

313 - 10 Questions for the Start of the Summer

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 313 - 10 Questions for the Start of the Summer. Once May hits, it already feels like August is right around the corner. Time is weird, right? Everyone likely feels the urgency of the season in different ways. You're excited to have a break, and you don't want to miss it. You have kids, and they're home either from regular school or maybe even college. You might have a job - a lot of us still have to have those in the summer - and you're figuring out how to keep doing it when everything else seems to shift. You might live in a place that gets really really hot, and you're kind of dreading the management of that. And about 17,000 other things, likely some all at once. So instead of drowning in the overwhelm of this giant, approaching season, let's make it smaller by asking a handful of questions where just one could adjust your thinking in a helpful way.

And don't forget that we'll include all 10 questions in the next Latest Lazy Listens email, so if you'd rather not take notes right now and you just want to answer one or two that stand out, that email will go out next Friday and have everything included for you. There's a link to sign up in the show notes, or you can go to thelazygeniuscollective.com/listens.

Okay! Let's jump in!

First question for the start of summer: what are you most excited about? This could be anything - an experience, a trip, space in your schedule, a person you get to see, a tradition, just the general vibe of summer itself. But name what you're most excited about! Saying it will help you prioritize it.

Unfortunately, we tend to assume that because something matters that it'll automatically happen. And sometimes that's true, but not always. And what we want to avoid here is getting deep into the summer without having done the thing you're most excited about. Naming it helps you prioritize it. It tells you, "Oh, I need to make sure this happens! And also I'm going to look forward to this thing and enjoy the anticipation of it!" It's like an anchor. If you prioritize the thing you're most excited about, your season is going to feel more rooted in what matters. Because it is.

And speaking of what matters, this question isn't quite as intense as when I force you to ask what matters most and make you give just one answer. You can be excited about more than one thing. You probably will be! Prioritize those things.

If you live with other people or are going to spend a lot of your summer with other people, ask them this question, too. In my family of five, if we all name individually the things we're excited about and focus on those things, what a great summer, right?

So that's question one: what are you most excited about?

Question number two: what are you already exhausted thinking about? This is like the opposite of question one, but the point of this question is not to be a Debbie Downer about your season. It's bringing into the light the thing that's swirling around in your head and distracting you from the things that matter.

So what are you already exhausted thinking about? Two responses to that answer. One, is there a way to apply The Magic Question to that thing? What can you do now to make that thing you're exhausted thinking about easier later? How can you lessen the exhaustion? And then the second response to your answer is to note if your exhaustion is justified. Not that it's not real. We get stressed out about stuff and worried about stuff, and that's normal and real. But we all know that we can spin out in our heads about something that we're worried about to an extreme level. Or it's covering up something that's maybe deeper than whatever we're exhausted thinking about.

For example, I'm already exhausted thinking about how to do my job while my kids are home and not yet knowing when my husband is going to be off in the summer - because he's a school counselor and gets some of the summer off - and not knowing when my babysitter can babysit. I'd like to have work days carved out and childcare on the calendar today. I would love that. But because I don't have that and because that's kind of a big deal, I'm already exhausted thinking about figuring it out.

But why am I exhausted by this? You can ask yourself the same question about your thing. Why am I so exhausted by this? It's because I like having things planned. I like having things done. But one of my superpowers is solving problems and pivoting well in the moment. I'm really good at that. I'm really good at being present. If you're an Enneagram person, Ones are oriented to the present, not the past or the future. I spend my present planning for the future so that that present is better than I think it could be. That's not necessary. I can solve my childcare problems right around when I need the childcare. I don't have to do it now. I don't have to let that exhaust me because it's undone. Things can be undone without undoing me, right? So ask yourself not just what you're already exhausted by but why? You could do something now to help make that thing easier later, and you can also name how deeply that exhaustion is justified. Maybe you can release it a little as you still practically solve the problem.

We'll be right back...

Alright, question number three: What are the top three things on your summer bucket list this year? There are two important factors to this question. One is I want you to ask the people you're spending your summer with this question. It's important because everybody has a different bucket list. Everybody has different things they'd really love to do, and all those voices should be heard. So that's one reason the question is important.

And the second thing about this question is that it's different than what you're excited about. You're likely excited about things that you know will happen. A vacation you've already planned. A tradition that exists without much effort. The sun will shine hot if you love the hot sun no matter what you do, right? The thing you're excited about is anticipation of mostly a sure thing. A bucket list is not a sure thing. It's likely something you have to make an effort to do. You have to name it. You have to plan it. You have schedule it so you can do it, right?

You can use a different term than bucket list if you want. Bucket list does present us with our mortality pretty brutally. You know, these are the things I want to do before I kick the bucket. Which is also kind of a brutal phrase. Also a bucket list feels more intense, right? At least it does to me. In fact, I had a conversation with Jamie B. Golden from The Popcast a couple of weeks ago about bucket lists. She asked me what was on mine, just casually over breakfast. And I was like, "Umm, I don't really do bucket lists. They're too much pressure, and I'm too disappointed if they don't happen." And she was surprised by that answer because it would be so different from hers. She doesn't see a bucket list as a to do list or as a disappointment if something doesn't happen. I kind of do. Bucket lists as a concept, as a phrase, when I hear it, it's embedded in my brain as something high stakes. I don't like high stakes. I do high stakes easily enough on my own. I don't need extra.

But I do like thinking about things that would be really fun to do and trying to make them happen. I think removing the pressure of having to do something helps me, and for some reason, asking about a bucket list for a single season feels like lower stakes. I'm not going to say, "Man, I would really love to take my family to London this summer." That's not something Kendra's going to do on a whim, you know? That's a lifetime trip bucket list thing that I actually do what to do and have it written down so I can think about the best span of years to do it. But looking at a singular season that's right in front of me, that's much easier to dream about. It's easier to make a list for right now.

So that's what this question does. It helps you name right now the things you'd really really like to do before the summer is over. Naming them now helps you plan them for later. Put them on the calendar. Prioritize them. Bucket list items don't just happen. You have to make them happen, and that's why we're asking the question, so you have time to make them happen.

Question four. What outfit makes you feel good in the summer? Go ahead and name that summer uniform, y'all. You love wearing long linen overalls and a tank top. You wear the comfiest pair of jean shorts and a solid colored t-shirt. You love a strappy maxi dress. You love leggings and a tank top and a kimono. Pick your summer uniform that makes you feel good, and wear it as often as possible. Don't feel weird if you repeat. Don't think it's bad to buy the same pair of comfy shorts in the same color so you don't have to wait for laundry. If that helps you, do it. It might not matter to you, but I think for a lot of you it will. So ask it now. What outfit makes you feel good in the summer? See if you can turn it into a summer uniform.

Question five: What are your favorite summer sounds and smells? You can add tastes and touch and sights, too, but I think sounds and smells are closer to the marrow. They just really transform things in beautiful ways that are actually doable, right? If you love the sound of crickets chirping on a summer night and you have named that, you'll enjoy sitting on your stoop even more because you know you love that sound. Or you love the smell of chlorine at the pool, and you'll stop and take it in because it matters. Or you love a citrus candle that you burn on purpose. You love the sound of kids playing in a sprinkler, and that knowledge will help motivate you to actually pull out the sprinkler when the kids ask because you can't get the sound without the sprinkler. What are your favorite sounds and smells? Name them so you'll either notice them or create them.

Question six: What summer events need to be made smaller? There are likely things on your bucket list or to do list or general life list that are too big. That might be why the summer feels overwhelming. For example, there have been times in my professional life where I wrote down on my brain dump list "write the book." Because I've written two books. Um, guys, that's too big. It's overwhelming. Writing a book is a huge task. Takes a long time. It's a lot of steps. It does not serve anyone to remain on the to do list as "write the book." That's not a thing. You might have some similar items on your list or in your brain that need to be made smaller. So that's question six. What summer events need to be made smaller?

Make a plan for how you'll break it down whether it's right now in your notes app or on a scrap paper, or it's in a conversation with a partner or friend involved in the thing. Like, if one of your summer items is "redo Peggy's room," that's too big. That for sure needs to be broken down, or it will stay wildly overwhelming and might not even get done because of how many pieces are involved. So make your big summer stuff smaller. What needs to be broken down? And sometimes that process shows you that "oh wait, I have too many big things." Because when you see all the small pieces and how much time and energy and money they're going to take, you realize oh this thing should probably wait until a different summer. Or I need help with this thing. Right? Break down your big summer things now so you'll see what can actually happen.

We'll be right back...

Question seven: What House Rule worked well last summer that you want to use again this summer? Set House Rules is one of the 13 Lazy Genius principles, and one that I really love in its practicality. A house rule is kind of what it sounds like - it's a rule that the whole house knows put in place to keep things running smoothly. I like putting house rules in front of situations that tend to get out of hand, either logistically or emotionally. If wet towels on the floor after the pool make me a crazy person inside - which they do - a great house rule for us to have is hang your pool towels on the pool towel rack when you get home. Our dining room becomes our pool recovery room in the summer time, and the rack is always out.

Now this question has come up before: what happens when people in the house don't follow the rule? The age old question. This might not resonate with you, but to me, a house rule is not there for everyone to follow at all times with their own hands and arms and words and actions. I

honestly don't fully expect my kids, for example, to remember to hang up their wet towels every single time. But by making that a house rule and sharing it as such, it's like it takes the pressure off of me to be the bad guy or to get frustrated that I'm the one always hanging up the towels or reminding people to hang up the towels. It's like the house rule is a partner. The rule shares the load. And I'm following the house rule just like I hope everyone else does. But I can follow it too. I can remind a kid who dropped their towel on the floor, "Hey remember, house rule that towels go in the rack when we get home! I'll hang it up for you, but remember that's where the towels go." I'm hanging up the towel, which might feel in conflict with the point of the rule. But to me, it's not. The house rule is communal. It transcends one person. It involves our home. It's like - I feel a little nuts right now - but it's like the house itself is also partially responsible. We're all in it together, and when that's the posture, it's harder to get mad at somebody for not hanging up the towel, and it's easier to ask them to, to remind a kid to hang up their towel. "Hey, house rule! Hang up your towel please!" That's so different than "I'm so tired of asking you every time to hang up your towel! Hang up your towel!" A house rule makes it so I'm not frustrated by having to repeat the expectation. I don't mind repeating it. How many times have you committed to something and then forgotten? How great would it be if someone was around to remind you of the thing you committed to? So great, right? That's what we're all doing with house rules. A kid will remember and then forget and then remember again. Set the rule, and don't expect to never say it again. In fact, expect to say it almost every day. But you're separate from it somehow. It's a *house* rule. Not a mom or dad or singular person rule. It's a house rule. Everyone follows it.

So back to the question, what's a house rule that worked last summer that you'd like to do again? Or what's a house rule you need? I ask the first question first because sometimes we do things that work and forget about them when the season rolls around again. So look back. Did something work really well last year? Try it again. It doesn't have to work great this year, but give it a try.

And this transitions really well into question eight which will be much shorter: What was something you Decided Once last summer that would be helpful again this summer? Decide Once is another of the 13 Lazy Genius principles and many people's favorite principle. It's a decision you make one time about one thing and you keep doing that thing until it doesn't work anymore. It's different than a house rule in that you don't have to remind people to get on board. You don't have to even tell them what you decided. They don't have to know that you decided once that you say yes to pool snack bar requests on Tuesdays and Fridays and no on every other day. I mean, you can tell them, but they don't have to know. They don't have to know that you decided once to pick up fast food on the way to every swim meet. They don't have to know that you decided once to meal plan based on your Saturday farmers market trip. See the difference? Decide once is a decision. A house rule is a collective commitment. So what's a decision you made last summer that served you well that you repeat? And you can also name a new way to Decide Once that would be helpful based on this season.

And remember, the key to deciding once is that you make one decision one time about one thing until that thing doesn't work anymore. If it stops working, change your decision. You're

allowed to change your mind. Expect to change your mind. Not everything works for every person in every season. Be flexible when something doesn't.

Nugget break.

Question nine: What household task will you be least motivated to do? Name it now so that you can make a choice on how to approach that task this summer. So here's the basic order. What household task will you be least motivated to do? Let's say it's cook. You're like ugh I hate cooking when the routine is so weird. Cool. I hear you. Now your next step here is to make that thing smaller. Is that you're not motivated because meals are so big? Lazy Genius just dinner. Or just breakfast. Or just meal decision making. See what I mean? You can be the least motivated about laundry? What in particular about laundry makes you feel unmotivated in the summer? Is it because of the swimsuits? You don't know how often to wash them and are annoyed at having brightly colored swimtrunks hanging around your house? Get more specific with why that thing is what you'll be least motivated to do. Then name what matters most about that thing and apply a Lazy Genius principle or two to make it easier.

So many Lazy Genius principles will be helpful in this process, and it depends on what you're unmotivated to do and why. But let's say it's the meal planning that's so hard to get momentum to do during the summer. Who wants to plan when you have your kids home and everything is not a whim? Planning is the pits. So a way to make that simpler is to name that what matters is simplicity. Not a variety of ingredients or recipes. Not taking advantage of summer produce. Not eating at home. Maybe what matters is simplicity. So you use the principle Batch It, not the other thing you hear when I say that, and plan the easiest dinners over a two week rotation and then just repeat. Will you eat a lot of take out? Sure maybe. Will you have a lot of cereal for dinner? Sure! My kids are obsessed with that. Will you eat at the pool or the park or your porch or just have a burger and no sides? Yeah maybe. But if simplicity is the point in a task you're super unmotivated to do, make it as easy as possible. Remove friction. Friction comes in the form of complicated systems, guilt, variation when repetition is totally fine, decision fatigue, expectation of following through with the plan to the letter instead of being flexible and pivoting. Remove friction from the household task that you know you'll be the least motivated to do this summer. Do it now before you're in the season so you're better equipped to handle it.

And finally question ten which is kind of two questions: at the end of the summer, what will you be so glad you did and what will you be so glad you didn't do? This can be an event or an experience, but this can also be a posture. You might be so glad you embraced things being spontaneous. You can be so glad you didn't obsess over your body in a swimsuit and that you just wore the swimsuit. And maybe you want to answer this question in both categories, a practical thing and a posture thing. So when you look back, what will you be so excited that you did and so excited that you embodied, and what will you be glad that you didn't do and didn't embody? Your answers might be similar to question one, the thing you're most excited about, but you also might surprise yourself with a different answer. These answers are your clues, your buoys, your markers over the summer season that help you put stakes in the ground and plan the things that matter. Summer is awesome for a lot of you because it has low stakes. It just kind

of floats by. Super casual and easy even though that's stressful in and of itself for a lot of you. But ease is different than complacency. You can be intentional about your summer with these questions and any other that they spark, and your summer can feel that ease even more because it's ease that's rooted in what matters. If your summer goes by in a blur without intention, that's okay. You're not a bad person. But if you don't want that, if you want there to be a smidge more intention than the complacent go-with-the-flow summer vibe, this question in particular will help in that. At the end of the summer, what will you be so glad you did and what will you be so glad you didn't do?

And those are 10 questions for the start of summer.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Emily whose last name I don't know but who I do know is from Beaver County, Pennsylvania. Emily writes this: "Hi Kendra! am a fairly new listener, but am working my way through The Lazy Genius Kitchen and love your podcast. Something I am working on, which I THINK would follow the Decide Once and Batching principles, is my Summer Survival Car Kit. I love taking my 3 young boys (7, 5, and 2) out and about all summer, but the motivation to prepare a bag for the day really derails the fun. So this year your podcast has inspired me to make a survival car kit. I have a giant plastic bin for my van, and I am loading it with an outfit change per kid, water shoes, a towel, plastic baggies for trash/wet clothes/dirty diapers, diapers, wipes, swim diapers, bottles water, snacks, sunscreen, bug spray, and maybe a few treats. :) Now we can up and leave the house without the 15-minute mad dash to get all the necessities gathered! Your new fan, Emily"

Emily, this is so good. This is like a bonus 11th question: what should be in your summer survival car kit? No matter your life stage or summer plans, there's a decent chance that there are things you'd love always having in your summer survival kit. It could be a car kit, or if you use public transportation, it could be a kit that's just by the door. Small, big, comprehensive, or for one particular type of activity... this idea could be a really great thing for everybody's lives! Love this idea so much, and I'm so glad you shared it with us, Emily. Congratulations on being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

One quick favor before we go, we have a survey that we would love for you to fill out. I love filling out a survey because I love anything that's a list and multiple choice, but every single one of you has a voice in this space. We so deeply value your feedback and what you need and want from the Lazy Genius podcast, books, products, social media, all of it, and we can't get your feedback unless we ask and you answer. So if you could click the link in the show notes and fill out the survey, that would be amazing. If what we're doing isn't working, we want to pivot well and serve you better. Your feedback means the world as we craft our intentions for the next year. So please check that link in the show notes. The survey was also linked in last week's newsletter, so if you got that, you can click there, too.

And finally if you're like, "man, these questions are so good, but I need a system for putting them into action and actually making a plan," check out The Summer Docket in our digital store.

It's literally a guidebook to help you make your summer fun the way you want it to be. So answer these questions and then print out The Summer Docket! So many people have said that the docket helped them have the kind of summer they dream of because their dreams have some place to go. So that link will be in the show notes, too, or you can go thelazygeniuscollective.com/store to check it out.

Okay, that's it for today! Thank you so much for listening, and I'm really excited about what your summers will look like based on this kind of thoughtfulness. It's worthwhile work, and I hope you're excited about it. 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!