today, we're getting more practical. I'm going to share seven ways to manage daily chaos, and while you could apply one of these on its own, these seven things are super helpful in order as a series of steps.

Before I share the steps, let's imagine daily chaos. That's probably not hard to do. It comes in many forms, and there's no need to compare yours to mine or someone else's. In fact, chaos is often a feeling, a perspective. It's not always the state of things. One person sees chaos where another sees something perfectly normal, so a lot of it is in the eye of the beholder. That said, you probably can easily access an idea of what your personal daily chaos feels like.

Now, I do think it's important to distinguish between daily chaos that's regular life and daily chaos that's extra. Some things are simply going to feel like a lot no matter what you do. For example, our evening bedtime routine, especially right now in this season, is pretty chaotic no matter what. Our primary bathroom is being renovated which means our entire family is using the single shower in the Jack and Jill bathroom between two of my kids' rooms. That means that in order to enter that bathroom, you have to enter a kid's room first, and *that* means that there are no showers or use of the bathroom of any kind when those humans are sleeping. That alone is mildly chaotic, but even with fully functioning bathrooms that are operational at all hours, the bedtime routine is always a little nuts. All three kids shower at night because that works better for us than anyone doing it in the morning, but right now the boys have to be done before Annie goes to bed because any noise in the bathroom keeps her up, so we're cramming three showers into a small amount of time. There's also the typical parenting challenges of getting the kids to actually take said shower or remind them to brush their teeth and then brush them again because they did such a crappy job the first time and to put on clean pajamas instead of dirty ones and no you can't have anything else to eat because you just brushed your teeth and it's bedtime and all the regular things that happen with kids. No matter what, it's always a little chaotic.

That's a particular kind of daily chaos, much like making a meal or getting home from work with groceries and mail and the dog needs to be walked and you're hungry and how is it already seven o'clock. Daily chaos is going to exist. You will feel a little scattered in certain situations no matter what, but that doesn't mean you need to fix the situation or yourself. Sure, you might apply a Lazy Genius principle to a small part of it and make the chaos a little less crazy, but ultimately, daily chaos will happen. It is normal. We can't eliminate the stress from everything, so stop expecting to. You're doing great.

Now, on top of that kind of regular, expected daily chaos, are the unexpected things. The power that goes out, the meat that didn't get defrosted, the kid who didn't turn in their homework and now has a backlog, the phone call from a family member that throws you off kilter, a cat that knocks over a potted plant, a kid that runs through the house wet and naked after getting out of the shower without a towel, someone selling something at the door, looking down and noticing how your nails are super chipped and you need to put on more polish but you never have time and now you're in an emotional death spiral about how you never have time for yourself and maybe you should make some big changes in your life. And sometimes, all of that happens at once. And that's on top of the regular daily stuff. Pals, that is a very particular kind of chaos. It's both outward and inward. It is manageable, but it seems impossible. It's not a big deal, but it feels like the biggest deal ever.

The more you practice these seven ways to manage daily chaos, especially in order as a loose system, the more you'll be able to kindly navigate both kinds of chaos, even when they're happening at the same time. So let's get into it.

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Number one is to be calm. Or at least try to be a little calmer. Chaos often makes us rise up or back down. We get angry or withdraw. We get frustrated outwardly or inwardly. Basically, chaos of any kind is rarely something we're excited about, unless it's Internet chaos or Taylor Swift dating Travis Kelce or something. P.S. My Ben is a Chiefs fan, and in case you were wondering, he thinks that Travis dating Taylor will encourage Travis to play better because he really likes her. Adorable.

Anyway, chaos is rarely welcomed, and our brains interpret chaos as a threat. It's normal to not be into it. That's why starting by trying to be a little calmer will make everything else better. Even if you don't do anything else on this list and you just take some deep breaths and tell yourself that you're okay amidst the burning chicken and barking dog and homework-resistant teenager, you will be able to manage your daily chaos much more effectively. So number one is to be calm. Or try to be a little bit calmer.

Number two: be specific. When you are looking at daily chaos, you see everything. You see everything that is going wrong, everything you need to do right now, and everything that feels urgent enough to do right now but very much isn't. When faced with daily chaos, be specific about what's really going on, about what you really need to do. Essentially, make the chaos

smaller. It could be that you're just scattered and your brain is fragmented, and rather than spend energy trying to clean up everything or get control of anything, you need to step outside into the sun for a few minutes and listen to the birds or a song and just breathe and recenter or pray or whatever you want to do. Maybe you make the chaos smaller by naming what matters right now and just doing that thing. Yes, everything feels on fire around you, but you also need to feed everyone. In fact, maybe the people are chaotic because they're hungry and dinner is late. Give them a snack. Calm the hangriness. Give yourself a sliver of margin to finish dinner or lunch or whatever meal it is. Staying grounded is better than staying on task. Noticing and adjusting to the needs of yourself and the people around you is better than checking off an arbitrary box of "no snacks before dinner" or whatever your equivalent might be.

So be calm, be specific, and third, be reasonable. What is a reasonable expectation in this moment as you're trying to manage this daily chaos? If you are PMSing, be reasonable about how much emotional margin you have for this and let yourself off the hook for whatever you were about to do. Be reasonable that your kid has been sitting in a desk all day and has the zoomies and isn't a bad kid for not listening to you or being calmer or whatever. He's just got a lot of energy right now. Be reasonable that you don't yet have the skills to make a meal that you think is something to be proud of, and be proud of what you do know how to do. Be reasonable that if the laundry stays unfolded in that pile while you help get the homework or work project done that it will be there later and you'll be able to get to it then. Not everything has to happen right now or be perfect when it does. Be reasonable. Being calm and specific beforehand really helps this, but in those moments of daily chaos, be reasonable about what is going on and what margin you actually have to meet it.

Fourth, be timed. Remember last week, we talked about the cycle of our homes and how much of it is never done. Your laundry and food and cleaning and all the things will never all be completed at the same time and definitely won't stay that way. It's an unreasonable expectation to think so. So because of that, you have to set limits for yourself. You can't tend to every project right now or to completion, but you can set a timer. Set a timer for two minutes, five minutes, ten, whatever you want, and work on that thing you were specific about for that long. You don't have to eliminate chaos across the board, nor is that likely. Simply be calm in your body, be specific about what matters right now and what you might do, be reasonable about what your margin and expectations are in this moment, and now be timed. Set a timer, and do something for a little bit.

Then fifth, be done. Be. Done. Because the home is never done, you have to declare certain things are. You have to decide when you're done, and that practice alone is worth this whole episode. Just be done. And because you're also being reasonable, you'll be able to say you're done in a way that balances whatever levels of responsibility and self-compassion and care for your surroundings you have. And some days, you don't have any of that, and that's okay. You're allowed to just be done. You'll have plenty of chaos to get to tomorrow.

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Two more. Sixth, be proactive. I am a huge fan of noticing what's going on and then adjusting in a helpful way, even to the point of preparing for the future a little bit. That's why I love The Magic Question - what can I do now to make something easier later? In times of daily chaos, especially after you've been calm, specific, reasonable, timed, and done, be proactive about what you might be able to do next time to make this chaotic situation easier later. You don't have to turn every chaotic experience into a lesson, but if you have the energy to be a touch proactive and note what might be helpful next time, I'd encourage you to do it. Sometimes those small choices now make a huge difference later. You'll get a great example of that in just a minute from our Lazy Genius of the Week.

And finally seventh, be kind. Be kind. To yourself, to your people, to your expectations, to your things, to your space, to your body. Be kind. When we're experiencing daily chaos, it's easy to not access kindness. There are plenty of other feelings that are trying to be the loudest when we're under duress. Whether you're in the middle of the chaos or on the tail end after you've declared yourself done, be kind. When you're in it, it helps you keep connections alive with yourself and others, and when you're at the end of it, kindness helps you stay okay with doing something that fits your margin right now. Too many times I've done the good thing of setting a reasonable expectation and then saying I'm done, and then I sit down and feel bad about myself that I didn't actually do more. Don't negate the good work you just did. Be kind to yourself.

So to recap, remember that chaos is a thing. It will happen, and a lot of daily chaos isn't something you can eliminate or even change that much. Accept that good is here right now and that you're not a bad person because your daily life is a bit chaotic. Since there's a difference between daily chaos and extra chaos, pay attention to what's really going on by walking through these seven steps or just picking one if that's all you have the mental energy for. Be calm, be specific, be reasonable, be timed, be done, be proactive, and be kind. There are dozens and dozens of episodes that give specific ideas for specific kinds of chaos. There's an episode on organizing paper, on keeping surfaces clear, on cleaning the kitchen, on doing laundry. All of those are super helpful. But if you go into those systems without calm, specificity, reason, limits, freedom to be done, energy to think ahead for next time, and kindness toward yourself, those systems will only take you so far. These seven steps are way more impactful than an idea of how to clean up your dirty dishes faster.

And those are the seven ways to manage daily chaos.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it is Michelle DelSole. Michelle wrote this: "This is so insignificant it feels silly even typing, but I always forget to give my kids their vitamins in the morning. I have them set to arrive automatically by the mail pharmacy (I Lazy Geniused this a few months ago because I kept having to call to refill then and drive to CVS), and even though I bought a cute little basket for my countertop to hold the ugly containers, I still kept forgetting to give them the dang vitamins! One morning I took the vitamin containers and put them on the shelf with the cereal boxes. It looks ridiculous, but it's the first thing I see in the morning now, and I don't forget!" Michelle, this is the best example of being a Lazy Genius, and I love how relevant it is to this episode. Forgetting the vitamins

created a little bit of chaos, both tangibly and mentally. You're managing that daily chaos by doing something small that might seem a little strange, but it works for you and that's all that really matters. This is why I didn't do an episode on lots of tips and tricks and hacks for managing daily chaos because those are not applicable to everyone. The better option is for you to notice what's going on, what really matters, how you can make the problem smaller, and then make a choice. It can be a choice to be done after vacuuming only one room, or it can be a choice of putting the vitamins in front of the cereal. You can figure out your own personal ways to manage your daily chaos, and I love Michelle's example of what that might look like. What a great message, Michelle, 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!