

# #130 - The Lazy Genius Guide to Hosting Anything

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 130 - The Lazy Genius Guide to Hosting Anything. It is the first week of November, and all of the holiday hosting is about to hit hard so I want to give you some tools to enjoy this time, not dread it.

Today, I'm going to walk you through the ten steps to hosting anything, and since I've talked about a good bit about the holidays in the past, I'll mention some past episodes that could be great companion listens to this one. Apparently I care a lot about you guys not being unnecessarily stressed out during the holidays.

Before we get into the ten steps, I want to mention quickly that this Wednesday, I'll send out the Latest Lazy Letter which is my monthly newsletter with book reviews, specific podcast episode recommendations, a rundown of everything that's come out of the Lazy Genius machine this month, and other words that I choose to share only with that list. If you're going to trust me enough to let me into your inbox, I'm going to trust you with thoughts I don't put on big internet. If you'd like to try out that Latest Lazy Letter, click the link in the profile or go to [thelazygeniuscollective.com/join](https://thelazygeniuscollective.com/join). Again, that next letter will go out this Wednesday.

Okay, let's walk through the ten steps to hosting anything.

## **Step One: Name your reason to gather.**

Think about why you're bringing people together in your home, and it's a great idea if you can think of an answer other than "to have Thanksgiving together." That's a fine enough reason and will carry you along for sure, but it really helps for you to name your reason to gather. I think there can be two answers to this question actually - one, what's the reason for you as the host, and two, what's the reason for them as your people? Why are you personally choosing to host? What intention can you set in moving toward that purpose? What are you hoping the people in your home will feel after the gathering is over? What is the purpose for them, and how can you set an intention to help them move toward that purpose?

I talk more about this specifically in episode #39 - The Lazy Genius Hosts Thanksgiving. In that episode, I share ten Thanksgiving hosting tips along with three keys to hosting success, and one of those keys is to remember why you're hosting. It's important to name that, no matter what the gathering is.

## **Step Two: Assess who is coming.**

There are obvious reasons for this. You need to know how many people will be in your home for this gathering. If you're having 15 people over for Thanksgiving dinner but you only have room

around your table for six, you'll need to think creatively about how to serve the meal and where people can sit and eat it. Knowing who is coming is important when you're thinking logistically.

It's also important when you're thinking relationally. Sometimes it's good to remember that certain people and personalities have historically been a little tricky, so naming who's coming and even how many other people might be there to buffer any relational weirdness is really helpful. None of us are strangers to relational tension, and if you need a deep dive into that topic, check out episode #40 - The Lazy Genius Navigates Family Tension. That episode came out two years ago, and when it did, I heard from so many listeners that it made a huge impact in your holiday interactions. Definitely check it out if that's an area that has you feeling a little wonky.

### **Step Three: Check your filters.**

I wish I could do a dad joke about "no, not air filters." Or maybe I just kind of did. But I don't mean air filters. I mean your personal relational filters. I talk more about this in episode 39 as well, but we all have filters through which we see, not just the world but specific people. Or maybe you feel like you personally are seen through a filter by your parents or some other member of your family. If you're the youngest but now you're legitimately in your thirties and an adult with a 401k and a car payment but still feel like you're treated as the baby in the family who doesn't know anything, that can be a huge bummer, especially if you're the one hosting everyone. It'll be easy to take casual comments that don't have any ill meaning and run them through your filter of being the youngest who doesn't know anything and get offended quickly by someone who had no intention of offending you in the slightest. And yet you still feel hurt, and that's real.

So check your filters. Look at the list of folks and do a quick reset on any filters coming from them that might get in the way of your telling yourself the truth and having a good time. This doesn't have to be a massive practice or something that applies to every single person coming over to your house, but give yourself the space to name relationships and messages that put you in a funk. You don't want to be the host and be in a funk, so check your filters now.

### **Step Four: Name how people can help.**

Sometimes it feels easier to make a huge plan and then find ways that others can fill in the holes if there are any, but I think we do ourselves and our people a disservice if we always go in that order. I would encourage you to look at who's coming and first name how they can help. What are they good at? What do they love doing? How can their specific way of being in a group offer something beautiful to that group on purpose?

For example, my sister is a masterful playlist maker. Truly. Spotify should hire her. Not every gathering needs perfect music, but if I'm going to spend any time at all thinking through appropriate Thanksgiving dinner music that sets a certain mood and evokes certain feelings, I'm going to ask Hannah to choose that music. It's a way for her to contribute something she loves and is good at to the rest of us, it's a way for her to feel included in the gathering itself, and it

takes something off my plate that I'm not great at or that I don't need to have a personal hand in. Certain things I do love to do myself and that's great if you're the same way, but you don't have to and possibly shouldn't do everything yourself, so ask your people to help. And not just to bring napkins. Look at the people coming and name how they can help in a way that's unique to them. Do you have an uncle who always makes the little kids laugh? Ask him if he would think of a game or activity to lead the kids in while the finishing touches of a possible late Thanksgiving dinner are being taken care of. You're eliminating stress of whiny kids who don't know what to do but run around, and you're acknowledging that your uncle has a lovely spirit that little kids attach themselves to. Even say, "Uncle Mike, I've noticed that all the little kids just love hanging around you when we get together as a family. How would you feel about planning a tiny little something for them to do before dinner?" Think about ways to name how people can help in ways that are beautifully unique to them. And of course remember that it's perfectly fine if they say no.

### **Step Five: Plan the menu.**

Here's where we often start, but it's good to do those other things first for good reason. If the purpose of your gathering is simply to be together in a comfortable, comforting way, serving fancy guinea hens for dinner might not be the right vibe. If the purpose of your gathering is to create a special meal that most of your people don't get to experience very often, guinea hens for days. Nothing is bad or good or right or wrong; just remember that certain foods and dishes mesh better with certain types of gatherings than with others.

Basically when planning your menu, you're deciding what matters and what doesn't. What gets attention and what doesn't, at least by you. I'm not a beverage person. I'll drink water and be super fine. No ice even. But not everyone is like that. This is where step four comes in handy. Maybe creating a special drink doesn't matter to you, so you don't particularly have the margin to give it attention. Cool. You can totally let it go. Or you can ask someone who's coming who loves beverages to be in charge of that special drink. If you don't care as much about something, that might mean you can let it go completely from the gathering or most likely it means giving it to someone who does care. Everyone wins.

So as you name what matters and what doesn't, start with the non-negotiables. What dish has to happen? It might be the turkey, it might be your grandmother's famous mashed potatoes, or any number of things. Choose the one, two, or three things that are must-haves. Notice how difficult or easy they are. Think about how much time they need in the oven and when they need to be pulled out. Oven math is real, you guys, so pay attention to what needs oven attention. If all three of your non-negotiables must be made by you or require your oven for of the day, fill in the holes by asking others to bring stuff already made or look for simple recipes that are served cold or at room temperature, recipes that can be made in a slow cooker or somewhere off the stove, that kind of thing. Start with your non-negotiables and then fill in the gaps in the most Lazy Genius way that makes sense, whether it's pre-made, make-ahead foods or you just delegate the menu to others. Obviously I could do an entire episode series on what to cook for

Thanksgiving dinner or any gathering you're hosting, but really you can do it. Go in this order, and I promise it'll be a lot easier than you anticipated.

### **Step Six: Create an environment.**

I talk a lot about environment in episode #42 The Lazy Genius Hosts a Holiday Party, so you can listen to that for more ideas, too. Basically though, environment is such a fun place to give your gathering legs. No matter what you're hosting, creating an environment that matches your purpose is such a gift to the people entering your home. And it just makes everything more fun and enjoyable. We remember gatherings that set a good environment.

If you don't know where to start, I have three easy categories with a big win. Music, lighting, and plants. Music is such a Lazy Genius way to help create an environment because once you choose the mood, which Spotify has playlists based on mood - it's so great!, you just hit play and let the music go, and it creates a great foundation for the environment. Depending on the type of gathering, you might want something really moody, instrumental, throwback, fun, the possibilities are endless, but put a couple of descriptive words out there as you think about the kind of music you want, and almost certainly, there's a playlist out there for it. But please play music. It also is a great social buffer if you have your first guests arrive and no one's really talking because maybe they're early and you're still in the middle of task, and then that silence can be a little awkward. Music eliminates that. Choose some music appropriate for your environment, and play it early.

The second category is lighting. Candles are always a win. If you happen to be hosting something outside or candles feel too cozy for what you're after, hang paper lanterns or twinkle lights. Basically any kind of mood lighting is massive in creating such a fun environment. And you don't have to go crazy or buy extra. Even pulling lamps from other rooms and putting them around the main gathering room to create more of a mood works. Don't feel like you have to spend a lot of money or anything; just don't forget lighting.

And the last category is plants. Something living is never a bad idea. That's why Christmas parties have an easy win because you likely already have a giant Christmas tree in your house. There you go. Don't overthink it. Just have plants around or flowers or branch cuttings or anything really.

If you consider those three categories, you'll set a really fantastic environment. And depending on the kind of gathering, you might consider how you're going to decorate the table or the area where all the food is set up. My one piece of advice for a buffet area is to create levels. Put different bowls or platters on a stack of books or on a wooden crate or on a cake stand. You can absolutely put everything on a plate or in a baking dish and have it all on one level, but if you were to pay attention to other events where food was served and it felt really beautiful, I guarantee the food was set up in levels. It just makes the whole thing really interesting and inviting. And for a table, I will spout the beauty of brown craft paper until my last breath. Run a

length of it down your table, put little candles and a few bud vases or eucalyptus branches around, and you're set. If you want to go all out on a table setting because that matters to you, do it. But be sure you let some other stuff go or hand it off to others. Amen.

### **Step Seven: Troubleshoot.**

Go ahead and think about what might make hosting your gathering difficult, either before, during, or even in the recovery after. Name it. It could be a relationship, it could be that a recipe is brand new and you're nervous, it could be that you have little kids and when they get underfoot you get really upset and it affects the whole night. Name what might get in the way or cause you to not have fun, and then come up with a solution for it now. Troubleshoot. Set yourself up well. This is a step that we never think about and it makes perhaps the biggest difference. Don't skip it.

### **Step Eight: Make a game plan.**

Depending on the type of gathering and how many details there are, this game plan could be really simple. But look at what needs to happen and go ahead and give yourself some deadlines on when those things should be done. For example, you need to order your turkey. Figure out where you're getting it and how much you need before you show up at the store the day before Thanksgiving. If you're going to make a playlist, do that now while you have time. Do the things that aren't tied to a timeline early and get them done so you have room to do the things that can only be done the day before or the day of. Again, there are so many possibilities here which is why it might feel overwhelming, but by going in this order, you already know the purpose of your gathering. You've already decided some things you can ask others to offer. You've already figured out what you'll be cooking and eating which makes it easier to know what needs to be done when.

You can go analog or digital or put a sticky note on your fridge. Just give yourself some markers for hosting a gathering so that everything is spread out enough that you'll have fun.

### **Step Nine: Create an order of operations for the day of your gathering.**

This will include things like oven math. When certain foods need to go in the oven and even what temperature to cook them at. I'm telling you, if you write down on one sheet of paper how long each food needs to cook and at what temperature, you will love me forever. Otherwise, you're trying to remember where you got a certain recipe and you're looking up all the things and growing more agitated with each passing moment. Create an order of operations now with all of those details so you can just follow your path and have a great time. It also is a great bonus when someone else needs to help because they can just look where you are in your timeline and do the next thing. Include things like lighting candles, turning on lamps, starting music, warming up cider, putting on clothes that are not your pajamas. Create an order of operations for the day of your gathering. No detail is too small, you guys. I promise. You might

look insane or even feel insane, but you will likely feel far less stressed because everything you need to think through is already right there.

### **And finally Step Ten: Schedule rest.**

The day of or after or the weekend after your gathering, whatever the deal is, please schedule rest. Schedule space to not say words, to sit on your couch and read, to recover from being around a lot of people. Even if you love being around people, sometimes you need a break. And unless you schedule it and build it into the planning, you'll likely just keep going with your life and then find yourself kind of snippy the day after Thanksgiving because you haven't been intentional about resting from hosting a dozen people all day. Schedule rest. Even if that means talking with your husband for example and thinking through what you both need emotionally from hosting and also what needs to be done for the gathering itself. Share the duties, maybe you're the cook and he cleans up after or the other way around. That's a place you can also troubleshoot. If you are just wiped once you close the door on the last guest and then want to physically cry when you look at the state of your kitchen, troubleshoot by starting with an empty dishwasher, by having a sink full of hot soapy water so you can clean as you go, by using disposable paper goods if it fits the vibe of your gathering. Troubleshoot things that keep you from resting, and then definitely schedule rest no matter what.

So to recap, if you want to be a Lazy Genius about hosting anything, go in this order.

1. Name your reason to gather.
2. Assess who's coming.
3. Check your filters.
4. Name how people can help.
5. Plan the menu.
6. Create the environment.
7. Troubleshoot.
8. Make a game plan.
9. Create an order of operations for the day of the gathering.
10. Schedule rest.

This list obviously doesn't consider every single thing that might come up for you personally, but it'll put you in a good position for whatever does come up. This is such a great order to start with, and you can fill in other things that you need where they make the most sense.

Again, I'll put links to several other episodes and resources in the show notes. The best podcast episodes though to go along with this are #99 - The Lazy Genius Feeds a Crowd, #87 - The Lazy Genius Guide to Flexibility which is really important when you're hosting something, #42 - The Lazy Genius Hosts a Holiday Party, #40 - The Lazy Genius Navigates Family Tension, and #39 - The Lazy Genius Hosts Thanksgiving. I also have a post on the site about food math when you're feeding a crowd. It works like magic. I promise. I'll also link to my favorite turkey recipe. It's shockingly easy and incredibly delicious. I've had so many people over the years

share how it was the best turkey they'd ever made. Truly. Give it a try. And don't forget to join the mailing list to get this Wednesday's Latest Lazy Letter. That's it for today! Thanks for listening. 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!