

306 - What We Need to Have More Fun

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 306 - What We Need to Have More Fun. I almost called it What We've Been Getting Wrong About Fun, but that seemed too dire.

Being a person is tough. We all know this. Part of what I love about this job is offering encouragement and tools, not just to take the edge off, but to enjoy being a person and living your life in a way that's meaningful and matters to you. And we talk a lot about that kind of thing here: time management, food management, rest management, relationship management. We have a lot of words around management, around figuring it all out.

But one of the things we don't talk about a ton is having fun. I mean, we have fun! I share books which I think is fun. I share what's saving my life once a quarter, and I think that's fun, too. I encourage us all to take time to feel like ourselves whatever that looks like for each individual, and that too is also fun. We've even had a handful of specific episodes on fun things! But I have some new understanding I did not have before.

In preparation for today's episode which was supposed to be called How to Have Fun Everyday, I started reading this book called *The Power of Fun* by Catherine Price, and it turns out that I have been getting fun wrong. My understanding of fun is incomplete at best. The things I've often named as fun aren't actually fun. They're other things; they're pleasant or enjoyable or something else. But after reading this book and understanding what Price calls True Fun, I recognize that I don't have as much fun in my life as I thought. Something is missing.

Now, this episode is not going to be a summary of *The Power of Fun* even though it could be, but I can't talk to you about how to have fun every day if our understanding of fun is so wonky. And it is. We have a wonky understanding, and my eyes are now opened to an understanding I am just psyched to have.

It was a mindblowing book to read honestly, and I highly recommend it. If you have read books like *Joyful* by Ingrid Fetell Lee or *The Art of Gathering* by Priya Parker (this is also how you'll feel about *The Life Council* by Laura Tremaine when it releases on April 4th), you'll find a similar energy. All four of those books take a large topic - fun, joy, gathering, and friendship - and the authors break those topics down in ways we haven't seen before, that makes those huge topics come alive in ways we didn't know were possible. *The Power of Fun* is a lot of well-organized research communicated in a very human, engaging way, and then has concrete ways forward to develop and embrace something that really matters to you, or at least should. And that's fun. The concepts from this book are very Lazy Genius in nature, and I think it'll be a great foundation for us to have a conversation about what fun really and truly is.

Again, this episode is called What We Need to Have More Fun. I've always thought I have a lot of fun. I'm a generally happy, contented person. I laugh a lot, I enjoy doing things with people,

and I like my life. But I've been operating with the assumption that because I'm happy, I must also be having fun. I'm realizing that's a bit incomplete.

I did an episode a few months ago, episode 256 - how to make time for fun. And it's a great episode. You should listen to it. I talk about our resistance to fun, our guilt over doing fun things, and also the nuance that exists in what is fun for each of us individually. I even talk about the nuance of what's fun, what's restful, what's peaceful, what's pleasant. In that very episode, I named that all the things I thought were fun weren't exactly.

And based on what I've read from this book, *The Power of Fun*, that's very true. True Fun is something very specific, and I think it's something we're missing.

So as we begin, I'm going to give you Price's thesis about fun, what her definition of True Fun is, and a couple of the instructions she had in the book that have helped me name what fun is for me.

Then we're going to apply a handful of *Lazy Genius* principles to see how we might experience fun every day.

Price says that fun is the intersection of play, connection, and flow. Play, connection, and flow.

She describes play as something lighthearted and free, of doing something more to do it than super focused on the outcome. I think about putting on an actual play or performing in a concert or something. The outcome exists and does matter, but you're doing that thing for the process of it. You're playing and feeling free, and the outcome is not in charge. When it comes in charge, that thing becomes way less fun.

Connection is what we think - being connected to something else, whether it's another person, a community, a sense of place, an animal, a spot in nature, God, ourselves. Being connected to something is a huge part of fun when conflated with play and flow.

And flow is the one we do the least I think. Flow is when we're so engrossed in something that we don't even notice the time passing. It's an uninterrupted flow of energy and presence in whatever you're doing. The reason we do this one the least is something Price talks about a ton in her book, and that is interruption and distraction. Where do both of those things typically come from the most? Our phones.

Her perspective on phones is a good one. If you remember the episode awhile back called *How to Lazy Genius Adult Screen Time*, you might remember being afraid that I would judge you and then listening and realizing I very much was not. Screens and phones aren't bad, and Price talks about that in detail. The distinction here is a phone's very natural presence as a disrupter and interrupter in our flow and therefore potentially our fun.

So True Fun according to Price is when all three of those things - play, connection, and flow - exist at once. Now, you can have one or two exist and it be lovely. Flow and connection come together as a deep conversation with someone. Play and flow come together when you're practicing an instrument. Play and connection come together when you and your kid are playing Eye Spy while you cook dinner. All of those things are great and maybe even fun. But when all three are together, that's True Fun. That's where we sparkle, and that is the thing that impacts us on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level.

We'll be right back...

I know I said I wouldn't just summarize the book, and I realize we're still talking about it but it's really good! Just hang tight. A couple more points.

Price talks about what True Fun offers us, and these things are all researched and shown to be true for people. True Fun sparks genuine creativity, it lowers our stress, it drops our chances of chronic illness because of that lowered stress and healthy releases of dopamine, it creates meaningful connections with others and connection and community have been scientifically proven to be primary components of happiness and even physical longevity. Having fun is like a really big deal, y'all.

But fun cannot exist with distraction. If anything distracts you from being present, you're not actually having fun. Your attention is divided, and you're preventing the presence of flow, you're restricting the connection because you're distracted from the person or place or whatever it is, and the play is not as lighthearted because you're thinking about something else.

Fun also cannot exist with judgment. If you are not free to have fun, to drop your self-consciousness, you won't really have fun. We've all experienced that, right? Also if you are with a group of people and someone either refuses to be present and fully engage in what's going on or they're making fun of you for being free in the play, that person definitely won't have fun and likely neither with you.

In fact, Price says that activities aren't what help us have fun. Our attitudes do. How we move in spaces, how present we are, how quick to laugh we are, how quickly we release judgment and insecurity... you can have fun anywhere with that.

This is a great quote from the book. "Simply put, the pursuit of fun requires us to decide how we want to fill our days. It demands that we identify what makes us feel the most alive. If we don't know what True Fun looks or feels like, and don't have a sense of which activities and contexts are the most likely to produce playfulness, connection, and flow, then we will be left with empty space and no idea how we want to fill it."

This is all about intention, right? When we notice, when we pay attention to what is happening around us and in us, we are better able to name what matters about those things. And now that

I've personally started noticing what fun really is and how there's less of it in my life than I thought, I can name what matters about that fun.

In fact, in *The Power of Fun*, Price walks you through all these steps to help you figure out what True Fun is for you. You do a Fun Audit where you figure out what is fun about your life and what memories were playful, connective, and flowing all at once. She teaches you to identify your Fun Magnets so you'll know how to put yourself in the path of fun more often. There's an acronym to help you remember to add fun to your life, and I love an acronym! There's a distinction between what she calls Peak Fun, like those magical memories of vacations or experiences that were just all around amazing fun, and also the little glimmers or flashes of fun that we experience hopefully fairly often that are just as valuable and also important to notice. We want to notice them so we'll more easily recognize them and continue to seek out fun in our lives.

I'll wrap up the actual conversation around her book, but I highly recommend it. After reading it, I feel excited. Truly. I feel excited and inspired and empowered to pursue something in my own life that matters. Why? Because we don't have a lot of practice at this. We don't have a lot of tools for this. There hasn't been a lot of scientific research on the importance of fun. But now that it's here, it's really exciting.

Okay, let's talk a little bit about how we can start small with this. When I get excited about something, I can very easily go big. In fact, I really want to go big *because* I'm excited! It's something that matters! But even in cases of things we love, too big too fast can still come back to bite us. We still want to start small.

So let's talk about a couple of ways we can do that with this idea of True Fun.

First, I want you to think of something you've done that was True Fun, that was full of play, connection, and flow at once. The Fun Audit in the book is a fairly detailed process of this, but I want you to just name one thing right now.

When I was making my list in my longer process, the first thing I wrote down was throwing theme parties. I have so much fun when I throw a theme party. I used to do parties all the time. I had a Hunger Games party and a Wizard of Oz Halloween party and a carrot cake tasting party. It is *the* most fun for me. It's full of play because people are in costumes or are being delighted by the detail or the absurdity of whatever we're doing. There's so much connection because people are saying hi to each other and in a comfortable environment for conversation and catching up and comparing costumes if there are costumes. And there is such flow. No phones, no distractions, no interruptions. The party is the only thing that's happening, and the time just flies.

And I haven't hosted one of those in years and years. I've been sitting here trying to remember when these parties happened and when the last one was, and my memory failed me. So I did what anyone with a very old gmail address would do and did a little email search. In early 2012,

I hosted The Hunger Games Games, a very competitive and exciting Hunger Games themed party. Later that same year, I hosted the carrot cake party where I made something like nine different carrot cakes to compare with all my friends, and it was a whole thing. Then I hosted the Wizard of Oz party in 2014. And I'm pretty sure that was the last one. Maybe there's another one I can't remember. I mean, I've hosted big gathering. I think in 2016, we hosted a house show around Christmas time where a couple of musicians came to play and we had food and stuff. It was lovely. But it wasn't themed. It wasn't full of play.

So this thing that immediately came to mind as something that is the most True Fun for me, that feels like it's part of who I am, it's something that people enjoy me doing? I haven't done it in almost a decade, and I didn't even realize it.

Now, to be fair, I had a baby in 2016, tried to grow this business and the kid over the next few years, and then everyone's life stopped in 2020. But honestly I'm kind of startled that I haven't thrown a party in nine years.

And that's just one of the things on my list of things that I remember that really were fun. And this is why I want you to try and think of just one because then I want you to ask yourself when was the last time you did that thing? It's not to make you feel bad that you haven't or to dismiss that maybe circumstances literally have not allowed such a thing, but it's good to name what you find to be so deeply fun and notice how long it's been. That tells us something.

I know one thing. I'm throwing a theme party in 2023. I don't know what it'll be, but it's happening. Because it is the most fun, and I want to pursue more fun things.

So that's the first small thing. Just think about something that you know to be fun that you've done in the past. It doesn't have to be big; in fact, a lot of those things aren't. But as something comes to mind, you can pay attention to what you want to do with it.

We'll be right back...

Another small thing you can do to start thinking about more True Fun in your life is to notice.

Price encourages people to keep a journal. I think she has a cute name for it, but honestly I can't remember what it is. But the idea is to notice moments when you experience any of the three things: play, connection, or flow. Or maybe a combination of two. She suggests writing them down at the end of the day with the letters in front of a quick note of whatever the thing was. So for example, last night I wrote down the letters CF for connection and flow and then wrote the note "Dinner with the family at Mythos. Everyone was content, the kids were affectionate, the food was good, and the conversation was really nice."

Now, why is this important?

First, I'm marking moments. I don't have to do anything with it. I'm just noticing and being grateful. Two, I can notice just like Kaz and I did when we walked out of the restaurant that this little Greek restaurant was actually a good spot for our family to eat out. Because of the wide range of picky eating in our family, finding a restaurant that everybody likes is a whole situation. This one worked, and it worked really well. Which leads me to three, writing this down isn't necessarily for replication. Maybe the dinner had nothing to do with where we are, just like Price says activities aren't necessarily the fun thing but our interaction and attitude in that environment is. And also there's something important about putting yourself in the path of things that could work well, and we think that this restaurant could work well for us again. And fourth, writing this down helps me notice what is True Fun and what is something else. This was something else. Our dinner last night wasn't fun. It was so pleasant and lovely and made my heart slow down in the best way, and I loved it. But it wasn't fun. Now maybe if we had been playing some kind of game while we were sitting there, it might have been True Fun. But it wasn't, and that's okay. That's good in fact. Not everything has to be fun. What noticing does though is help me see what of those three things is least often in my life.

Which leads me to the third small thing and that is to guess which one of these three things you experience the least. I know for sure mine is play. For sure. I experience play in language. I love to banter and joke with people. It's literally my favorite. But usually those interactions are limited and short. They can still be little sparks of fun, but mostly just sparks. But real play? That's not something I do very much. I am super wired for productivity to do something just for fun. I mean, I do, but I have to think about it. I have to choose it. I'm not naturally a player. I'm also super competitive which means games can get out of hand because I have now made the stakes too high. People who have played games with me know this.

Side note: when I was in my 20s and a church youth group volunteer, we did a weekend-long Road Rules slash Amazing Race type thing where teams of a couple of adults and a handful of high school kids did a huge scavenger hunt challenge situation all around North Carolina, and I got so into it that the youth pastor told me that the following year, I shouldn't lead a team and should just run a stop on the route. Like, I got so riled up that I was removed from any future competitions. I can ruin play very fast.

I'm also a brittle lady with terrible cardiovascular strength and knees made of glass, so play in the athletic sense is not my strong suit.

When I made my list though, I wrote down that a recent memory of True Fun was throwing the football to my boys. They like to get on the trampoline, I throw the ball over the net to them, and they wrestle to catch it. It often ends in fights, but this particular time I wrote in my little notebook did not have fighting. It really was True Fun. We were playing, we were all connecting with each other, and there were no interruptions or distractions and desires to stop. We just kept going, and it was so much fun.

So I do play, but I do not play that enough. I don't have a lot of play in my life. Connection and flow? Good gravy those are like air and water for me. My days are full of connection and flow

because of who I am as a person. I think that's why I feel so content and happy with my life. It's not because I have certain things or don't have horrible situations happen to me. We live pretty averagely, and honestly parts of my personal life are currently on fire. But I experience so much connection and flow in myself, in my relationships, in my work, in my family that I feel really grounded and content most of the time. There's a richness to how I experience each day, and I think it's because of how rich my days are with connection and flow. But there is not a lot of play which is why I'm very happy but why I don't have a lot of fun. And knowing that is actually really helpful. I'm not trying to force play in my life, but it's a lovely thing to notice so that when an opportunity for play presents itself, I'll say yes. I'll see the value in saying yes.

So three small things: name one fun memory and pay attention to what you want to do after naming it, notice - in the moment at the very least or even write things down if you want, and name which of the three components of True Fun are not as present in your life. Really you're just gathering information and turning your awareness to something that probably matters to you.

And then maybe get *The Power of Fun* if you're ready to dive in.

And that's what we need to have more fun.

Okay, before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Emily Geotte Morgan. Emily wrote me this: "Hi there! I wanted to share a fun tradition that you helped our family to start. A few years back you did an episode about creating your own holiday in the February or March months because that time seems to drag on. So we will be celebrating our 3rd annual Movie March. Each of our family members gets a different weekend where they get to be in charge of picking a movie and dinner for us to enjoy. We even buy fun paper plates that each person chooses for their weekend to make it festive. The benefit is that I don't have to plan meals or worry about clean up. But because it is themed and festive, everyone is on board. There is no fighting over movie or food choices because each person knows they will get their own turn that month. Thank you for helping us create fun memories in a truly Lazy Genius way." YOU GUYS ARE YOU BREATHING HOW PRECIOUS IS THIS. I know some of you are sad that you're hearing about this in the middle to end of March, but you can still start small with this. You can do it over several days. You can do just one movie and call it Movie March. But you can also go ahead and put a note on your calendar for February of 2024 to set up The Movie March! Which honestly, Emily, I'm going to use a double meaning here. It is movie March as in movies in March, but also it's a march through movies in March! The Movie March! I love it. I'm putting it in my own calendar for next year even though my kids don't really like movies WE WILL PREVAIL. Thank you for writing in, Emily, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week.

Okay, y'all that's all for today! Thank you so much for listening. Don't forget to sign up for the Latest Lazy Listens email that goes out every other Friday. It's a robust summary of the most recent podcast episodes as well as some extra resources if you want to dig deeper into whatever topic we're on. There's a link in the show notes, and you can also sign up at

thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens. And speaking of listening, thank you for doing that every single week! If you enjoyed this episode or any episode, be sure to share it with someone else who you think would love it. This show has grown because of person to person shares like that, so thank you for continuing to tell your friends and family. 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.