

#46 The Lazy Genius Loses Weight

Hey, everybody! 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! It's episode #46 - The Lazy Genius Loses Weight. I mean, it's January right now. This is what we're supposed to be thinking about, right? I mean... we'll see. I know that millions and billions of words have been written and said about body image and losing weight and being healthy and all that New Year New You stuff, but the words keep coming because they don't work for everybody. We've seen that with goals, with holiday traditions, with doing laundry... we're set up to think there's one right way to do everything, and we end up striving to meet that one way when there are many other ways available to us. The same is true about losing weight. And it's not in a diet pill!

In the playbook today, we're going to reframe our weight, our bodies, our perception of who we are. What's behind wanting to lose weight? What questions can we ask ourselves to put that journey into the right perspective? What life are we aiming for? And how can I still eat cake? I will never tell you to not eat cake. Let's Lazy Genius this business, shall we?

First thing, why do we want to lose weight? I mentioned in the previous episode The Lazy Genius Sets Goals that we walk around with ideals. We go through the day under a veil of how it's supposed to be - generous air quotes there - and give ourselves a very narrow perspective on that ideal and whether or not we're meeting it. The line between success and complete failure is razor thin, so in the last episode, we talked about defining good enough, defining the wide space between success and failure that we often ignore. That space exists majorly when it comes to our bodies and our weight, and yet we're all just trying to look like Jennifer Garner. She has kids. She has a stressful life. But look at her in those Capitol One commercials in that blue dress? I mean, come on. We see her, we see celebrities, we see the moms at Target who just came from CrossFit and look ridiculous and immediately know we're not enough. That's the goal. We should look like *that*.

First thing, who says? Who's idea was that? Second thing, why? Why does thin automatically equal beautiful? And we all do it, we all see ourselves this way on occasion or feel this way a lot. There's a level of not-enough-ness that's always under the surface, telling us that we'd matter more if we were thinner.

I've believed this for my entire life. I had a father who instilled in me that only beautiful people are valuable. If you're not pretty, you don't matter as much. Your voice isn't worth listening to. Your presence isn't worth my attention. Pretty people are the important ones. You might not have had that kind of upbringing, but we all have it a little, you know, with magazines and red carpets and who wore it better. Now, I love that stuff. If you've been around here for awhile, you know that I adore celebrities and movies and award shows. It's so fun. And I appreciate a beautiful person hello Idris Elba, but I know that I'm part of the problem. If Idris Elba was the exact same person but "ugly," would I care about him the same? Probably not. Embarrassing but true.

I say all of this to remind you and remind me that we're all in this, we all do this, and we're all wonky for thinking that thin and beautiful equals value. Yes, there are people who have valid reasons for losing weight - health problems and such - and I'm not saying that we should all just ignore being healthy. But we *have* to get down to our deepest reason why. Why do you think you should lose ten, twenty, or fifty pounds? Why does every meal, every bite teeter on that razor-thin line between success and failure? Can I eat a salad without feeling like I should give myself a high-five? Can I eat cake without needing to atone for it the next day? Everything is so weighty. And *that* is the weight I want to lose. I want to lose the weight of the pressure, of always evaluating my success and my failure as a human based on my pant size or the amount of skin that spills over when I sit down. We. Are. Not. What. We. Look. Like. I mean, we are, but *who* we are, what we have to offer the world, and our value as people has literally nothing to do with our weight. Now if you're unable to move because of your weight, if it's massively affecting your quality of life and your relationships, then yes. Losing weight is important, but you also know that the work is far deeper than food. It is for all of us. Our relationship with food is never just about food.

So what do we do? How do we lose the weight of the pressure and the guilt? I don't exactly know because this is still a journey for me, too, but I'll offer up a couple of questions that have helped me tremendously over the years to combat that emotional weight.

The first question is how would life be different if I was at my ideal weight? I heard a version of this question many times on a podcast called The Psychology of Eating. I'll link to it in the show notes if you want to check it out; the show notes today are at thelazygeniuscollective.com/lazy/weight. The podcast is great. A nutritional psychologist has a one-on-one session with someone in each episode and really breaks down all the specifics and nuances of that person's relationship with food. Most people come into the conversation saying variations of things I've heard myself say like "I just can't get motivated" or "I do really well tracking my food and then eat a cupcake and fall into a pit of terrible eating" or "I'm just so tired of feeling this way." I don't listen as much anymore, but when I did, I would often hear myself in something the person said. It's very easy to relate to, and Marc's counsel is also really great. But one of the questions he would ask almost every person is how would life be different if you looked and felt the way you wanted to? The answers were rarely about physical feats like being able to run a marathon or the ever-popular "play with my kids" reason. They were almost always a version of "I'd just feel more confident when I walk in a room." And I always loved Marc's response to those answers because he would say what I will say to you now. Why do we have to wait to feel that way? What's stopping us from being confident no matter our weight? Why does that ideal hold everything in its skinny little fingers? And that's why we live with that haze of failure because we don't feel like we can be fully present in our bodies or act confident or walk in a room and feel pretty without feeling like a total fraud. Overweight people (and I use that term with my eyes severely rolling) have no business being confident. And if they are, we're always so surprised and inspired, right? We hear ourselves say things like "good for her."

You guys. WHY GOOD FOR HER? Is she not allowed to be confident and dress cute because she's a size 16? Why is that a thing? And when we think about it, we know that's ridiculous. How somebody looks has no bearing on their value or their importance in the room, and yet we're surprised when non-Gwyneth-Paltrowers act like Gwyneth Paltrow, when they act like they belong and wear form-fitting clothes and don't hide in the corner hoping nobody will look at them. We treat that situation like it's an exception, but we're playing into that by voluntarily living under the guilt of that weight ideal. We keep ourselves from living fully because we don't look

quite like we want to yet. I do it, too, and it's so sad. So let's start asking ourselves how we think thin life would look different and then just start living that way before we're thin. We said last week that marking off checkboxes is lauded as the endgame, but it's not. The same goes for how we look; being thin is not the endgame, but we treat it like it is. Can you imagine how free we would feel if we stopped living under the weight of that constant endgame pressure? Oh my gosh it would be amazing. So start asking yourself what life you think you'd have if you were thin and then do the work of just living it.

Next question. Let's start asking ourselves what role food plays in our daily lives. How do we see it? Is it good or bad? Is it weighed down by different emotions? Is it a means to an end you haven't really named? I don't want to be under the weight of thin pressure, but I also don't want to be under the weight of my own emotional eating. Double-fisting chocolate chips because I'm lonely or because somebody hurt my feelings or because my kids are driving me crazy and I realize I'm resenting being a mother a little bit are not why I want to eat chocolate chips. I eat to distract myself from a hard emotion, and after the eating, all I'm left with is bloating and repressed emotion. No work is done and maybe some harm is done, too. So being aware of the role of food is crucial to losing the emotional weight of food.

I love food. So much. I love to cook, I used to teach people how to cook in my house, and if you listened to last week's episode, you now know that I want to open a bakery! That's my real life dream that I'm pursuing. Umm, people who open bakeries have to eat a lot of cake. So I'm not knocking food or dessert or any of it. I love it! But what I don't love is having it be in control over me rather than the other way around. I want my experiences with food of all kinds to be at worst functionally nourishing and at best positively emotionally gratifying. Hot homemade chicken soup on a cold, exhausting day is food for the soul, man, but we all know the difference in that scenario and hiding in a closet with a pint of ice cream. We know. We know when food has taken over the situation, when we're using it to keep us from doing the hard emotional work of admitting we're lonely or hurt or that we don't love motherhood as much as we thought we would. But often the knowing is enough. Recognizing the emotional connection with eating is often enough to start the process of taking away its power. It's still slow and frustrating, but the answer is not to throw out every cookie in your house. The answer is it be honest with how you use food to meet needs it shouldn't be meeting.

It's such a crazy paradox, y'all. We use food to meet a need it was never meant to meet, and we restrict that same food to become a person we can be right now. So bizarre. If I live with my thinnest self hanging over my head, I'll never be content. If I live with an arbitrary weight ideal without knowing why, it'll always be there weighing me down in unnecessary guilt.

The funny thing? My thinnest self that I sometimes strive for? You guys, I was eating 800-1000 calories a day then. I was basically anorexic, and that's the person I think I should look like? My 22 year-old anorexic self? It's ludicrous to think that and yet makes all the sense why I feel like being thin is impossible. Because it is. Looking like that again is impossible. And even if it wasn't, am I willing to do the ridiculous work of making it happen? I can't shake my head hard enough. So why am I still living under the pressure? Why are you? We don't have to continue defining ourselves by how thin we are, how we stack up against the other moms in carpool line, and at the same time, we can recognize that we've given food power that it was never meant to have. I truly believe that losing this kind of weight - losing the guilt of being thin and the emotional dependency on food - is a choice. It's a choice we have to make a lot, sometimes many many times a day, but it's a choice. It has nothing to do with our genetics or the amount of

time we have for exercise or that we can't afford a gym membership or any of the random excuses we throw out to make ourselves feel better for not being our ideal. Scrap the ideal! It doesn't make any sense. It really doesn't. And if the main difference in your quality of life is that you'd be able to walk into a room and be more confident, you can do that now. And we can all change that being such a big deal by letting each other. We don't have to get squirrely when a friend who does CrossFit looks like a rockstar in a bikini at the neighborhood pool. We don't have to resent her. We don't have to be surprised when a woman who's not a size 4 wears something fitted and isn't constantly pulling her clothes over her stomach. We can be part of providing a safe place where people can lose the weight of guilt and emotional dependence on something that was never intended to bear the weight of a soul.

Sure, it feels good to move our bodies. Our energy probably is better when we eat more kale than sugar. But those daily decisions are more easily made when we lose the real weight. So let's lose *that* weight in 2018, okay?

If you have any thoughts or questions about this topic, you can leave a comment on the post of this episode - thelazygeniuscollective.com/lazy/weight, and just a reminder I'll be live on Instagram @thelazygenius on Thursday, January 11th around 12:15pm EST to answer any of your questions and talk more about this. Remember, even if it's just for today, you can live like a thin person without being thin. Grab that life, man. Don't let the size on your pants stop you.

Okay, let's do a quick lazy genius tip of the week. I encourage everyone to get one of those dish scrubbers with dish soap in the handle. Cleaning the kitchen is easier when you do it the lazy genius way - I'll link to the podcast episode about that in the show notes - but it can be so annoying to run a sink of water for one pan, especially when the temptation is just to leave it until the next morning when you're super not in the mood to wash dishes. Those little scrubby brushes are magic. Wet the pan, scrub with built-in soap, and rinse. I lived for 34 years without one of those things, and the last two years and having one? Stop it. It's the best. It's one of the easiest ways to keep the kitchen clean without requiring gallons of water every day. Grab one the next time you go to Target and see if it works for you.

Okay, guys, that's it for today! Thanks so much for listening, and remember to be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. See you next week!