

## 373 - Best Summer Hacks from the Lazy Genius Community

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 373 - best summer hacks from the Lazy Genius community. That's you! I asked y'all on Instagram for your best summer lifesavers so far, and holy moly did you guys deliver. These are some of the best ideas that align so well with what it means to be a Lazy Genius, to name what matters to you in the season that you're in and then make choices that support that! Plus, those choices help you feel like yourself. An excellent thing.

It was so fun reading through the comments. In just one day, that post got over 800. Eight hundred. And pretty much every single one is a banger. I've compiled my favorites in this episode and want to expand on some of them, too. I also want to show you the Lazy Genius principles that are used in some of these ideas so that you can see how the Lazy Genius way of approaching your life really is so kind and effective.

For the record, most of these are related to kids and families which makes sense. I think that the majority of challenges during the summer are because of kids and families, and parents are, in general, often quite desperate for help during this season which is why most of the comments come from folks in that life stage. There are some that relate if you're single or don't have kids or are an empty nester, but I do want to say upfront that this is a pretty family-heavy episode, so if you'd rather not spend the time listening for whatever reason, I get it. I will say as I always do with topical episodes that don't work for everyone, hearing how to apply Lazy Genius principles to anything, even if it's something less relevant to you, helps you do it more easily and effectively on your own. It's good practice. That said, I'm glad you're here, and you do whatever works best for you!

I've organized these ideas into a few categories: food, rhythms, house rules, connection, and perspective. I'm only sharing maybe 30 ideas in this episode, and like I said, the Instagram post has over 800 comments. If you want to read through them, I highly recommend it. You can't miss the post. It's a sunshine yellow box with the words "I need your best summer tips."

And here they are. Let's start with food.

As we all know, meals are a whole thing. Everyone always has to eat. It never stops, and if you're the primary one who carries the responsibility for making sure everyone is fed, it is incredibly heavy.

As a reminder, think about the cycle of food in your house, whether it's for you or for you plus many other people. You have to choose what to eat, you have to plan to go get that food, you have to spend whatever energy on spending or saving money. In other words, you might find

deals or shop at multiple stores or plan your meals around what's on sale or figure out when you're going to go to the store because there are so many other things on your plate. Okay, so you choose and shop. You have to store food and keep track of what's out. You have to cook food before it goes bad. Also you have to cook food. Many times. You might have to deal with complaining humans who don't like what you make. You might not be in the mood to make what you planned. You have to clean it all up after, and then do it again. The rhythm for just one person to stay fed is practically a full time job, you guys. I feel like you need to be reminded of this. P.S. This is one of the reasons I love my book *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*. It helps you think through all of that chaos like a Lazy Genius.

So food is a lot. Any place where you can make the process of getting yourself and the people fed is a win. It doesn't matter how small or obvious it might feel. If food is even remotely stressful, especially in the summer with its different energy, set yourself up well by making even one choice to make it easier. Here are some that y'all shared.

First, we have an excellent example of Decide Once, our tried and true favorite Lazy Genius principle. Kristen Vogel shared, "Thursday dinners are always a cereal buffet and smoothies." And we're done. No prep. Little shopping since most of the things one might need for cereal and smoothies are likely part of your regular shopping rhythm and already in your house. I'm also guessing that there's something significant for Kristen about Thursdays. Maybe it's an easy mental choice after three focused days and then moving into a weekend. Maybe Thursdays are when some kids have afternoon activities or classes or something. Maybe it's completely arbitrary. No matter the reason, choosing one thing to eat on one specific day is quite dreamy.

Pasta Mondays, Pizza Fridays, Breakfast Sundays, Taco Tuesdays, Takeout Thursdays... if you do not yet have a Decide Once set on a specific day, give it a shot for a few weeks this summer, and see how it feels. If it doesn't work for you, don't do it anymore, but maybe this season is a good time to try it either for the first time or try a different choice than one you make the other nine months of the year.

By the way, I call this structure of choice a Meal Matrix. Having certain meals go on certain days is a loose system that just might work.

Alright, next idea. This is also a use of Decide Once as well as Live in Your Season. This is from Kelly Bee who wrote, "High school and college kids plan, shop, and cook the family dinners. Mama's off for the summer." Man, don't we all want to be Kelly right now? Obviously, this is a Decide Once because it's decided. In the summer, the older kids take care of dinner. Done deal. But this is also a great use of living in your season. There are two seasons at work here for Kelly. First, it's summer. Did you notice that? Mama is off for the summer. It's probably not feasible for the kids to handle dinner during the school year because they're not home as much. This is a summer thing. This is also a season of life thing. Kelly's kids are older but living at home. And it sounds like she has multiple kids, so even if one or two are gone because of camp or a job or something, there are others to take over.

Sometimes we can automatically dismiss ideas like this because they just don't work for us, and honestly most ideas don't work exactly for every single person. But if you notice the principles that Kelly uses, you can see how the same principles can apply to your particular life. How can you Decide Once about something based on the season that you're in?

That's a beautiful segue into this idea from Magen Ranae.

"Instead of having a mid-afternoon snack at 3-4pm, we go ahead and have a full dinner. Then, at 8p, when we get home from the pool, we have a snack instead of dinner. Same amount of food, but the energy expenditure for me happens at 3p instead of at bedtime." I mean, how's that for living in your season. Will this work for everyone? Definitely not! Some of you go to the pool every day, but it's over lunch and not dinner. This exact idea wouldn't work for you. Some of you don't orient your day around any particular activity, so the consistency of this doesn't make sense. The particulars of each of these tips isn't the point. It's just a great chance to notice how folks are applying Lazy Genius principles to stressful areas of life, and it's working for them! Because it's for them. See which of these ideas spark an idea specific for you.

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Another food adjustment based on the season is from Lyn Crawford. "We cook lunch. Whatever we had planned for dinner, we cook it for lunch. Then sandwiches/wraps/cold dinner." This is a great place to mention that the standard idea doesn't always have to be what your choice. You can cook lunch. You can store hairbows and brushes in the car because that's when kids are needing ponytails. You can keep your kid's ADHD medication in his backpack because he'll always have it to take no matter what the morning is like! You can keep pots in your pantry and cereal in a bottom cabinet and cups in a drawer. You get to decide what works for you even if it's different than the convention, and that is extra true for particular seasons.

Another lunch idea is from kbiederwolf. "When one kid has an activity that requires a lunch, I pack them for everyone—myself included. It saves us all from getting hangry after a morning of drop offs and errands." Love it. This is a Decide Once, and it's also a great example of going in the right order and batching, two other Lazy Genius principles. You know that hungry humans create chaos, so to calm that chaos on busy days, you make lunch for everyone at the same time since you're already doing it for the camp kid. This isn't for every single day or every single season, but for this situation at this time, it sounds like this idea is a great one for kbiederwolf.

Next up, we have Hannah Vasquez. "So simple but I bought a \$10 tray at target I can pile plates, cups, and food on to take outside. Last summer I always wanted to eat outside with the fam and it always felt like so much "schlepping" things. Now it's easy." Man, is this one great. Hannah named what mattered: eating outside without a lot of schlepping. So she got something to make that easier: a tray. Now they eat outside. I love how one small solve can make a big difference for an eating rhythm over an entire season.

Another similar idea is from Mera olive. "Instead of buying tons of expensive paper plates and going through them every 3 days, grab some food/fry baskets from the dollar store and find somewhere to buy a giant pack of restaurant basket liners (even cutting them in half to go longer). For 90% of the snacks/meals my kids eat, the paper liners keep the baskets from needing to be washed at all. I just throw away the paper and re-stack the baskets!" If summer is not the time to serve food like you're at a casual burger restaurant, I don't know when is. This is such a fun idea. It's literally fun because who doesn't want to eat out of a fry basket. Plus it is a lot cheaper, a lot less waste than paper plates, and it's still the same easy cleanup. Great idea.

Two other food things that are a little more fun: bestdaycourt aka Courtney Cleveland shared this: "The answer is yes to popsicles. You can have as many as you want. This is also my reputation in the neighborhood and I love that kids stop by for one." If you know Courtney, I'd stop by her house for a popsicle too. And finally in the food category, we have Skclaborn: "We do a Blue Bell Bracket. Each week we buy 2 different pints and vote on the best flavor. There will be an ultimate champion the last week of summer! It's something we look forward to weekly and is budget friendly!" That's a really fun family activity. We're doing a couple of similar things this summer. First, we have an ice cream shop we want to visit every week, and we're keeping track of the scores. On the final week of summer, the plan is to go to the winning shop.

The other thing we're going to do is have an ice cream tasting party with some friends where we basically take skclaborn's bracket idea but do it all in one go. Lactaid will be provided. But doing fun things like this around food is a great way to enjoy the summer.

Okay, our next category is around rhythms and schedules in the summer. Everyone approaches this so differently, and that is the right answer. Everyone gets to decide what works for them and their family if they live with one, so look at the use of principles first and then the actual idea to find a way to apply a particular idea to your own life.

First up is Colorado peach690: "We marked out "active weeks" and "down weeks" ahead of time. Active weeks we scheduled camps, swim lessons, play dates...and easy meals 😊 On down weeks we're guarding as much time as possible for slow mornings, spontaneous choices...and more time-consuming summer meal making." This is such a great idea. Y'all already know that I love planning seasons intentionally, creating loose ideas of what might work, paying attention to energy, all of it. This loose rhythmic framework of active weeks and down weeks is such a great idea, not just for the summer season but for any season that has a lot involved. The winter holidays come to mind. You could see this in terms of weeks or even week to week. Maybe your weeks themselves need a down day or two or three built in. If you feel like your summer energy is struggling to keep up, this might be an idea you can make work for you.

Here's another approach to camps for kids by literally not planning them at all. Jessica Precise wrote this: "Instead of trying to find camps and activities for my 4 kids for part of the summer since I don't need full time care, I instead hire a sitter for one day a week. Gives me a break each week or time to work or catch up at the house, and the kids have someone new to play with!" I love this approach! Again, we hear everyone around us talking about summer camps

and week long activities or whatever your version of that is. When “everybody else” is doing something, it’s easy to think we should be, too. But like Jessica said, she doesn’t need full time care. She doesn’t need an entire week at a time where all her kids are gone. Plus, have you ever tried to find camps that fit multiple kids ages and interests? Even if you have to do two different camps for four kids, part of your time is spent driving and rushing to get lunches packed and all the things. Instead, spend that money throughout the money on a weekly sitter. The calm I feel on Jessica’s behalf is enormous. What a beautiful way to look at your season, what matters to you, and make a choice about your own free time that makes the most sense.

Next up is Walkers love life. “I have my kids write their own list of non screen time activities that they love to do at the beginning of every summer. When it’s non screen time time, and they say they “can’t think of anything else to do” I have them refer to the list THEY wrote. Then it’s not moms dumb ideas, but their own and they are generally much more receptive to those ideas and I get very minimal resistance.” What a great idea. I did a version of this, but I made the list myself. I was trying to save myself the “I have nothing to do” vibe but making an “I’m Bored” list. When they say I’m Bored, I just tell them to go look at the list. But since it’s one list for all three kids and I made it, most of the time they argue about what they don’t like to do instead of just doing something. Having the kids make their own lists would’ve definitely been a better approach. I tried to Magic Question (another principle) summertime irritation around their boredom, but next time, I’ll adjust a little and maybe try Walker’s way!

Finally in the rhythm section, we have Erin Mosier. “10 minute tidy! Every night after dinner we set a timer for 10 minutes, turn on some fun music and pick up the main area of our house. It’s so helpful because there’s 6 of us so many hands make light work. And it resets our home for the next day.” That’s not a new idea, and a lot of you likely already do this, but I want you to listen to this second part of Erin’s comment. “I don’t feel like I have to nag my kids to pick up their stuff all day because I know we have a set time coming where everything will get put back in its place.” That right there is where the magic happens. When something is put in its place, even the tidying time, it releases the pressure for a room to always be tidy. It’s going to happen, so let it happen when it happens. It puts everyone at ease, and I love that perspective.

Our next section is really just a quick rundown of some House Rules or Decide Onces that work for people.

First is Elle jay person. “The kids each get \$10/week for activities. They can spend it or keep it. It helps them plan, and see the value of free playdates.” That’s rad. Super into that approach. It’s a Decide Once, but it also puts the ownership back on the kid. They have permission to make a choice that’s best for them, too. Love it.

I love this one from Jlynhuff. “Thunderstorms/rain are a Decide Once that everyone goes to the porch to sit, relax and watch/listen/read. We stop what we are doing and take it as a sign that the universe wants us to chill.” Two of my kids are afraid of storms, but I might make this one for me. I love sitting in a storm (sheltered, of course), and having that built in sounds absolutely lovely. I also dig the line about the universe wanting us to chill. Using cues from nature is

actually quite fantastic, so think about ways you can use the nature in your own life! You might not have a porch to sit under, but can you open a window to listen to the rain?

Next is Sashposh. "This summer my husband and I decided that our entire family was going to be wearing the long sleeved swimwear. We are fair skinned and would go through so much sunscreen and would often leave early from being burnt. We have had a lake day already with all our long sleeved glory and it is a game changer. It honestly put my mind at ease and we had a more relaxed time. GAME CHANGER!" As a fair skinned person myself, this is an excellent choice.

Next is Emlinkburr. "Sunglasses everywhere! A pair in my car. A pair in my husband's car. A pair in my purse. Another pair that floats around as an added extra!" Yes. This is like us having hairbrushes and scissors and umbrellas in multiple places in our house. Sometimes having an abundance of important things makes such a difference you don't even understand the math. How do these three extra pairs of sunglasses make such a difference? No idea, but they sure do.

Last one in this section is absolutely amazing from The uncle mary. "My kids picked a code word for when it's time to put on shoes/get ready to leave. So instead of yelling "get your shoes on!" 20x and getting frustrated, I holler "Quidditch Practice!" and they come running!" Listen to me right now. This is brilliant. This is joyful. This is a perspective shift that we all need in some form. What you name things, what you call things, the words you speak, all of it makes a huge difference! And when you make it fun like this in an area that's generally not fun? Amazing.

That idea is a great segue into the category of connection. Yelling Quidditch Practice when you're leaving the house together is very connecting, and here are some other ideas that focus on that.

The first one from Hfreni also involves a code word. Maybe we all need more code words. "I made my kids come up with a plan to not drive me crazy by fighting all summer. They came up with a code word (it's "banana") that means "I've had it with you and I need you not in my face anymore" which means they have to go to separate rooms no questions asked." Incredible. Just bananas all over the place. And that they both have buy-in, and you're teaching them to set their own boundaries! Will this exact idea work for every set of siblings? No. But think about how the idea of this idea could be stretched a little to work for your own kids if you have them. Dude, this could work for roommates, too.

Another idea if you have siblings at each other's throats, depending on their ages of course. Meg Rlitter shared this: "If the kids are having a tough time getting along (persistently), I will announce that they are doing a drawing or yoga video together. It gives them just the reset they need!" We are huge fans of drawing videos in our house. Since Annie has two big brothers who rarely want to play with her, when she's bored, one of her favorite things to do is to draw with a drawing video. There are tons of great channels out there. The point is not the video, whether

yoga or drawing or anything else. It's thinking about activities that help your kid or set of kids connect with themselves or each other in a helpful way.

Next is Lilbitsofsunshine. "Puzzles! We have started working on puzzles together as a family. We have found ourselves gravitating to the dining room to work on the puzzle instead of turning on screens. We each take a night and rotate music playlists. And of course, popcorn or ice cream is always involved. It has brought us closer together as a family and it is something we will continue doing even when summer ends." I love this. I feel the need to speak to those of you are immediately thinking "I wish my family did that!" Listen. My family doesn't like puzzles either. I love them. But I still do them out in the middle of our main living areas. And guess what? Sometimes somebody comes and does a few pieces with me. Remember that your reality does not have to match someone else's in order for it to count.

And final idea from Yourbirdcansing that reminds me of Markela's playground spreadsheet if any of you remember that. Yourbirdcansing shared this: "I have 4 girls (ages 4mo, 5,8&9) and dread the summer due to managing play time with school friends. If one is invited, I feel guilty that the other 2 aren't and feel the need to make things even. (Don't come for me and my soft millennial mom heart lol). So I decided to make a private Facebook group for park dates and invited my friends with kids and had them invite others as well. We have about 50 families in the group now! I picked dates for the month so people could plan ahead and whoever can make it comes or they can catch us on the next one. No pressure, low stakes. We've had 2 meetups so far and they've been a blast with all different aged kids and totally checks the box of playing with other kids without me going bananas all summer navigating hurt feelings. Plus I get some mom socializing time too! 10/10 recommend." This is excellent. What a great reason to get on Facebook if you're not. Decide Once the dates, and just enjoy whoever is there. Love this so much.

Okay, our final category is perspective. These are places folks have given themselves permission to think about the season in a way that makes sense to them.

Pineapples and pixiedust says, "I'm no longer listening to the "You only have 18 summers" rhetoric. It may be well meaning but it tends to bring up energy/thoughts that leave me feeling like I'm not doing enough or doing it right, that time is slipping away—scarcity mindset. So I've just stopped listening to that." What a great example of a mindset that works for some and not for others. Skip what doesn't work for you.

Next is Jo Owens who used to be my neighbor! Hi, Jo! Jo wisely says, "Remembering that summer is both a season and state of mind. My kids are more self sufficient (11 and 14), and I'm working full time. But I can choose a summer mindset which helps me breathe deeper, appreciate the small things, and carve out a little extra space in my schedule." Beautiful.

Lori williams stroich says, "The one thing is to include yourself. I've made intentional space for asking what I want from this summer with kids and family. What do I need? What supports me?"

What brings me delight? What matters to me? As a mom we can easily get swept up in everyone and everything else- make space for YOU.” Yes yes, Lori.

Elizi2006 says, “Lean into the chaos and say yes. But also don’t feel guilty saying no when you’re overwhelmed and exhausted.” Oh man, what a deep breath of a sentence that is. Yes! Say yes! Embrace the season you’re in. But also notice where you are day to day. If you need to say no for whatever reason, don’t beat yourself up about it. You’re not doing it wrong, and you haven’t backtracked on your choice to say yes. Things can be way more fluid than we let them be, so this is a good word.

The final comment I’ll share is a bit of a plug, but you might benefit from it, too. This is from Kiewiete:

“Literally everything I can think of to share is something I’ve learned from the TLG podcast episodes and the LG summer docket. A plug for the docket, though: I can’t remember how many summers ago I got it but I’ve used it every year since and it’s ALWAYS been incredibly helpful and grounding for me! I highly recommend it!”

If you’re like, what is she talking about, we have a digital product in our store called The Summer Docket. It is a compassionate, helpful, practical process that helps you name what matters about your summer and make plans to support that. Yes, it’s already July, but you might still have a lot of weeks left in the summer and could use a little directional refresh. The good news is that you can get it now and do what kiewiete and literally thousands of others do and just reprint it every summer. You only have to buy it once. We’ll have a link in the show notes.

Thanks to all of you for sharing your ideas on Instagram, and I hope that everyone listening got a little sparkle of an idea for something. Next week, I’m going to share my own list of summer wins so far and give you an update on a few of things I’ve shared in previous episodes and how everything is working! Keep an eye out for that episode on Monday.

Since we had so many Lazy Geniuses of the Week this week, we’re going to skip the official selection in this episode, but thanks everyone for listening.

This episode is hosted by me, Kendra Adachi, and executive produced by Kendra Adachi, Jenna Fischer, and Angela Kinsey. The Lazy Genius Podcast is enthusiastically part of the Office Ladies Network. Special thanks to Leah Jarvis for weekly production.

Thanks, y’all, for listening, and 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!