

#83 - The Lazy Genius Skincare Routine

Hi, friends! 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. I'm so excited about today's episode because it's been highly requested for months now, so welcome to episode 83 - The Lazy Genius Skincare Routine. Listen, I'm no expert. Not even close. And if I've learned anything, there is not a single piece of skincare advice that works for every single person. Not even sunscreen because sunscreen makes me break out. Be that as it may, we're going to talk about taking care of the skin on our face for the next few minutes, and we're going to be as lazy genius about it as possible.

Most of my knowledge comes from my sister, Hannah, who you can hear talk more about skin and literally every other thing on our podcast The Lazy Sisters Podcast. It's only available for folks who support The Lazy Genius Collective on Patreon, so if you're interested in our monthly conversations, as well as access to Hannah's secret playlists which are often lauded as the best playlists ever, head to patreon.com/thelazygenius. For three bucks a month, you get access to the show. And right now, since my sister is about to have a baby and is moving into a new house and a lot of major life things, she's taking a tiny break, so last month as well as in November and December, I'm joined by none other than my beloved Erin Moon from Instagram and Popcast fame. She's our honorary sister and is joining me while Hannah is becoming a mom of three, and it's been so fun to have her. So if you're interested in supporting the work I'm doing on this show, I'd be so honored if you became a Patron and would love for you to also get The Lazy Sisters Podcast. Again, you can get more info at patreon.com/thelazygenius.

All that said, Hannah is my skincare guru. I'm a big fan of having one person to listen to in any kind of space, and Hannah is my skin person. The thing I love about Hannah's advice and we'll get into this in a second is that she rarely gives me product recommendation. She's more of a teach a man to fish or teach a person how to use moisturizer kind of person. She's an equipper, and I'm going to try and follow her example and do that for you today. I will share with you the products I use on thelazygeniuscollective.com, so check the show notes for a bare bones link to the products I use and generally in what order and for what purpose. Generally. Again, I'm not an expert.

Here's what I am an expert in though - knowing when to be lazy or a genius about something. When it comes to skincare, you get to decide. That's our number one rule for today's episode; I have a few more, but that's number one. You get to decide what matters. I'm not going to shame you into using anti-aging products if you're happy letting your face do its thing as the years pass. Because it only matters if it matters to you. I'm not going to tell you to use 17 serums that all sound like they have the same ingredients if you can barely remember to wash your face at night. It doesn't matter unless it matters to you, and if it matters to you for reasons that are worth holding up, then be a genius about that thing.

I remember in a recent episode of The Lazy Sisters Podcast I was asking Hannah what to do about my lady mustache. I have fairly pale skin and pretty dark hair. I have what can only be described as whiskers on my upper lip, and I was telling her about my adventures with bleach

and plucking and all the things and wondered if she had any advice for me. She said, “So I’m assuming it bothers you then?” And I was like, well of course it bothers me. Isn’t it supposed to? But until Hannah asked me that, I didn’t even think that being okay with my lady mustache was allowed. It never even crossed my mind. That’s what I want to encourage you in today. There might be problems you think you have to solve that you don’t actually have to solve. If it doesn’t bother you, then it doesn’t matter and isn’t worth trying to be a genius about.

Let’s use my whisker situation to unpack this further because we’re all friends here and it’s okay. I decided that, yes, it does bother me. The next step was to decide if my reason for being bothered was a reason worth the effort. Sometimes our reasons are put on us by others, and we don’t even realize it until we simply ask the question. So I’m asking you the question now: is the reason it matters your reason? Because if it isn’t, consider not worrying about it. My lady whiskers do matter to me, and that’s okay. It doesn’t make me or you vain or better or worse than anyone who chooses to treat their whiskers differently. When I look in the mirror, it distracts me. I bet it doesn’t distract anyone else, but I’m already on a sometimes-hard road of being kinder to myself, and having to fight through whiskers along with all the other stuff isn’t worth it right now. So I tend to the hairs in my own way.

Now have I noticed that I have considerable peach fuzz all over my entire face that isn’t yet black but is totally there and very obvious when I’m backlit? Yes, I’ve noticed. And I know that a lot of women are doing that treatment where they shave their faces. It has a fancy name that I don’t know, but it’s a common occurrence for women with my skin. But guess what? My peach fuzz doesn’t bother me so trying to find a solution doesn’t matter. I’ll just leave it until it bothers me badly enough to do something about it.

So if rule number one is that you get to decide what matters, rule number two is you don’t have to feel badly for whatever does matter. If you want to use lots of interventions to keep wrinkles at bay, do your thing. If you don’t shave your armpits ever again, do your thing. If you spend more money on skincare than you’re comfortable admitting, that’s okay. If you use a bar of soap on your face and nothing else because you either don’t care or don’t know what else to do, that’s okay. It’s all okay. You don’t have to feel badly for whatever you’ve decided matters to you. I can’t think of a scenario where your decision is actually harming someone else, so in general, if anything having to do with your skin matters to you for reasons that are your own and rooted in being kind to yourself, don’t feel badly for a second.

Now let’s get into some tangible skincare rules. Rule three: start small. You knew it was coming, didn’t you. We always start small because small is better than grand in almost every situation. There are a lot of specific reasons for this when it comes to your face though, so let’s talk through them now.

The first reason to start small is so we can build a routine that sticks. We get overwhelmed by choice, and when those choices are yelling at us literally morning and night when we’re supposed to be caring for our faces, we’ll crumble beneath all the serums and creams we bought in one fell swoop and have no idea how to use. Limit your choices, especially if you’re still exploring what you want out of your skincare routine and build it super slowly.

The second reason to start small is so you can know what causes irritation. We all think that a miracle product for one person will work for us, but that’s never the case. A lot of times, someone’s miracle product will turn your face red or make you break out or make your skin dull

and ruddy; you won't know what the culprit is if there are multiple culprit options. By starting small and adding one product at a time and waiting a solid week or two to see if you have a negative reaction, you can learn to understand your skin better. I swear that every time I've asked Hannah why something is happening to my skin and she asks, "Did you add anything new to your routine?" the answer is always yes and once I stop using that product, the problem, usually breakouts, clears up in a couple of days.

And the third reason to start small is to know what actually works. If you have a specific skin issue you're trying to address like redness or dryness or acne, starting small with only one product at a time lets you see if that product actually works. To know if something doesn't work, you'll usually know within a few days. To know if something does work, it might take up to six weeks. I know. Super annoying. But if you've chosen something to tend to in regards to your skin, take your time so you can actually solve that problem or at least make it more comfortable for you.

So our third rule is to start small so you can build a routine, so you can know what causes irritation, and so you can know what actually works.

Rule number four is wash your face. If you're completely new to skincare and feel overwhelmed by all the acids and serums and retinol and this industry that has a completely different language, just start with washing your face. I recommend both morning and night because I've found that it works for me, but you do you. Depending on your skin type, you'll choose your cleanser differently. I rotate among a few different cleansers depending on how my skin is feeling that day, the season, and whether it's morning or night. By adding just one product at a time though, you won't feel overwhelmed by which cleanser to choose. Start with one. People swear by all different kinds, and like I said before, nothing works for everyone. Nothing. I'll list my favorite cleansers on the blog, but for the sake of listening now, I'm a big fan of oil cleansing for all skin types, even oily ones. Especially for oily ones actually. Oil cleansing is basically rubbing a specific blend of oils on your face, letting the oil dissolve the oil already on your face for maybe 30 seconds, and then you put a hot washcloth on your face to open your pores and get things rolling. I do the hot washcloth thing a couple of times during one cleanse. So put on the oil, get my rag hot, put it on my face and hold it there for a few seconds, rinse it out, do it again, and then gently wipe my face to end things. Oil cleansing is also great to get rid of eye makeup, so that's a bonus. Your skin isn't left oily; it's well hydrated and balanced. And if you don't do any other steps in your skincare routine, the oil cleansing will not exactly double for a moisturizer, but it'll definitely help, especially since not everybody needs a traditional moisturizer.

Which takes us to rule number five. Consider exfoliation. I'm not saying you should do it, but at least think about how it might work for you. If you're under 35, you're probably fine. Chances are, you still have dewy skin and tiny pores and aren't seeing any signs of sun damage or wrinkles or anything the industry tells us to fix. If you're older than 35, consider exfoliation. Exfoliating is not just to make your skin look young; it's good for its health no matter what your skincare goals are. Skin is really awesome and also kind of gross. The amount of skin cells that die and sluff off is a lot. Like, more than is comfortable if you're a germaphobe. And since we touch our faces a lot and they're never covered up against cold and heat and germs and all the things, it's good to think about keeping our skin from getting, for lack of a better word, stale. Do you ever look in the mirror and just feel like your complexion is muddy or dull? It's like your face took the day off and stopped looking like the face of a person who's excited to be alive. My face

used to look like that most of the time, and then I start exfoliating. Again, nothing is universal, but if you're in your 30s, your skin is changing. There's no way around it. Change isn't bad at all; hopefully I've been clear with that so far. But if you want your skin to match your vibrant insides, exfoliation will absolutely help. So let's talk for a second about what it can look like for you.

There are generally two types of exfoliants - physical and chemical. Physical exfoliants are anything that removes dead skin cells with friction, with something physical. Think sugar scrubs and cleansers with those tiny little balls in them that scrub your face. Chemical exfoliants are actual chemicals that when you put them on your skin chemically remove the dead skin cells. Don't let that scare you. You can definitely abuse chemical exfoliants, but if you start small and make informed decisions about what's important for you and your skin type, you'll be just fine.

Here's the magic question: how often should you exfoliate? The answer varies everywhere. I heard an interview with a makeup artist who exfoliates every day. Like with a brillo pad. It's so intense. Other experts say you'll mess up the pH balance in your skin if you exfoliate more than once a week. I've found that somewhere in the middle works for me and probably for most people. So don't feel like you have to start exfoliating this way right off the bat; build up to it to make sure that what you're choosing actually works, but in general, I'd say that you can exfoliate 2-3 times a week with either physical or chemical exfoliants. If you're adding any kind of mask in there which we'll talk about next, stick with twice a week to start. You can always have that third day a week, especially once you see how your face reacts to the products you're using.

Chemical exfoliants generally take longer to use than physical ones. A physical exfoliant is as simple to use as washing your face. Chemical ones need to be applied at a certain point in your skincare routine and usually need to sit for a few minutes to work before you move on to moisturizer or makeup or anything. Because of that, I use both. I have an exfoliating face wash that I like from Neutrogena - I'll link to it in that post I mentioned that will be in the show notes - and I use that face wash when I don't have time to do a chemical exfoliant. Because I'm in my late 30s, chemical exfoliants work better for me; they do a more thorough job, but the face wash is a great standby when I need it. Otherwise, I go for chemical. For awhile, I only used salicylic acid that I get from The Ordinary (again, all of this will be linked in that post), and now I'm starting to expand that repertoire with a lactic acid treatment. I generally do those in the mornings, not at night, because there are a couple of products I use that are best used at night because they make your skin sensitive to the sun. I'm talking about retinol, y'all, but that's for another day. I'll give you the quickest rundown of my routine in just a second, but before we do that, let's do one final rule that's not really a rule but fun to talk about and do and that's masks.

So we'll say that rule number six is use a mask because they're fun! I mask once a week because I don't remember to do it more often than that but also because over-masking is a thing, at least for me. My skin isn't super sensitive, but it's fair, has seen its share of sun damage, and I have reactions to a good number of products. I need to be careful with how often I strip my face. That said, I love a good mask. You can have a low commitment and buy a single sheet mask. I don't like sheet masks because maybe my face is a weird shape but they never seem to fit or stay on. They just weird me out. I use masks that you brush onto your skin. I'll link to my favorite, and y'all it's not cheap. It's bonkers expensive actually, but it'll last me well over a year, and it's magic. I learned about it from Sarah James over at Whoorl which is a great beauty blog if you're into green beauty. It's called The Problem Solver, and it's made my May Lindstrom. Y'all, it's amazing. It's a clay type thing that you mix with the tiniest bit of water and

brush on your face. It's the classic dark green color that my kids think is hilarious. I've tried a good number of masks over the last few months, and this is the only one with such obvious difference after I rinse it off. It really is a problem solver, and I love it. But again, I had started small and had sheet masks and low-commitment tiny containers of masks to make sure I could keep a mask in my routine. Only then was it worth it to splurge on The Problem Solver or anything you've wanted to splurge on.

Okay, so here's my general routine. It's not the exact same every day because some products are only used every few days, but I'm not telling you so you'll copy me step by step. I'm telling you so you can see the general order of types of products so you can know how to build your routine product and step by product and step.

So morning skincare routine. I wash my face. I rotate between four cleansers right now - one is an oil cleanser, one is an exfoliating cleanser, one is a foaming brightening type cleanser that's what you think of when you think of a cleanser, and the fourth and my favorite that I have to ration is called Honey Mud. It came as a gift when I bought The Problem Solver, and it's my favorite skincare product. It smells like honey, has the consistency of mud, and makes me skin hydrated and clean and amazing. It also doubles as a mask if I want to use it that way which is a fun option. It's the thing I save up my birthday money for now. Dang, it's good.

So first I cleanse. If it's an exfoliating day and I didn't just use my exfoliating cleanser, I'll put on a layer of chemical exfoliant and then brush my teeth or get dressed while it does its business. Then because my skin is primed and ready to soak in a bunch of goodness whether I exfoliate or not, I'll put on some kind of serum that does good things. Serums are a giant conversation and not one for today, but you could absolutely skip this. I don't, but I started small and built gradually. After the serum, I put on a light day cream, especially in the winter. If my face is feeling really supple, I might skip it. My skin teeters on the brink of too much moisture, so I just pay attention to how it's feeling that day.

Here's the part where all the skincare gods will shun me. I don't use sunscreen. I know. I do when I'm going to be outside a lot, but I have yet to find a sunscreen that doesn't clog my pores and make my skin look like an old tire. When I find my magic sunscreen, I'll let you know.

Then at night, it's more of the same. Cleanse, I might spritz on a rose water toner I get at Trader Joe's, I layer on a serum that has skin-happy stuff in it, especially Vitamin C or retinol that don't like to be exposed to the sun right away which is why I use them at night, and then a night cream. I'm still not convinced the night cream I use is the best one because if I use too much, I break out. It feels like a tricky line to walk every night, so we'll see. And one night a week or so, I'll stick a mask in between the cleansing and the seruming.

On Thursday, let's chat on Instagram about the best way to test out products without spending a million dollars. I'll be there @thelazygenius around 12:15pm EST and share some of my favorite ways to try stuff out. I hope you join me there! So again, a post with a list of my current favorite products will be linked up in the show notes, and in the meantime, ask any questions in the comments of the show notes at thelazygeniuscollective.com/lazy/skin. And if you want actual personal skincare advice or more conversations like this one, consider becoming a Patron and hearing my little sister Hannah teach us all her ways. You can get more info about that at patreon.com/thelazygenius.

So a quick recap of our skincare routine rules. One, you get to decide what matters. Two, don't feel badly for what does matter. Three, start small. Four, wash your face. Five, consider exfoliation. And six, do a mask sometimes. That's it! And I thank you and your beautiful face for listening.

That's all for today, guys! Thanks so much for being here with me , and until next time be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't! Bye, guys!