

## #238 - How to Get Stuff Done When You Don't Feel Like It

Hi there! Welcome 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 238 - how to get stuff done when you don't feel like it. How real is this episode, y'all. The number of times I have to do stuff I don't want to do is a very high number, and it's part of life. I think it's important to name what we can be a genius about and what we can be lazy about, but some things - like paying bills - we can't just drop off our task list. There are things we have to do that we don't love doing, and we still have to make time for them. So how do we do that while still being Lazy Geniuses? That's what this episode is all about, and we're going to make it as linear as possible.

So let's start with the problem. Start with the thing you don't want to do. You're sitting on your couch or driving home from work or driving to work or lying in bed trying to find the momentum to get up, and there is something you don't want to do. There's something that's keeping you from moving forward because you just don't want to do it. As we walk through this process of getting stuff done when you don't feel like it, I'm going to use the example of paying bills.

I hate paying bills. There's something about it that breaks my brain. So that's where I start. I walk to the mailbox, grab the pile inside, find a bill, and am reminded that I need to pay bills. I groan and complain and walk slower and roll my eyes and feel like my whole afternoon is ruined because I have to pay bills. I'm pretty sure you don't have to work hard to imagine your own similar scenario.

Here's your first question: do I have to do this now? Do I have to do this now? We get in the habit of responding to the urgent, but some things aren't quite as urgent as we think. Now if I'm going through mail we've gotten over the last couple of weeks and find a bill that is due literally today, much like what just happened with an email I got from my credit card company being like "hey, Kendra, you're great but you need to pay us TODAY or we're gonna get real mad." If you're hit with something you don't want to do, there are definitely times when the answer to "do I have to do this now?" is yes. You do have to do this now. If the answer is yes, just go ahead and do it. Paying overdue bills. Cleaning up an accident in the bathroom where a kid had really bad aim. Feeding yourself or your family because it's 6 o'clock and everyone is melting down.

Those are the kinds of things that need immediate attention. You could absolutely ignore them, but the aftermath is way worse than just doing the thing now. If you don't clean up pee right away, I mean let's just not talk about it. If you don't pay your bills on time, you'll be more in interest and late fees or your power will get turned off. If you don't figure out how to feed your family when they're hungry, they will turn on you and become feral. And chances are, you already know those things are urgent. That's why you jump on them right away even though you really don't want to do them.

But there are a lot of things that feel urgent that might not be. That's why your first question is "do I have to do this now?" And this is not said in a whiny tone like you're a fourth grader being

asked to put away his laundry. It's more intellectual and rational. Do I have to do this now? Is this truly necessary in this moment. Only you can know the answer to that. If I get a bill that just reminds that I have bills to pay in general at some point in the future, I don't really have to pay them now. I can make a plan for when I should which we'll get to, but ultimately I don't have to carry the weight of this thing I don't want to do because I can release doing it until later.

Now as you ask that question - do I have to do this now? - the answer might be no but qualified. Maybe you don't have to do it now, something like cleaning up the kitchen after dinner, but man will you sure be glad you did it now when you wake up tomorrow morning. So "have to" is relative, but you can make decisions based on what matters to you.

Okay, so you've decided if it has to be done now. If yes, do it now. If no, then your next question is pretty simple: if not now, when? Let's go back to the dirty kitchen. If you don't clean it now, when will you do it? When you answer "tomorrow morning" or "tomorrow before the next time I cook dinner," really think about if that's the time that makes sense for you and what matters most. If you're like "No, I am exhausted and really need to just go to bed" then do that. I'm not trying to trick you into choosing only one answer here. But when you ask yourself "if not now, when?" you're giving yourself a context for what's best for you. You can see your scenarios a little more clearly and can make a decision that works.

Let's go back to my bills. I have established I don't have to pay the bills right now, but if not now, when? Because they have to get paid. For you, you have to figure something out for dinner. If not now, when? For real, when? Name your when. If it's not now but it has to happen, then it has to happen some time.

Now before we move on to the next step which is the fun step of using Lazy Genius principles to build a system, I want to talk briefly to the folks who find it challenging to see time this way. Some of you are either "right now" or "later." Just later. If you're not doing it right now, it just exists somewhere in the future. To you, I would like to say that part of your system of "if not now, when?" is to use some sort of technology to specify your "later." A timer, an alarm, a calendar notification. Your brain can think "I'll do it later" and be correct, but you need a failsafe. You need some kind of automated net to move your generalized later to an eventual "right now." And ideally a "right now" that's not stressed out and late and frantically trying to finish something because you forgot that your "right now" was coming up.

### **We'll be right back.**

Okay, so you've named if you have to do something now, you've named when that will be and recorded it somehow. Now it's time to create a small, doable system around that thing, possibly one that you can even replicate. Enter the Lazy Genius principles! We're going to apply a few here as examples so you can figure out how you might use the principles for your own thing you don't want to do.

First up, I'm going to share how I use a couple of Lazy Genius principles to deal with my bills that I hate very very much. Well actually, before I do that, let me say this. Some of you might be thinking, "Why do you have to pay the bills? Can't Kaz do it?" Yes, he can. In fact, he's probably way more qualified than I am on paper because he has degrees in both economics and math from Duke University. Actually as I say that, I'm not sure why the bills fell to me in the first place. But really I do know why. I tend to be more organized than he is, and he also doesn't enjoy administrative tasks. Like at all. They suck his soul dry. Does he mind cleaning toilets or doing laundry or playing pretend with Annie for literally three straight hours? No he doesn't. In fact, he kind of enjoys those things. I do not. And while I hate paying bills, I can manage that hatred better than he can. The division of labor sometimes shifts in a marriage, but for us, I've always paid the bills. I'm fine with that in the broader context. Because it's kind of like the time question. If not now, when? If not me, who? If not me, it's Kaz. And he matters to me, his sanity around this task matters to me more than my own. I'm not sacrificing my own wellbeing for his, but in this situation, I'd rather do it than him do it. He feels the same way about other tasks; he'd rather fold the laundry than have me fold the laundry because I'd really rather not fold the laundry and he doesn't mind it as much as I do.

Okay, so I pay the bills, and these are the principles I use to do it. First, I decide once - a Lazy Genius principle - by naming when I pay all the bills. Most of our bills are due between the 6th of the month and the 13th of the month. So my decide once is that somewhere from the 1st and the 3rd of every month is when I'll pay all the bills. Done. Decision made. That's the beauty of Decide Once. You make one decision one time about one thing until that decision doesn't work anymore. So when I pay bills is decided. Second principle: put everything in its place. This is pretty self-explanatory in that things work more easily when everything has a place and is put back in the place when you're not using it. Now here's something I learned about mail. Mail is a very broad category. Very broad. In fact, if I treat all my mail the same way, I will forget many important things. In fact, there is an entire episode about dealing with paper that I'll link in the show notes, and a big part of that episode is dealing with mail. All that to say, bills cannot go in the same place as catalogs and financial reports that need to be filed or shredded. In other words, bills are urgent, and they cannot be put in the same place as mail that is not urgent. So we have two places for mail. We have one big basket for non-urgent things that I go through when the basket is full, and we have a smaller basket for urgent mail as well as keys and wallets. It's the daily, more urgent catch-all. Those two baskets are right beside each other because I want to be able to triage the mail quickly, but I put the bills in their place. That way when it's the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd of the month, I know exactly where to find all the bills I need to pay.

The third principle I use is batching. Batching is doing one thing all at once. I could pay bills as they arrive. I have an app on my phone, and I could pay one bill at a time when I have it in my hand. In fact, I tried that for awhile, but it didn't work for me. I dislike paying bills so much that being at the mercy of whenever one would arrive would make me so sad. Also sometimes I would be like "ugh not now" and then drop the bill and assume I'd pay it later and then didn't and then we got a \$45 late fee. I would rather batch bill paying. So I do. I grab them all, open the app, pay the bills and do mobile deposit for any random checks, I'm done in ten minutes, and then I don't have to think about it again for another month.

So our path. “Do I have to do this right now?” If yes, do it. If no, ask “if not now, when?” Then mark that time so you don’t forget. Then if you’d like to replicate that process or just make that single task easier, apply a couple of Lazy Genius principles. I would actually encourage you to look through the episode archives at any titles that pop up of things you really don’t like doing. Cleaning the bathroom, cleaning the kitchen, organizing paper like we’ve already talked about, meal planning, figuring out chores for your kids... look through the episode archive on your podcast app, and there might be an episode that applies Lazy Genius principles to your specific struggle already. It’ll give you a good place to start.

And as you go through this process, I’d like to remind you of two other principles that are very important when talking about doing stuff we don’t want to do. One is to be kind to yourself. It’s okay to not like doing something. It doesn’t make you a bad person. And when you put something off and the consequences are worse than you expected, please don’t beat yourself up about it. Be kind, learn, and move on.

The second principle to remember here is live in the season. Remember that certain seasons are meant for certain things. This might be a season of a lot of chores because you’re tending to your own home as well as the home of an aging parent. You might hate washing dishes, and you have a baby who has bottles you have to wash all the time and you’re stuck doing a task you really dislike doing for a season. Some seasons will be more intense with this than others, and that’s okay. Remember to be honest about your season, learn from it where you can, and be kind to yourself in the process.

And that’s how to get stuff done when you don’t feel like it.

Before we go, let’s celebrate the Lazy Genius of the week! This week it’s Angela Kidde Taylor. Angela shared this in the Lazy Genius Facebook group:

After a taco night, I dump all the bits and pieces of leftovers into a taco soup bag for the freezer. When I’m ready for soup, I empty the contents of the bag as a starter. It saves time and the leftovers aren’t wasted.

That’s such a great idea, and I want to take it even a step further. You have leftover meat and sauteed onions and peppers, maybe beans. You put those in a bag for soup. Or you can put them in a bag to use as a topping for sheet pan nachos. In a few days, pull out a bag of tortilla chips, spread them on a sheet pan covered in foil and parchment to make cleanup easier, sprinkle the frozen taco night leftovers on the chips, cover that with handfuls of shredded cheese, and put the pan in a 400 degree oven until the nachos look amazing, just a few minutes. Then top with salsa and sour cream and anything fresh you have around. I love taking leftovers and repurposing them but in a way that doesn’t require me to come up with an entirely different meal plan. This is kind of the same meal, just on chips instead of in taco shells. Super easy. Love this idea, Angela! Thank you for sharing!

Okay, y'all, that's it for today. Thank you so much for listening. Remember you can buy *The Lazy Genius Way* from wherever you like to buy books, and I do read the audiobook version if that's helpful to know. Also if you like becoming more of a Lazy Genius, be sure to sign up for the Latest Lazy Letter, a monthly newsletter with all kinds of Lazy Genius tips, perspectives, book reviews, and all kinds of stuff I don't share anywhere else. I appreciate you listening and being part of this community! 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!