

#125 - The Lazy Genius Asks for Help

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 125 - The Lazy Genius Asks for Help. This episode is all about seeking help for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. We'll talk about different kinds of therapy and different reasons why or why not you might pursue them. We'll also just talk about how to be a good friend to someone else who needs help. It's a heavy topic but also one that I want to join in the flow of normalizing. I've been in counseling for several years now and will share my process of that, too. I hope that by the end of this episode, you'll feel encouraged in your knowledge of different ways to ask for help and might have more of a language of how to do it.

Before we get into that, I want to tell you about a way I asked for help with my work and an opportunity for you if you'd like the same. I joined Hopewriters a couple of years ago, and it's been an incredibly helpful tool in my work as a writer and a content creator. Hopewriters is an online community for smart, creative writers, helping you get your words out of your head and into the hands of your reader, all without feeling lost, discouraged, or overwhelmed.

I've been writing on the Internet off and on for almost a decade, and I remember the early years feeling like I had no idea what I was doing, I didn't know how to make people care, and I didn't have the tools to manage all of the self-doubt and inner grossness that sometimes made me want to stop, not to mention knowing how to improve the craft of writing, how to sell something, or how to become a published author. There was so much I didn't know and didn't know that I didn't know!

If you feel that same wondering and wandering, Hopewriters is your answer. It's such a beautiful community of writers who want to write words that matter without feeling like a robot or going crazy. I've been a member since it started, and I've benefited so much. It helped me write my book proposal which turned into a book deal, it's helped me refine my writing voice, create writing rhythms, figure out how to approach Instagram... there's just no other resource like it on the Internet.

My personal favorite part is the video library of Tuesday Teachers. Every Tuesday, one of the Hopewriter co-founders, usually my beloved Emily P. Freeman, interviews someone from the writing life: authors, bloggers, publishers, editors, agents, marketers, book launch experts... it's stupid actually how rich those teachings are alone. I've learned so much from them.

Hopewriters is open to membership only three times a year, and this week is one of those times. You can join Hopewriters starting tomorrow, Tuesday October 1st thru this Friday the 4th. I'll put a link in the show notes, and you can explore all that Hopewriters has to offer. And if you're listening to this episode on the day it comes out, on Monday, you can still click over and take the

Hopewriter quiz to find out where you are on the writing path, and you'll get alerted when doors open.

I love Hopewriters, and if you're a writer, this is the best way to ask for help with that craft. The link will be in the show notes!

Now let's talk about asking for help personally and mentally.

First thing, you don't have to be in a crisis to ask for help, even professional help. We tend to think that unless things are just falling apart, there's no reason to seek help. You don't need to tell your friend that you're randomly feeling sad for no apparent reason. That would bother her and not really do any good anyway. Or you hear people talk about going to counseling, and you think that there's no way your problems are severe enough to merit that. Or it's just too expensive and you'll be fine. There are lots of excuses and reasons we tell ourselves to not ask for help, no matter the circumstance. So the first thing I want to say is that you're allowed to ask for help. It's good, in fact, to ask for help. We're not made to go through life alone, and sometimes we need to process our stuff with someone else, even if our stuff feels too big or too small to share. You don't have to be in a crisis to ask for help, especially since none of us are terribly good at seeing our circumstances properly anyway.

Second thing, asking for professional help, especially for your mental health, doesn't need to make you feel like a failure or that you're crazy or any of the other stigmas that often go alongside therapy. I'm not the first person to say this, but treating mental health is only recently being normalized. The messages our parents got and we get are often layered with some kind of suspicion for needing help or that it's all a crock or that you should be able to figure something out on your own or that you're making too big a deal out of something trivial or any number of things. We can't eliminate those messages in one fell swoop, but I want to do my part in normalizing asking for professional mental health. I can't imagine the person I'd be without counseling. And I still go. It's not like you go to fix a problem and then call it done. Tending to our mental health is a daily practice, and having the occasional help from a professional to do that is such a lovely thing. It doesn't mean you're stupid or crazy or can't get your act together. It simply means you're human.

Third thing, there might be some confusion on the different kinds of mental health professionals and which kind you should see. Maybe those questions are actually keeping you from going to see someone because you don't know where to begin. I would love to help with that by giving you the quickest rundown of the difference in mental health professionals. I'm going to go from most education required to least education required, but that doesn't mean the quote unquote lowest professional is less competent. In fact, I think the one I'll mention last is likely the most important for many people.

So at the top of the degree list is a psychiatrist. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor with a PhD who can prescribe meds, diagnose conditions, and usually treats more complex mental health concerns like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Next is a psychologist. A psychologist also has a PhD but usually in psychology, not in medicine like a psychiatrist. A psychologist isn't a medical doctor but still a doctor. A psychologist typically treats behavioral disorders and anxiety, and many psychologists do what's called talk therapy where they simply talk with the patient.

Next is a counselor. Counselors have a masters degree in counseling, and that degree is often specialized in something. My husband is a school counselor, so he has a masters degree in school counseling. Others might be marriage and family counselors, abuse counselors, or specialize in disordered eating, that kind of thing. And in addition to the masters degree in counseling, in order for a counselor to be licensed, she has to do two years of supervised counseling work after grad school. You can't just graduate and open your own practice but instead have to work under another licensed counselor for two years before you can have your own license to practice on your own.

Two more. A therapist doesn't have to have an advanced degree but is licensed. There are various ways to go about getting licensed in a speciality, but therapists are more about improving your life and improving your daily mental health. If you think about a life coach, a therapist would likely be the closest thing to that. My understanding of licensed therapists is also more about guiding coping skills and habits as opposed to holding space to listen and ask questions like, say, a counselor would.

And the last one, speaking of holding space and asking questions is a spiritual director. You don't have to have a degree to be a spiritual director; it's not regulated like psychiatry and psychology are, but you definitely want to see a spiritual director who has gone through some type of training. A spiritual director is someone who helps you find how your regular life intersects with your spiritual life, perhaps even helping you see how they're integrally connected more than you realize. It's someone who listens, asks questions, and helps you find Jesus in your circumstances. There are likely spiritual directors for other spiritual spaces than just Jesus and Christianity, but since that's what I'm personally more familiar with.

So based on what you're struggling with or the kind of help you're looking for, hopefully these distinctions will help you know narrow your search.

Which leads me to how to find a mental health professional. My friend, Laura Tremaine who hosts the podcast 10 Things to Tell You, is someone who has been normalizing therapy and mental health struggles in her Internet space, and it's such a gift. If you go to her Instagram account which I'll link to in the show notes but it's @laura.tremaine, you'll find a highlight labeled Anxiety. A few clicks into that highlight, she shares so much insight and feedback from others on how to find help, who to ask, what some stumbling blocks might be... it's rich in helpful

content. She also has an episode of 10 Things to Tell You called 10 Thoughts on Anxiety which was so well done.

In terms of finding a mental health professional, I can honestly only speak about my own experience and the experiences of the people I've talked to in real life.

I've been seeing the same counselor off and on for probably close to ten years. A few years after I got married and started becoming a grownup, I saw how much stress I was carrying, how much my childhood trauma was affecting my daily life, and how I just wanted to be happier and more content. So I knew I wanted to start seeing someone, but I wasn't sure who. The reason I chose to see the man I see is because both my mom and my sister saw him. There was something about not having to lay out all my history that was comforting. He knows more than anyone does because he knows all of our individual stories. I just really liked the idea of dealing with my past with someone who was more informed than a stranger might be. For some people, that might be the worst. You don't want to see someone that sees other people you know. That's a personal decision, but that's how I made mine.

There are a few counselors in my area that come up often in conversation with friends, so a lot of folks see similar people. I'm also friends with several licensed counselors and am actually married to a school counselor. I know a lot of counselors, but the beauty of that and that we all kind of know who's seeing who is that it's not secretive. It's not shameful. Tending to your mental health is such a lovely thing, so knowing who my friends see and them knowing who I see doesn't bother me. In fact, it continues to normalize something that at once felt a little icky.

Most people I know who see various mental health professionals started based on the recommendation of someone else, so ask your friends and family or whoever you feel safe to talk about it with who they see or who they've heard about that made a difference in someone else's life.

There's also the question of money and if paying someone \$75 or \$125 is worth just talking about your problems. I have never met anyone who has a desire to heal and learn and grow and has gone to a reputable, recommended counselor and didn't think it was worth it. Ever. Everyone I know who has sought help for their mental health sees it as essential. Because in my opinion it is. I know that finances are a thing and I'm not about to tell you how to spend your money, but I encourage you to work through any issues you have with money and pursuing your own mental health. You are worth the money spent on a few counseling sessions.

To give you context on how often you could go, I went for several months every 2-4 weeks while I was working through some difficult things. Then my counselor legitimately said, "I think you've done the work here. You're good. You can keep coming back as often as you'd like, but as far as the regular work on this particular thing, we're done." And we were. Now, other things come up. For awhile, I'd make an appointment with him when a new thing would come up, and I'd go see him three or four times over as many months to work through it. Now I try and see him at

least once a quarter just for upkeep. It's never a waste to unpack all my stuff with someone who knows my patterns and history so very well but has little personal stake in it. He's unbiased and professional and can stay separate from what's going on with me in a way that's helpful for me to process the truth of what's actually going on in my life.

That's mostly a look into my own experience with mental health, but I'll put some resources in the show notes for you to dig a little deeper. I also want to mention one other thing before we go and that's asking for help from the people in your regular life. I struggle with this a lot, but you're allowed to ask for help from your friends. You can reach out and say "I'm feeling some type of way today and just don't want to be alone in it" or you can ask a friend to watch your kids while you go for a walk or take a nap or do whatever you need to feel like a person. You don't have to do everything. Ask for help with your daily tasks and regular life stuff and just with the companionship of being a person. It's important and good, and it's a gift to your people for you to let them in. Emily P. Freeman had a recent podcast episode on The Next Right Thing called Ask the Second Question. It's required listening if you want to be a friend who listens well when someone asks you for help, especially the "I just need to process my feelings" kind of help. I'll put a link to that in the show notes, too.

Obviously, there's no way to talk about all the things we could talk about in this area, but without the Enneagram and counseling, I would not be the person I am today. It's been a vital part of my personal development and healing and mental health, and I want you to give yourself permission to ask for help in this area, too. It's worth it. I promise. Again, I'll have some resources in the show notes, but I also wanted to quickly mention since I just mentioned the Enneagram that I have a couple of episodes on the Enneagram that are great places to begin thinking about your own personality and how you see the world *and* that there are three new episodes of the Liturgists podcast all about the Enneagram, specifically the instinctual postures and the 27 subtypes. If none of that makes sense, no worries, but if you're familiar enough with the Enneagram, this three part series is a long, incredibly helpful, insightful conversation between Science Mike, one of the hosts of the liturgists podcast, and Annie Dimond, who is an Enneagram teacher and who is currently getting her PhD in practical theology. It's the best conversation on the enneagram I've ever heard, so I wanted to mention it here, especially since it's been such a huge part of my growth alongside counseling. Again, all of this will be linked up in the show notes, as well as the link for Hopewriters enrollment if you're interested in that.

That's all for today, friends. Thanks so much for listening, and remember to 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!