

339 - How to Make the Rest of 2023 Easier

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 339 - How to Make the Rest of 2023 Easier. I am legitimately so excited about this episode, and I know you are too. This type of episode from last year is still our most downloaded episode, and I think this one is going to be even more helpful than last year's.

However, before we get into it, I have the most sparkly fun thing to tell you. For a limited time, we are selling a Lazy Genius sticker pack. It has a mess of stickers, like several dozen, sold in one pack Lisa Frank style, and they are ridiculously fun. We're taking preorders until November 15, and once that date passes, they will be no more. They'll be delivered well in time for Christmas gifts, so if you are a Lazy Genius and want to give yourself a fun stocking stuffer, get them. If you're friends with a Lazy Genius and want to get these as a gift, get them. All the stickers are individually cut, so they can be put in snail mail cards or used as bookmarks or of course placed on your water bottles and laptops and planner pages. There are a couple of that we are keeping a surprise, that you'll lose your mind over when you see them, and I can't wait for that moment to arrive. A link will be in the show notes for you to get your pack, and orders are open until November 15.

Okay! To the episode. How do we make the rest of 2023 easier? This episode is different than last year's. I've learned a lot about time, priorities, and how to better Lazy Genius situations since then, and you get the benefit of that in the form of - what I think - is an incredibly helpful process to make a busy season, particularly the end of this year, easier. This episode is so practical and you'll need paper and a pen or an open laptop, so grab them so we can get started.

I don't think I need to set the stage for much here, but I briefly will anyway. Life is, like, kind of busy right now. Chances are you have a lot going on. If you're listening on the day this episode comes out, today is November 6th. Christmas is in 49 days. In the next 40 days, so between now and the week before Christmas, here are some of my personal things to give us all a sense of how busy in general many people might be. I have six very significant family birthdays plus the birthdays of two dear friends. I have three school performances that my kids are in and one grownup performance that I am in. I have three very significant work projects that come with many decisions and deadlines. I have a four day trip out of town, seven evening meetings, a wedding to attend, and Thanksgiving. Which I am hosting for 13 people in someone else's house but I'm cooking all the food. And that's just the extra stuff on top of making dinner and carpool and work and haircuts and homework and trying to go for walks and making lunches and getting sleep. And I did not mention any of the Christmas related things like decorating, gifts, travel, and holiday plans. I mean, I didn't really need to set the stage, but chances are, no matter the length of your list, you feel a little overwhelmed by all that's coming your way.

I had lunch with a friend a couple of weeks ago, and I told her that when I list out my life like I just did for you, it's kind of impossible to get my head around. In fact, I can't really. It's too much

to remember, process, keep track of, or plan for. And definitely not all at once with my limited energy. And yet it's all still happening. Life still happens, much of it fun and awesome and significant to our lives. So with that said, I want to share with you an incredibly helpful process to help you make sense of what you've got going on so that it feels easier and so you can focus on what really matters.

Okay, let's jump in. The first thing we're going to do is do a Brain Dump. But not just any Brain Dump. This one is a little specific. First, I want you to write down all the things that are an answer to this question: what is happening in the next two months that feels overwhelming or doesn't have a plan? What is happening in the next two months that feels overwhelming or doesn't yet have a plan. Now before you start writing, let me offer some guidelines.

First, do not write down everything that is happening. Just because something is on your calendar or is happening in your life doesn't mean it belongs on this list. This list is the beginning of a simplification process, and the more you put on the list, the more complicated it will be. So unless something is either overwhelming or doesn't have a plan, do not put it on this list. For example, I mentioned being in a holiday performance. Some of you know that I participate every year in my church's Lessons and Carols service, and it's one of my favorite things ever. Now, is it happening in the next two months? Yes. Many dates actually. There's the performance date but there are also rehearsals and my own personal practice to make sure I know my parts. But even though this event, this thing that is happening, takes up a lot of space on my calendar does not mean it goes on this list. Why? Because it is neither overwhelming nor does it require a plan. It's not overwhelming at all. It actually feels energizing. Okay, so that box is not checked. And it does have a plan. The rehearsals and times are on my calendar already. I already have that entire performance weekend blocked off so I can help out with setting stuff up or doing whatever inevitably needs doing at the last minute. And I naturally find myself listening to the music I need to practice while I'm washing dishes or making dinner, so I don't need a plan for practicing. This thing that is happening is neither overwhelming nor without a plan. That means it does not go on my list.

The second guideline to think about is that this requirement of something being overwhelming or without a plan can be either or both, but be sure you're not only looking for things that check off both. For example, giving Christmas gifts doesn't feel overwhelming to me. I love giving gifts. It's one of my favorite parts of the holiday season and even birthdays and stuff. I love finding, giving, and even wrapping gifts. But "Christmas gifts" will 100% go on my list because I don't have a plan yet. Be sure you're not skipping things that don't have a plan just because they don't feel overwhelming. Both are not a requirement. Just one is.

And the third guideline is to also consider regular, everyday things, not just holiday happenings or stuff from your calendar. Are you overwhelmed right now by dinner? Do you not have a plan for how you're going to finish that work project before the holiday break? Are you overwhelmed and without a plan for how to manage getting your kids to all their places because your oldest who can drive broke a bone and can't drive right now or because you're down a car because of

a blown transmission or something? Don't just consider the unusual holiday, end-of-year things. What's overwhelming or without a plan in your regular life, too, that's got you in a bit of a tizzy?

Okay, so write down all the things that are either overwhelming or without a plan. Don't break things down or get too detailed or analytical about them. Just do the Brain Dump. If it comes to mind, even if it's not a tangible thing, write it down. Cool? Cool.

Next question. What do you want to make happen that you haven't yet? What do you really hope you get to do or experience over the next couple of months that you don't yet have some kind of plan for? I call this a "hope to" experience. What do you hope to do that you want to try and make space for? Add that to the same list.

Now, this is the fun part. At least it's fun for me. Each item you just wrote down needs to get one of these labels: Make It Matter, Make It Easy, or Let It Go. You can make three new lists and actually rewrite each thing from your Brain Dump into a new list. You can use three different highlighter colors for the main list or put a symbol next to each thing. You do whatever you'd like to do, but somehow I want you to visually differentiate your main list into those three categories: Make It Matter, Make It Easy, and Let It Go.

Let me explain briefly what all of those might mean. Make It Matter is something that really does matter to you. For me, gift giving over the holidays really does matter. I don't want to approach that thing with the primary posture of shortcuts or laziness or ease. It matters to me, and I don't mind spending time or energy or money making it happen. Make sense? So what really matters to you right now? What do you want to make matter?

Next is Make It Easy. What still has to happen, but you want that thing to be as easy as possible? People tend to make meals easy during this time of year. You're busy with a lot of other stuff. Spending a lot of time on the daily meals isn't in your cards. So you're going to make meals easy by repeating things, making really simple meals that don't need a lot of chopping or cooking, maybe you get a meal delivery service for a couple of weeks during the really busy parts, maybe you have cereal for dinner a lot. Whatever the case, you're going to make it easy. It's not that eating doesn't matter, but it can't matter as much as the other things right now so you're going to make it easy. Mark your list with things that you'd like to make easy.

And the third category is Let It Go. What overwhelming thing or what thing without a plan is probably best if you leave it alone? What can you let go? You might be overwhelmed by an unresolved situation at work or with a friend, and even though there's nothing you can do about it or your friend tells you that everything is okay, you just keep thinking about it. You're overwhelmed by your own insecurity or worry about this unresolved thing, and it's using a lot of your energy. Maybe that's a thing you can let go. You're not letting go of the relationship, but you're letting go of perseverating on it. Letting it go also might mean letting it go into the hands of someone else. You could let wrapping gifts go by hiring a high school student to do it for you.

You could let go of organizing this year's neighborhood caroling tradition by asking someone else to do it this year. You can let go of cleaning your house in the same way you normally do by hiring a cleaner, delegating the work more amongst your family, or just having a house that's a little dirtier than usual while you get through the other things that matter. What can you let go? Not forever. You're not letting it go forever. You're just letting it go during this season.

Alright, so everything that is overwhelming and/or without a plan is now categorized one of three ways. Your job now is to make a new list, one that makes things *smaller*. "Get Christmas gifts" is definitely something you want to make happen, but we can all agree that it's too big, right? You have to make it smaller, and chances are, a good number of the things on your list need to be made smaller. Hear me clearly: you make things happen by making them smaller.

Now, I have found a bit of a secret when it comes to doing this, and even though it's simple and even a little obvious, it's also surprisingly clarifying. In order to make things happen, you make them smaller, and in order to make them smaller, you are looking for two things: singular decisions and singular tasks. If you think about it, when you break down something that is big into something that is manageable, you're breaking apart all of the decisions and all of the tasks.

Let's examine this a little bit more. On my list I have "bake Christmas treats and share them." That is something that matters to me, that I want to make happen. Okay, so now what? How do I make it smaller? By writing down all of the decisions and tasks that go with it. What do I have to decide? What to make, when to make it, how to wrap it up, who to give it to, and those are the first ones that pop into my head. Now what's interesting here is that tasks often fall on either side of decisions. What do I mean by that? Well, in order to decide what I'm going to make, I have to look through cookbooks or on blogs or whatever to get ideas. That is a task. Look through my cookbooks and make a list of options. Then I decide what I'm going to make. Now that I've made that decisions, tasks come after, right? Now I have to make an ingredient list of what I need, shop for those ingredients or have them delivered, and *decide* when I'm going to make the stuff. Oh wait, now we're at another decision! I have to decide when I'm going to do it! How do I decide that? Probably after the task of looking at my calendar and choosing an opening to do it.

Okay, let's stop right here. I'm not saying that you need to write down literally every single decision and task involved with this thing. This explanation of decisions and tasks is not to overwhelm you even more. What I'm hoping to show you is why you likely feel overwhelmed by things or struggle to make a plan. Something seemingly simple like "bake Christmas treats and share them" has at minimum two dozen decisions and tasks, *and* some of those decisions and tasks depend on each other. They have to go in a certain order. Even if you can make some of those decisions quickly or the tasks aren't that hard, the mental load of projects like bake Christmas treats and share them could be more than you realize. And you're not being kind to yourself about it. You're just frustrated you can't seem to get your stuff done.

Again, as you make what matters and what needs to be easier *smaller*, I'm not saying you need to write down literally every single decision or task involved unless you just really want to. It might help. Still, some of you are likely used to intuitively or habitually putting those decisions and tasks in the right order to get them done without needing to keep track of all of it. However, if you are neurodivergent, if you are struggling through some kind of life challenge that is taking your energy away from things that once felt easier, or if you are simply juggling too many projects at once to make sense of them, intuitively putting all of these things in order might not be working for you. You need the list. You need to recognize the decisions you need to make and the tasks that might come before or after in order to make them happen. And that is how you make something smaller. You break it down into the decisions and tasks necessary to check off the big box of whatever the thing is.

Now, I can't see your list. I don't know what you need to make smaller. But I want to encourage you to trust yourself in this. You can look at what is overwhelming, at what doesn't have a plan yet, what really matters to you, and what you want to make easier, and you can say, "Oh! I get it now. I get why hosting Thanksgiving is so overwhelming to me. I definitely don't have a plan, but I don't even think I have the brainpower or energy to figure out all the pieces I need to make it work. Even though hosting Thanksgiving usually matters, I think this year I need to make it easier so that there are probably fewer decisions and tasks. So I'm going to make a turkey and ask everyone else to bring sides. I might even ask my sister to coordinate that part so I don't have to worry about it. I'll just make the turkey." This process and these categories help you see where you can be kind to yourself, where you can schedule rest in your schedule and your tasks, where you can let people in and delegate these decisions and tasks, and where you really and truly want to spend your energy because this thing is too important to you to let go.

Okay, let's summarize where we are, and then I'll give you one final step as we make the rest of 2023 easier. So you do your Brain Dump. Write down all the things coming up that are either overwhelming or without a plan. Add to that list things that you still want to make happen but haven't been able to yet. From there, separate that list into three categories: make it matter, make it easy, and let it go. Now in order to take action on any of that, you have to make those things smaller. You need to distill your list into decisions and tasks in order to make your things happen, in order to make what matters happen, in order to make what's easy happen, and in order to actually let things go. You can't just decide to let go of coordinating the family tradition of running a 5k without asking someone else to take over. Even letting go can require something to make it happen. And that's the whole point here, right? We're trying to make the next two months happen but also make that whole thing feel easier. So you're making your stuff smaller by breaking your things down into decisions and tasks.

Okay, here's where you go from here. In order to make these decisions and tasks happen, you have to put them in the right place. You have to give them some kind of treatment in order to make them happen. I don't think one approach works for everything, so I'm going to give you five. These are five things you can apply to your decisions and tasks to make them work, and

you can apply them in whatever way or combination you want. This is less about a system and more about how you see what you have to do. When you can simplify the way you see a list, the more likely you are to do it.

So the five things you can apply to your decisions and tasks are order, deadlines, urgency, significance, and ease, and you can do that by utilizing any relevant Lazy Genius principles. I'll explain.

Let's start with order. If you have a lot of decisions and tasks that are dependent upon each other but right now they're written in a crazy-making fashion, use the Lazy Genius principle Go in the Right Order and put them in order. This then this then this. Right? You could use the Lazy Genius principle Build the Right Routines and create order that way, a daily, rhythmic order. You can take things from your list that are similar to each other and batch them together, using the Lazy Genius principle Batch It and do them all at the same time. See what I mean? What needs order?

Next, you could give something a deadline. Maybe certain decisions or tasks can wait a little longer but not past a particular date. So look at your list of decisions and tasks and notice if anything could use a deadline. It doesn't matter when you do each individual thing so long as this particular one is done by a certain deadline.

Third, you can give certain decisions or tasks urgency. If you have a particularly long list of decisions and tasks that are overwhelming you, now might be a great time to utilize the list-making strategy Now, Soon, Later, and Never Mind. You're basically giving very general forms of urgency to the items on your list so you're only paying attention to the most urgent now. Others will happen soon, and others even later. You might not end up using Never Mind in this scenario because you've already let the stuff that needed to be let go go, but try applying urgency to certain decisions and tasks with now, soon, later, and never mind.

You could apply significance. You've made what's happening smaller which is enormously helpful, but you don't want to lose sight of what matters most amongst the things on your list. Maybe you need to apply significance to certain decisions or tasks so that you can actively see what needs the highest priority, no matter when it happens. Add a little star or something. Anything at all to remind you what really matters if that's helpful.

And finally, apply some ease. Use the Lazy Genius principle Decide Once that in order to make non-family gift-giving easier, you're going to choose one thing for everybody and be done with it. Apply ease by using the principle Schedule Rest to make sure you have time built into the next two months where you are taking time to just rest and be and enjoy the season.

In fact, that's a great place to move into a conclusion here. This list you just made is not the objective of your holiday season. You're not a robot trying to check it all off. The entire point of this season for a lot of people is to enjoy it, to connect and celebrate and rest and watch fun movies and feel cozy and hang out with friends. You're a person hoping to enjoy a beautiful

season. You're not a robot with a list. I know we just spent this entire episode talking about many lists, but the point of the lists themselves is so that you can feel more human, so that you can feel more like yourself and enjoy the season, so that you can make what matters happen.

Now, even though this is technically a process with a certain order and several steps, I want you to feel free to take whatever you need and leave the rest behind. This is the most complete way of approaching an easier remainder of the year, but that does not mean it is required. You might have less on your list than you think. You might just need one of these steps to make the rest of the year easier. I'm giving you full and complete permission to only do the parts of this process that actually do that. Don't make your holidays easier by first making them more complicated. You might not need all of this. In fact, you just needed someone to show you that you're overwhelmed because everything is a series of decisions and tasks, and now that you know that, you feel better already! From this episode, do what makes sense for you, that supports what matters to you. We're all so different, and under no circumstances do I expect every person listening to follow the steps in this episode to a tee. Please don't actually. Take the pieces that make sense for you, and I truly believe it'll make the rest of 2023 easier and more lovely.

Alright, before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Mia Vieregge. Mia has a tip for holiday baking, especially if you're going to do a lot, and I have actually done this myself many years and can vouch for its excellence. Here's Mia's message: "With the holidays coming up, batch all of your dry ingredients for your baked goods. If you are baking cookies, muffins, pumpkin bread, etc., batch all the flours, cinnamon, baking soda and all other dry ingredients in their own bags and label them. Then, when it is time for all of the baking, you have made your life so much easier with the batching. Not losing my mind and saving time matters to me, so I have found this to be so helpful." Seriously, I have done this so many times, and it is magical. If you plan on some marathon baking or you'd like to be that much closer to have a family favorite coming out of the oven, this is a great approach. I'm always so grateful to myself when I grab a labeled bag and get to make something that I love and that matters easier. Thanks for sharing your idea, Mia, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, y'all, that's it for today. Y'all, don't forget shout the sticker popup. These stickers are the most fun, and once the preorder window closes on November 15, you can't get them. The link to get the sticker pack will be in the show notes, and I hope you love them. Don't forget to go get your sticker pack! A link is the shownotes or go to thelazygeniuscollective.com/stickers. They are too much fun. 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.