

#172 - Resurrecting Routines

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 172 - Resurrecting Routines. August is such a transitional month for so many of us, kids or not, school or not, and after several months of our regular rhythms being interrupted because of the pandemic, getting back into the swing of things feels more important than ever. This episode is for anyone who is trying to get back into a routine, no matter the reason.

Before we jump in, I have a request for you. Would you be willing to leave a podcast review on Apple Podcasts? There's been a beautiful influx of people coming into this space because of my book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, and I'd love to give some context for those new listeners who might wonder if this show is for them. So if you love The Lazy Genius Podcast and have not yet left a review, I would be so grateful if you did this week. And while this next part does sound a little like bribery, I don't mean for it to. This is really a way to say thank you for taking the time to do it because I know that anything extra, even something as small as typing out a podcast review, is kind of a lot right now, so I'll choose three reviews, two that are left from the time of this episode and one from before to honor those of you who have already left a review, and those three reviewers will get a \$50 Amazon gift card. Once next week's episode releases, the gift card possibility closes. We'll choose from reviews left just this week. So head to Apple Podcasts - we'll put a direct link in the show notes - click "leave a review," and say a few words about why you love the show. No pressure, but if you've thought before about how you like the show and would like to demonstrate that in some way, leaving a review is actually incredibly helpful to me and to new listeners. I appreciate it so much.

Okay, let's resurrect some routines!

First, let's start with where we are before we name where we're going.

A couple of days ago, I asked folks on Instagram what one word they would use to describe their current relationship with routines. There were very few positive words, words that would indicate that routines are working. There were mostly words like inconsistent, messy, desperate, chaotic, disappointing, failing, numb, and avoidance. There were also many variations of words like needed, wanted, and necessary. My favorite word was just an all caps NOPE. So basically the majority of us feel the need for some kind of routine but are not achieving it even close to the level we wish we were.

Here's what we're going to do for the next few minutes. We need to examine our expectations of routine, reframe what routines actually are, and then give you a next step or two to resurrect them.

So first, let's examine our expectations of routine. A friend said to me just this weekend that every conflict is a result of unmet expectations. Every single one. When I think about arguments I've had with my husband, times I've gotten frustrated with my kids, encounters in the store

where I was kind of seething under my breath, all of them are indeed rooted in unmet expectations.

We have to name what we're actually expecting of our routines and see if we're being realistic about them. Otherwise, we'll just keep using words like chaotic and messy to describe them when the reality could actually be better than that.

So ask yourself, what am I expecting from my routines? Or if there aren't really any routines yet, what am I hoping they achieve? I think for most of us, we expect a smooth day. We expect to know exactly what's coming up next. We expect to not rush or scramble in our tasks. We expect our kids to be happy and compliant and to understand what's expected of them at any given point in the day and easily transition from one thing to another.

I don't think any of those expectations are reasonable. I think that's expecting too much from our routines. There's a certain safety in doing the same things over and over again, and we assume that people who have routines that seem to function the way we want ours to function have it all together. They're doing something right. Whenever I think about routine, I always think about the movie *Turner and Hooch*. Tom Hanks is a buttoned-up, up-tight, orderly detective whose life is turned upside down when he has to take care of a messy dog that's connected to a murder case or something. The particulars of the movie don't matter too much, but the opening credit scene of *Turner and Hooch* feels like a masterclass in routine. It shows Tom Hanks getting up at the same time and not wallowing in bed, hitting the snooze button. He exercises and makes a very neat cup of coffee. He eats his breakfast while reading the paper and washes the pan when he's done. His closet is super organized, he brushes his teeth with a timer, he even flosses. Obviously we're being set up with his order to make the subsequent dog slobber all over his apartment be more comedic, but I always loved that opening scene. It felt so safe, so dependable. I want to do all those things before I go to work every day and have a neat house and vacuum up crumbs the minute that land on the ground. It feels like we have more control over our lives when things are orderly, and by orderly I mean neat and organized but also moving in order, going seamlessly from one thing to the next.

But that's not real life. That is not a reasonable expectation, especially if you live with other humans, namely tiny ones. We see snapshots on Instagram of kids working at their desks with their cubbies of organized school supplies, and then glance at our dining table that's covered with markers and schoolwork but also unfolded laundry and a piece of toast from yesterday's breakfast. We see snapshots of nature walks and then glance at our kids who are on their third hour of screen time. We see sticker charts and chore lists, kids helping make their lunches instead of whining while they pull at your pajamas as you try and figure out what to feed them.

So not only do we likely have unreasonable expectations of what routine is supposed to do for us, we're also inundated with snapshots, with reflections (not realities) of what other people are doing in their homes that looks very different from yours. And you know what? Even if you're the mom who's showing the nature walk and the cubbies and the family lunch prep, you could still be holding on to those moments so tightly as evidence that you're doing all of this okay. You

take a photo of your kids in the trees, but literally every other minute of the day, things feel like they're falling apart around you. The whole thing is just very gnarly and complicated and saturated with unmet expectations.

So we need a reframe. We need a new way to see routines and a balanced expectation of what they're supposed to do. And as we experience that reframe in our own lives, I hope it helps us be more compassionate to people whose lives look different than ours do. Just because your life, your routines, your priorities look different than mine doesn't mean either of us is wrong. We get to choose different things and care about different things. We get to function and even thrive under different kinds of order. Order doesn't always mean organization. Sometimes order is simply not being stressed out on the inside from the pressure of doing everything perfectly in our homes. We all get to care about whatever is most important to us and our families without it being an indictment on someone else's choices. I talk about that in *The Lazy Genius Way*, and it is seriously the most important foundational message of the whole thing. As long as we're holding our own standards hostage, as long as we're comparing our way with someone else's, as long as we're looking for the right way of doing things based on other people's priorities and not our own, we're going to keep using words like chaotic, desperate, and failing.

So what's our reframe? What should our routines do for us? A routine is an onramp to something, not the destination itself. The A B and C of a routine is not the goal. It's not even the point. And yet that's where we put our energy, on the order of our routine, on the components, on doing them the exact same way every day so that it counts. But that doesn't work. That's making the routine the main thing instead of the onramp it should be. Building the right routine is such a foundational *Lazy Genius* principle that there's an entire chapter about it in *The Lazy Genius Way* by the way. We've been doing routines all wrong for too long, so what's the new way?

Instead of listing out all the things you want to do in the morning, like Tom Hanks and his running and flossing and washing his breakfast dishes, name one way you want to feel, one objective you have for your family's energy, for your energy, for the space you're in. If your expectation of a routine is smoothness or serenity, maintaining a ten-step morning routine is not going to get you there. You'll forget a step or seven and feel like your stumbling instead of being smooth. You won't feel serene because you're freaking out about a kid waking up early and cutting short your ten steps to two. The steps don't matter, you guys. The steps do not matter. What matters is the objective, because you can reach your objective in multiple ways. You can experience that freedom and be flexible and nimble and patient with yourself and your people when you're not putting so much pressure on the routine being the main thing. Make the objective the main thing.

And that's really all you have to do next is name your objective. If you're feeling out of sorts with routine right now, choose the one time of day where you feel the most stressed or the most out of control or the time you lose your temper the most. You get to choose the gauge of the time of day that needs attention first. Because listen to me, start small. Start with one time of day, not all

the times of day. If you start with all, you're back to maintaining more than you have the margin to maintain. Please start small so that you'll actually start and then keep moving.

So pick one time of the day and then name what matters most about that time. What's your main objective? Some examples:

Your main objective in the morning is that you feel calm and not frenzied so that you're not impatient and reactionary with your kids. What gets you feeling calm? For me, it's getting up before everyone else and reading in the quiet. For Erin Moon, which we learned in the bonus interview episode with her a couple of weeks ago, what gets her feeling calm is getting to stay in bed and sleep a little longer after her kids get up. We're achieving the same objective in seemingly opposite ways. That is why this principle of building the right routine and seeing it as an onramp to a destination is so powerful. Your steps can look different than someone else's, even when you're both after the exact same thing. You get to choose what works for you! Stop looking around at what everyone else is doing. Trust that you know what you need more than the Internet does.

Another example would be a school routine. That's definitely real for a lot of you listening who are moms with kids at home doing online learning. What's the objective for school time? What really matters? What's the actual destination? For me, it's that my kids enjoy doing school as much as possible. Sure, I want them to get their work done and be where they're supposed to be when they're supposed to be there and stay focused and whatever, but really the ultimate objective is that there is at least a little joy always associated with school at home. It's tough for all of us, so it really matters to me that we nurture joy in this time. So what does that mean for school routines? It means that they can do their work wherever they want in the house. Having one set spot doesn't work for our family because I have three different kids with different needs who sometimes wake up needing something different than they did the day before. So our routine doesn't include all of us transitioning into school together into one designated school space. The boys start their work wherever they'd like to. To support that, we got them both cheap headphones at the fancy dollar-ish store Five Below so they can work wherever they want without disturbing anyone else.

What else can we do to support joy in learning? If they need to take a break every ten minutes, I let them. It's hard to stay focused, and if I nag them to go back and work and go sit down and you've only been working for ten minutes get back to it, the joy starts to dissipate. Now listen, this works for us. This particular way of having a school routine where basically we don't have one, we don't have set times or set spaces or set orders every day, this particular way works for us. It doesn't work for everyone, but you know yourself and your kids. You know what you can do, what small step you can take to support the joy of learning. Maybe it's music. Maybe it's moving a picnic table to the front yard so you can do school outside. Maybe it's bringing them surprise snacks while they're working to kind of give them a mental reset and where they feel loved because they love food and you showed them that you know that.

You and your kids might thrive under an A B and C structure or the traditional way we think of school routine, and that's great. That's not bad. But you do that to achieve your primary objective of taking school seriously and also seeing it as a joyful thing too. All of us can achieve that objective in different ways. In fact, we have to. We're too different not to.

So to recap, go ahead and call out what you're actually expecting from the idea of a routine. Is it feasible? Are you being too demanding of your routine? Probably. No day is going to be perfectly smooth and ordered because life has too many variables. We can't control everything. We can't anticipate everything. And we'll run ourselves into the ground trying. So call out your unreasonable expectations of routine.

Next, reframe what a routine actually is for. It's an onramp to a particular destination, not the destination itself. That means you can choose the steps to get there. In fact, you can change the steps every single day based on whatever is happening. Sometimes you can achieve morning calm and refueling by sitting on your front porch with your coffee, sometimes it comes from listening to your music in your ears while your kids listen to their music in the room, sometimes it comes from lying in bed and saying a breath prayer before you get up because you slept late and didn't have time for your regular coffee. Just remember that vital reframe. The steps of the routine aren't the point. The direction they take you, the destination is the point.

And finally, you get to decide what the steps are based on your objective, based on what matters to you. Start with one time of day, one objective, and start very small with how you get there. Now that your expectations are reasonable and your reframe is clear, those small steps will likely feel like they're enough. And pay attention. As you try this today and throughout the week, pay attention to how naming what matters and taking one small step at a time to support that in those fixed regular times of the day where you usually stick a complex routine, notice how you feel. Notice how the energy in your home feels. Notice how your kids respond. You're not trying to build an elaborate machine to plug into every day. You're not a robot. Simply name what matters and respond to it in kindness and with small steps. And if you're kind of annoyed with me for not giving you several multi-step routines that you can just implement right now, I want to remind you that you've tried that already. You've tried to copy other people's steps, and it doesn't work. The problem isn't that you can't find the right system. The problem is that you're focusing on the wrong thing altogether. Start small. Name your destination, and slowly build an onramp to get there. Don't worry that you're doing it wrong because your onramp looks different than you thought it would or different from someone else's. Expect that. Expect it to be different because we are all different.

If you're having trouble naming what steps you can take to support the objective, the destination that matters most, ask someone who knows and who you trust. Ask them for insight into how this all could work for you, what small step you can take that makes sense for your life, your family, your personality, your margin, your current emotional health, your budget, all of it.

Which actually, it's funny, I didn't plan this and I kind of love it when this happens, but we're doing a Lazy Genius book club which is actually designed to help you name these things in

community with your people. We're going to read *The Lazy Genius Way* together over the next three weeks, and we've created a great little book club guide with some questions to help you think through the 13 Lazy Genius principles with the sole purpose of talking about how you can use them in your particular personal individual life. And the beauty of doing that in community is what I just said; it's inviting people to give you ideas based on what they already know about you. So trusted people who love you and who champion the right things in you and in themselves, people who aren't trying to help you maintain a big system but who are willing to walk next to you one small step at a time. We all need each other in this kind of work, even in this work of resurrecting routines in a very challenging time. So if you're interested in having some loose direction in conversations with your friends or your sister or whoever, you can find all the info at thelazygeniuscollective.com/bookclub. I'll be doing live book club discussions the next three Thursday nights, August 27th, September 3rd, and September 10th. We'll save those videos so you can still see them if you can't make the live discussion, but the idea here is to give you a place where you can work out stuff like this, where you can lazy genius your routine or anything else that needs attention in community. So again, you can get more details at thelazygeniuscollective.com/bookclub. And it's free by the way. There's no cost or anything. I just want you to have a resource and path in learning how to apply Lazy Genius principles to your life.

But book club or not, you can resurrect a routine. You can move from desperation and chaos to contentment and calm. Does that mean every day is perfect and totally in the flow and every child is compliant and every meal is made with a hum? No. That's again not reality. But as you let go of that being your expectation of the reality and you start to take small steps in supporting what actually matters to you, I believe you will feel contentment and calm even when the particulars of the day are not exactly that all the time. I want us to be people who can experience contentment and calm when our surroundings are not that. The point isn't to control our surroundings. The point is to have a lens on how to see them and move through them with kindness. So high fives on learning to resurrect your routines this week in a very Lazy Genius way.

And that's it for today! I'll put some links to a couple of other routine-related episodes in the show notes. Obviously there's the conversation with Erin Moon about morning routines, but there's also an entire episode about morning routines, there's one about evening routines, another about kid bedtime routines, there are lots of resources, and all will be in the show notes, as well as a link to where you can leave a podcast review - thank you again for that, and I'm pumped three of you get a little extra cash to spend on something you need or want - and we'll also have a link to the book club.

Okay, thank you so much for listening. Also? In case you missed the news on my Instagram feed which is @thelazygenius, *The Lazy Genius Way* is a New York Times bestselling book. It's amazing. It's currently #2 in its category, and it's just the coolest, most exciting thing. So thank you for reading and sharing, and if you haven't read it yet, check out the reviews on Amazon. They're so specific and amazing on how the book has helped in different ways. One woman sent me this on Instagram, "This is the best self-help book I've ever read, and I've read all of them. I

feel motivated to do what matters to me and have steps to actually make it happen. Thank you for not guiltting me into doing things your way.” It’s just been so encouraging to read all of your words and see how your lives are already changing in ways you want them to after reading this book, and while being on a bestseller list is not proof that the book is valuable because that would be stupid - plenty of books are incredibly valuable and never hit a bestseller list - it’s exciting to me that this book and this way are getting in front of more eyes and hopefully giving more people freedom to embrace what matters, ditch what doesn’t, and actually get stuff done. It’s been quite a ride this last week, so thank you for sharing in it with me and for being so instrumental in making it happen! A book doesn’t become a bestseller without a lot of people buying it, so thank you for buying it. I don’t have words for how grateful I am.

Okay, that’s it for today. 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!