

374 - What's Saving My Life: Summer Edition

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 374 - what's saving my life: summer edition. Last week, I did an episode on all of your best summer ideas, and today I'm sharing the ten things we're doing this summer that are saving my life. It'll be a shorter episode probably, but those could also be famous last words.

As always, this list is not something for you to copy. In fact, half of them are pool related, and not everyone spends their summer at the pool. The point is to notice where you have problems, adjust, and see what works. Some of these have been adjustments from summers past, and some are brand new. I hope you get a little help and encouragement from at least one of them.

Seriously though, the first five things are pool related. My apologies to the non-pool folks.

First up is our pool bag. Everything we need for the pool stays in the bag. Towels, goggles, sunscreen, bug spray which is a new addition this year, all of it. The bag is kept by our laundry rack where we hang wet towels, and when it's time to go to the pool, all we need to put in the bag are towels. A pool bag is a fairly simple idea because everyone takes a bag to the pool or wherever you're going if you need a lot of stuff, but the key is to make sure that everything stays in the pool bag when you get back home. That is the place for the pool things. If Annie keeps her goggles on her head and then drops them on the bathroom floor once we get home, those goggles will not make it back to the pool the next day. Unless it is being used or cleaned, everything stays in the pool bag.

We still have the teal mesh bag we got from Target last year on a recommendation from Sherry Petersik of Young House Love. If you don't know Sherry, I hesitate to tell you to follow her on Instagram because her recommendations are always excellent and hard to say no to. Much of my money has been spent because of Sherry. Anyway, Sherry shared this bag, and it's excellent. Target doesn't sell the same bag anymore which is sad, but we'll have a link to a pretty close version in the show notes.

The next thing that is saving my life this summer is our snack bag. It is another large tote bag full of individually wrapped snacks. The family took a trip to Costco at the start of the summer, and we got a bunch of boxes of snacks: Skinny Pop, chips, Pirate's Booty, one of those packs with chips ahoy and oreos and nutter butters and nilla wafers. We have Trader Joe's dried mango and pistachios and granola bars. It's a delight and saves us a lot of money and headache from the pool snackbar. We take it everywhere actually, not just the pool.

The third thing is a small cooler. This is one of those changes you make that seems kind of silly but then when you make it, you wonder how you existed before. We have a large cooler that's been our only cooler for years. You can fit a huge watermelon in there and then some. Not that anyone is bringing along an entire uncut watermelon in a cooler, but this is just for scale

purposes. But what if all we want to bring to the pool is string cheese and maybe some hummus cups? That big cooler is almost more annoying than helpful. So I got a small cooler. You guys. It has changed everything. I throw in a couple of ice packs and whatever drinks or snacks we want to stay cold at the pool, and we carry it along with us. There's something so magical about an item functioning in the way you want it to, and this small cooler does that. It's nothing special. I can't even remember where I got it. Target maybe? It's just small, and small was what we needed. That's it.

Okay, this next one is something a lot of other pool families do, and I never saw the appeal. In fact, I thought it was weirdly unnecessary until I tried it myself. And that is washing Annie's hair at the pool before we go home. Listen to me right now. You know how showering at home after the pool seems to slow down time and cause you to age ten years, showering at the pool before you leave is like you got to borrow Hermione's time turner and change the world. I don't even understand the alchemy that happens inside that pool shower where we are in and out in five minutes flat. Then we just go home. No wrestling a sun-weary third grader into the shower with her now-dried tangly hair. We're just... done! So now one of the things we keep in our pool bag is a hair bag. I still use and love those zipper pouches they sell on Amazon that every lifestyle person you follow loves - we'll put a link in the show notes - and one of the larger ones has shampoo, conditioner, a hairbrush, and hair ties. We also have gotten in the habit of taking an extra towel with us to the pool so that Annie has a dry towel after her shower and not a damp one from just getting out of the pool. It's so easy since I'm also in my swimsuit, so I just get in there with her without worrying about getting wet. We wash her hair, load it with conditioner, give it a quick brush, and go home. Even she is like, "Mom, this is the best idea ever." We'll never go back.

One final pool-related thing that's saving my life this summer is borderline bougie, but it has been such a worthwhile investment I cannot even tell you. So our family belongs to a pool we have to drive about seven minutes to get to. No big deal, but my kids can't just go to the pool on their own. I have to drive them even if I'm not staying. Again, no big deal, but it's a thing. What's funny is we live in a neighborhood that has a pool, but we aren't members there. People are always surprised by that which makes sense. Why would you not join a pool you can walk to? The main reason is that when we first joined a pool a few years ago, all of our people were at this other pool. The people make the pool, so we went where the people were. Those same people are still there and we love our pool so much, but Sam, my oldest kid who will be in high school next year, his people are at the neighborhood pool. The first week the pool was open, he walked down there every day for many hours to hang out with his friends, just paying the guest fee. Well then we learned that he could only be a guest twice a month. That's it. And even though I kept telling him that he could hang out with his friends pretty much any time he wanted and we would do everything we could to help him do that, his friends are at the pool, a pool he couldn't really go to. When I found out our neighborhood pool offers a dual membership, meaning if you already belong to a pool but want to join theirs, too, they let you for a discounted price, I jumped on it. It's still a price, but it's the most worthwhile price ever. Sam walks down to the pool almost every day. He's moving his body just by the walk, he's seeing his friends, he always takes a book in case no one is there or he doesn't want to swim and just wait for his

friends to be available, he throws a couple of snacks from the snack bag in his tiny personal pool bag, and then he comes home when he's ready or when I tell him it's time for dinner. I cannot even imagine how our summer would be if he didn't have that kind of access to his friends and that type of independence to enjoy. It has been an absolute gamechanger. Again, kind of crazy to belong to two pools, but holy moly is it worth it.

The next thing that's saving my life this summer is something I mentioned in a previous episode, a new thing we're trying, and now I get to give you an update. A lot of folks have lists that their kids need to do before they can have screen time, and if that works for you, that's awesome. For our family, it hasn't historically worked as well as I wanted it to. Sure, the kids would do things like read and chores and move their body and whatever else, but it felt like it was making them cram normal life things into the earliest parts of the day so that they could get screen time as soon as possible. It also prevented anyone from enjoying screen time in the morning which sometimes fits the day better than another time of day. Everything just felt too desperate. So this summer, I decided to start making a list of things for them to do every day, but that list is connected to tomorrow's screen time. Here's how it works for us.

I got a dry erase clipboard, and I divide it into four sections. I actually started with four clipboards, and it was so annoying to have four clipboards laying out every day. It covered the whole counter! So I adjusted my plan, and I use just one. Anyway, I divide it into four sections, and each of my three kids has their own section with their list. The fourth section is titled "today" and I write down the things I know about the day. We're going to the library, somebody is at camp, it's just a chill day, and I write down what's for dinner if I know it. If I don't, I literally write, "I don't know what dinner is yet." It's basically writing down any flags we have that day that will help the kids know how to structure their own day if they want.

Then in the other three sections, each kid has a list. My boys both have summer classes they're taking, so there's work to keep up with. Both are taking a math prep course that's not for a grade but to keep them fresh with math concepts since they both have tested into and have chosen to stay on a more accelerated math path. And then Sam who again starts high school next year wanted to take his Health and PE class over the summer to leave more space for music classes during high school. So he's got several hours of schoolwork every day. He's regretting that choice a little, but I keep reminding him why he decided to do it. I'm like, "Keep your eye on what matters most: taking as many music classes as you can." Usually that helps him not fall into a pit of summer school despair. But anyway, on their lists, I'll have a box that says "finish module three" or whatever so they know the broad category of work they need to do. They usually have reading and moving their body, too. Sometimes I'm specific that they need to read a library book or move their body in a certain way or for a certain amount of time if it seems necessary. I also put specific chores on there if there are things they each need to do but that's only occasionally. I'll get into why we don't have specific chores every day in just a second. But every kid has their list of usually 3-6 things. In order to have access to screens the next day, their lists need to get done before they go to bed today. If anyone chooses to not finish their list, that's their choice, but they're also choosing to not have screen time the next day. So far, no one has made that particular choice, but the next day list has been so fantastic. It puts screen time

in a less urgent position because it doesn't affect how we operate today. I have absolutely loved it from a parenting standpoint, and the kids seem to dig it from a list-checking standpoint. It all just feels easier.

Okay, to the chore thing. I used to have chores for the kids to do, but it's always been tedious. And we also have a house cleaner that comes every other week, so the desperation of cleaning everything super well on a regular basis isn't there. The kids do things, but because we have chosen to have a housecleaner because that regularity matters to me, our approach to teaching the kids how to do things around the house has adjusted. However, there is still more that happens in the home outside of regular chores. There is also tidying and food and shopping and tending to our things. The term here used a lot is the mental load. I bet that everyone listening to this podcast right now carries the primary mental load of tending to their home. You might be single so it's just you anyway, or you might be partnered or have kids and I bet you carry most if not all of the mental load. I've done an episode about the division of labor in the home, how having your partner equally carry the work of the home matters. Eve Rodsky wrote a great book about that that some of you have read called *Fair Play*. However, something that is missing from both my episode and the concept of *Fair Play* is the involvement of the kids.

Enter Sam Kelly. I found Sam Kelly on Instagram a few months ago when one of her posts was in my feed, and y'all she is the real deal. I think that if you have kids, you need Sam's voice in your life. She has an audio course that I haven't even finished yet - that's how effective her concepts are - they're making a difference before I even complete the content - but she has an audio course called *Little Cycle Breakers* all about how we teach our kids to share the mental load of the home. I started listening to the course maybe two months ago, and we immediately started implementing Sam's signature concept of "notice and do." Her whole thing is that most of the mental load in the home is the noticing. It's being the person who notices what needs to be done, and while a lot of us might notice something and then ask someone else to do it which is better than doing everything ourselves, teaching our kids to notice is really how we stop the cycle of everything falling on one person's shoulders, most often the mother's.

So one of the things saving my life this summer is Sam's concept of "notice and do." My kids are still loosely in the whiny stage of notice and do where if I say, "Okay, let's all notice and do in the living room" there are groans of "oh I hate notice and do." And Sam - Sam Kelly, not my son Sam - has taught me how to handle this. I respond with words like, "I know! It's a lot to go into a room and notice what needs to happen, but all of us working together is what family is about. Plus, this way you're doing something different than the old way that says moms do everything, and that's awesome!" I'm not a victim or a martyr anymore. I'm not making everyone feel guilty even in a comical way by saying "I do everything around here!" Nope. I'm teaching them about the cycle we all live in and that they're helping break it thanks to Sam's teaching.

So back to the kids daily lists: rather than focus on specific chores which I do sometimes just so kids can learn those particular skills, most often I will write “notice and do in the bathroom” or “notice and do in your bedroom.” I’m making noticing part of the skill they’re learning. Eventually I might not have to write that at all.

A recent example is from lunch. We’re all home during lunch now, so the kitchen gets rather messy every day. Ben makes a pepperoni and cheese ciabatta sandwich in the airfryer that he assembles and cooks every single day, but he usually leaves all the ingredients out. Or he’ll leave the empty pepperoni bag on the counter instead of throwing it away, that kind of thing. I have started using Sam’s language, encouraging Ben to notice how to reset the kitchen after he makes his sandwich. I spent a few days in a row narrating what I was noticing and then doing something about what I noticed. “I notice that this bag is empty, so I’m going to throw it away. I also notice that the cheese packet is open and over here in the dirty dishes zone instead of in the fridge zone, so I’m going to move to a spot where it’ll more easily get put away. Or I notice that I have a few minutes while I’m waiting for the sandwich, so I’m going to put away the stuff while I wait.” I narrated all of that for a few days. There’s still a lot of prompting because kids are kids. But y’all the other day I was sitting at our kitchen island eating or reading or something, and Ben had been making his lunch. He walked past the island that was covered in his lunch stuff, but then he stopped and said loudly “notice and do!” and he took care of literally everything. He even scraped the bread crumbs off the counter. Y’all, Sam’s course is maybe the best money I’ve ever spent in my actual life. She is the Lazy Genius of teaching kids how to share the mental load of a home, and I cannot recommend her audio course enough. I’m pretty sure there’s a waiting list right now, but it’ll be available again soon. We’ll put a link in the show notes, but Sam is offering you guys \$10 off the course so be sure you click that link to get the discount. I was going to share before Sam invited me to be an affiliate for her program, so this is not a money grab. This course is excellent, you guys. Absolutely excellent, and I cannot recommend it enough.

Okay, next thing that’s saving my life this summer: dinner is rarely planned and often repeated. If you get my monthly newsletter, The Latest Lazy Letter, you’ll have already read our top 10 summer meals that we’re just making on a loop all summer. I do better in the summer without a specific meal plan like I do the rest of the year, but having brainless crowdpleasers we can quickly make and eat on repeat is necessary. Embracing the season and rarely planning dinner but repeating it often is hugely helpful.

If you’d like to see that list of meals, you can sign up for the Latest Lazy Letter by going to thelazygeniuscollective.com/join. The next newsletter goes out August 7, but in the PS section of every newsletter is a link to an archive of all the old newsletters. You can click that link and read the one from July.

The next thing that’s saving my life this summer is casual bedtimes with the occasional mandatory “go to bed now.” I’m a stickler for bedtimes during the school year because I like my kids to get sleep, and so do I. We’ve always been a big bedtime routine family. But in the summer, I’m way less vigilant because I want summer to be more casual and fun with late nights

sometimes. But I'm also noticing when a kid needs an early bedtime. We're casual for the most part, but if I sense that somebody needs to for real go to bed on time tonight, I'll prep them for that and help them find their way to bed early enough to sleep well and be ready for another handful of casual evenings later.

Number eight. Are we still counting? I am barely making to-do lists, and that truly is saving my life this summer. Which sounds weird, right? I am mostly reacting to whatever it is we have going on and need to do. Having Kaz around helps me not carry the whole mental load myself, Sam's course is helping me speak "notice and do" language to my kids so I truly am not the only one noticing what needs doing and making lists to make it happen, and having no school means less to manage. Am I actively not making lists? No. But after going two or three weeks without feeling the need to make one, I started to let the urge to make a to-do list pass. I can tell if a list is out of habit or a need for control as opposed to actually needed. Funny enough, I haven't needed one as often as I do throughout the year, and it's been great. It's helped me experience that summer mindset and relax. It's showing me that I can exist without a linear list of what to do next. Sometimes I really need that reminder. It's saving my life this summer, not because it's making me do less but because it's helping me think less in ways that are actually helping me. It's been great.

Number nine: my overall jumpsuit things. I'm wearing my purple one right now. Erin Moon texted me the other day after getting the Walmart dupe I shared recently and called it a body bag. Truer words were never spoken, and it's also the best body bag ever. Today, I dropped Annie off at camp, and the woman at the desk said, "You look so comfortable what a cute outfit!" Yes, ma'am. This little jumpsuit situation continues to save my summer life. We'll put a link in the show notes to the Walmart dupe version if you didn't get it the last time.

And finally, the thing saving my life this summer is akin to number eight, but it's remembering that I'm okay without plans. Summer has had so few plans. Yes, I write down any flags on the today section of the little whiteboard. Yes, we're using our Essential Calendar Summer Break Calendar which I still love with my whole heart. Yes, I have my work tasks organized over the summer so things get done and I'm not behind but I can still be home as much as possible. There are still plans, but the type of daily plans I tend to make during the school year are not happening in the summer, and I am loving it. This is not the season for those kinds of plans for me. I don't need them. In fact, they keep me from enjoying this particular season the way I want to. Do I need them during the school year? I very much do. I'll need them like crazy this fall when *The PLAN* comes out. Plans are not bad. Plans are awesome. But certain seasons need them less, and I love that those seasons teach me how okay I am without them. I'm okay not having a plan. A day can be beautiful without a plan. Plans can definitely be overrated, so in seasons where I can release them a little, I love doing it. It's good for me, it teaches me, and it makes the summer feel more like summer.

And that's what's saving my life: summer edition.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Shawn Hurtgen. Shawn writes, "I wanted to share my most recent decide once. I was listening to your podcast about your list of decisions you keep repeating as I arrived at Walmart. I did my shopping and then returned to the parking lot unable to find my car which unfortunately looks like every other boring gray station wagon in the lot. I did find it eventually and then I decided. From now on I'm parking in row 7. I have 7 people in my family and row 7 is right in front of the door, so it's a perfect place to park and remember. So, I've decided once, when I go to Walmart I park in row 7 and then I find my car every time without wandering around like a loon." Why this is so funny I'll never know, but this is so funny and also brilliant. If not finding your car is annoying to you, park in the same area each time! Maybe it's that Shawn picked row 7 because there are 7 people in the family. It feels very Waltons which I'm so obsessed with. Great idea, Shawn, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

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!