

#173 - What Is Your List-Making Personality?

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 173 - what is your list-making personality? Lists are a big part of our lives, especially in these uncertain times, but I think we sometimes think there's only way to make them. That's not true! So today we're going to talk about list-making personalities and how we can support what matters in our lives even more with how we approach our lists.

Before we get into that, I wanted to remind you that we are just starting week two of the Lazy Genius Way book club! It's only a three week book club, but it's not too late to join. All details are at thelazygeniuscollective.com/bookclub, but here's the gist. I want you to gather up a couple of your friends, whether in person in ways that feel comfortable to you or virtually, and help each other Lazy Genius your lives using the 13 principles from The Lazy Genius Way. Last Thursday, we had our first live video chat with everyone involved, and it was so much fun. We also have a book club guide with questions and reflections for you personally or your group to walk through together. It's really low stakes, low commitment, and a short window of time, but it's also really powerful reading this book with other people and Lazy Genius your problems together! So even though we're starting week two, it's not too late to join. Just go to thelazygeniuscollective.com/bookclub where you can get the guide, watch last week's video, and find the link to join this week's video live. Our big book club chats are the next two Thursdays, September 3rd and 10th, at 8pm EST. I hope you can join!

Okay, let's figure out your list-making personality.

Usually when we think about making lists, we think about the particulars. The paper, the app, the way we cross stuff off. We start with the nuts and bolts, with the how. But even for something as basic as making a list, we need to start with the why, with what matters.

I think there are three main types of thinkers when it comes to making lists: Trackers, Unloaders, and Developers.

First are the Trackers. These are people who make a list to keep track of stuff. You don't want to forget anything, and you like to see your progress. Not only do you keep track of things using a list, you keep track of the list itself. The thought of making a list and then not ever looking at it again doesn't make sense to Trackers. Trackers are also the people who write something down even after they already did it just to cross it off.

The second kind of list makers are the Unloaders. If you're an Unloader, you make a list when your brain is too full and you just need to get stuff out. There's no real rhyme or reason to the order of what you list out, and in some cases, you might not really look at the list again. The point isn't to keep track of things, it's simply to unload them or your brain will explode. Once you unload, you have a clearer head on what to do next.

The third kind is the Developer. A Developer makes a list to put things in order, to see what comes next in support of a bigger project or vision. Developers like having a list to get stuff done like the Trackers, but Developers only reference the list when the bigger picture needs a reminder.

If you're setting up a visual comparison here, for Trackers, a list is the road. Without it, they go nowhere. For the Unloaders, a list is like a rest stop. You're on the road and doing your thing, but sometimes you have to pull over and throw away all the trash in the car and stretch your legs and remember what's important again. And for Developers, a list is like the travel itinerary. You know your next stop, you know the next big thing that's coming, but if you veer off the path a bit getting there, it's okay because you feel confident in where you're heading next. The process matters just as much as the destination.

Now here's the thing about these three list-making personalities. You can tap into any of the three at any time. I think we all use list making in these three ways, so these are not exclusive personalities. But I think there's a lot of power in naming, oh wait! That's me! That's how I use lists! Because if you're an Unloader but you try and force yourself to be a Tracker, lists aren't going to serve you. So choose the one personality that makes the most sense, that feels like your usual way of approaching lists, or if there's another name for how you see lists, name it yourself. The name isn't the rule; it's a tool to help you understand why you make lists in the first place.

So knowing that, knowing why you make lists, you can have a better idea on when you make your lists, how you make your lists, who's involved in your lists, and all the other things that usually go first. By starting with why you make lists and giving your permission to make your list for that reason even when it's not someone else's reason, your list making will enhance your life rather than just be another thing to do.

Now I want to go through each list-making personality and talk about a few components that can help you lean into your list-making tendencies and make it work for you, and then we'll end with a couple of list-making principles that work for every personality.

First, the Trackers. Trackers need ongoing lists and a regular rhythm of adding to the list. Trackers love the Bullet Journal method. Trackers love planners. Trackers love list pads that already have structure built in. Trackers like a good system, and the best way to maintain that system is to leave your list in a visible place. Make it obvious. If you're a Tracker and you write down all of your tasks and to-dos and even ideas and stuff you don't want to forget, if you write that down and then put it away, you'll lose your mind. Because in some ways you just put your mind away. So leave your list out. Keep it visible and close by. That doesn't make you obsessive. It's actually helpful in keeping you from becoming obsessive because you see clearly what matters and where you're going next.

I also think a lot of Trackers are analog people, and if that's the case, I want you to think about this. If your list impacts someone else, if the tasks hold an expectation of another person, and

you are an analog list person, your family member may never know about that task or expectation because you keep an analog list. So if you're an analog person, please be aware of the rest of your people. Have regular conversations about what you're putting on your list that impacts others so that those things happen if they need to happen but within the support system that the other person uses, not just yours. That's why Kaz and I talk most nights about the next day or at the very least we talk on Sunday night about the coming week. I have a lot written down, and while he does have access to my Google calendar and can see what's coming up, he doesn't see what's in between the actual events. He might see that an article is due but he doesn't see that the two days before, I need to work uninterrupted to get it done. So remember to include your people in your lists, especially if they're part of them and you're a Tracker, especially an analog Tracker.

And finally for the Trackers, the system itself is not the goal. You don't need the perfect planner or the perfect method of making your list or the perfect pen to write it down. You think that in order for the list to function at its best that you need all of those components to be perfect, but you do not. Remember that you're a Tracker and that you need to keep a running list throughout the day so you don't spin out. Just keep it visible. It doesn't have to be color-coded or anything that doesn't support the actual act of the tracking, which is the point here. There's nothing wrong with being a Tracker. It's completely without morality. All of three of these personalities are. Simply be a Tracker without putting value on how you do it. Just do it. Start small. Movement one small step at a time is better than building a giant list-making machine and scrapping it after a week because it was too big.

I niche but perfect example of this is having a Bullet Journal and creating a dozen signifiers to draw next to each item on your list to show what kind of item it is, but you get tired of drawing a lightbulb next to every single idea so you just stop writing down your ideas and then scrap the whole thing because nothing looks consistent. That's not letting your Tracker self thrive. Start small.

Okay, let's talk about the Unloaders. If you're an unloader, don't feel pressure to keep a list like a Tracker does. You just need to trust that making your giant list when you feel a little crazy and then never really looking at it again is okay. That's very normal for so many people. If you'd like the tiniest bit of direction in how to decide once when it comes to being an Unloader, maybe have a cheap little notebook or a running Google doc where you always put your Unloadings. By having the one place you always go, you're not looking for a piece of paper, and you can look back if you ever wanted to. You likely wouldn't look back to remember if you did something but instead to see patterns of what's filling your brain and at what point is it time to unload. I think the first two or three things you write down are likely the last two or three things that went into your brain that made it bust. They're the things on the soonest deadline or the things that you feel like you need to do but keep putting off. And I think the items towards the middle and bottom of the list might be things that actually deeply matter but are getting pushed down in service to the urgent, most recent things. So there's a lot of power lying in that Google doc or that little notebook where you always unload. Pay attention to where the items are on the list. See if there are similarities among those lists. And just make your list when you need to.

And lastly Developers. I think Developers love a good organized, color-coded system. You love technology because you can shift items around in different categories to process different information. If you resonate with the Developer energy, apps like Trello or Evernote or Asana or Airtable or any kind of project managing software is probably a much better avenue for you than just a plain notebook. The ideas are talking to each other. They inform each other. The tasks are connected in multiple ways, and in order to develop the best path to get where you're going, you need to understand and see those connections clearly. It's tough to do that with a pen and paper. It's not impossible, but it's tough. So explore an app or software that can support how your brain naturally processes information, add stuff to the list whenever it comes, and maybe check in once a week to see how things are going. Create an easy rhythm for how often you engage in the list, or simply look back at it when you've arrived at the next destination on your itinerary and just see where you are and what comes next. Again, Developers don't need the list as the road like Trackers. It's just nice knowing it's there, waiting for you when you need it and able to be versatile and connect organically, especially with creative, smart technology.

So just lean into what you are. Don't try and be another kind of list-maker. We all work differently, and that's great. Don't beat yourself up for being one way. Embrace who you already are and how you already work and simply support that by making lists in a way that makes the most sense for you.

Now to wrap up, here are a couple of list-making principles that I think apply to everyone. First, start with a verb. When you're writing down stuff, even if you're an Unloader, try and begin each item with a verb. Attach an action to it. That action gives you more momentum into the actual doing, but I think sometimes if I can't name the action or feel overwhelmed by the action, it's a filter into seeing if something matters or not. For example, something that used to float around my subconscious list world was baby books. I would just write down "baby book." But do what with a baby book? Make one? Organize one? Finish one? It was always make one which is why I never did it. That verb is really overwhelming, and it wasn't important enough to see it through. But if it is important enough but the word "make" is too overwhelming, start with a different, smaller verb. Like choose twenty photos for a baby book. Plan a Saturday to work on the baby book. By starting each list item with a verb, you give yourself a filter for what actually matters and can naturally break things into smaller steps which is a very Lazy Genius thing to do.

Second principle is to name the most important thing on your list. If you're a Tracker, what one thing can you do that would make the other things feel fine if they don't get done? If you're an Unloader, what is getting crowded out by other non-important things that you want to bring to the front of your mental space? If you're a Developer, what idea or task seems to connect to lots of other ideas and tasks? Name what's most important on your list.

And third, a list will never save you. It can be a great tool, especially if you know your list-making personality, but even with the best tools and perspective for you, a list still isn't your savior. If you go into list-making with the purpose of saving your life, of feeling completely in control, of whatever else, you'll be disappointed. Yes, it can help. It can be a great tool. But it's not the only

thing, so let it be part of your life, not the only thing. People over lists. Presence over lists. Perspective over lists. And those are true no matter your list-making personality.

Okay, that's it for today! Thanks so much for listening! Remember, you can join our book club late if you'd like! All the info is in the show notes of this episode, or you can go to thelazygeniuscollective.com/bookclub. 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!