

#70 - The Lazy Genius Welcomes Fall

Hi, friends! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast. I'm Kendra, 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 #70 - The Lazy Genius Welcomes Fall. I was going to title it The Lazy Genius Starts School, but I didn't want any of you non-moms or non-students to think this wasn't for you. Because it is. The start of school affects all of us in weird ways. We start in two weeks, and I have so many feelings about it. Because here's the thing. Even if you don't have kids, there's something about the start of school. It marks a beginning. It means something. The air shifts, and we start to buckle down. Life becomes more regular, probably busier, and something happens in our brains that didn't happen in during summer break. Transitioning from summer to starting school has some beautiful perks and some interesting challenges, so today we're going to talk about how to see them with Lazy Genius eyes.

Here's our framework for this episode. August feels out of place because it's still summer but it's also fall. It's mentally fall. We talked about that a little last week, about the challenges of having our brain in one season and our bodies in another. Go back an episode and listen if you haven't yet. Here's what I've realized, and this framework is so helpful because it finally has a place, it fits. The start of school is like its own January 1st, right? It's new beginnings and clean slates and all that jazz. That means that August and the few weeks leading up to the start of school, again whether or not you or your kids are in school, is like the holiday season. It's like Christmas. And what do we struggle with during December? It's so stupid busy. There are gifts to buy and experiences to have and memories to make. We try and balance all of these things we need to do and prepare for and still somehow enjoy the restful Christmas season, spending time together and slowing down. Do you see the parallel? August has school supplies and clothes shopping and open houses and summer reading one of your kids forgot to finish. There are a lot of tasks and things to do, but we're still in the summer and don't want to end that season in a desperate rush, just like we don't want to end Christmas in a desperate rush.

Last year, I did a really long series on the holidays, and one of the things that came up over and over again in that series was not wanting to be glad Christmas was over. We look forward to that season so much, have such a tender affection for it in our hearts, especially in like July, but when we're in it, we don't see it, and then we're so relieved when January rolls around to clear the air and take away the busy. But then after the air settles, we feel like we kind of missed Christmas, that we weren't present for it in the way we hoped. The same things happens in August. We get crazy, we forget what matters, we get desperate for the start of school so that things can go back to normal, and then it's not but a few weeks later where we're overwhelmed yet again with how crazy fall feels and ohmygosh how long before Christmas break?

We need a new way, guys. But even seeing the parallels can be so helpful. That's why August feels weird. Because it is weird. It puts us in a holding pattern if we let it, so let's not let it. The first step in that not happening is what we're doing right now. Acknowledge it. Acknowledge that the way you're feeling is understandable, but there is another way. Just like we created a slower, more intentional Christmas, we can create a slower, more intentional August. It's like a

prelude before school starts. It carries tunes of what's to come but isn't exactly what's to come. Simply seeing it for what it is will help.

Now let's think about it practically. Think about how lovely it is in December when you have an epic Christmas shopping day and get pretty much everything you needed all at once? It frees up the days after in such a lovely way. Try and do the same for back-to-school stuff if that's part of your life. Maybe we don't space out the errands to get clothes and pens and notebooks and bookbags and all the things because then our brains are always in active mode. They're always already in school. What if you take a day or two this month, whenever it makes the most sense, and tackle everything at once like you often do with your Christmas shopping? Commit and get it all done so you can enjoy the rest of the season. That's one way to be intentional.

Another thing to consider is transition. Going straight from summer to school can be rough. We often don't give it any clear delineation. One day it's summer with the pool and the popsicles and then we're suddenly running errands for what feels like a month and then it's the first day of school. During the holidays, I'm all about opening and closing ceremonies. Mark the beginning and the ends clearly, even if it's in your mind, but if we're talking you as a student or teacher or your own kids as students, summer needs a clear end and school needs a clear beginning. There are definitely a few days of overlap where you're transitioning from one to the other, and we'll talk about that in just a second, but right now, think about something so simple you can do. You might actually already do it! Go out to dinner the night before the first day of school. Go get ice cream or go bowling as a family. Do something on purpose together where you are almost offering a cheers, a salute to the summer. You lovingly say goodbye and acknowledge it. And then lovingly say hello to school and the fall and acknowledge it, too. It might feel kind of overwrought to make such a big deal about going from one season to another, but if we think about farmers - I love how I'm about to use a gardening example and I don't know how to garden - but if we think about farmers and gardeners and people who grow things in the earth, you have to prepare to begin and shut it down to end. You cut back plants, you cover your beds with pine straw to protect them while they rest in the coming colder days, you have to essentially close up shop because most of the things you grow on purpose in the spring or the summer aren't going to grow in the fall or the winter. Not everything has to work everywhere, and if you try and force that to happen, you're just going to get frustrated. That's why in the summer strategy series from back in May, I encouraged us all to not try and fit the summer into a fall-sized hole. Dinner routines and bedtimes and your own work don't operate the same way in different seasons, and that's normal and good and doesn't have to be a source of frustration. Sure, it can be frustrating, but so much if our frustration is because we're expecting something that isn't realistic. So don't be tempted to cram too much fall and back-to-schooling into these last days of summer. Let it be. Let it breathe. Mark the moment.

Now to finish up, what about that idea of transition. Closing up the summer like we would a lake house or a vegetable garden is good, but it can feel abrupt. I get that. I also get how after a summer of kids at home and free time and a very loose routine, you are itching to put so much structure into your life. August is a chance to transition into that structure slowly. Because if you don't give yourself time and space and slowness to figure out what you're going to need when life becomes more regular, it's like a marathon runner who's getting back into running after a broken leg. You miss it so much. You miss your structure and your routine so hard and want it all back at once, but if you go from nothing to everything too fast, your structure will fail you and you'll be frustrated all over again. Just like that runner who doesn't walk first. You have to walk first, and these next few days even are such a great chance to do that.

So what does that look like? Consider adding one regular routine thing back into your life that might not have been there much during the summer. Maybe you start getting up a little earlier and doing the morning routine that will fill you up in the fall. Get into it slowly, maybe one component at a time. You can reverse engineer it. I love reverse engineering things. So let's say your ideal morning routine in the smack-dab middle of September is you're up at 5:45am, you walk around the block three or four times, you drink your coffee, you read a chapter from a book, you make lunches for everybody, and while your crew is eating breakfast, you get ready for the day. Starting all of that all at once might not go as easily as you hope it will, so go backwards. Take one thing from that routine and start doing it now. Maybe you start setting your alarm for 5:45am and just getting up and sitting on the couch with coffee and a book until everybody else is up and you guys do whatever your summer day holds. Let your body get used to the hour. Or wake up and do your walk or whatever it is. And then a few days later, add another thing. Ease into what you want to maintain in the fall. And consider doing the same for your kids. Start a non-summer bedtime routine bit by bit. Make the mornings a little bit more structured bit by bit. Slowly transition into the fall so nobody's hit in the face with all structure and hates school before it even starts. If you move into that transition slowly and pair that with some sort of moment marker, you know some kind of summer closing ceremony, you're going to find that starting school will feel good. Everyone will be a little more ready, a little more equipped, and not going straight from the pool to school. Ha! Did not intend for that to have a little rhyme, but that was fun. We just need to practice presence where we are and recognize the value of looking ahead just a little and looking behind just a little. We prepare and we remember, but we also stay where we are. Don't jump too far ahead or drag your feet too much. So much of the stress is manufactured by our own urgency and by the urgency of newspaper fliers and Target sales. Lean into the urgency if you want for a day or two, like you do at Christmas, and get everything bought and packed and washed and done, and then rest. Look around. Still have fun. Slowly transition, and you'll be able to say goodbye to summer and say hello to the school year with balance and presence. No desperation. No kicking kids out of the house. No looking back at how you missed out on the pace of summer because you looked into fall too quickly. Go slow. Go slow.

I hope you feel encouraged as you begin this school year, and I hope you remember how fun the summer actually was. Decide on that ceremony, and come tell me about it this Thursday on Instagram. I'll be there live around 12:15pm est to answer your questions. I'm @thelazygenius. Okay, that's it for today. Thanks for listening, guys, and remember to be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. See you next week!