

#175 - How to Create a Cozy Space

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 175 - how to create a cozy space. We're about halfway into September, and even though temperatures and even seasons depending on your hemisphere are different right now, something about life shifts when we hit September. And whenever I hit a shift, the importance of my environment is more obvious.

In fact, if you take anything from this episode or need to peace out right now, hear this sentence: when you're in a place of transition or inside what Brene Brown calls Day 2, that messy middle, pay attention to your environment. Creating a space that feels safe and cozy, whatever that looks like for you, is important for your mental health. Truly. Don't ignore your space. I'm not saying decorate within an inch of your life and buy all new things or upend your entire house. Just pay attention. This episode will give you steps on how to do that, but the important thing here is to name the importance of your environment when you're in the middle of something long or at the start of something new.

Now this episode doesn't have an official sponsor in the traditional sense, but this episode is gifted to you on behalf of Myquillyn Smith's new book *Welcome Home*. She's not paying me or even asking me to mention her book here on the podcast, especially in the sponsor section of this episode. But I believe in her message and in this book as a beautiful enhancement to your Lazy Genius life as it relates to your environment. She is my home guru and has taught me everything I know, including a good portion of what I'm going to share in this episode. So while this episode technically isn't sponsored by her new book *Welcome Home*, releasing tomorrow Tuesday September 15th, I'm going to talk about it and encourage you to consider if it's right for you. I think the likely answer is yes. In my experience, if you like me, you'll like Myquillyn. And fun fact, so many of you listen to *The Next Right Thing* with Emily P. Freeman who is my real life best friend and say that our spaces hold hands really well. Which they do. Well Emily and Myquillyn are real life sisters. A lot of people don't know that, so in case you're one of those people, they're sisters! All three of our spaces are such good companions to each other - Myquillyn says all of our books would be friends at camp, so it's very likely if you resonate with one of us, you'll resonate with all of us. Not always, because again we're all different and I don't know your life, but I would be remiss to not tell you they exist and can very much be companions to your life as they have been in mine.

Okay, so let's talk about how to create a cozy space, and I'm so grateful for Myquillyn's perspective on so much of this over the years.

Okay, the Lazy Genius step one for creating a cozy space is to - wait for it - name what matters. First, what matters is that you have an environment that feels safe, welcoming, peaceful, encouraging, whatever adjective you need for your life. Most of our homes are always in at least a minor state of transition, so don't have expectations that your entire home will feel this way

right away. Just focus on one space. Start small. So starting small matters, and once you choose the space you'd like to make cozy, name what matters about that space.

I encourage you to choose a space that makes a big emotional impact. Maybe it's the room you hate the most. Maybe it's the room you're in the most. Maybe it's a reading nook that if it served your purposes would improve your life in massive ways on a daily basis. You get to choose. And once you choose, name what matters about that space. Pick your words. Choose its function and how it feels.

It's also important to name what season of life you're in, what season of the year you're in, what your limitations are and not ignore them. Sometimes we ignore all the components of a space because they feel hopeless, like having no budget for anything new or having orange formica countertops that you can't replace yet or having a spouse that hates changing anything or having kids that seem to mess literally everything up. So go ahead and name your season and your limitations. But don't do it with the intent of letting those things steer the ship or wallow in a pit of despair or just make you generally throw in the towel on all the things. Remember, Lazy Geniuses live in their season, and we let the season teach us something. The same can be said about our limitations. Let your season and your limitations be arrows to what's important, not hazard lights about what's wrong.

So that's step one. Name what matters and some other stuff too. Name your stuff. Pick your space and name the stuff about it.

Step two. Go in the right order. This is another Lazy Genius principle. Going in the right order makes a lot of difference in so many tasks. Obviously the right order is relative and is often right for you, but in decorating, Myquillyn has taught me that there is an actual right order. There is a right order in creating a cozy space, so let me give it to you real quick.

One. Get inspired. Find your style. Whatever words you want to put on this part, but if you don't know what you want a room to look and feel like, you'll just be Frankensteining furniture together and creating what Myquillyn calls accidental gallery walls because you don't know what else to do. You need a direction, a creative direction, a stylistic direction, a purpose direction. Something, and her suggestion of the best way to do that which I completely agree is to create a Pinterest board. Now listen. I'm usually not a Pinterest board person. It doesn't seem like it does any good, but here's what you do. You create one board for the one space you're looking at. Don't do one for your home because different rooms have different feels and functions. Make a board for your one room, make it secret if you feel weird about it, and then pin any picture that gives you some kind of positive response. You don't have to like everything about the photo and likely won't, but if you like a rug or a chair or the way a room feels or the color palette even though the style isn't quite right, pin it. Don't edit your pins. Pin pin pin. Then scroll through and look for patterns. Have someone else look at it and name a few patterns. Is there a color palette you notice. A wall color you're drawn to. Maybe there's always a camel colored sofa in every living room photo or there are lots of plants or lots of mood lighting or none at all and it's really bright. Look for patterns in your pins to give yourself some direction on what you like. And

remember that naming your style is your choice. You don't have to use style words that other people use. You don't have to be Boho or Midcentury Modern or whatever if those feel too pigeonhole-y. Just say you like furniture with thin legs, you like rustic texture, you like quirky lighting. It's okay to use your own words for your style. But grab some from that Pinterest board as you notice what you like. As Myquillyn says, "Do you want to love your home? Stop decorating like someone else."

Okay, then comes the rest of the order in terms of arranging your room. Furniture goes first. The biggest primary piece. So in a bedroom, it's the bed. In a living room, it's the sofa. So start with the primary furniture or primary seating. Then the secondary seating. Extra chairs, seats that you need but aren't necessarily the first place you'd sit, that kind of thing. Then comes surfaces. Tables for drinks, consoles for TVs, those. Do those after the furniture is placed. Next is your rug. Now that you see the footprint of your furniture and the best places for it, buy a rug that fits it. Myquillyn has great rug rules in her book *Cozy Minimalist Home*, I won't go into those now, but your rug is likely too small. If you can't afford a big rug now, consider layering a couple of smaller ones. But rugs make a room. I speak from experience. They really truly do. After your rug comes your drapes and window treatments. Drapes are a delight. Hang them high. Let them hit the floor. They make your room seem more spacious and definitely warm and inviting. After that is lighting. I love statement lighting because you need lights for function, so why not choose lighting with some personality and presence? Then you do the walls: paint, art, etc. Most of us start with paint, but it's a lot harder to match a paint color to an existing sofa or rug than a rug to a wall you've already painted. And then come accessories. Which we put way too early in the process don't we? That's why our rooms feel like arranged matching yard sales rather than put together rooms. Go in the right order. That was quite the crash course in the right order, and honestly that's what *Cozy Minimalist Home* is completely. It's a full book on the right order and breaks down those steps into further steps.

Okay, so back to the big Lazy Genius steps for creating a cozy space. Step one: name what matters. Step two: go in the right order. Step three: be patient.

Here's where a lot of us get stuck. We're frustrated by having a house full of messy kids and their toys. Our spouses are not as interested in creating a cozy space as we are. We don't have the budgets we want or the homes we want. We're a little obsessed with things being perfect before we even begin. So we don't. We want to start from scratch on everything and get really impatient when we can't. So be patient. Start small. When I made our main living area more cozy last week on Instagram, I got a lot of questions about how long it took and how I did it with kids in the house or did I kick them out or whatever. So much of that is relative to your situation or even the day it happens, but instead of being patient with the process taking longer than we'd like or with the interruptions we'll get from kids who want to be helpful or whatever, we don't start at all. We just live in a home that we don't love because it feels too hard to start because of all the reasons not to. And I'm just here to say that maybe those aren't good enough reasons anymore. Start with one little nook. Refresh in the right order. But be patient with your circumstances. Don't let your small budget or your small children or your small amount of free time keep you from doing something. People decorate on shoestring budgets all the time. I have

three children and love the way my house feels and so do they. You can do this. But you won't do it unless you start, and most of the time you're not starting because you're frustrated by any number of factors that you feel impatient about. Because it's not the way you want it right now you're not going to do anything about it. And while that is absolutely your choice to make and I encourage you to make whatever choice gives you life, if waiting and moping because it's not going to be perfect or ideal is keeping you from moving, I'm going to big sister you and encourage you to not let that attitude be in charge. Because your environment and your joy in your home are impacted by that attitude in ways you probably don't want it to be. Be patient. Start small.

And finally step four: use your senses. This is why I love Myquillyn's new book *Welcome Home* so much. It's basically a guide on how to incorporate your senses into decorating your home and making it a cozy space based on the season you're in. We love for the insides of our homes to reflect what's happening on the outside in the world and even on the inside of ourselves. I have different energy in the summer than I do the winter. So *Welcome Home* is all about creating cozy spaces that reflect your season. It's also about letting people into those spaces and hosting in a way that's life-giving and not about perfection or performance. So step four is use your senses.

Last week, Myquillyn was a rare guest on *The Next Right Thing* with Emily P. Freeman, and she told a story that was so lifegiving that I want to share it here. She was talking about engaging our senses when it comes to the season and contrasted how we often feel compelled to decorate for fall - lots of brown and orange things that say grateful or all the fake pumpkins or whatever else - and then said something like imagine your kids coming home from school in the fall. There's a pot of cider on the stove. You have a candle burning that smells like fall. Maybe you have a crackling fire or some nice fallish music playing. You're making chili for dinner. How much more does that feel and smell and taste and sound like fall than the look of all of that orange and brown stuff? We often start with how our homes look in the seasons, depending on the visual decor to communicate that when the rest of our senses are even more impactful, cost less, take up less space, and are often the things we remember for longer.

So name what matters, go in the right order, be patient, and use your senses. Buying a bunch of new stuff or thinking you need to hire somebody to make your home beautiful or thinking that it has to be beautiful in order to open its doors to others is just not true. As Myquillyn says, it doesn't have to be perfect to be beautiful. There's so much beauty in imperfection if we just give ourselves permission to try and go slow.

So if you have resonated with any of this, let me tell you a little more about the book *Welcome Home* and what fun free thing you can get if you preorder the book today! So first, *Welcome Home* helps you create a home that's fresh, meaningful, beautiful, and always ready to host. It has step-by-steps, beautiful photos, ideas for seasonal rhythms, and helps you feel confident having people into your home and being a host. I actually endorsed this book, so here's what I've already said about it: "*Welcome Home* is thick with permission and inspiration, and I'm ready to invite someone over right now. Such a delightful, actionable collection of seasonal

magic.” Now obviously the inviting looks a little different in these pandemic times, but it still applies in safe contexts. This is a great handbook on how to create that cozy seasonal space that’s also ready to share with your people.

Now the freebie. So many authors offer some kind of bonus for folks who preorder the book because it’s such a huge help but also a bit of a risk for the reader because you can’t flip through the book in a bookstore yet and things like that. So as a thank you, Myquillyn created Welcome Home Prep School. It’s about an hour’s worth of short videos that walk you through all kinds of ways to incorporate intentionally lovely seasonal living into your home. She talks about home base, a fantastic concept for any lived-in room, how to create a charcuterie board, how to style your sofa. If you’re like me, my throws never look like they’re thrown, and Myquillyn actually shows you how to put blankets on your couch so it looks even more inviting and cozy. The videos are so fun and completely free when you preorder the book in any form from any retailer. I’ll put a link in the show notes for you to check it out.

I hope that this episode has given you some sparkle about your own spaces and given you some tools on how to start small in making them feel like home to you. And a reminder that my entire cozy home process is saved to an Instagram highlight @thelazygenius called Cozy Home. I show the process and before and afters and where I got stuck and all of it. Check it out if you’re a visual person.

Also final word. I got a lot of questions about where I got my furniture and what the paint color is on my wall. First off, paint colors never look the same in real life that they do on a phone, so if you like the feeling of the blue gray on my wall or any other color you see online, go to a paint store and get a few samples of colors in that family. Then paint big swatches on the wall at home and see how the light hits them and how they look throughout the day. If you’re going to go through the trouble of painting, do a little extra homework on the color that works for your space, don’t just pick a color in an Instagram story that you think is pretty. It’s probably different than you think. Plus I can’t remember the color anyway.

The second thing: where I got my furniture. Every single thing we own we’ve owned for a long time with the exception of a couple of chairs. But because I’m choosing to not be a genius about a post that has house resources because a lot of things aren’t even available anymore, I’m just going to be lazy and tell you about it here. So if there’s a piece you were curious about, listen in. I’ll tell you where we got it and likely why you can’t get it anymore. Our big tan living room couch we’ve owned for a dozen years. It used to be red, and we had it reupholstered when we moved into this house we’re in now. The room was just too small for a giant red couch also I don’t love the color red? I think we picked red before because it felt statement-y. Oh, how we learn our styles over years of trying stuff. We originally got the couch at a furniture store that’s been closed for six years. All of our white storage pieces, the cabinets and bookshelves and such, are all from Ikea. Our dining table in our main living area is from Pier 1 and we’ve had it longer than we’ve had our couch. Our upholstered white chair is from Ikea. The blue rocking chair and the leather-ish bar stools at my kitchen island are from At Home Stores. The gray midcentury looking chair was left in the house when we bought it, and we had it reupholstered. My desk is

from Target. The tiny sideboard table next to the dining table as well as my giant dining table in the big dining room are both custom made. The white modern chairs at that dining table are from Amazon. And the gray couch that I always sit on for Instagram lives, the gray one, is from a local place called Area that makes the furniture here in North Carolina. Oh and our light fixture over the dining table, the one that looks like an upside down basket is from Ikea. The one with the jars over the big dining table is from Pottery Barn. I think that's it. So Ikea, At Home, custom pieces or local places, and Target. Or places that no longer exist. I'm such a good home blogger.

Okay, that's it for today. Thank you so much for listening! I hope you feel a little inspired for your own space, and if you do change anything up, even just a vase of cut branches from the yard, tag me if you share it. I'd love to see. I appreciate every single one of you! 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!