

#235 - When You Disagree on What Matters

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 235 - when you disagree on what matters. This is an episode dedicated to the hundreds of you who have asked me over the years how you handle disagreeing about what matters with someone you love.

In this Lazy Genius way of living, we seek to support what matters most, and those things are different for everyone, right? We know that. We don't argue with that. In fact, perhaps we even embrace those differences! But what if the difference is with someone you live with or work with every day? What if you're trying to make decisions about something important, and you have different priorities and opinions than the other person making the decision? It's tough. So today, I'm going to share three simple questions to ask when you disagree on what matters.

Before we get into the questions, I want to make a couple of clarifications to set up the context here. When I was preparing this episode, my first thought was "well, you have to talk to the person about the disagreement." And then I thought, oh wait no that's not true. There are relationships where you actually don't feel comfortable talking to the person about the difference in your priorities. Maybe it's a boss, maybe it's someone in your family who isn't emotionally safe and dismisses you, maybe it's how the school pickup line works and you have better ideas based on your priorities but the school administration is not going to listen to you. There are absolutely scenarios where you disagree with someone on what matters, and talking it through isn't an option. It's just not. And this is where boundaries come in. Which makes me even more on the ball to do a boundaries episode soon. We need a separate episode and a separate set of principles and thoughts around not having what matters to you respected, especially by someone who you're more or less close with in terms of proximity but maybe not in vulnerability. You shouldn't just tell anyone and everyone that you need to talk about priorities. Instead, some people require that you set boundaries for yourself, so that episode will come.

Today, we're going to talk about disagreeing on what matters with someone who cares about you, who is emotionally safe, and who will listen to you. Am I saying you might not get into an argument and therefore that person isn't safe or needs to go in the boundaries episode? No, not at all. But in general I think you know what I mean. We need an approach to talking through different priorities with people we love.

I have three questions for you to ask in this process.

So imagine a scenario with a partner, a family member, a friend, a co-worker where what matters to you and what matters to them are different. The example I get a lot is when a couple that lives together has different priorities about mess. One person likes things clean and tidy and the other doesn't care. This is a very niche example, but when Kaz and I first got married, he would get undressed after work or whatever and lay his clothes out flat on the floor. Just lay them there. Because they weren't fully dirty yet but he didn't want to hang them back up. I used

to joke that it looked like our house was full of people who had been raptured because of all the neatly laid out outfits on multiple floors. It was a whole thing. I don't remember how we resolved that because it was almost 20 years ago, but I know it drove me crazy.

When something drives us crazy and someone we love is either contributing to it, causing it, or doesn't care equally about it, the crazy grows. It might be internally processed where you get more frustrated and isolate, or it might be external where you just suppress and simmer and then blow up because why can't he put his clothes on the chair instead of the floor or whatever.

So what do we do? We need to calm that crazy down, right? Here are three questions that can help do that.

So get with your person who is making you crazy about something. Here's the first question:

"What matters most to you about this?"

Listen first. Ask them what matters to them, and really listen. Don't formulate your answer. Don't assume you know what they'll say. Be patient if that person isn't in the habit of articulating what matters to them about the thing. Ask questions. Be kind. Remember that the point is connection, right? In fact, that's what matters most in the conversation - that you stay connected. You can even say that in the beginning, that what matters most about this conversation is not that someone gets a solution or wins but that you stay connected. A way you can do that is by asking them to share their thoughts first and really listen to them.

So "what matters most to you about this?" Then you can ask that person this second question "Can I share what matters most to me?" You can totally say "Okay, now it's my turn" and that is acceptable. But I think offering it as a question is acknowledging that you just heard their words and their priorities, and you value yours too. *But* you are still presenting a connective posture where you acknowledge that pivoting from sharing to listening can be hard. So by asking that person if you can share your thoughts now, you're helping them naturally transition from the person who's sharing to the person who's listening rather than a person who just shared their words and then you're like "okay, now here are mine." It's easy to become even the tiniest bit defensive there.

So first question, what matters most to you about this? Second, can I share what matters most to me? And third, "how can we honor both of those things?"

Listen, remember what we're assuming about you and the person you're talking to. You care about each other. You are safe with each other. You are listening to each other. This is really the question to ask to move into a place where you can disagree on what matters but still move forward. How can you honor both of those things? How can you honor what matters most to each of you?

It's easy to make things too general in your head. You think "what matters to me is that things are clean!" and you assume that what matters to your husband is that he can be messy. But that's probably not what's really going on. Maybe what matters most to you is that you don't have to move his clothes to get to your own. Maybe it's that when it's time to gather up the laundry you don't know what's dirty or what was just left on the floor rapture-style. Maybe what matters is that you feel seen by your husband that you like things to be clean and you're tolerating his dirtiness with no recognition. The more specific you are, the more you drill down and make it smaller, the more you can indeed honor both of the things that matter to each of you.

I'll give you a personal example. The first one is with my oldest son and his homework. He's in sixth grade which is middle school, and he has more homework than he did in elementary school. If I stay broad and big in our disagreement, I could say that what matters to me is that he gets his homework done! And I'd assume that what matters to him is that he can do whatever he wants and just be a cool middle schooler. Neither of those are actually true. A couple of weeks ago, I realized that we were butting heads over homework so often that it was making me not look forward to the afternoons at all. He doesn't get home from school off the bus until 3:45 or 4pm, and we eat dinner at 5:30pm. And then three days of the five weekdays, he has something he loves but that interferes with his regular time. He has piano lessons on Mondays pretty much right after school, he has youth group on Wednesdays just after dinner with no homework time after that, and soccer practice on Thursdays where we have to eat dinner at 5pm so the boys can get there on time and not throw up when they're running. So all that to say, fitting in homework and also piano practice and fun things is hard. And I was trying to do it for him. I believed that I knew best about how he should organize his time because, y'all, I don't know if you knew this but I'm kind of a systems expert. But guess what? Sam didn't need me to be a systems expert. He needed me to listen to him and honor what mattered to him within the boundaries of what he was responsible for.

So a couple of weeks ago, we loosely had this conversation. I asked him how he wanted to handle his homework and what mattered to him about it. He said that he doesn't really like doing his homework right when he gets home from school because he's been doing work all day already. Makes sense. He also said that now that he's older and going to bed later than he used to, he has time at night to do some homework and doesn't mind it. That makes sense too.

Then I shared with him what mattered to me which was that I didn't want him waiting until the last minute because that's not where he thrives. He's better if he does a little bit at a time, and when he's up against a deadline, he starts to spiral. And he agreed with me on that. Something else that matters to me is that Sam starts learning how to manage his own time the way he needs to manage it. Y'all, no one automatically knows how to be responsible. Some people are a little more naturally wired to handle it than others, but ultimately we need people to show us how to be a person. And that matters to me, too. Helping Sam figure out how to do this on his own.

So here's what we do now. On Mondays, we open up the app that shows all of his homework for the week. His teachers post the week's assignments at the start of the week, so we know what is due when and if there's a test and that kind of thing. It's rare that an assignment gets added midweek, so that's helpful. We look through those assignments while his school paper planner is open. Every kid gets one which is so fun. And together we work out when he's going to do something, and those decisions always start with me asking him "When would you like to get this assignment done?" I let him steer that ship. Sometimes I need to remind him that he'll have less time than he thinks because of soccer practice or something, but he's mostly recognizing those things on his own. He's spreading out the 150 minutes he's supposed to read every week. He's starting to learn that studying for a test ten minutes every day is better than cramming the Thursday night and missing Thursday night football which he loves. We're working it out because we're honoring what matters to both of us - planning so there's no procrastination and blowups, independence, and him not having to do all of his homework in the afternoon. And it's so much better than it used to be. So much better.

So the gist here is to have a conversation that honors what matters most to each person, and the only way you can do that is to name it out loud to each other. So first, what matters most to you? Second, can I share what matters most to me? And third, how can we honor both of those things?

You can use Lazy Genius principles to create any rhythms that are necessary to keep that going. Sam and I batch his homework plan and do it all at once rather than discussing it each day. We have a House Rule that if he follows through with his homework plan with a good attitude that he gets ten bonus minutes of screen time at night which is a lot of fun for him because our kids don't get screen time on school nights except for when sports are on. We've decided once to go through his homework on Mondays after dinner. He has a routine of practicing his piano before he leaves for the bus stop so that he has more time to make his homework decisions and do fun things after school. It's all really small, you guys. Having a kind conversation is really where it begins with the intention of honoring each person's needs equally.

And that's how to move through disagreeing on what matters.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Becky and I don't know your last name, Becky! But Becky sent this message, and it actually connects super well with last week's episode!

Becky writes: Hi Kendra and team!

I just wanted to share something that's been really helpful for me during the holidays!

I got a blank planner at Hobby Lobby in 2017! The first pages are blank calendar pages, so I only fill in November and December each year! (My planner will be good for 6 years)The back pages are blank! I use the blank pages for menu/party planning,

traditions I don't want to miss, gift lists/ideas, holiday baking recipes etc! Also, at the end of each holiday season, I make notes about what did or didn't work well, so I can reference that the next year!

It's become not only helpful, but a fun way to reminisce about the previous holiday seasons!

Can you tell I just listened to Monday's podcast? Have a great week.

I love this idea, Becky. The episode Becky is mentioning is probably episode #229 - how to Magic Question the rest of 2021, and in last week's episode, #234 - 10 rules for holiday gift giving, I talked about having a notebook where you track your gifts so that you can even remember what you gave people the years before. This undated planner idea takes this to a whole new level, and I love it so much. Like, it makes me want to go get a planner right now! I also know some people too who print out their holiday docketts and then hole punch them and put them in a three ring binder to look back on year after year. We've only had for three years maybe, but this is another great way to not miss what matters. Thank you for sharing this fantastic idea, Becky!

Okay, that's it for today! Thanks 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!