

#277 - How to Connect with Friends More Regularly

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 277 - how to connect with friends more regularly.

A couple of weeks ago in episode 275, I shared what's saving my life right now. I do those episodes about once a quarter, and one of the things I mentioned in this most recent one was something that was saving my future life and that was scheduling chunks of time to spend with people. Shortly after that, my dear Laura Tremaine, the author of *Share Your Stuff* and the soon-to-be-released *The Life Council*, was asking questions on her Instagram account about friendship. She does this often because that's a lot of what she writes about - friendship and how those relationships often shift, what we need from them, what we offer them, and how we make them part of our lives. I already had this episode topic planned and loved there was so much friendship conversation energy happening everywhere. I asked on my own Instagram account how you all approach time with your friends and your people. The answers were fantastic, so you can actually check out that post to read them all. It's a photo of a pastel notepad. Today, I'm going to share some of your answers, but before we do that, let's break this down a little bit. I want to give us a bigger picture of what we expect from our friendships, and then after the break, I'll share a couple of friendship principles along with your ideas on how to connect more regularly.

When you think about connecting with your friends more regularly, what do you imagine? How does that picture show up in your head? Do you think of all the people you want to see and get overwhelmed? Do you feel a lot of sadness that you don't have many friends for any number of reasons and feel disappointed or discontent there? Do you feel like scheduling time with friends takes the care and spontaneity out of it and maybe resent that a little? Do you tire of being the initiator and wish that someone would you invite to something for a change? Are you a pretty intense introvert who doesn't have many or any close relationships and feel mostly fine with that but wonder if you should be doing something differently?

There are likely a lot of thoughts that might enter our heads when we think about spending time with friends. I honestly think that pop culture has messed with us the tiniest bit in terms of our friendship expectations. Shows like actual *Friends*, *Sex and the City*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *Seinfeld*, even *Stranger Things* and book series like *The Babysitters Club* or *Nancy Drew* or *Harry Potter*... there are a lot of pretty formative pop culture influences in our lives that highlight groups of friends being with each other a lot. Being in each other's lives daily. Even groups of kids. There's a camaraderie and connection we see on screen and on the page, and it is beautiful. It is desirable. We want to have a friend group or even just a singular friend who is our ride or die always who we are always doing life with, who we call at a moment's notice with a quippy story, who comes over for dinner at least weekly, who is almost like a spouse or a roommate because of how much they're in your life. I remember reading *The Babysitters Club* books and *Nancy Drew* books quite a lot as a kid and wishing I had a group of friends like that. I

loved that they were always together. It was just a natural part of life to be in each other's lives all the time. I think that's one of the reasons we love the show *Stranger Things*. Those kids are pals, they are in and out of each other's homes every day, they have rhythms and traditions and trick-or-treat together and play D&D and eat food from each other's houses and have walkie talkies and talk about hard things and have rules like "Friends don't lie." They fight for each other, risk their lives for each other, cry with each other, apologize and shake hands when they mess up... all of these things that, sure, make a great show but that also create a desire in us to have that kind of connection. Humans are built for connection, and when we see a valuable one that is desirable but fairly different from what we have, we have a sense of longing that's hard to fill.

If you're listening to this episode, if you were drawn to the title, you likely feel like you want to connect with friends more regularly. There's a lack, even a tiny one, somewhere in your relationship rhythms right now, and you're hoping for some help. I just don't think there are a lot of people who feel like they are deeply connected in the best way possible and are 100% content in their relationships and how often they spend time with people. I think we all long for a friendship to be part of our natural rhythms without having to think about it. Somehow, that's the marker for an ideal friendship, that it doesn't need to be planned or scheduled, that it's just so natural that it happens, like on TV shows and in books or even in real life examples that we see on the Internet or in our own circles.

So all of that to say, I want us to put our relationship expectations in context. I want us to be honest about what really matters here, what really qualifies as connection with our friends, and that we pay attention to our seasons of life and the way we live and how those affect our relationships.

Several times this past summer, our power went out because our transformer or whatever is very tender and if the wind blows too hard, we lose power. One time this summer when it was out on our street - and I live on a neighborhood street with yards and porches - I noticed that when the power went out, everyone went outside. It was just a couple of hours before sunset, and since homes were getting a little darker and there were no lights or TVs or whatever, everyone went outside. People were on their porches, walking to say "hey, crazy we lost power again" or whatever but chatting and hanging out. It was slower. It actually had the same vibe as early days of the pandemic when we were locked down and staying at home and outside a lot more because we missed people. I had this pretty obvious but kind of profound realization that the very nature of our technological culture makes it harder to just be a person in the ways we might want to with the people in our closest geographical proximity. We just get into our own rhythms, we depend on our technology (which I like by the way), and it's easy to stay isolated in our homes because for a lot of us, we have everything we need and more. We don't need to go outside and chat on the porch because there's nothing to do inside. We don't need to become close with our neighbors because we have access to so many people outside of where we live. We don't need to depend on friends or family to do things like pick up groceries or bring us a meal because we can just DoorDash it. This is not new information, but there are a lot of things we've lost because of how many of us experience life every day. And I think friendships, the kind

we long for, are a casualty of our modern lifestyle. We just don't need each other in the same ways. We don't need to become friends with our neighbors. We don't need it. It reminds me of a C.S. Lewis quote from *The Four Loves* where he says, "Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art... It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things with give value to survival."

Last week, we talked about packing lunch - weird segue - and how eating is essential to our survival but eating a thoughtful lunch that makes us happy in whatever way our food does is less important. It gets pushed to the side. And yet we still have the expectation that we should be experiencing a certain kind of lunch every day.

I said this in that episode, it resonated with a lot of y'all, and I think it can apply to friendships too. "Match your expectations to the energy you're willing to give." Or maybe adjusting it for the topic of friendship, match your expectations to the energy you're able to give. A lot of us don't live lives where we can connect with our people face to face every day. We just don't.

In the rest of this episode, we're going to see a lot of Lazy Genius principles come into play in super helpful ways, but in light of this perspective on the realities of our relationships, I want to remind you of two. First, be kind to yourself. We all need different things, have different life stages and schedules, have different friendship dynamics, and different ways of making those relationships matter. We all also mess up quite a bit. Be kind to yourself in the process - the lifelong process - of being in relationship with people.

Second, start small. Earlier I asked what you imagined when you thought about the concept of hanging out with friends more, and my guess is what you imagined was pretty big. The problem was big, the solutions were big, and therefore the movement towards change will not happen. When we start too big, we often don't move at all. So as we go through the rest of this episode, please notice the ways you can start small and give yourself permission to experience those slowly.

We'll be right back...

There are a couple of principles - not one of the 13 Lazy Genius principles - but some others that I think are really important when it comes to friendship.

First, friendships change. I mean, duh. But listen. Some friendships last for a season in our lives, some friends stay but how we interact changes, and many other things. We know that friendships change, but we don't give them permission to. It's okay to grieve change and loss of that's part of the story, but on a practical level, the things that once worked for you in connecting regularly with friends have shifted, possibly even drastically.

I'm actually in a season of some pretty big relationship shifts. Because I work during the day now and my kids are in school, my days look different than they used to. I used to be able to go for walks with other moms in the morning with their tiny kids. I had time during the day to talk to

my sister on the phone. I drove more places to fill up time with the tiny kids and could vox while I was in the car. All of those things have changed. Emily P. Freeman and I live three blocks away from each other and will sometimes go an entire month without seeing each other's face. That's terrible but also it's our reality and that's okay. So we schedule things on the calendar. My sister just started a new job that's full time and we have to start scheduling lunches now to hang out because we just don't see each other anymore, and you can't finish a song on the radio from my driveway to hers. She lives very close. I have another friend who I used to see every single day because our kids were in preschool together and we were in the same community group at church. Now our kids aren't at the same school and we aren't in the same community group anymore. We went from daily to barely weekly and have to adjust when and how we connect with each other. Friendships change. There are relational and logistical shifts, and that isn't wrong. It's very very normal.

This was one of the comments in my Instagram post, and it's perfect to share right now.

It's from [@laurenefdunaway](#) who said "One of the best things I ever did was agreeing to go to breakfast every friday with a small group. It's since dissolved but for 7 years consistently, in a season of babies and toddlers and working and finishing my PhD, I knew I had that. It kept afloat and was the biggest gift!" I want you to notice the tense of this comment. It was one of the best things. It has since dissolved. But she's sharing it with positivity and that it was a gift in that season. That's just so hugely important for us to notice and name when we talk about friendships. Just because things change doesn't mean the change is bad. We can still embrace and remember those times of connection that no longer work without them being a judgment on how we do things now. So friendships will change.

Second, try not to keep account. I realize this could be harder for some based on personality, but when we keep account of how often we initiate versus the other person or who calls who or how long it's been and feel resentment towards the other person for not being the kind of friend we want them to be, we will likely enter into a difficult place. Now, a caveat, I realize that there are relationships where you don't feel reciprocity. You don't feel like the effort you're putting in is being seen or honored by the other person, not just in terms of a balance sheet or whatever but in the actual relationship, in the intimacy of the relationship. Some friendships just don't work, and that's okay. So I want to be clear that saying not to keep account doesn't mean to not have boundaries or needs. It just means that keeping track or keeping score isn't our ultimate goal in a meaningful, connected friendship.

I know it can be hard being the initiator. Some people just are and others are not. And when you're an initiator, it feels like everyone else should be capable of doing it. It's not hard, right?! But if you ask someone who is not motivated by the same things, who has a different personality or perspective or propensity towards introversion or something else to behave in the same way you are, you're asking an unfair question. We're all capable of learning, but some people are just naturally more wired to reach out, to be bold, to be a planner, or whatever else, and others are just not. There was even one comment in the post about how someone is a quality time person and hates being scheduled in. I think it's good to say those feelings out loud, and at the same time, we have to name that all of us approach our relationships differently and we want to honor that and not keep account, not keep tabs or track or score. We can lose the thread if that happens.

And third, anything is better than nothing. Anything is better than nothing. We want our friendship rhythms to be thriving and full of traditions and daily contact and whatever else, and if we don't have that or can't create it out of the gate, we think it's not working and just stop. That's just not true. Anything is better than nothing, and the small steps of planning anything will lead to more. So start small today in this episode, start small this week in your own relationships, and believe that texting someone "Thinking of you today!" without any context or also saying "we should get together every Thursday for lunch until we die" still counts. Those small things - anything - are better than doing nothing at all because it's not right or not big enough or not everyone in your life. Start small. Anything is better than nothing, and those tiny drops in the friendship buckets don't really dry out. Just keep dripping, and you'll get deeper.

Okay, now I want to share a few of your practical ideas of how to connect with friends more regularly. I think this is just a big old Decide Once party. These are examples of people who decided something about how to be with a friend or group of friends and then just kept doing it. Let's roll through some of these, and I think you'll get an idea for sure.

Maryvangeffen, a wonderful parenting expert, said this:

I am fastidious about an annual accounting of my relationships. I literally make a list of everyone local who brings me joy and A list of far away friends that need maintenance via phone calls and travel. Then on an attendance sheet bullet journal page, I check off each time I get to spend quality time with each throughout the year, noticing who I need to see more. I keep this page very private so I don't have to worry about whose feelings might be hurt if they are on it or not. But maybe I should hire someone to come burn it before my funeral?

Probably. We all need a friend who will delete all of our correspondence when we die. But I love the thoughtfulness of this approach, and it sounds like Mary does this once a year which leaves space for changing of seasons and changing of relationships and how one friend that was local might have moved away and needs a different approach now. But this is almost like a friendship review or audit which could sound harsh, but perhaps you can rethink it as intentional.

Laura.tremaine, the previously mentioned voice on friendship and a dear friend, said:

I don't overly schedule the time WITH friends (that seems to happen more organically) but I do try to schedule time FOR friends. Meaning I have a "Relationship" section on my To Do list just like I have a "Work" section and a "Home" section. I schedule time to sit down and return texts, send voicemail messages, etc. ✨ If I don't schedule in friendship, it won't get done. (This is not what I expected adult friendship to look like, but it does!)

I love the reality check of what adult friendship looks like. It's very different than riding bikes and playing boardgames and having sleepovers or whatever. We have to plan it in or it doesn't happen. That's just the reality.

Alexandria_kokx said: 6 years ago several of my coworkers/friends and I decided (once) to meet once a month on a Thursday. We sip a specific wine each month, eat food, and spend time together 🍷 there's only been a handful of times we haven't all been able to gather, but we've been

doing it for years & it's basically the best. We've created our own traditions based on the time of year (Rosé on the boat always in July!) It's SUPER helpful to plan our next month meeting date before we leave the current meeting instead of saying 'oh let's do this again sometime!' 🙌

There are several things I love about this. First, the decide once of the time and that wine and food are involved. Second, that there are seasonal themes and traditions like the July gathering on a boat with rose. And third that they plan the next one at the current one. That suggestion came up a ton in the comments as a way to be proactive and not lose momentum on seeing friends regularly.

Here's another example of this in a slightly different context.

Stubborndev shared this: My two BFFs and I all made the Decide Once decision to pick the next quarterly meeting time (we all live in different cities) at the current gathering. So for the last year, post Christmas hang determined early April book-cation which led into July birthday grillout which puts us into October getaway. We also try to do two "adults only" and two "with varying numbers of family". I like that variation, too, that if you're friends with folks who have partners or kids or other humans in their home that some of the gatherings can include those people! I love that intentionality. Here's another example of that: **eamrobinson shared this:** Every Tuesday night at 7pm we have "Bridge Club" but now it is extra planned because kids. 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month are the whole group, 2nd Tuesday guys meet, 4th Tuesday girls meet. So life giving and only need babysitters 2x/month." Brilliant from a group dynamic standpoint and also the babysitting one. So so good.

Littleloomis shared this:

This year I decided for my birthday to go to dinner with my 3 girlfriends and that started a girlfriend birthday dinner tradition; extra fun since our 4 birthdays are spaced apart every couple months. It was a very simple thing (and we don't always manage it on the birthday date itself) but we love planning it.

Again, simple and a Decide Once. My mother-in-law does this with her Japanese friends. They have birthday dinners, and since there are a handful of them, that's really when they hang out. It's pretty fantastic.

Next up is [kathy4g](#). I have a group of friends from our PTA days - kids are now adults - and we decided once and now meet 2nd Wednesday of every month for dinner. Decide where next month will be when we are at dinner. If someone has to miss we go ahead and they catch up next month. ❤️ That's another theme that showed up. You plan something, and it's okay if not everyone can come. They'll come the next time. [Amyb7399 said a similar thing](#): "A standing date-last Tuesday of odd months. (I love the odd month thing!) Don't try to juggle it around if not everyone can make it-if you try to make it work you likely end up canceling til the next time." That's so smart. It's consistent and it's okay if someone can't come because if you change the date to help everyone, you likely won't do it. Again, anything is better than nothing.

Here's a good one from a scheduling standpoint. This is from [msvallely](#). My BFF and I try to get together for breakfast on Saturday. We don't meet every Saturday but once or twice a month if possible. Early AM before things get too hectic at home works for us. Also grouping things like working out or walking with a friend, or volunteering together can be a good time to connect.

Such great ideas there. I love an early Saturday breakfast if you have tiny kids especially.

I love this next one. This is from [vhummel](#). "When my friend was living overseas for a few months we would share a meal together via video chat. Her dinner time, my lunch time. When she came back we still lived in different states so now we have a weekly Sunday afternoon phone call. It's a highlight of my week." Having a meal with someone over video chat is absolutely better than nothing, and it can happen when you don't live on different continents.

Next is [mrssarahjanegriffin](#). "When a friend and I say "We should get together!" I have started whipping my phone out and saying "Okay, when? Let's set a date now." Does it sometimes get cancelled/rescheduled? Sure. But we keep those dates pretty frequently and it's a lot better than saying "sometime" and that sometime turning into never because we didn't just set the date." Another beautiful example of anything is better than nothing. Schedule it. Hop on it right then. It also shows the person that they matter to you.

A few things I'm doing that you also might like. I'm setting aside one day a week that's my "get lunch with somebody" day. I'll put it on my calendar, and it's always blocked. I'm also doing things like choosing one Saturday a month to have people over for dinner. Would I like to do that every week? Yes. Is that realistic right now? Not to plan for sure. So anything is better than nothing. Try blocking off a monthly time for something, and add the person to it later. Ultimately, we want to be kind to ourselves and to our people in this process. Recognize the world we live in and that having the kinds of relationships we're drawn to are harder to make happen, and that's okay. Instead, we can adjust our expectations to the energy we have available and start small from there. Remember that friendships change and what worked to connect before might not work now. Adjust and don't see it as a bad thing. Try not to keep account. Let friendships ebb and flow the way they need to based on personalities and schedules and all the things. And remember that anything is better than nothing. A text, one single meal, one walk with a friend out of every dozen texts that say "do you want to take a walk today?" are better than not doing anything at all. And for sure Decide Once some stuff with a friend or two. Put it on the calendar.

Schedule it just like you schedule meetings and appointments. And that's how to connect with friends more regularly.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Emily Robinson! Emily sent me this quick DM that I love for the season we're in and for this episode theme. Here's what she wrote: "My BFF and I Lazy Genius-ed Christmas photos this year. We booked mini sessions with a photographer friend but this year decided to book back to back so we can help with child/pet wrangling during the other person's 20 minute session." How great is this! You're scheduling something you both need to do, you're doing it so you can help each other, and it's a fun chance to see each other and hang out. And depending on the day and attitudes and stuff, that could easily be followed with a meal together or playing at the park or walking through the city or whatever. I just love this idea, Emily. For y'all listening, hopefully this inspires an idea to schedule something necessary with someone you're close to whether it's family photos or grocery shopping or anything! I love this idea, Emily, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, that's it for today, everyone! Thank you so much for listening, and 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.