

# #112 - Grasping for Summer Routine

Hey, guys! 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 112, and it's the third and final episode in our series about getting ready for summer. Two weeks ago, we talked about summer reading, last week we talked about making summer dinners, and today we're talking about time. We're well into June at this point, so summer time is for real. The irony is that today is my kids' last day of school. I know. We get out so late. So my summer officially starts a few hours after you listen to this, and I'm honestly nervous about it. It feels so lovely and so awful all in the same breath to have the kids home all the time, to deal with the heat, and to have glorious routine take a break for awhile. I've heard from so many of you over the last couple of years about how hard summer is because of the super long days and no routine to speak of, especially if you don't belong to a pool or hate going out when it's hot or have kids with different needs and schedules and nap requirements. It can be a lot, so today I want to share how I'm approaching our summer routine, and hopefully it'll help you get some ideas on how to think about yours. I'll also include some links in the show notes of other summer resources I've had over the years, including a blog post called The Lazy Genius Summer Survival Guide. We need all the help we can get.

The first thing I say in that blog post and the first thing I'll say now is that if we try and force the rhythm we have the other nine months of the year onto summer, we'll hate summer. Summer is different on purpose, and even if you struggle with aspects of it, it's still worth living in and learning from. So remember, your frustration with summer might be that you're trying to make it as little like actual summer as you can, and that'll just leave you mad. Let summer be summer, but we can make decisions that help us feel like a person in there, too.

When I think about how I'm going to approach my time in the summer, I usually start with my frustrations. What drives me crazy about summer? That list is easy to make - the heat. I hate being hot. So much. Also the lack of routine and alone time. Everyone is always together for the entire day and what am I supposed to do with that. And entertaining my kids. The whining and complaining and asking to go somewhere really bums me out and makes me mad, so I dread that part of summer every single year. A lot of times, we stop there. We stop with the frustrations. We list out why we hate a season of life and then just moan about it until the season is over. I'm a complainer as much as the next person, but I don't want to actively go into summer preparing to be miserable or allow it eat my lunch and make me cranky for three months. I want to enjoy it, even though parts of it I don't like.

So I think it's good for all of us to not only recognize what frustrates us about summer and figure out ways to be geniuses about those things but also name what we love about the summer and actively pursue those things. This is true for any season. Work with what you have and what you can't change - like heat in the summer, but also let the engine be what you love. Be led by the things that are good, that fill you up, that are worth the heat and the lack of routine. Otherwise, we complain more than we enjoy, and while complaining doesn't make us bad people, it certainly isn't our goal for our days.

So what do I personally love about summer? Honestly, the thing I love is being in the moment with my kids. I think about park visits that turned out great, the occasional trip to the library where the kids actually stayed and read books for awhile. I think about dinners with friends and a highly successful bubble blowing contest. Most of what I love about summer isn't planned; it just happens in the regular moments. Which means I don't have to go crazy with my planning but have regular moments, regular activities, and regular resources like bubbles and sprinklers and popsicles and chalk that make for lovely moments with my kids. I'm not going to force the moments but instead see the value in regular life and not quickly brush it aside in favor of something more grand. Grand is just fine, but grand isn't sustainable all summer. Regular, ordinary life and being present in the moments that surprise me is a good thing to hold on to.

So I love the regular moments that just happen. Another thing I love about the summer is that my husband is home for a good chunk of the summer. Kaz is a school counselor, so he gets about four weeks off every summer. His summer schedule is a bit scattered and looks different every year - a couple of weeks here, a few days there, but it's so fun to have space to do things as an entire family and also have my teammate around to parent and cook and keep things above water, even for part of the time. I realize how lucky I am to have that as part of our summer rhythm, even if it's a bit unpredictable. We decided early on that we'd rather have his flexible schedule than a hefty paycheck. Public school employees aren't exactly rolling in the dough, but we love having him around for half the summer. Which also means I can prioritize being alone sometimes. I can leave. He can leave. We can give each other space to be a person which I definitely miss when he's at work. Half the summer it's just me, and that half is always a little sadder. I applaud you parents who are the solo parent of all your kids for the long days of summer. It's not an easy job.

So to recap my list, I don't like heat, lack of routine, and whiny kids. I do like ordinary moments and time as a family. My job isn't to micromanage the summer or over schedule it or build some big system. It's simply to keep these things in mind. Here's the thing about being a Lazy Genius. We need to be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. It's clear what matters - ordinary moments and time as a family. That's a time to be a genius, not break out the lazy. I want to invest time and energy in those two things. I want to be present with those two things. Now as far as the things I really hate about summer, you might think those are the things to be lazy about because they don't matter. But actually they really matter because they have such an enormous impact on me emotionally. I want to be a genius about the heat. I want to figure out ways to not feel like I'm going to sweat to death all the summer. This is not a time for laziness. Everything else though - everything that I don't really love or really hate - gets the lazy treatment. Creativity in dinners is one of those things. It's not a priority to me to have amazing meals all summer. Like I shared last week, I just want flexible meals that I can make ahead or in the morning or super fast with limited ingredients so I'm not spending a ton of time at the store. Our summer dinner queue is limited and simple and lazy, and that's on purpose. Be lazy about the things that don't elicit any sort of passionate response either way, but the things you really love or really hate? Apply genius tactics to those.

How will I be a genius about heat? We'll go out early in the mornings instead of the afternoons. Errands, the park, or whatever else that doesn't involve water. It'd rather spend the mornings doing those things and then stay tucked into the cozy air conditioned house in the afternoons. Dinner is made in the Instant Pot or the grill almost exclusively, or it's made ahead of time on bigger meal prep days. I'll make sure the sprinkler is always hooked up so the kids can start it

on their own without my having to drag a hose through direct sunlight. I'll stock popsicles and icy water bottles. We'll only go to the pool or outside in the middle of the heat with friends to limit the complaining from me and the kids. Experiencing hot days together is better than doing it alone. And I saw recently that my friend Andraya bought herself an inflatable pool for when her kid is playing outside and she has to be out there too. Absolute genius.

What about lack of routine? How can I be a genius about that? I'm not going to scrap routine altogether because that won't last long and would make me crazy, but I don't want to be so rigid that I lose the chill, playful part of summer. So I'm going to approach my time using what I call anchors and blocks. Anchors are the things in your day that don't really move, things like meals, naps, or important parts of your daily rhythm like our family reading time I mentioned two episodes ago. Think about what exists in your day that happens most days at generally the same time. Those are your anchors. My personal anchors are breakfast, lunch, family reading time slash Annie's nap since they'll happen at the same time, dinner, and kid bedtime. Generally. Don't be insane about it, but some things don't move much off course day to day.

Blocks are the times in between those anchors. Think about filling those (or not filling those) just one block at a time. Or as you plan out a week, maybe there are blocks that are more set in stone which leaves the other blocks open and flexible. My blocks are essentially morning, afternoon, and evening. I'm not breaking any new ground here. But what really helps is segmenting the day a little so I'm not overwhelmed by the entire day in front of me. By breaking the day into chunks, into blocks, I can name one thing for a block but not necessarily be bound by a specific time. We might say that for our morning block between breakfast and lunch we'll go to the park and make a Target run. It doesn't necessarily dictate exactly when we leave or which one we'll do first or when we'll get home, but those two things fit within the loose confines of that block. It's simple but really helps. Anchors and blocks might be a helpful way to stay loosely tethered to routine without being super organized about it. And bonus, when you feel like you're losing your mind, all you have to do is make it through the next couple of hours until the next anchor hits, and everybody then gets a reset. Next anchor, new block. That perspective helps me so much, and I hope it helps you, too.

I also don't like whiny kids. I'm going to be a genius about that by essentially punishing them every time they whine. I know. I'm such a fantastic parent. We've been doing a version of this for several months now, and it mostly works. I'll share it in detail in an upcoming episode, but the main idea is that my boys get a certain number of tallies a day. I mark five tallies on a little white board every morning, and every time they complain or are super disrespectful to me or each other, they lose a tally. Of course we encourage gratitude and coming up with different ways to communicate how they feel or what they're frustrated with, but there's no warning. If you complain or are rude, you lose a tally. If you lose all of your tallies before the day is over, you lose screen time or something else that's prized. Basically it's a system of giving them multiple chances to notice their choices without being overly disciplinary about it. We all agreed on the system, on the number of tallies, they mark off their own when they mess up, sometimes without my even having to prompt them, and even though there is definitely a lot of sadness on days they lose all their tallies, they learn. They don't die over it. And when they have one tally left, I'm pretty vigilant about reminding them of that. If the boys start playing a game together that they tend to explode over, I remind them that they just have the one tally left and this is the warning. And I cross my fingers that they keep it together so I don't get a severely disappointed kid after.

Most days, they don't lose all their tallies. It's not a perfect system, but it keeps me from whining back at them when they won't be more grateful. Now it's in a system where they're just reminded of which words and tones of voice are complaining ones and which aren't. My oldest is really motivated by getting something, too, so there was a time maybe a year ago where he said, "if I can go an entire week without complaining one time, will you buy me a new Lego set?" And I was like yes of course because I never thought he would do it, and if he did, our lives would be amazing. He complains a lot. And he did it. We had to start the seven days over a couple of times, but he legit went seven days without a single complaint. He was happier, the house was lighter, everyone yelled less, it was amazing. So finding some way to notice the complaining and attaching it to something valuable has worked for us in fits and starts over the years. I want them to be grateful because it's just a good call as a human, but I struggle with gratitude, too, and I'm a grownup. I can't expect them to be perfectly content all the time without teaching them what's what in some concrete way. So complaining tallies will be how we handle whininess this summer. I do have plans to talk with the boys about an end of summer reward if there's some master level of gratitude hit when we get to the end of the summer, so if they're sold and on board, it's worth trying to keep up with some kind of system. If they don't buy in, it's usually not worth my effort.

Okay, on to the things I love: regular moments that are suddenly special and time as a family. It's kind of easy to be a genius about these because they matter. Essentially, it's what I said before. We don't force lots of grand plans, but we do use anchors and blocks to give us a little structure. We do more things together, even chores and annoying stuff, rather than just go into our silos every day and entertain ourselves constantly. Summer is the rare season where we can be more connected and spend more time together on purpose than we usually do. It definitely gets overwhelming not having a lot of alone time or any at all, but summer is meant for connection, as a family and with your friends, too. We're going to spend time with our people in regular ordinary ways. I want to see the ordinary summer activities like going to the park and building a pillow fort and eating popsicles as the thing, not what's getting in the way of the thing. So much of that isn't so much about planning but about our perspective. If I see bubbles and reading the same book forty times and making sandwiches forty thousand times as the things that are getting in the way of my alone time, of my to-do list, of my longing for fall, I'm going to be really unhappy. But if I try and see those things as the thing, as the entire point of summer, I'll still be tired but I'll likely be less annoyed. Summer is meant for play. Its entire purpose is to slow down and be bored and get on each other's nerves and eat breakfast in the driveway and invite in new ways to connect with each other. That's the entire purpose, so if we can keep that purpose in mind and seek to align our perspective from that place of gratitude and living in the season we're in, summer is likely to be more enjoyable.

So for you, name a couple of things about summer that you really don't like. Name a couple that you love. Name how you can be a genius about both of those types of things, and keep a fair, generous perspective on summer in mind. You don't necessarily need a massively new way to do summer, you might just need to adjust how you see and then adjust what you might do one thing at a time. And don't forget about anchors and blocks. That could be really helpful. And for the record, if you don't have any obvious anchors in your day, make one. You're allowed to do that to benefit from the beauty of anchors and blocks.

Okay, guys! I think that's it for today. I hope you've enjoyed this summer series, and I sincerely hope it helps you enter into this season with a little more grace for yourself and your people. If you're new to the podcast, you might not know that I am live every Thursday around 12:15pm

EST @thelazygenius, so if you have any questions about the episode, join me there. We'll have a couple more episodes the next two weeks before I take a short summer break from the podcast. Just a heads up on that one, but I'll be here next week talking about laundry and the week after talking about the enneagram. Two very fun topics coming your way. Until then, 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 time!