

## #196 - How to Lazy Genius Adult Screen Time

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 196 - how to lazy genius adult screen time. Specifically on your phone. Before we get into any of it, this is not going to be a throw your phone in the ocean episode. I love my iPhone. I love my apps. I love Instagram. I love it all! And because we love it, we're on it a lot, and while that is not a universally bad thing, you might desire a better relationship with your smartphone. You might want to have some clearer limits around what matters to you, so I don't want you to turn this off right away because you think I'm going to shame you for using your phone. I am very much not going to do that. There are no enemies here. There are no universal rules or truths or any of it when it comes how you use your phone. You get to decide what matters. You get to decide how to do your own screen time, and I'm going to share some Lazy Genius principles that you can apply to make your phone enhance your life the way that you want it to. End of story. No Internet shaming allowed! Also this episode is a little longer than usual just because we get really practical, so I hope every single minute of this is helpful to you!

Alright, where do we begin, fam? Always in the same place. Always! We begin with what matters. You get to name what matters about how you use your phone. Now, a perspective that will likely help you name what matters to you - because we all have different things that matter to us - let's talk about why screen time and phone usage is something we think about anyway. What's the problem? There could be several. And by listing these, I'm not saying they should be problems for you, that they are problems for you, or any of it. These are some potential problems for the general phone using population.

First problem is you don't want to be on it too much. Well, how's that for specific. If you have read my book *The Lazy Genius Way*, you know all about the moving finish line. We have been taught to seek after an ideal life, an ideal way of looking and living and making choices, and the phone super falls into that. We don't want to be on it quote too much. But what is too much? Is there a rule for too much? Because if there's not, you have no way of measuring this thing you think you're supposed to measure. You're simply looking at other people and comparing your usage to theirs. The problem with that, most importantly I think, is that the times we feel the most drawn to comparison in a negative way where we are telling ourselves that we are in fact on our phones too much is when we see something that someone else has posted on the actual Internet. For example, someone says they are taking a break from social media for awhile. And you're like oh man maybe I should take a break from social media. And then you realize that you read that while on social media. But you also forgot that that person had to go on social media to post it. The same is true but a little more nuanced when we see a photo that someone has posted of let's say a mom and her kids playing outside. You think to yourself man I'm the worst because I'm on my phone and not outside with my kids and then you start shame spiraling, all the while forgetting that that mom did in fact go on the internet to post that picture. I'm not saying that moms who post pictures of playing with their kids outside are lying. I've done it plenty of times. Trees are very pretty to look at on Instagram. But I'm reminding to not forget a very important piece of your comparative puzzle. The very person you are comparing yourself

too was also on the Internet to post the picture that's making you feel bad about being on the Internet. We just all need to be kinder to ourselves about that. So that's the first hangup with adult screen time is you don't want to be on your phone too much, but since there are not clear rules of what that looks like, you always feel like you're doing it wrong. You always feel like you're on your phone too much. Which is why a lot of people don't know what else to do but metaphorically throw their phone in the ocean and give it all up. All or nothing. When you don't live by Lazy Genius principles, it's usually all or nothing. Go big or go home. Try hard or give up. There's not a lot of space in between, and the space in between is where we pretty much all are.

Okay next possible hangup: your phone takes you away from other things that you enjoy doing. I shared this on IGTV a few weeks ago at the start of the year maybe where I realized that when I open Instagram, I'm usually on it for a solid ten minutes, even for a lazy check-in where I'm just bored. Which isn't bad at all. But for me, I would rather read a book than be on Instagram 85% of the time. When I did the math - and this is what I shared in that video - I realized that I spend enough lazy time on Instagram to read something like an extra 26 books a year. Which is ridiculous. And also kind of amazing? That there is that much time waiting for me to do something I really really love? So I share that to name the importance of this particular hangup. There is likely something that you would rather be doing than checking your phone and scrolling as your first choice, right? As the thing you do lazily rather than intentionally. So what a great thing to see that and name it and possibly create some permission for yourself to do the thing you really genuinely like doing more than being on your phone, at least most of the time. That's hangup number two.

Hangup number three is the very real mental health aspect. Depending on your personality, your story, your current season of life, your current mental health, and what you consume on your phone, your screen time could very much contribute to struggling mental health and stress. Maybe it's the news. Maybe you take in a lot of news. Maybe it's the comparison thing. Maybe it's simply that your brain doesn't handle more than a certain number of hours looking at a screen before you start to feel off and kind of squirrely. It could even be physical health too even as I say that last bit. My eyes start hurting personally if I've been on my phone what would be too much for me. I know it's too much for me because my eyes hurt. I don't want my eyes to hurt, so it's simply paying attention how the time and how you spend the time impacts your mental and even physical health. That's a legitimate concern in talking about adult screen time.

And the final hangup - and again, this is very much not an exhaustive list, but it's a helpful place to start - but the last hangup we'll talk about here is the fact that you like being on the Internet or being on your phone and remembering that most apps and websites and all of that are designed for you to like them and designed to keep you there. That's where some people would disagree with me about universal rules and truths and Internet shaming because they see the foundational design of the Internet as purposefully addictive. In order for apps and sites and all of that to make money, they need eyes. They need a lot of eyes and/or eyes to stay for as long as possible. That's why Instagram now has the "In case you missed it" feature or the "accounts you might like" because you've hit the end of your scroll, and they're like no no no don't leave

yet it's still pretty it's still so pretty here don't go! And if you're like "the end of my scroll what are you talking about?" we'll get to that, but a real genuine concern here is that your relationship with the Internet and your phone is literally designed to keep you on it more. So when you feel bad about how much time you spend, I want you to remember that it's not as simple as just putting down your phone. We are kind of legitimately addicted, so it's not about willpower. If it matters to you to change, even in the tiniest ways which as we know as Lazy Geniuses are the best ways that stick, if it matters to change your relationship with your screen time, it is vital for you to know that you're working against a very stacked opponent. So your routines and House Rules and all of it need to take that into account. I also want you to be kinder to yourself and not just be like I'm the worst I can't even put my phone down. Congratulations, you're a human being who is, like the rest of us, at the mercy of machines bigger than you are. So gentleness, everyone.

Okay, so now what? These are big challenges. How do we Lazy Genius this? I'm so glad you asked. I have four principles we are going to use for this, and if you are like where these principles from Kendra, they are from The Lazy Genius Way, a book I wrote and released in August of 2020. It is a book of thirteen Lazy Genius principles that you can apply to literally anything to help you embrace what matters, ditch what doesn't, and get stuff done. It was a New York Times bestseller you guys. I'm trying to get better at saying that without being embarrassed about it or apologizing for it, that it happened by accident. But it happened! It's really hard to get on that list, and the fact that so many of you have bought it and read it and shared it, obviously in that first week it released, is why it got the attention it did. And it's super helpful. I would not tell you about it and waste your time if I didn't think it would help. So I'm using four of those principles to lazy genius our adult screen time. And that's really how you can lazy genius anything. Just run your challenge or question through the principles and see which ones land really well and offer some help and hope and ideas that can get you moving in a direction that helps you based on what matters to you.

Okay, so our four principles for this are Essentialize, House Rules, Build the Right Routines, and Be Kind to Yourself. Those are the four we're using. Now before we apply any principles, you have to name what matters. In just talking about all the potential challenges, maybe some things have to come to mind for you about what matters to you about your own phone usage. And as we talk about the principles, I'm guessing that clarity will continue to take shape. But it's hard to apply principles to a situation when you don't know yet what matters most. So keep that in mind as we talk. Eventually it's important for you to name what matters to you.

Okay, principle #1 - essentialize. Essentializing is getting rid of what does not support what matters to you. For example, let's talk about my time on Instagram. A couple of things matter to me. One is that I use Instagram for my business, for this community, in a way that serves you well - gives you encouragement and permission and tips and systems and maybe a little entertainment sometimes - while also not consuming my life. Just because it's a huge part of my business doesn't mean I want it to be a huge part of my daily time. I also like using Instagram just as a person, consuming it not as a business owner but just as Kendra. And what matters to me is that I feel good and happy when I'm using it. I'm learning, I'm laughing, and I'm seeing

people that I know in real life share their lives. Any account that does not do that for me needs to go. Now a way to do that is not necessarily to unfollow someone, mostly because we feel bad about it, especially if it's someone we know. Like your college best friend to know you're like "I can't right now with you this account is stressing me out" for whatever reason, so you mute. You might not have known that this was a thing, but you can mute an accounts posts, stories, or both. Some people I have just one muted because I want to keep up with them but don't need both things. Or you mute both. The account doesn't know. No one can see mutes, and you're still following them. Which also helps when your circumstances change and you want back in. You can look at who you follow and click on those three little dots and unmute whatever was muted. I will go through seasons of excessive muting. Lots of muting. I'm in one right now because I wrote a book real fast and because I'm just generally overwhelmed by life. I don't want Instagram to overwhelm me more, so I have essentialized my feed. I have muted every account that does not bring a very high level of joy. That doesn't it mean it's all funny. It's joy. And not stress. If I feel even the tiniest bit anxious that this person a lot of story panels I really this business I can't with all of this dots on their story, I'll mute the story. I'll keep the feed posts going, but I'll mute the story. So any twinge of ugh, that thing gets a mute. I am essentializing. I am removing what is in the way. If enjoyment and a huge lack of stress matter most, I get rid of everything that gets in the way of that.

You can apply this principle in lots of ways. Maybe you essentialize your apps. Maybe you take turn off cellular data to a number of your apps so that you actually do read in carpool line instead of lazily being on Instagram and then you're like I thought that was three minutes that was actually 23 and I didn't read anything. Essentialize. Get rid of what's in the way of what matters.

Next principle: House Rules. A house rule is a rule that you choose that essentially keeps the line of dominos from falling. It's putting a limit around that first decision that might eventually lead to you sitting in carpool line with every intention to read and then being like wait what happened. It's the insurance policy against the wait what happened. So for your phone, you can create some House Rules. Here are some of mine to help you think through yours if you so choose to make one.

House Rule #1: Only check email when you have time or energy to reply. My Gmail app is one that is in that string of apps that I often open automatically. You know, you kind of hopscotch from one to the other to the other and back again. I don't want to do that, mostly because it takes time away from what matters more, but also I forget stuff. If I check my email but don't have time to reply and don't remember to go back and mark it unread, I forget about it. And then I'm overwhelmed by a neglected inbox. So my first house rule is only check email when you have time or energy to reply.

House Rule #2 is very similar: only listen to Voxes when you have time to respond. Some of you might use Marco Polo or some app that keeps you in touch with people. And listen, that matters! Voxer has been a lifeline for years but especially this past year because I can still keep up with my people when we feel separated. Also I keep up with people who don't live near me and can

still be part of each other's lives. But if I listen to a vox without having time to respond, it gets lost. I forget it's there because you can't mark voxes unlistened to. Once you hit play, it's over. And while I can relisten to remember what the person said, that - it sounds bad - but that wastes my time. Not in the sense that I'm like ugh friend your words are wasting my time, but if what matters is connection, I'd really like to listen when I can respond so that I don't forget the person or have to cram in another listen and then have a shorter rushed response because I forgot all the things that got said. So house rule #2 - only listen to voxer when you have time to respond.

House Rule #3 for me is to read books on my Kindle Paperwhite instead of on the Kindle app on my phone. The reason for this is probably obvious, but if I'm on my phone, it's easier to click through the apps and stop to check and get texts and all the things. By reading on my Paperwhite, I can still read on the go, but I'm less beholden to notifications and temptations, especially ones that would take me from the very thing I really love, like, kind of the most. I mean, I love my family more than I love reading, but I really love reading.

Those are my main House Rules. Now a way to get help in setting your own House Rules is to use the Screen Time function on your smartphone. You can set time limits for certain apps, your phone will turn off at a certain time, you can get reports which sometimes is good and sometimes not depending on how you feel about it, but if you look at those metrics as just information around what matters to you, it really helps. You've already removed the arbitrary "too much time" thing, so whatever number is on that report every week just tells you how you've spent your time, and you can decide based on how you feel physically or mentally or how much you've been able to dedicate to what matters this week, you can use that screen time number to see if your desires are lining up with what's actually happening. It's not a shaming thing, it's not even really a measuring thing, it's just taking a pulse. It doesn't have to have moral value. That's when you get into trouble. So the screen time function on your phone sort of brings your phone in on your House Rules.

Some other House Rules you could consider are using a timer when you open an app. Maybe you're like "I want to spend ten minutes catching on Instagram" or however much time you want, and before you open the app, you set a timer on your phone, and when it goes off, you're done for now. You chose what you wanted, and your House Rule of setting a timer helps you not lose track of time and get behind on the next thing or whatever is in your line of dominos that you want to keep upright. Another could be taking a day off of your phone each week or a night off each week or just deciding after a long day of not wanting to be on it right now, you just say "I'm going turn my phone off now" or I'm going to go ahead and plug it into the charger by my bed and come back to the living room and read my book or play a game with somebody or watch Schitt's Creek or knit or whatever it is that doesn't require your phone. It doesn't have to be set in stone or all or nothing or every Thursday I don't use my phone. Well, what happens when the next Thursday rolls around and a friend of yours is doing something cool online or you have more time to catch up on voxes than usual or whatever. You don't have to set it on stone. Try and create House Rules that work with you, not against you.

Okay, so we've applied Essentialize, House Rules, and now let's talk about Building the Right Routine, our third Lazy Genius principle. As a reminder, the purpose of a routine is not the step-by-step. It's not doing the same five things in the same order just because. The point of a routine is where you're wanting to go. The routine is an onramp to what matters. So in light of that, if it matters to you to not lose track of time on your phone in the morning, especially when you're getting up a few minutes before everyone else if that's your thing to just be alone and recharge and get ready for the day, if you quote unquote waste that time by being on your phone and lose focus on what matters more, you could create a routine or an onramp that leads you in the direction of filling up and recharging. And if the phone keeps you from that, your routine would benefit from keeping the phone away. For example, do you look at your phone first thing in the morning when you wake up? I often do. My alarm goes off to get me up before my crew because I like that, I like to read in the morning and experiencing some quiet, but if my routine is to check my email first thing, I'm stutter-stepping in the direction that matters. I'm already making the onramp bumpier and harder because I'm likely going to lose track of time, I'm disobeying my own house rule of not checking email unless I have time and margin to respond, so what can you do. A morning routine could include something like you take your phone with you to the dark kitchen to make your coffee, but you only open your phone while the coffee is brewing maybe. If you like the idea of checking in with your inbox and or looking at instagram or facebook or whatever in the morning, create a natural limit for yourself within your routine to check it while the coffee brews but not before or after. Something like that. A nighttime routine could be you reset the house and you finally sit down to read the book or watch the show or have the conversation or whatever, but you currently go offroad, you don't stay on that onramp of real rest because the phone has distracted you and you lost track of time, so your routine could include an alarm that goes off on your phone at whatever time, you know 8:30pm or something, where that's when you stop scrolling. It's a reminder to stay on the ramp.

What if you want your routine around checking your phone to feel different? Maybe you don't want to feel like you're sliding down a steep slippery slide and you're checking 15 apps because the phone is made to keep you there. You want to just check it for the thing you went there for, right? We do that all the time. I go to look something up but when I open the phone, I go through the motions of checking email and Instagram and twitter and the weather and there's another vox for me waiting and oh wait what's my bank balance you know all the things, and I forget I originally grabbed my phone for. If that is not how you want to experience your phone, you can create a routine that keeps you from getting sucked in. Maybe you only check your phone after you've gotten kids set up with food, lunch or snacks or something. You could move apps to folders or different pages to disrupt the automatic checking so everything appealing isn't right next to each other. There are lots of ways to apply this that are particular to your own way of living and what matters most to you, but building the right routine can really help with how you interact with your phone.

And finally, and this one will be quick, is be kind to yourself. You can love your phone. You can love the Internet. Everyone is different in how they interact with it. If somebody poopoo's the internet or says that instagram is a waste of time or whatever, you can be kind to yourself and to that person, even if that person is a stranger and has no idea you're reading her words, you can

say “what matters to her is different than what matters to me” and then move on. It doesn’t have to be an indictment on how you spend your time. You don’t have to indict that person for choosing differently than you either. So be kind. Also remember that we kind of expect of a lot of ourselves when we desire change. We expect the rhythm to happen right away. You know, you apply a House Rule, you have a morning routine that keeps your phone in the context you want most, and it’s like we have this idea that it all has to click and work right away. And it just doesn’t. So be kind as you find your way. Just because you have a house rule doesn’t mean you follow it every time. The principles serve you, not the other way around. So just.. It’s fine. Be kind. It’s all going to be okay. One decision, one day, one app at a time.

And that is how to lazy genius adult screen time. I hope this episode was helpful, and I hope you feel so much permission to use your phone and the Internet in ways that support what matters most to you. If you’re a new listener, hello and thanks for being here! Be sure to subscribe to the podcast on your favorite podcast app so you always get the newest episodes, you can follow me on my favorite Internet spot Instagram [@thelazygenius](#), and you can get my book *The Lazy Genius Way* wherever you like to get books. And yes I do read the audiobook if audiobooks are your thing. Thanks to all of you for being here, 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!