

#133 - Ten Helpful Thanksgiving Strategies

Hi, Lazy Geniuses! 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 133 - Ten Helpful Thanksgiving Strategies. I was inspired by a blog post I wrote a couple of years ago called the Ten Commandments of Thanksgiving Weekend, but some of my commandments have changed and I wanted to add more tangible help to your entire Thanksgiving week whether you're hosting or not. Some of these strategies are for being a guest, others for being a host, and others for just being a person. If you're not celebrating Thanksgiving for whatever reason, I love you and think you're great. You can obviously skip this episode if you'd rather get back to your audiobook.

A quick reminder before we get started. The first ever Lazy Genius bundle will be on sale this Friday on Black Friday until Saturday morning at 8am eastern. The Lazy Genius bundle is all three digital lazy genius products - The Meal Plan: The Lazy Genius Guide to Happy Dinners at Home, The Swap: The Lazy Genius Guide to Decluttering for Life, and The Holiday Docket: The Lazy Genius Guide to Celebrating Well. You get all three for one discounted price, and those details will go out to the mailing list on Friday, so you can join that at thelazygeniuscollective.com/join, or if you'd rather just try and remember, the bundle will be available at store.thelazygeniuscollective.com/bundle. Again, that's store.thelazygeniuscollective.com/bundle. Also a quick heads up in case your brain starts thinking about Christmas gifts as soon as Black Friday shows up, I'll have a gift guide available this week on the blog! It's only stuff I have used or own and love. Super tried and true tested, so be on the lookout for that.

Okay, let's walk through these ten helpful Thanksgiving strategies.

Number one, plan easy food for all the meals leading up to Thanksgiving. Whether you're hosting a meal or cooking a few sides for someone else's meal, it's a great week to pull out zero stops for all the other dinners. This is definitely the week for brainless crowdpleasers which I break down in a podcast episode called One Simple Step That Changes Meal Planning Forever. I'll link to it in the show notes, but brainless crowdpleasers are recipes that require very little brain power from the cook and generally make your family happy. They're not necessarily knock-it-out-of-the-park meals, but they're solid and dependable and easy. Even though you might not think you need a lot of easy meals, especially if you're not hosting, the energy around Thanksgiving week is usually different and could use some built-in wins like easy dinners that don't stress you out. So plan easy food for all the meals leading up to Thanksgiving.

Number two, leave food morality at the door. Okay, y'all. Huddle up. I have some thoughts about food and calories and weight and body, and I say a lot of them in what is still the most downloaded episode of the entire Lazy Genius Podcast, an episode called The Lazy Genius Loses Weight. And spoiler, I do not think you need to lose weight. But here's why leaving food

morality behind is important for the week of Thanksgiving, no matter where you are in your food perspectives. I hear and have also said a phrase like “I’ll be good tomorrow” when I’m carrying my plate of Thanksgiving food. Or you read articles about how you should drink a big glass of water before you go to dinner so you’re more full or eat a big salad first or just get one or two small bites of the things that you should “avoid.” Food morality in my opinion is super harmful, but be that as it may, please try and ignore the concept of food being good or bad around the Thanksgiving table. Food is food, and it’s a gift to enjoy it with people you love. Instead of thinking about portions and calories and being good tomorrow, don’t see it as being bad today and simply listen to your body. Pay attention to what your body wants to eat, and eat it. Don’t make foods off limits. Enjoy yourself. Help create an environment where other people can enjoy themselves, too. Again, if you want a lot more words, listen to that episode. I’ll put a link in the show notes.

Number three, assume the best intentions. You’re likely about to be around other people for a few days, and it’ll do us a lot of good to assume the best intentions about everyone else. I am so grateful when others assume the best intentions about me, that a comment or choice wasn’t meant to be hurtful. I’m not saying to ignore the hurt you might feel from others, but if it’s assumed hurt, think about what those intentions are. If you assume the best intentions of others and give people the benefit of the doubt in whatever they said or did that hurt you, you’ll likely have a better time around the table and with your people.

Number four, be a helpful guest. There are a number of ways you can do that, so let’s run through a couple. If you’re bringing food to someone else’s house for a meal, please bring it ready to eat. Your host likely has a lot of oven needs already, and asking to put your casserole in the oven real quick will make things complicated. If you need to keep something warm in transport, use a cooler. Coolers aren’t just for keeping things cold; they keep things at whatever temperature you need. Line a cooler with towels, put your hot food in there, put another towel on top, and close the cooler. You’ll be all set. And if you think about it, go ahead and bring a serving spoon or whatever the dish needs to be served so your host isn’t searching around in the kitchen for a spoon or even has run out of them because they’re already in the dishes she’s cooked. Another way to be a good guest is if you bring a hostess gift, bring something that doesn’t need attention. You’ve likely heard this before. If you’re bringing flowers, bring them already in a vase with water. If you bring wine, don’t assume your host has a corkscrew. For years, I didn’t, so it’s a nice thing to think about. Basically, enter into someone’s home without requiring them to accommodate what you’re bringing. And obviously a way to be a helpful guest is to help. One thing I’ve found over the years of hosting and being hosted is rather than saying “can I help you?” say “how can I help?” or “what can I do?” or “give me a job.” When we say “can I help you?” the answer is either yes or no, and a lot of people feel weird saying yes. We think it’s the sign of a good host that you don’t need help, but having connection in the kitchen and around the table is a beautiful thing. If you want to offer yourself to be part of that, don’t ask if you can help, ask how.

Number five, be the boss of your plan. If you're hosting a meal, a plan is essential. For real. There are generally too many moving parts to Thanksgiving to get away with not having a plan. So yes make a plan for what goes in the oven and when, what needs to happen the day you host, how things might go once your family or guests arrive. But remember that you are the boss of your plan. Your plan is not the boss of you. We fool ourselves into thinking that plans will save us and then get wonky when the plan doesn't go according to plan. Don't let the plan be in charge. It's just a path you've already mapped out, but if you go a little slower or faster or skip one part in the name of connection and being a person, do it. Be the boss of your plan. Don't let your plan be the boss of you.

Number six, don't be an apologetic, stressed-out host. Being the boss of your plan helps with this, but we all have this tic sometimes of apologizing for everything in our house. I'm sorry this room is so messy. I'm sorry this bathroom isn't more put together; we're in the middle of renovating. I'm sorry the turkey is probably dry I'm not a great cook. I'm sorry the green beans aren't as good as grandmas. I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry. What that does is put your guests on guard. They might feel the pressure to counter your apology and make you feel better over something that didn't even notice. It also makes you focused on yourself rather than on your people. If you keep seeing things to apologize for, your lens could use a change. Don't be apologetic because it stresses you and your guests out, and it makes the vibe not at all what you want.

Which leads us to number seven, be welcoming, not impressive. It's okay to have a beautiful table. It's okay to want to make an absolutely delicious meal that makes people roll their eyes back in happiness. It's okay to light candles in the bathroom and have a pretty front door and anything else that's beautiful. But if you're doing those things in order to be impressive, you'll be left disappointed. Instead, let the lead be welcoming. Be welcoming. Think about what would make your guests feel welcomed. That could be things like a pretty front door and candles lit in the bathroom, but it could also be a smile and a hug and a warm mug of something waiting. A welcoming environment is only halfway about the physical environment; so much of it is the energy you bring to the room. So instead of having an impressive energy, have one of welcome.

Number eight, be smart about new recipes. If you're cooking a meal and want to try out a new recipe or two, go for it. Do your thing. But please make sure it's good. You could do that by cooking it ahead of time as practice to make sure, but if you don't have time for that, I have a blog post for you that I'll put in the show notes. It's called [How to Tell If a Recipe Is Any Good](#). It's fine if you serve something that's a bust. It happens, and it doesn't affect your value as a person, but you don't have to take unnecessary risk. Read that post if you're deadset on trying something new. And if you get recipes from websites, read the comments. You'll likely learn a lot by browsing those and finding that everyone suggests adding more salt. Which is almost always the case. Nobody uses enough salt, y'all.

Number nine, actually should I make number nine use more salt? No I won't do that, but it could be. Okay, number nine, give the kids a project. Over the last couple of weeks as we've talked

about Thanksgiving on Instagram, I've seen a lot of questions about kids. What do you do with the kids? How can you keep them entertained before the meal or later on when all the adults want to just sit around? Well, kids occupy each other, so if you're around cousins and friends, you're probably fine to just let them be. But if it helps to get things going either before or after a meal, give them a project. Have them put flowers in bud vases or stand at the door to welcome people. Let them write names on place cards or light candles if they're a little older and trustworthy with the lighter. If you're looking for a project that actually pays off later and just doesn't make a crafty mess, I'll put a link in the show notes for my stupid easy chocolate dipped pretzels. You basically dip pretzels in chocolate and then dip that into sprinkles and chocolate chips and all kinds of things. It's really easy and a fun thing to keep kids occupied. Also use Google. Google is your friend in this. Search for indoor kids activities with no clean up or something. Give them a project, and it'll help.

And finally number ten, be where you are. Just be where you are. Be in the conversation, be in this life stage, be in this body, be in this discomfort or this joy. Be where you are. Presence is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself and the people around you. Don't look around and compare. Don't look ahead at only what's coming next. Don't look back at what you did wrong. Just be where you are. It'll make a huge difference in how you feel this week.

I hope those ten things are helpful as you prepare yourself for this week. This can be such a beautiful time of year, especially if you think like a Lazy Genius and be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I hope this week is beautiful and warm and helps you remember the truth of who you are, that how good your turkey is or how pretty your table is or how funny or smart or thoughtful you are with your family that your value doesn't lie in any of that. You are enough as you are, and you can rest in that as you walk into rooms that might have more baggage or expectation than usual. You've got this.

Happy Thanksgiving, friends. I am not trying to be cliché when I say that I am incredibly grateful for you. Truly. This work wouldn't make a bit of difference if you guys weren't here, and I'm so grateful. And don't forget about the Lazy Genius Bundle available this Black Friday. All the links are in the show notes. Okay, guys, 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.