

## 375 - Behind-the-Scenes of the Book I Swore I'd Never Write

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 375 - Behind-the-Scenes of the Book I Swore I'd Never Write.

My third book, *The PLAN: Manage Your Time Like a Lazy Genius*, releases in 78 days! Completely arbitrary, but on this random summer Monday, it sounds fun to talk about some behind the scenes details about the book.

After I wrote my second book, *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*, I said I would never write a book again, and I'll tell you why I said that. But then I did write another book. Again, it comes out in 78 days. Why did I write that book after all? I'll share that, too. And because I personally love behind the scenes info, especially in the areas of writing and publishing, I want to share some of behind the scenes details of *The PLAN* in case you love that kind of stuff, too. Let's jump in!

First, I swore I'd never write another book. Why did I say that? I always hesitate sharing this, but I never wanted to be an author. I went to college to be an English teacher and love books and reading and talking about them. Clearly. And I was a naturally good writer with some excellent teachers that made my writing better. But I have never been a person who thought "I should write a book one day." Even when I started writing on the Internet and people around me were writing books, I thought it was so cool, but I never imagined it would be for me. I just didn't think I had anything to say that would fill an entire book. Plus it seemed really hard.

But eventually I got to a point in my work where I thought, "Maybe a book makes sense here." After years of talking about how to be a Lazy Genius in podcast episodes and in emails, I thought it might be nice to have one resource that people could go to to learn how to be a Lazy Genius. So I signed with a literary agent and wrote a book proposal in the summer of 2018, I got a book deal in November of that same year, I wrote the book in 2019, and *The Lazy Genius Way* released in August of 2020, a great time for an author to release a book into the world. To those of you who came and met me in bookstore parking lots for awkward social distancing air high fives on August 11, 2020, thank you.

If you're unfamiliar with that book, *The Lazy Genius Way* describes the thirteen Lazy Genius principles in detail and gives you ideas of how to apply them to your life. It was a New York Times bestseller which shocked all our pants off and has sold over 127,000 copies and is still selling. If you get value from this podcast but have never read the book, I promise you that it's not a rehashing of the podcast. People reread it every year as a refresher of how the principles are helpful in their lives right now. I'm really proud of that book.

After *The Lazy Genius Way*, I knew I'd write another book, not because I had an idea but because I signed a two book contract. That happens to authors more often than you'd think. There's a lot of trust that you'll have another idea and be able to write another book which is a scary thing indeed. But that second book came to life fairly quickly, and now we have *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*, a book that helps you have what you need, use what you have, and enjoy your kitchen like never before. It is the application of Lazy Genius principles to the kitchen, a room that could use some Lazy Geniusing, and I still love flipping through it. It's so cute and colorful and helpful and cool. Some of you recall that it went through a difficult journey to be made and then an even more difficult journey to get in bookstores after thousands and thousands of copies of it fell into the actual ocean. Yeah, that happened. Just a couple of months before the book was supposed to release, something happened with a shipping container, and my books fell to the bottom of the sea. Since printing a book, especially a color one, is kind of a whole thing, we had to move the release date, find a new printer, and try to not panic even though everything was saying to panic immediately. What a ride.

Now, to this third book thing. Did I not want to write a third book because the first two were a) hard to write and b) were affected by a pandemic and the gaping mouth of the open ocean? I mean, could you blame me? But that's not why. Not even close. The reason I always said I was done writing was because I did not think I had anything else to say. Not in book form. If you have the 13 Lazy Genius principles in *The Lazy Genius Way* and you have them organized specifically for your kitchen in *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*, what more do you need? I had people asking me for a book on how to Lazy Genius different rooms and organize your home. The Nester writes about that better than I ever could. I had people asking me for a book on how to be a person and make decisions. Emily P. Freeman writes about that better than I ever could. I had people asking me for a book on parenting. That's hilarious because I've barely started and also no thanks. I had people asking me for a book on starting and running a business, but frankly, I'm just trusting my gut, listening to my audience, and saying no to things that most people say yes to. I'm not an expert in that, nor does it excite me to talk about. I really and truly did not think I would ever have anything else to say that would require an entire book.

Then in the summer of 2022, not three months after *The Lazy Genius Kitchen* was released into the world, I started working on an online course about time management. That's the topic most people ask me about, those are the podcast episodes that get the most downloads, and it's my favorite topic. Everyone around me was making an online course at the time, so it made sense that I would too.

You have to break an online course just like you have to break a book, meaning you have to figure out what goes inside it, in what order, for what purpose, and for what person. It's actually quite challenging to do. As I started to break the time management online course, I stopped, stepped back, and remembered that my audience is not an online course audience. We've done a couple of versions of memberships and courses, and while they weren't failures, they just didn't resonate with you all in the same way courses do from other content creators. Y'all just aren't course people, at least courses from me. You'd rather read or hang out with friends or watch *The Great British Baking Show*, listening to my podcast while you're doing laundry or

going for a run or whatever. Frankly, I'm into that arrangement. But you do read. You like books. And you like my books which I will forever be grateful for. I didn't need to make a time management course. I needed to write a time management book. I still remember voxing my agent and being like, "Welp, I know I said I wasn't going to do this literally six weeks ago, but I have a book idea." Tale as old as time.

So in summary, I said I wouldn't write another book because I didn't think I had anything to say, and I decided ultimately *to* write another book because I had something to say that was best said in a book. Pretty simple, but also it took months for all that to happen and make sense. And now we're 78 days away from the release of the book that I believe my entire career and even life has been leading toward. And I really mean that. I don't mean that everything else in my life, my other roles or relationships are secondary to this, but in terms of my vocation and what I'm putting into this world and leaving behind, I think this book is the thing. This is a message that has been missing from the time management space to the detriment of a lot of people, women in particular, and I cannot wait for it to make its way into the world.

You'll hear plenty about what the book is and who it's for and why you'll want it once we get into September especially, but for the remainder of this episode, I'm not actually going to share that stuff. This is more about the logistical particulars of what it takes to get a book into the world and the specific path this one has taken.

P.S. If you'd like a little bit of extra listening about publishing related things, you can listen to Episode 166: Book Launching 101 which is quite old but hopefully not too old and also the bonus episode What's the Deal with Bestseller Lists. We'll have links in the show notes.

Okay, here's the timeline of *The PLAN* and some fun details about how it's come together.

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Like I said, I told my agent in August of 2022 that I wanted to write a time management book. The first step was to write a book proposal. A book proposal explains the purpose of a book, describes its audience, its competitors, marketing and publicity plans, and it also has a detailed book outline and sometimes sample chapters, too. I didn't do sample chapters since those are more to see if an author can write, and I had already proved I could with the two previous books. But I spent about six months writing that book proposal. Fun fact: did I write the book I proposed? I did not. I wrote a Lazy Genius time management book, but it wasn't what I initially planned for it to be, and that's eerily common among nonfiction writers. You think you know what it is, but until you start writing it, you really don't.

So once I had a book proposal ready, it was time to pitch it. I didn't have a book contract anymore, but I did have a clause in my previous contract that put some restrictions on how and to whom I could pitch this third book. That's pretty standard actually. It's very normal for a book contract to have some stipulation where the publisher you're with gets to see your next project and make you an offer before you can shop it around.

Here's a little publishing primer. I think I used this analogy in one of the other publishing episodes I've done, but I'll share it again since it's relevant. There are five big publishing houses: Penguin Random House, Simon and Schuster, Hachete, Harper Collins, and MacMillan. They're literally called The Big Five. I like to think of each of those publishing houses as a hotel. A very large hotel. Now, each floor of the hotel is a publishing group or division. There might be a children's lit floor and a business floor and a religion floor and a fiction floor, actually a lot of those probably. They're contained inside the hotel, but each floor or division has its own vibe and specialty. Then on each floor, there are many rooms, just like at a regular hotel. Each of those rooms in this weird publishing analogy is called an imprint. The imprint often has its own staff and vibe and is the "publisher" an author signs with. Unless you're Michelle Obama who just signs with the hotel proper, most authors are with an imprint or hang out in one room. And inside each room or imprint is a single or group of acquisition editors who are in charge of acquiring or getting an author to commit to that room. They're the ones who read the book proposals and decide if it's a book they want to publish.

For me, back in 2018, I signed my first contract with an imprint called Waterbrook Multnomah which is on the Crown floor of the Penguin Random House hotel. After I wrote and launched the two books in my two-book contract, I wanted to try a different room. That's very normal. Authors switch publishers all the time. Like any experience, there were some things that went great and others that didn't, but ultimately my vibe and audience just didn't match the Waterbrook room anymore. It barely did when I started, and it definitely didn't when I ended. Still, as I already mentioned, there's that standard component of a lot of publishing contracts or the first rights clause. It makes sense that the room you're in is unlikely to just let you leave without knowing what you're wanting to write next. They've been your room so far, and they want a shot to stay your room. But I knew I needed to change rooms. However, one of the tricky things about this clause, at least in general, is that very often if you say no to the room, you're saying no to the floor and even the hotel. And I really like the Penguin Random House hotel. I liked the floor I was on, too. So the folks in charge of the entire floor, of the Crown Publishing division, said to me, "Kendra, we think this room over here is better suited for you." So I had a meeting with all the people in that room, in the Convergent room, in May of 2023, to see how the vibe was and if they understood the book I wanted to write. They did more than I actually dreamed, and it's been an excellent partnership so far. Plus, the Convergent room aligns a bit more with who you all are. On their website, their vision states: **Convergent publishes books for the human spirit. Our authors are community builders, experts, and storytellers helping people to nourish their inner lives and find meaning, connection, and understanding in a changing world.** That sounds like us, right? Plus, a lot of you are very likely familiar with the family of Convergent authors: Kate Bowler, Sarah Bessey, Richard Rohr, Austin Channing Brown, and Henri Noewen. It's a room that makes sense for the kind of book I wanted to write. So in the summer of 2023, I officially agreed to live in the Convergent room for this next book.

And the manuscript was due November 1st. Summer to November is not a lot of time. Good golly, let's go. Y'all, writing a book is no joke. It is so hard. We often think that writing a book is doable, especially when we read ones that work really well and feel effortless, but most things that seem effortless require so much effort. That's for everything, not just writing. I always think about how The Nester can just make a mantle beautiful and it looks effortless, but it actually took effort and knowledge that we don't see. The same is true for writing. And writing books for me is quite difficult. I have to calm my perfectionist tendencies because there is no actual way you can write a good book on the first pass. No shot. So to do it in five months and without having a mental breakdown because of trying to calm down my perfectionist tendency is a tight, difficult ask. For context, *The Lazy Genius Way* took about nine months to write, and I wrote *The Lazy Genius Kitchen* in ten weeks like an idiot. No one should do that ever. But a lot of authors get at least a year. Because of when we wanted this third book to release, I needed to get the manuscript in quickly, namely in about five months. So I spent the summer of 2023, just last summer, writing this book.

What does writing a book mean? Well, I put a bunch of ideas on sticky notes and moved them around a lot, trying to find where things lined up. I wrote thousands and thousands of words just to get something on the page since you can't edit a blank one. I made outlines, wrote from that outline, and then changed the outline because the structure didn't hold up as I wrote. So I'd change the structure again, write more until the structure fell apart, and then come up with yet another structure. I did that until I found the book. That's the phrase I use and a lot of my author friends use. You write until you find the book. You kind of know what you're looking for, but you have to write to find the real bones of it all. And it's laborious, y'all. You sit with bad to mediocre writing for weeks until something clicks and you go, "Oooo, I think we're getting somewhere!" Then you keep writing in that direction. Eventually you find the book and then write the book. That whole thing takes quite a while.

I don't write well in 2-4 hours chunks which is how my regular job is usually set up. I need days to write because sometimes writing involves sitting in silence for two hours trying to figure out what to write in the first place. My best situation is to get away for at least three nights in a beautiful environment because my environment is super important to my energy, and I write when I want to write. I can write through meals and into the night. I can sleep from 4am until 10am, get up and write for seven hours straight, take a quick nap while I wait for a DoorDash meal. I need to have wide open space to fill with writing as the words and the energy come. That's one of the reasons why authors are paid an advance. Not in advance although that's also true, but an advance. A publisher says, "I know this is going to take a lot of work and time and adjustments in your life because writing an entire book is a super big deal, so here is some money so you don't have any cash flow issues and you can rent an Airbnb to write or hire childcare or do whatever you need to do to get this thing written." It's imperative to have some cash so you can fit writing a book inside your regular life.

So last summer and into the fall, I wrote the book. It felt so good once I found the book, y'all. Like, so good. It still does. I remember being so excited by a particular element of the structure that I ran around this apartment I was renting and waving my arms in the air like I was a toddler

at a bounce house. Just ecstatic. You live for those moments because they don't come very often.

Over the next two months, the book went through a few rounds of edits. First, you have editorial edits where your editor confirms that this is in fact the book. Sometimes it's not, and you have a lot more work to do. My editor loved the book and also spotted a lot of broader inconsistencies and concepts that needed more clarity. She's such a good editor. She gave me back the edits, and I had about three weeks to complete them. After that, the book went to a copy editor who made sure I didn't repeat certain words a lot (frankly, I do, and frankly is one of them) and wrote good sentences with good rhythms, that kind of thing. A copy editor helps make the book read well. After I made all of those edits, it went to a line editor who checked footnote references, misspellings, and more granular things. That's what happens with editing. It goes from broad to granular. An editorial edit could have tons of misspellings and grammar problems, but that's not the point of that edit.

Eventually, the thing was so final that I printed it out on paper and went through it line by line with a red pen to make sure we didn't miss anything. We might have because there's always something, but in February of this year, it was locked.

Around that same time, we were working on covers! We went through a lot of great ones and I'll share some of them in the next newsletter that goes out in a couple of weeks! But covering is so hard for me. Y'all, I am so aesthetically particular, so bless the designer and team for all the back and forths. But a book cover is very important, so if you're an author and ever in a position to choose one, let me give you a piece of advice that Emily P. Freeman gave to me with my first book. She said, "if you don't like a cover, don't tinker with it. Once you tinker, it becomes the cover. You're allowed to ask for another completely new idea." I'm so glad she told me that and I've told other authors that over the last few years because sometimes we don't want to make anyone feel bad for a design or we think we're being difficult by asking for something else. Neither of those is true. You get to work hard until the book cover or whatever else you care about is right, and you don't need to feel bad about it. Ask for another idea.

Last month, I finished rounding up blurbs and endorsements for the book, and they were so fun to get. Suzanne Stabile, Kate Bowler, Cal Newport, Nedra Glover Tawwab, Emily P. Freeman, Eve Rodsky, Kelly Corrigan, and the Office Ladies Jenna and Angela all had the most beautiful things to say about the book, and I'm so honored.

Right now, things for the book are a little quiet. I've done a small handful of interviews, one of which was published in Publisher's Weekly magazine which was super cool, but those will pick up hard in August and September. Watch out, y'all. Kendra is going to be all up in your podcast feeds come October. But already I am loving talking about the messages and practical help that this book offers. It is so needed, and I absolutely love that it's almost in the world.

I also love talking about it in person which is why we're planning a handful of book events in October! I'm not sure when we'll be able to share those actual dates, but I do know for sure that

I'll be at Bookmarks in Winston Salem on October 9th, Quail Ridge Bookstore in Raleigh on October 10th, and we've got things working in Atlanta, Chicago, and Dallas, too. More to come, but I'll be out and about in October celebrating and launching this book into the world.

For practical purposes, anything regarding The PLAN will always be at [thelazygeniuscollective.com/theplan](http://thelazygeniuscollective.com/theplan). Events, info about what the book is, preorder stuff when that gets announced... all of it will live on that page.

I know this episode is a little different than usual, but sometimes it's fun to get a peek behind the scenes. I'm not going to promise this because it's summer, but my plan is to do an Instagram live this week where you can ask me any questions about the book! I'll keep you posted on that on Instagram @thelazygenius. But thanks for being here today and for already being excited about the book! A lot of you have been able to read The Plan on Netgalley, and your feedback has been so encouraging you don't even know.

And that's the behind the scenes of the book I swore I'd never write.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Julie Palm. Julie writes, "I have a summer tip you might appreciate: Keep cold lavender towels in the fridge. It is a life changer! Buy a bunch of cheap washcloths, wet and wring out till damp, sprinkle with lavender oil (or peppermint oil or whatever you like), roll up and store in plastic bags in the fridge (or freezer). When it's really hot, I carry them in the car when I'm running errands; I use them to freshen up quickly during the day when I'm gross but don't have time for another shower; I leave one out for the dogwalker so she can cool off. They make me human again when it's sweltering. Trying to stay cool over in Winston-Salem." Winston Salem is my next door neighbor city! I love this idea. Also why is the smell lavender, at least for some, so luxurious? I love this approach. Batch cold comfort, pals. Thanks for the idea, Julie, 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!