

426 - Office Hours

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 426 - Office Hours. These are quarterly episodes where I take the questions y'all shared with me on Instagram and answer them here.

As always, we'll save the questions specific to parents at the end.

Let's jump right in!

First up is Mieke. Mieke writes, "After a weekend away I'm awful at getting reset. Dirty laundry stays dirty. The car isn't emptied fully. Totes on totes in our entrance way filled with miscellaneous stuff. What order do I start with.. should I pack up differently? Be okay with it? Give myself until the next day (or two lol)??? Buy doubles of everything so the miscellaneous just stays in the bag? Help!"

If y'all knew how many of these questions end with help and an exclamation point. So many.

We're going to address a couple of things. First, Mieke starts out by saying "I'm awful at getting reset." Now, I'm great with being honest about our situations. Some of us are awful at things. But there's a lot of power in how we talk about things we find challenging. If you frequently use words that are discouraging or use broad strokes phrases like "all the time" or "everything" or "never" you'll not find a lot of hope in those places. So first, notice when you're using language like "I'm awful at this" without at least a little bit of kindness.

Second, Mieke asked "Should I give myself until the next day or two lol?" Um, yes. Yes, Mieke. It sounds like what you're saying you're awful at is making it look like you never left your house on the very day you return. While you can totally do that if you'd like, that's not the baseline expectation. Resetting after being gone for a weekend does not need to happen right away in order to be correct. Things take time, and that's okay.

Third, I would choose an order of tasks that you always follow when you get back. It doesn't have to be right, but it's right for you. It's a Decide Once. Here's an idea of what that could look like. You decide that when you get home, the first thing you're going to do is have everybody work together to bring everything in from the car. Before hands are washed or people are settled or any of that, everything comes in. And rather than dropping it all in the middle of your main living area because then you'll have to look at it until it's gone, have everything leave everything somewhere offcenter in your house. Maybe it's all by the washer and dryer. Maybe it's all in a rarely used dining room. Maybe it's all in a mudroom. One idea though is to have one central location that everything goes that is not your living room or wherever you live most of your life. Okay, so you've brought everything in to this one location. Cool. Then you have an order of types of things you put away. Maybe your order is food, laundry, everything else. Or you just go tote by tote, suitcase by suitcase.

Regardless of what you choose, just choose. Choose an order. Decide once. This is what I do. And also this is what we do! Get help! Do it as a team with whoever you live with. This should not fall solely on your shoulders unless you're the only person in your house.

And one final tip, I'd have a Decide Once dinner that you always eat when you come home from a trip. It could be a freezer meal, spaghetti, a standard takeout order, cereal and eggs, whatever. But choose what dinner is so that you have one less thing to worry about.

Next up is Kate at @thiskategsd. Kate writes, "How do I use our patio more? We have a table and comfy enough seating but it always feels more frictional to eat outside or lounge outside when indoors is already there."

There were a few questions like this in the comments of the Instagram post, not about patio furniture necessarily but about not using things or doing things in a way someone thought they should. Like, I remember somebody saying they can't figure out how to put their laundry away instead of just pulling clean clothes from the laundry basket. My kid just pulls laundry from his clean basket. It works better for him, so why change it. Or someone who asked how to get out of bed in the morning in the summer when there isn't school or work meetings like during the rest of the year. And I'm like dude what a great season! Have lazy mornings! Unless there's a distinct reason not to that aligns with what matters to you, you can make a choice that doesn't fit what you think is typical. There are so many things that we think have rules but do not have rules. Just do what works.

So that is my first response about the patio furniture. Do you feel like you should use the patio furniture because eating outside is something people are supposed to like to do? If that's why, don't worry about it. Use it when it's easy or when it fits the moment. Don't use it just because you think you should. As a deeply indoorsy person, I feel this though. There's something a little romantic and of the earth about eating outside, but I enjoy being outside for other things and those things usually don't involve food. Food outside to me is a bit of a drag. The bugs, the dirt, the carrying things in and out, the crows that come and take your food while you're sitting there like they do for my neighbors. No thanks. Don't feel bad about feeling that way if you're the same.

Now, if you love being outside but it's the friction of getting the meal outside, use your patio furniture not for real meals. Or for breakfast where you're just carrying your bowl of cereal out there. Or go out there to read or have a snack or something small. Start small with using the patio furniture, and maybe those small choices will scratch the outdoor itch and make you feel less concerned about having a real dinner there.

Next is Markela who I have met in real life and just think is the greatest. Markela's earnestness in this comment made me laugh so hard. She writes, "Do I need fiber, protein, magnesium, a weighted walking vest? What are we supposed to be doing right now?" This is the question for every woman over 40. What are we supposed to be doing right now. I don't have an actual answer to what we're supposed to be doing, but I did want to take a minute to acknowledge this question because it is so real. I feel it, too. What am I supposed to be doing? While it could be protein and fiber and magnesium but I hope not a weighted walking vest because I already sweat too much, it's hard to parse through all the things to figure it out.

Here's my answer, and it's kind of dark, but here we are. My answer is remember that you're finite. Remember that no matter what you do and how much you care for your body, you cannot stop the fact that you might get sick or that you will for sure die. Yes, again dark. But also kind of a relief? I think that so much of our hustle in this world is trying to stay in control of our lives and somehow prevent ourselves from aging or declining. We're always trying to grow and be better and do more. That's in so many industries. And the wellness industry is most definitely an industry. I'm not trying to be a skeptic. I put protein powder in my coffee every morning and lift weights almost every day. This is what it means to be 43 apparently. But if we live thinking that there's a right way of taking care of our bodies, we'll always be chasing that rather than just doing whatever we can with what we have.

So my advice in what are we supposed to be doing is just to focus on what resonates with you, what's confirmed by your doctor, what makes your body feel good, and what you have the energy and ability to make happen in your life in small ways. Taking care of ourselves is worth the time, but I also don't know if all of us have the ability to make our health a part-time job. Some people do or make the sacrifice to, and I think that's great. Certain situations necessitate it. But for the average lady doing her job and tending to her people and trying to not crash at 4pm every day, start small, listen to your doctor, listen to your body, and move. I know we should move as annoying as it is. Weighted walking vests are optional.

Next up is Erin Weldon. Erin writes "I would love help LGing meal planning, specifically dinners. I know it's a struggle for many but feels tough because of my family's preferences. My husband wants to have meat with every meal. I am vegetarian (mostly vegan). My 7YO is selective. My husband would happily eat the same familiar meals over and over (he has the same salad for lunch EVERY WEEKDAY). I like our standards but also need variety and to try new recipes sometimes. I've tried everything (meal matrix/queue, purchased meal plans, asking ChatGPT) but for these reasons it seems like none of the typical "solutions" like Hello Fresh or crockpot meals work for us. We also both work full-time and like cooking but don't have much energy for it at the end of the day. What matters is that we eat dinner together most nights of the week, that we usually eat a version of the same meal, that my 7YO has familiar foods he'll eat AND a

stretch food or two to try, and that we eat relatively healthy. Typing this all out makes me realize it's just too many parameters to meet, but it's our current reality. Please help!" There's another one with the help and an exclamation point.

Erin is in such an understandable place, one that a lot of you listening probably can hear. And I chose to read this question not to answer it but to point out what Erin said at the end. She said, "typing this all out makes me realize it's just too many parameters to meet." That's true. And it's also Erin's reality. But there are some things that have to go. You can't have eating together and eating some version of the same meal and variety all exist equally with so many food restrictions. One of those has to get the backseat. Maybe that's not the case forever though. I can see a world where one week a month is variety week or eat what you like week or something that adds some spark into the meals without being tied to that always. Maybe there's a three week rotation that you legit repeat, but one week a month you don't follow it at all. It might be that kids are eating cereal or everyone is eating something different or you and your husband are cooking different things you're both excited about.

I also will always come for the guy who has food preferences but doesn't contribute to making them happen. I'm not saying that's true of Erin's husband, but gone are the days of the men in the home saying they need meat at every meal but not partnering with their wives to make that happen.

So in short, you can't make everything matter. As hard as it is, something has to go week to week. You can change what that is over time, alternating priorities, but ultimately not all of those things can matter every single day of your lives, not without compromise and partnership. And if that feels too hard, you just eat the same five things over and over again, trying something new as often as you get inspired to.

Okay, these last couple are kid-centric.

First is Bailey who writes "Solo parenting for two months while husband is away for med school rotations. I'll have a 1 year old and an almost 4 year old. We live in AZ and it will be 90+ still. How do I handle the mornings solo? (Trying to start small but even that is a big ask haha)"

When we are on the cusp of a transition, of a new season of life, it always feels big. It's looming and unknown and hard to imagine how we're going to do it. So we spend energy trying to figure it out before we get there, and that energy often doesn't land us anywhere helpful., at least for very long.

So the first thing I'll remind Bailey and anyone else of is that we can't figure out a new season before it begins. We can't prepare so much that it'll all be okay. Remember, *The PLAN*, the time management book I wrote? PLAN is an acronym. You can't just prepare in order to live. You

also need to adjust and notice. You have to be in it, see what's working, make small adjustments, prepare a little more, and continue that dance forever and ever. You cannot prepare yourself into a new season. It is impossible, so stop trying.

What you can do is start small by naming something about that transition that feels the most overwhelming and start working to make that smaller. Bailey has kind of already done with naming the weather and the mornings. I'm not sure why handling the mornings solo is different from handling the whole day solo, but maybe there's a morning routine that could help add some stability. Remember, Lazy Genius routines aren't about a list of sequential things you do. They're based on a feeling you want to experience at the end of the routine. The routine itself is an onramp to a specific feeling or experience, not a list of things to do. That means what you can do can change as long as you're prioritizing the feeling you're after. So maybe it's calm or connection or adventure or being energized. Name that thing, brainstorm a few things that could lead you there, and then consider how you might be able to do one or two on mornings that it makes sense.

The other approach is like a Meal Matrix where you eat certain things on certain days. You can do things on certain days. Or even just one or two days a week. Knowing that on Tuesdays you're always going to go for a drive and then to a new park before it gets too hot is a great anchor in the week.

But the answer I think the most important is to try to not overprepare. You can't prepare your way into a new season.

Next is hmmfashionista. "Pregnancy with a 6 and 3 year old with horrible morning sickness. How can I do what must be done while living a life that consists of half the energy and half the ability?? I feel guilty for a summer that won't be quite as full as normal." That last sentence is the only thing we need to pay attention to, not the first. We're not going to try and figure out what to do to live. We're going to pay attention to the guilt for a summer not being quite as full as normal.

I hear this all the time from parents for lots of reasons. The mom is pregnant or sick or starting a new job or lost a job and therefore lost income, and so this season, this summer, is different than normal and they feel terrible about it. You guys. You do not have to feel this way. In fact, I rarely see it being the reality anyway. Kids aren't lying in bed at night thinking "man, this summer is not at all like it was last year." They're three! They just want to be with people who make them feel happy and safe and do things that bring them joy. Joy can come in different packages and at different paces depending on the season. So many of you listening are big preparers, and those are the ones who often ask questions like this and feel guilty that something isn't the way it usually is. That cannot be a goal for your life. Remember that learning to pivot is way more important than learning to plan. Figuring out how to hack your energy or hack the schedule to trick the kids into feeling like summer is the same or that everything is normal or that you're getting a lot done is just not the way we need to live. Be where you are. Honor the body you have now. Live in your season. Just like the last question, you cannot prepare yourself into a

hard season. It's not a thing. Adjust and notice and adjust and notice and prepare a little and just keep living. Be done for now. It's all going to be okay.

Next is Emily Meier who writes "How do you LG a toy reset surrounding birthdays and Christmas (when a lot of gifts come in)? I know a purge in advance would help with this, but I never make it a priority. Signed, currently drowning in 5-yr-old twin birthday toy piles." Do you know what the problem here is? It's not the purging or the rhythm or needing to have some gift philosophy to share with grandparents and stuff. It's that you're currently drowning in birthday toy piles that haven't been put away yet. For real. I can see it. This happens to us every Christmas. Everybody has gifts, we put new things under the tree unwrapped and everything, and then eventually those things need to get put away by whoever they belong to. But as we stare at the piles for a day, two, three or more, it activates our preparation brain. It turns on our big black trash bag energy and makes us think we've got to systemize this thing when really you just need to put the toys away. Now if there is literally no room for those toys, then remove things that the kid wants to trade out. Say "We only have this much room in your room, so to make room for this new truck set you're excited to play with, what are we ready to say goodbye to and let another kid play with?" Then give that thing to a friend or donate it and be done. You don't need a purging calendar. You just need to put the stuff away.

Last question is from Hilary Daniel. "How do I keep my kids entertained at home while I work from home 8 hours a day? 😊 I live in GA and sending them outside feels like punishment. Screens are GREAT but I feel guilt for implementing it all day." This is a more common question over the last few years, isn't it? I feel like I'm not going to say anything terribly new, but these are my immediate thoughts.

Structure matters, at least a little. So if not being on screens all day matters, you can have a no screens before 11am rule. They can be creative with whatever they want to do - go outside, read, build something, whatever - but they just know there are no screens before this time. You could also add structure by having certain days of the week have a different priority. Maybe on Mondays, the kids need to work together to accomplish some kind of task that's housework related or depending on how old they are, they prep the snacks or lunches for the week or something. Maybe Tuesday you have a sitter or family friend come hang out at your house with them. If I had a friend who had to work full time and I didn't and we had kids the same age, I'd just take my kids to her house and hang out for a few hours. That's almost easier for me because the kids have friends to play with. Wednesday can be a day that involves making. Write music, build things, paint, bake, just make something. You get the idea. And then maybe Fridays are a rot day. I borrowed that phrase from Jamie Golden, and we use it in our house now. We have rot days where there are no screen restrictions, and they're great. Having those sometimes is great, and if kids know they're coming, they're not as resistant to other days that have more structure.

But ultimately working from home without childcare is incredibly challenging, so you have to either be creative or call it a season and just live in it.

Alright, thanks everybody for your questions! We'll do another Office Hours episode in about three months, and I look forward to hearing what y'all have to say.

Speaking of hearing what you have to say, what a great segue that is, it's our annual survey time! We need to hear from you about what you're enjoying from The Lazy Genius space, what you'd like more or less of, and what you'd like to see in the future. We've got questions about the podcast, the playbooks, the email list, all the things, and your feedback matters in a massive way. It literally determines what we do and don't do because this work is for you, so we really appreciate your input. As a thank you, we're randomly drawing five winners to get \$100 to a store of your choice from a list like Target, Sephora, and REI just because they do online gift certificates really well, and I hope you win! But thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey whether you win or not. It really is crucial and helpful, and we're so grateful for your feedback. The link is in the shownotes, so click on it, take a couple of minutes to fill it out, and we'd love to have it by July 21st. Thanks so much, y'all!

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week. This week it's Lexie Frankhouser. Lexie writes, "I'm an avid cook and collect all.of.the.things. Spices, sauces, seasonings... my pantry is full of delicious potential because I like to be ready to make a specific meal (or 12) at any given time.

The problem is that I end up forgetting what I have, which leads to buying duplicates or letting a culinary inspiration die a sad death because I can't find what I need.

The solution I found was to organize my pantry by cuisine or intended use type instead of container or type. For instance, instead of grouping canned tomatoes, chickpeas, water chestnuts and refried beans in a can section, they join their buddies in the Italian, Mediterranean, Asian and Latin sections. When I want to make a certain kind of cuisine, the search is faster. Plus it is easier to know what I have and what I need. There is still a space for all purpose ingredients that we use often, but organizing pantry ingredients by cuisine and how they'll be used works way better for me than organizing by the shape of the container the ingredient comes in." Holy moly I love this. What a great idea. If you love to cook different cuisines, organizing your pantry by cuisine makes all the sense in the world. This is a perfect example of doing what works for you, even if it's not the standard way. Most people organize a pantry by size and shape for sure, but that doesn't work for everyone. For Lexie, organizing by cuisine works so much better. I love this. Thanks for sharing, Lexie, and congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

This podcast is part of the Audacy family and the Office Ladies Network. This episode is hosted by me, Kendra Adachi, and executive produced by Kendra Adachi, Jenna Fischer, and Angela Kinsey. 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.