

## #278 - How to Manage Your Time This Fall

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 278 - How to Manage Your Time This Fall.

Today is Labor Day in the US, so you might not be listening to this on the day it releases, but I think that at least here in this country for a lot of y'all listening, fall really kicks off after Labor Day. Some of you have been in school for a month already, but pretty much everybody is back the day after Labor Day. And even if you don't have kids or have any real tie to the school system, you feel the transition of fall. Pools are closed, the pumpkin spice latte came out last week, and even seeing September on the calendar feels decidedly fall. The transition is real no matter who you are.

Now I know a lot of you really love this transition or at least love many parts of it. There's an energy and eagerness around getting back into a routine, getting kids out of the house, getting to wear sweaters eventually. For a lot of y'all listening, I really think there's a lot of safety and comfort in the transition into fall. It's not that summer is unsafe or uncomfortable, except for the heat part, but the majority of you, while enjoying the summer season, find a lot of relief when the fall season, even if it's still 90 degrees, is finally here.

Now here's the problem. That eagerness and excitement often leads to big systems energy. We're so pumped to get into a routine. We're also remembering other fall seasons where we felt scattered or overwhelmed and we're like "that's not happening to me again!" and so we have January energy with new planners and plans. It is very easy to take our optimism about the fall season and allow it to burn hot as we create all the routines and all the systems. We're picking our bag for fall, our place for backpacks for fall, our dinner queue for fall, I picked out a nail polish capsule for fall on Instagram a couple of weeks ago. This is important work. Let that optimism and eagerness help you make some decisions, help you Decide Once, on things that could help you as you begin this new season.

But that optimism burns hot and then burns out. You will not carry the excitement of the start of fall very far into September even. It's like that idea that for most things you buy, you will never be as excited about buying it as you are the moment you buy it. If you're not gung-ho on a purchase in the moment, the excitement will only wane. Our hormones just make it that way. We get a hit from the excitement of new things and new seasons and new routines, but that hit does not last. It will burn out.

I know there's a lot going on for so many of you. You have jobs and hobbies and friendships and kids and kids with activities. You have meals to cook and houses to clean and holidays to plan for, which I know sounds crazy but they sneak up fast. You have a lot to manage. And in order to manage it well, get your stuff done, feel like yourself, and invest in what matters, you have to be intentional. And now. You need to be intentional now before things really take off.

So that's where we are. We're eager and excited, going up the hill of the first drop of the fall roller coaster and super pumped, but once we crest that first peak, it's over, pals. All we're doing is screaming and hoping we don't die. So before we start screaming, let's get some stuff in place.

Here's what I want us to do. We're going to follow the five steps that I lay out in *The Lazy Genius Kitchen* of all places (that's a pretty rad book I wrote) in order to Lazy Genius our time. Those five steps are prioritize (name what matters), essentialize (get rid of what's in the way), organize (put everything in its place), personalize (feel like yourself), and systemize (stay in a flow).

Now, if you know that there is a specific area of your life, of the time that you manage that needs a good dose of Lazy Genius, just apply those five steps to that particular thing. You can Lazy Genius anything, and by using those five steps in their order, you really can find a great solution that works for right now in this season based on what matters to you in a specific area of your schedule or your life. So my first suggestion is to follow those five steps for something small if you have something small, especially if you already feel like you have a decent handle on a lot of things happening in your life. Maybe you've been Lazy Genius things for awhile, and so a lot of your tasks and energy have already been batched or build into the right routine or Decided Once or whatever. You already have a rhythm with a lot of things. So if that's the case, you can just use the five steps for whatever smaller piece still needs a rhythm.

Now, if you are like I don't think I have rhythms anywhere or you feel like starting small is annoying advice - which it's kind of always annoying advice even though it's one of the best Lazy Genius principles there is - and you need to start on a broader scale, which is a very real thing, let's do that. Right now. We're going to start big today which is not usually how we start anything here, but sometimes we need a bigger picture before we can start making decisions about individual days.

But here's what we're going to do. We're still going to follow the five steps, but I'm going to give you some specific direction in how to apply them from a broader time management approach. And you'll probably enjoy having some paper for this.

Step one: prioritize. Name what matters. Let's look at September and maybe October, okay? Let's focus on the first half of fall before all the crazy holiday stuff might start for a lot of people. What matters during that time? What is the priority? It could be an actual task, it could be a feeling, it could be rest, it could be figuring out how to manage being a sports mom (hey, Erin Moon) without turning into a tissue paper thin version of yourself that is one drop of rain away from crumbling into nothing. What is the priority for the next two months? Not for the rest of the calendar year or the rest of the school year or the rest of your life which we kind of do sometimes. What matters most about the next two months?

Now if you're like I don't know, a reminder of how to name it. Write down everything that could matter, then cross out a few things and land on what actually does. Then maybe circle the one

thing that matters most. You can still make a few things matter, but having one priority helps you make better decisions.

So it could be that what matters most is that you are not out of the house more than two evenings a week. It could be that you need to go to bed by 9:30pm half of the week. It could be that dinner is crazy easy, and if crazy easy means very repetitive or a lot of takeout because of all the sports with only one home cooked meal a week, that's what matters. So in this season, of all the things that could matter, name the 2-3 things that really do matter and then highlight the one that matters most.

### **We'll be right back...**

Next up is step two: essentialize. Essentialize is to get rid of what's in the way of matters and to make sure you have what you need to support what does. Have what matters and get rid of what doesn't. Here is what this looks like when we apply it to time management. You're going to look at what you're doing, how you're spending your time - because that's the point, right? You're managing and figuring out how to spend your time - so when you look at that, at those tasks and appointments and commitments and rest, I want you to try labeling everything with one of three things. Let it go, make it easier, or make it matter.

So if you want, you can write down everything you spend time on or are considering spending time on for the next two months. In big brain dump fashion, in no particular order, just write down everything you spend time on. There will be big categories like work. There will be tiny things like schedule flu shots for yourself and your people. You'll put meal things on there and caring for yourself and homework and specific errands and events that are coming up or projects you're working on and even things like hanging out on Instagram or reading. Don't overthink it. Just write it all down. You might end up breaking a few things down further later in this process, but for now, just write down whatever comes to mind.

Then we're going to essentialize. You can use colored pens for this or Mildliners, my favorite highlighter, or symbols or whatever you want, but with some visual distinction, I want you to mark let it go, make it easier, or make it matter.

Now, let it go could mean dropping something altogether. For me, I was very much considering joining the board of directors for the middle school band boosters because my oldest is super into band and I'm thrilled with that and I want help build up the boosters after a season of Covid, right? That actually does matter to me. But when I looked at my calendar this fall and all the things that I have going on, that I've already committed to, and knowing that one of my priorities is to be home minimum five nights a week, I couldn't commit to another thing. I had to let it go completely. I had to email the band director and say "I know I expressed a lot of interest in this, but I just can't commit this year." I completely let it go.

Letting something go could also mean letting it go into the hands of someone else. An example of this in our house is laundry. I don't have a system for laundry because Kaz does it. I used to

have a system, but once I started working more here in this space and our kids got older with more things happening after school which I'm handling because I'm the parent at home until dinner, it just made sense to let that go into the hands of my husband. So letting go doesn't necessarily mean it doesn't happen at all. It just means you're not doing it. So on that list, highlight or mark what you can let go.

Now in a different color or with a different symbol, mark what you want to make easier. Maybe it's grocery shopping or meal planning. Maybe it's getting kids to do their homework. Maybe it's winding down at the end of the day instead of getting caught up in your to-do list after everyone else has gone to bed. What do you want to make easier? Mark those things.

And finally, mark what you want to make matter. What gets your genius energy? What gets priority? What gets a little extra time? What matters enough that other things will orient around it?

Now quickly look back at your list of priorities. What matters most to you over the next two months? Note those things, and now look back at your list of how you spend your time. Is anything missing? Is there anything you need to add to support what matters most to you? If rest matters most to you and you have nothing on your list for yourself or your family that is intentionally restful, you need to add that to your time list. If what matters is that you spend time with people intentionally and you don't have that on your list of things you already do, add that to your time list. So before you move on to step three, make sure you have as much essentialized as possible, even things you're not doing but that you want to prioritize now.

So essentialize by brain dumping, making sure you have everything listed that's required or helpful for what matters, and then marking things as let it go, make it easier, or make it matter.

Step three is organize. Put everything in its place. Now we did a little with those three categories just now, but now we're going to really put things in their place.

For things you're letting go, go ahead and do that. Make a list of emails to send or calls to make or subscriptions to cancel of things you're letting go. And if you're letting things go into the hand of someone else, write down the task of calling a housecleaner or talking to your partner or your teenager about taking care of the thing or talking to your boss about changing a particular task you've accidentally been given because someone from your team was let go and a new person was never hired and you're now during work that really isn't yours or being compensated for it appropriately with time or money. Make the list of what you need to do to fully let the "let it go" things actually go. And that list is likely fairly concise and specific. You don't need to figure out a system for letting something go. You just do it.

Now for the rest, for the make it easier and make it matter lists, here's how I want you to consider organizing those things. I want you to put those things either in a routine or on the calendar. Here's why.

Our default for a lot of things, especially things that might bring us stress that are very regular and repetitive like meal planning or house cleaning, is to just do it when we have time or when it's too urgent to ignore. That's why when you have free time and you really want to spend it reading or going out for drinks with friends or going to bed early because you love sleep or hanging out with your people outside or whatever it is, you feel guilty for spending your free time on those things. Because your free time is where all the obligations happen because you haven't put them in a place yet. No time is free. All time gets spent. So be intentional about how you spend it.

Instead of having the default of filling in free time with a lot of those things, put stuff either in a routine or on the calendar.

The other default we have towards tasks and responsibilities that are overwhelming is that we wait for them to become urgent before we tend to them. A Lazy Genius principle of time management is to tend to the important before it becomes urgent. Urgency is highly stressful. Some of us definitely get things done on a deadline better, but for the most part, living in a constant state of urgency is not how we want to live. Urgency has no flow, and our goal is to feel like yourself in the flow of a life that matters. It doesn't mean we don't do things we don't enjoy or that we're not ever busy or even that we're not stressed. But if we're in a constant state of stress because we're always responding to the urgent, we will not get anything that matters done nor will we rest nor will we have fun nor will we have the energy to be a grounded, connected person. Waiting for things to become urgent is not the path you probably want.

So if our default responses to our tasks is to do them when we have free time or wait for them to become urgent and we now see that neither of those approaches works well, our alternative choices are to put it in a routine or put it on the calendar. And this goes for the things we want to make easier and the things we want to make matter.

We make things easier by putting them into a routine or putting them on the calendar because we're not overwhelmed by the dread of when we'll do them. And we make things matter by putting them into a routine or putting them on a calendar because we're giving them priority in our day or week. So the act of putting things in a routine or on the calendar works for both lists.

So now, look at your list of things you do, the one you already made. What can you automatically put on the calendar? I have a lunch hour blocked out every Thursday. It's a repeated event in my Google calendar. That way I can have lunch with people who matter to me or just rest and read a book on my own. So what on your list can be easily put on your calendar? Put it there. Give it a place. And this is for things that you both want to make easier and make matter.

So what about the rest? How might you batch those things? Are there any tasks that matter or that you want to make easier that go together? And since they go together, can you try building a routine around that group of tasks? And remember a routine can be daily, weekly, monthly, or whatever works. And if it makes sense, once you have named important routines - important

tasks that are done together around the same time every day - you can even put that on the calendar. I'd say that's helpful if it's something that's weekly or monthly so you don't forget about it.

One routine I'd love for you to consider building leads us into our fourth step: personalize. I want you to feel like yourself. Now, there are ways to feel like yourself throughout the day in how you handle certain responsibilities, but for this conversation around time management, I want you to have a specific time every day where you feel like yourself on purpose. My guess is that a routine that could help with that is some kind of evening decompression routine. You are not being productive anymore. No, ma'am. You are instead coming back to who you are every single day. This is where you could group the things on your time list that don't have a good place anywhere else in the day, like reading or watching a show you love or talking on the phone to a friend or taking a walk or working on your needlepoint or organizing a spreadsheet but of something super fun like a vacation you're about to take. Create a decompression routine or an unproductive routine or a Me Time routine or whatever you want to call it. But feel like yourself every day. Make it matter. I'm telling you now that that should matter. Make yourself matter so you can be available and present for everyone else as well as for yourself.

Then step five is to systemize, to stay in a flow. There might be things on the calendar or in your routines that you can apply Lazy Genius principles to. Some heavy hitter principle picks for time management are Decide Once, Start Small, Ask the Magic Question, and Batch It. And also Schedule Rest. That's kind of obvious but please for the love do it.

Okay, that's a lot of words, but let's do a quick recap.

You have a lot to do. Don't fall into the trap of letting early fall eagerness leave you out to dry in three weeks because you built the wrong routines and systems and built them too big. Or that you fall into the unhelpful pattern of doing things in your free time (there's no such thing) or when they're too urgent to ignore. Instead...

Prioritize what matters most the next two months. Just September and October. Then brain dump everything you're doing so you can see it all in one place. You'll then essentialize by making sure you're doing things that support what matters and that you're letting go of what doesn't. You'll do that by marking those items on your list with three things: let it go, make it easier, or make it matter. Quickly take care mentally or logistically of the things you can let go. Then you're going to organize the rest by putting it into a routine or putting it on the calendar. Please make sure you're feeling like yourself through that process and in the actual application by planning a routine or something on the calendar where you are tending to your own self. Then systemize this time management for the next two months by applying principles where they're needed.

And that's how to manage your time this fall.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Cara Rosenberg Nichols. Cara shared this in my Instagram DMs. "Hi Kendra! I wanted to share a proud Lazy Genius moment. A couple of weeks ago, I looked at our calendar and realized that we had 7 - count them 7 - kids birthday parties (ages 3-7) to go to in ten days. Instead of stressing about a unique gift for each kid, I went to the dollar store and purchased 7 bags, 7 generic kids birthday cards, 7 pairs of sunglasses, 7 puzzles, 7 sheets of temporary tattoos, and 7 fun towels. When I got home, I let my children sort out who was getting which items. We signed the cards right then and wrote the recipients names on the envelopes. All seven bags are lined up by the door and ready to go as we head to each party. Deciding once saved me hours of headaches! Thank you, Kendra!" Cara, first props to you for going to seven kid birthday parties in ten days. That is a feat in itself. And I love that you Lazy Geniused the gifting situation. You decided once in that moment to get all the gifts and that's fantastic, but I think this is an even better example of batching! You did so many things at once - buying gifts, organizing and wrapping, signing the cards, all the things. I'm not sure how many of us will be in this situation with seven parties in ten days, but I think it's such a great example of seeing when you're in a potentially stressful situation and applying a Lazy Genius principle or two to make it easier. So good. Congratulations, Cara, on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, y'all, that's it for today! If you're listening to this episode early in the week, this Wednesday, the Latest Lazy Letter will hit inboxes, so if you have any interest in getting that newsletter, you can sign up at [thelazygeniuscollective.com/join](https://thelazygeniuscollective.com/join). Every month, I send a pretty lengthy email that people say all the time is their favorite email to get which is so kind. But I share a couple of more thought-out things that don't land anywhere else, I share all the reviews of the books I read that month, I share any fun things I watched or listened to, and it's also a place where all Lazy Genius things you might have missed go. This month, one thing I'll be sharing is the surprising morning routine that has made my relationship with my oldest better. I don't like to put too many super personal things on the Big Internet, so the newsletter is where it goes. If you're interested, again you can sign up at [thelazygeniuscollective.com/join](https://thelazygeniuscollective.com/join).

Thanks for listening, everyone! 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!