

#74 - The Lazy Genius Takes a Creative Leap

Hey, guys! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra, 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 #74 The Lazy Genius Takes a Creative Leap. We can take leaps and risks and giant calculated steps in many directions, but today I want to talk about when you take a creative leap. How can you dive deep into that project or creative outlet or secret dream with intention? In today's episode, I'm going to share ten steps to taking a creative leap like a Lazy Genius. You will be leaping into something different than I am, but I'll share from my own experience of writing a book proposal to give you some context for these ten steps. They're helpful whether you're writing a book proposal or not, and if you are wanting to write a book proposal, you're basically in the perfect place.

Before we jump into the steps, I do want to talk specifically to you book proposal writers and writers of any kind about my favorite, most powerful writing tool ever. It's called Hopewriters, and it might be a good leap for you if you're wanting your writing to move from hobby to something more. Hopewriters is a membership site for writers, and you'll find training and community unlike anywhere else on the Internet. I used Hopewriters almost every single day I wrote my proposal. Every day. Their content library is extensive with detailed posts on stuff you just can't Google. I found help in writing my proposal, finding my audience, figuring out the weird voices in my head telling me I had no right to be writing. It was all there in Hopewriters. Also every Tuesday, they film a live interview with an editor, publisher, literary agent, or a writer about issues we all have but don't always know how to ask about. Insanely valuable. I'm telling you that if you are a writer anywhere on the path from just getting started to having multiple published works, you need Hopewriters. The community is lovely, and the library of content is a gold mine. You can find more info in the show notes, but they only open membership enrollment a couple of times a year, and now is one of those times. So click the link, poke around, and see if it's right for you. It's the best investment you can make as you take the leap to becoming a writer, and I'm honored to be a partner with them. Emily P. Freeman is one of the co-founders, and if you have any connection to what Emily puts into the world, you know that this is going to be good. And it is. Check out the link.

Now what if you're taking leaps into things other than writing? Let's jump into the ten steps to taking a creative leap like a lazy genius. Step one: Choose a season where you leap, and leap hard. The thing about creativity is it's easy to put on the back burner. We dabble and keep it a hobby, but sometimes our creative desire is bigger than we can tamp down. It's just time, you know? When you decide to leap, when you decide that your creative project is worth doing and worth taking time for, recognize that you need to choose a short season and leap far and hard. Why? Because you already know how to dabble. You already know how to tinker and find tiny pockets of time, and while those are incredibly valuable and will be a constant part of your creative journey, if you're trying to jumpstart a creative project or take your dream seriously, it's good to change it up for a short season. Choose a couple of weeks, a month, an actual season where you prioritize time for your creative leap like you never have before. I'm not saying this in a pie in the sky way or a generic go for your dreams kind of message. It's hard to make this time. It's hard to prioritize your own dreams when you have other things to take care of, but it's

still important. It could be a dream to write a book or learn an instrument or up your art skills because you have a secret dream to be a children's book illustrator. Whatever the dream, if it feels like a creative leap you can't keep down anymore, set aside a finite amount of time where you leap during that season. Jumpstart things to see that dedicating time is worth it. And by having an end to the season of leaping, you're not left with an infinite ending that feels overwhelming and full of failure. Choose a season, choose an end, and leap.

I told you I'd use my book proposal as an example for this whole process. I've been thinking about writing a book for awhile, and I've been making little notes for months and months. It wasn't until this past summer that I took the leap. I have a unique situation where my husband is home for a few weeks during the summer, so I decided that would be my season. I was going to write my proposal in that three weeks or bust. So we put three days a week for three weeks on the calendar, and those nine days were nonnegotiable. And, y'all, it was summer break. All my kids were home. We had memories to make and all the things! But this was a season. Just a season we chose to take this creative leap, and then it was over! Having an end really helps.

Which leads me to the second step. Step two: Be repetitive. Choose the same place to leap, the same food, the same music, the same route, the same timeframe. By creating a structure you can repeat, you can dive into your creative project more quickly. So for the book proposal, I left the house at the same time, took the same bag, the same cardigan for when it got chilly, went to the same coffee shop, sat at the same table, ordered the same breakfast, listened to the same playlist, left the coffeeshop at the same time... all of it. And while it sounds a little insane, creating that repetitive setup and structure gave me a quicker entrance into creativity and enabled me to have a lot of freedom. Repetition is so comforting for your brain and frees it up to do its creative thing. So in this short season of taking a leap, be repetitive in where you go, what you do, how you get there, or any number of things depending on what your creative leap is. Repeat repeat repeat.

Step three: Know who you're creating for. If your work has an audience, you need to know that audience. We want to please everybody. We want what we're doing to impact a lot of people. We shrivel at the idea of someone not liking what we're doing. Well, not everybody will. It's just the way it goes. But if your creative leap involves an audience, know who he or she is. A single person. She can be real or made up, but the more specific you are with who you're creating for, the better your work. We think specificity excludes people, but the opposite is true. I speak and write to one specific person in all of this Lazy Genius work that I do. She's a real person, and she's who I imagine sitting across from me every time I create something. It's a gift to your own work and to the people who will eventually experience it to have an audience of one. It just makes everything crystal clear. So as you work, as you take this creative leap, know who you're creating for.

Step four: Expect to stall out. I would work for five hours at a time at my same table in my same coffeeshop, and the first hour was almost always staring. Or typing one sentence and deleting it. You'll feel like you're not doing anything, and this is common, especially in writing. But guess when my best work happened? Hours four and five. I would work from 7am to noon, and once I hit 10am, the creativity energy was coming at me rapid fire. Expect to stall out. Expect to feel stuck and like nothing is happening and everything is stupid and why are you even here. But ride out the stall and recognize that it takes awhile to get into gear. Even with repetition, sometimes it's hard to get going. Expect it, don't resent it, and be patient. It's also why I highly recommend larger chunks of time than you might have previously given yourself. So much of

the best work happens after we usually stop. During this creative leap, stick with it. Stay longer. Stay strong past the stalling out.

Step five: stay focused. Translation: turn off your phone. I know. Don't you hate when people tell you to turn off your phone? What it communicates is that you're on your phone too much, and it's no one's place to tell you that. It can be really triggering when someone tells me to turn off my phone, but in this prioritized time of creative work, turn it off. Your brain takes so long to get back into the groove by seeing a text pop up or doing a quick Instagram check or anything that seems harmless. Leaving your phone on doesn't necessarily harm anything, but it does make the momentum of your work tougher to maintain. If you have kids, tell whoever is watching your kids that you're going to turn your phone off and if there's an emergency, they need to call the Starbucks on Main Street or whatever so that a human person can get your attention. Because that's our reasoning, isn't it? What if there's an emergency? You can still be gotten ahold of in an emergency without your phone on. And from a creative standpoint, if you look at your phone when you're in that stalled out period, it'll be hard to trust that any movement will come and you might just pack it up and go home. I don't want that for you! This is a season you've chosen to take a leap, so make it count! You're a lovely, balanced, well-adjusted person even with your phone, and you can also put it away when you understand what a distraction it can be to your work.

So a quick recap: step one, choose a season where you leap and leap hard. Step two, be repetitive. Step three, know who you're creating for. Step four, expect to stall out. Step five, stay focused. Now step six, trust what's in you.

One of my favorite podcasts is The Next Right Things with Emily P. Freeman, and one of my favorite episodes from that podcast is called Stop Collecting Gurus. I'll put a link in the show notes so you can listen, but essentially, Emily encourages us to stop collecting all of this information from all of these places to try and make the best decision possible. In so many ways, you already have what you need. This might land differently depending on your relationship with spiritual things, but I believe the words from the Bible in 2 Peter 1:3 that God's power has given us everything we need for life and godliness. And guess what? Life and godliness, those two words, translate to a fullness of life and reverence for God. Our creative energy and how we're made to move in the world in whatever creative way we choose is an integral part of fullness of life and a reverence for God who is the ultimate Creator. So trust what's in you. We trick ourselves into thinking we're doing creative work by collecting information and training and preparing, but really we have everything we need. Of course learning is good and developing new skills is important, but we often go way past the place we need to because we're afraid we don't have what it takes.

When I was writing my book proposal, I had to trust what's in me every time I sat down to write. I had to believe that this message, this calling I feel in my bones, was put there by my Creator, and hemming and hawing because I'm not ready or don't know enough or haven't lived enough life or any other lie that sounds pretty close to some kind of truth stops from me from embracing the fact that I already have everything I need. You do, too. So trust what's in you, and create.

Step seven to taking a creative leap: make crap first. Your first words or stitches or strokes will likely be garbage. You're putting pressure on the moment, you're freaked out a little that you're actually taking this leap, and you self-edit constantly. Don't do it. You have to make crap first. I started my book proposal with so many terrible sentences. So many. But you have to get

everything out in a crappy way before you can make something good. So don't beat yourself up for not creating amazing work in the very beginning or even the middle. It's your right as a creator: you have to make crap first.

Step eight: invite others in. After you make some crap and then put it in a slightly less crappy order, invite someone else to look at it. Invite someone to see your project, and then - I know it's scary - ask for feedback. Obviously you want to invite in safe people, people you trust, but it's also a gift to invite people who have a decent understanding of what your work is. Maybe they're not your specific audience, but they're close enough to get it. I sent the first draft of my proposal to my agent and to Knox McCoy from one of my other favorite podcasts, The Popcast with Knox and Jamie. Knox is a writer (his book *The Wondering Years* comes out in a few weeks actually, and if you like pop culture and thoughtful writing about how *Saved by the Bell* can shape your worldview, go preorder his book... I'll put a link in the show notes), but I sent my proposal to Knox because he's a dude and writes in a completely different style and genre than I do. But I trust him, he's really cerebral, and I knew he'd give me thoughtful feedback. I felt the same way about my agent who I hired for the very reason that I trust her. After I invited them into that first draft of the book proposal which was definitely a little scary, I got other eyes that gave me incredibly helpful feedback, and that feedback made my second draft miles better than the first. Creativity can sometimes be a very isolating experience and it's so personal that you don't want anyone to see it until it's done, but your best work comes from inviting others in. It's its own kind of leap. Trusting people with the crappy underbelly of unfinished work is terrifying, but it's worth it. I personally love feedback and don't easily get my feelings hurt, so it wasn't a huge emotional risk for me, but if you literally feel like you're going to vomit everywhere if somebody sees your work, you can tell the person that. Tell them that it's so hard to invite someone into this creative leap, but you really want the good that comes from it. Your people will treat you and your work with care, or at least ask people who you're sure will treat you and your work with care. This is another great place to say that Hopewriters can offer that kind of community. They have Hopecircles which are small groups of writers from similar experience levels and genres to share work and encourage each other. Such a gift and hugely important in any kind of creative leap.

Step nine: Don't shortchange yourself. Prioritize this season of leaping on the calendar. Prioritize your thought life and kick those wonky imposter-y thoughts to the curb. Recognize that you're going to be hit with holdups. Somebody has an appointment during one of your scheduled times, you'll miss a kid's soccer game, you feel like a terrible human because you think you're possibly good enough to make this thing that people will pay attention to, you're stupid and narcissistic and selfish blah blah blah. No. No no no. Don't shortchange yourself. During this short season of a real creative leap, make your work - on the calendar and in your thoughts - a priority. Who you are and your vocation, your calling in this world, is important. Most likely, this creative project is something that makes you come so alive that you almost don't know how to handle it. Don't shrug it off. Don't talk it down. Don't cave on how important something is even when a roadblock shows up. A couple of mornings, I left the house with kids crying. I met with a really snooty voice in my head saying I had no right to attempt writing a book. It would've been very easy to give into those situations and voices and not take the leap I decided to make. I get it. But don't shortchange yourself. You're worth taking this time to do the thing that makes you come alive, that brings life to the people around you. When we all do the thing we're called to do, the world is full of rainbows and freezers stocked with homemade ice cream. It's such a gift, so don't shortchange yourself or the rest of us of that gift.

And finally step ten: celebrate. This one, I'm confused to say, is the hardest for me. Celebrating the end of that leap, celebrating the tiny steps that might come after, celebrating despite not knowing what, if anything, will come from it feels so weird. And what does celebrating look like anyway? If you listened to my episode *The Lazy Genius and Self-Care*, you know that my definition of self-care is just doing things that make you feel like yourself. So maybe you celebrate with an extra dose of that. What makes you feel like yourself? Splurge on an aspect of that you don't usually do. For me, I never go to the movies at the theater, and I never buy snack bar food. I smuggle something in or don't eat. So a celebration for me is going to the movies by myself which is my favorite by the way and getting popcorn and a Cheerwine and a giant sleeve of peanut butter cups and settling in for an adventure on a screen. So think about what you already do for self-care, and then up the ante a little. Do a little extra. And by doing that little extra that you wouldn't normally do, you mark a moment and create a memory of celebrating something that matters. Celebrate progress. Nothing is too small to cheer for.

So those are my ten steps to taking a creative leap. Another resource I want to mention is the book *A Million Little Ways* by Emily P. Freeman. Can you tell I'm obsessed with her? She makes all the best things. If you said to yourself during this episode, "Well, I'm not really creative. I'm not really an artist," go and buy this book immediately. Immediately. Because you're wrong. Everyone is an artist, and Emily's book *A Million Little Ways* helps you uncover that. It's one of my favorite books on the planet and is a literal life-changer in the hands of someone who doesn't think they have anything to offer. Because you do. So read that book. And if you're a writer, consider joining Hopewriters! Enrollment is only open for a few more days, so click the link in the show notes to check out more about that.

Good luck on your creative leaps, my friends. I'm excited to hear what happens when you do. Not any big massive consequences or the regular definitions of productivity and success, but I'm just excited for you to take the leap at all, no matter the outcome. The leaping is the important part. The rest is just icing. Check out the show notes in the info section of your podcast app, or head to thelazygeniuscollective.com/lazy/leap to get links to all the things I mentioned in this episode. Thanks for listening, guys, and until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Bye, friends!