



The Lazy Genius Way

Embrace What Matters, Ditch What Doesn't, and Get Stuff Done

By Kendra Adachi

15-minute read

Synopsis

The Lazy Genius Way (2020) is an essential guide for perfectionists everywhere. We run ourselves ragged trying to excel at everything, but this leaves us exhausted and unfulfilled. Luckily, there is another way. We can identify what really makes our lives meaningful, and put our energy into leading lives that fulfill us. By adopting the practical strategies of the Lazy Genius, we can transform how we live and work, one small step at a time.

Who is it for?

- Perfectionists who want to learn how to relax
- Working parents struggling to balance a busy life
- Anyone overwhelmed by clutter

About the author

Kendra Adachi is the founder of The Lazy Genius Collective. She also hosts The Lazy Genius Podcast, where she teaches listeners how to prioritize happiness and satisfaction in their lives – and get rid of harmful perfectionism.

What's in it for me? Learn how to focus on the things that actually matter.

We all know what it's like to feel overwhelmed. As workers, we're expected to excel. As parents, we're expected to maintain an immaculate home, nurture our friendships, and still have time to post magazine-worthy Instagram pics.

No wonder that most people – and particularly women – feel so frazzled. We're constantly trying to live up to impossibly high expectations in all areas of our lives.

Luckily, there is a way out. Instead of trying to live up to what everyone else expects of us, we can start to tune into our own needs and desires. We can put our energy and passion into the parts of our lives that really matter to us – and find easy shortcuts for the rest.

Using accessible, practical strategies, the following blinks will show you how to become a Lazy Genius. Along the way, you'll learn how to slow down, abandon your perfectionist tendencies, and prioritize making connections with other people.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- why a clean house doesn't always make for an inviting home;
- how taking tiny steps can lead to big transformations; and
- why self-care goes much deeper than bubble baths.

Being a perfectionist is exhausting and lonely – but there is another way.

Do you ever have the feeling that no matter how hard you try, you will never manage to live up to your own high standards?

That's how the author, Kendra Adachi, felt for most of her life. She'd grown up in a home with an abusive father who was angry and unpredictable. In order to escape his wrath, she tried as hard as she could to do everything perfectly. Her room was always squeaky clean, and she was a straight-A student. But it was never enough – her father would find fault anyway. And it was exhausting because she constantly felt like she was failing.

It was also lonely. Adachi was trying so hard to be perfect that she wasn't able to be vulnerable with the people she loved. No one knew that, behind her polished facade, she was actually struggling and in need of support.

The key message here is: Being a perfectionist is exhausting and lonely – but there is another way.

When Adachi moved away from home and started her first job, something snapped. Out in the real world, she had to deal with lots of new demands. When she discovered that she couldn't immediately do everything perfectly, she decided she would just stop trying. She started acting as if she didn't care at all. She allowed her house to become a messy pit, and stopped trying to cook for friends and excel at work. But she was still completely exhausted.

This is because she was still stuck in a perfectionist mindset. She was so scared of messing up that she'd simply substituted not trying at all for trying too hard. Neither of those modes was authentically her. Neither allowed her to follow her true dreams and passions. And even though on the outside it seemed that she had stopped caring, on the inside, she still cared deeply about what other people thought about her. No wonder she was so tired.

Luckily, Adachi managed to find a middle way, which she calls being a Lazy Genius. Instead of racing around trying to get everything right, she started tuning in to what really mattered – for *her*. Having a perfect house wasn't so important. Having a place where people had space to connect with each other was. Spending lots of time weeding in her garden felt like a waste of time. But spending hours baking pies in the kitchen filled her with joy. She became her own compass, and developed a host of strategies to allow her to pursue what she loved – imperfectly.

Real transformation happens in small steps.

All of us have had the experience of being impatient because we couldn't learn something fast enough.

That's what happened to Adachi when she decided to take up yoga. She enrolled in a studio and signed up for three classes a week. She was motivated, and willing, and knew that yoga genuinely mattered to her. But a couple of weeks later, her practice had completely fizzled.

So why didn't it work? In her enthusiasm, she had tried to do too much, too fast. Like so many of us, she was impatient about change. We try to do everything at once, and end up creating unreasonable expectations for ourselves that we can't possibly meet. The changes we make aren't sustainable and, like Adachi, we end up crashing after a few weeks. Then we become very frustrated and resentful that we didn't succeed – and often end up giving up altogether.

This is the key message: Real transformation happens in small steps.

This is another example of perfectionism rearing its ugly head. If something isn't worth doing perfectly, it's not worth doing at all – right? Well, actually, no. As a Lazy Genius, you can value progress for its own sake. Some

improvement is better than none, and if you love something, it's better to do it badly than abandon it completely.

In the end, Adachi decided that she would commit to doing one yoga pose every day. It only took a couple of minutes, and was so easy to do that she actually did manage to fit it in even if she was very busy. Sometimes she'd even be inspired to do it a few times. Slowly but surely, she realized that the pose was getting easier, and she was getting more supple. By taking that tiny step, she'd begun the yoga practice she'd always wanted.

Approaching change in small steps is a key tool for Lazy Geniuses. All the strategies we'll discuss in the blinks to come will only work if they're applied very gradually. Don't try to change every part of your life or apply every technique at the same time. Rather, take just one aspect of your daily routine and tweak it slightly. When that's become second nature, you can adopt another strategy. Real change doesn't *look* dramatic, but the results are dramatic. By keeping the stakes low and taking small steps, you're transforming your life in a sustainable way.

Making fixed decisions can bring calm and focus.

There's a reason Mondays have such a bad reputation. It's the time of the week when we feel like we have to start all over again after enjoying the brief lull of the weekend. It can be overwhelming to get back into the rat race of work, school, and countless appointments.

Adachi decided that she would tackle the problem of overwhelm by making some fixed decisions that she would repeat every week. For example, every Monday she would wear the same outfit, a standard black ensemble of jeans and a top. Immediately, she felt more in control. She could spring out of bed and get dressed without a second thought. That's the power of *fixed decisions*: you don't clutter your brain with unnecessary choices.

Here's the key message: Making fixed decisions can bring calm and focus.

You can apply this philosophy to every area of your life. For example, you can simplify meal preparation by deciding in advance on a regular rotation of dinners that you cook throughout the week. Instead of making lots of spontaneous trips to the supermarket, you can choose a day for doing a large shop at a place you know well.

Making these kinds of decisions in advance is very calming for your brain, because they reduce the need to think and plan constantly. As well as deciding when you'll do certain tasks, you can come up with a detailed strategy for how best to tackle them. Imagine you have to clean a messy kitchen. Instead of haphazardly dealing with items one by one, you can batch tasks together so

that first you're just clearing, then loading the dishwasher, then scrubbing surfaces, and so on. You'll find that you save a lot of time, and are also more relaxed because you're able to operate on autopilot.

So far, we've mainly been discussing chores, but you can apply these ideas to festive occasions, too. For example, you could adopt a few set traditions, like going out for dinner on birthdays, or spending Christmas Eve with your in-laws. Fixed decisions can help with gift-giving, too. Instead of worrying about what birthday gifts you want to give friends throughout the year, you can choose which presents you want to get everyone all at once.

These tactics may sound like they take the fun and spontaneity out of everything, but they can actually make festive occasions more enjoyable, as they allow you to focus on relaxing with the people you care about.

You can defuse stressful situations with a little planning.

So much of life can feel like putting out little fires. Take a seemingly harmless situation, such as picking up your kids from school. Suppose that, today, they're hungry and grumpy. Normally you'd simply prepare them a snack at home. But you know your fridge is empty at the moment, so you'll need to stop by the supermarket. However, right before you enter the supermarket, you realize you've left your wallet at home.

It's in situations like these that we often find ourselves frazzled and overwhelmed. Luckily, there is a way to make these times of day less stressful. Simply ask yourself what Adachi describes as the Magic Question: "What can I do now to make life easier later?"

For example, if you want to make the after-school rush less stressful, you could lay a few snacks out on the kitchen table before fetching the kids from school. That way, their hunger is immediately placated – and you get the chance to catch your breath when you get home.

The key message here is: You can defuse stressful situations with a little planning.

Small amounts of planning here and there can drastically reduce the amount of stress we deal with on a daily basis. For example, if you have trouble leaving the house and getting to work on time, you could pack your lunch the night before. Or perhaps you could leave your keys and bank cards in a special basket near the door so that you'll never forget them.

Another really great way to prepare for pressure points in the day is to establish some routines. By doing so, you'll be better equipped to achieve the things that you really find important. For example, if starting the day calmly is important to you, you could adopt a routine of getting up before everyone else and enjoying a peaceful cup of coffee.

Our professional lives can also benefit from the power of routine. When you're starting your workday, for instance, ask yourself, "What kind of mindset and energy do I want to have as I begin?" Depending on your answer, you can create routines like clearing your mind with a walk around the block, or upping your energy by listening to an uplifting song. All the while, keep in mind that routines should be dynamic, not dogmatic. They can change according to your needs.

Taking small actions to make life easier later and setting up helpful routines can transform your days. They're like dominos lined up to set off a positive chain reaction.

Introducing a few simple rules can transform your home.

Have you ever gone to someone's house and been bombarded with so many rules about how to behave that you felt like you were walking on eggshells?

House rules are designed to create order in the home. But if they come at the cost of human connection, then they're distracting you from what really matters. On the other hand, having no rules can lead to so much chaos and clutter that you won't be able to relax and enjoy being with your family.

The middle ground is to introduce a few simple, practical rules that allow for a good atmosphere in the house and support the humans who live in it. For example, if you get easily overwhelmed by messes piling up, you could introduce a rule that a member of the family loads the dishwasher every evening before bed, and empties it every morning.

The key message is this: Introducing a few simple rules can transform your home.

In order to really tackle clutter, you need to make sure that everything has a place. Your home has a finite amount of space. If you have too much stuff, it will end up exploding out of every drawer and closet, and you'll be overwhelmed by clutter. You don't need to throw away all your possessions and start living out a minimalist fantasy, but you will feel better if you make space in your life for the things that really matter to you.

One solid rule of thumb is to find space to display your most prized belongings. If you love books, for example, then make sure to make the most of your collection by displaying them on the biggest bookshelf you can find. And if you get a kick out of cooking with spices, then make sure there's enough space on your spice shelf. When everything has enough space and its own place, it will become easy to find and use.

On the other hand, you should make a concerted effort to get rid of the things you don't use or value. Broken toys, and clothes and shoes you don't actually wear, just

end up getting in the way. Odds and ends can become clutter magnets on your kitchen counter.

When you start to make thoughtful decisions about what you want to keep in your space, you'll notice that your environment will start to feel more functional and inviting. It will become a space where you feel freer to connect with your family or housemates because you aren't waging a constant war on clutter.

In order to discover what's important to you, you'll need to take some time out.

So far, we've been talking a lot about living according to your own core values and needs, instead of trying to live up to some external standards or ideas about what you should be doing.

Living this way will allow you to *essentialize*: you'll be able to identify what is essential to living a meaningful, satisfying life. Instead of running yourself ragged trying to do everything and *be* everything to everyone, you'll be able to focus on what matters to you.

You may be thinking, *That's all very well, but how do I know what really matters?* This is a very good question. If you've spent most of your life trying to please other people and match their vision for your life, you may have completely lost touch with your own desires.

Here's the key message: In order to discover what's important to you, you'll need to take some time out.

If you feel lost and without purpose, it could be that you need to take some time to learn to listen to yourself. To do so, you'll need to trust your gut feelings and intuition, perhaps for the first time.

To do that, you need to create time for some rest and self-care. Self-care goes much deeper than bubble baths and moisturizing face masks. Put simply, it's doing whatever makes you feel most like yourself. What makes you feel alive, confident, sparky, and comfortable in your own skin? Is it going for a run? Retreating with a book? Going on a jaunt to a bar by yourself?

Like with all Lazy Genius strategies, the trick is to start small. Instead of making grand plans for silent retreats and spa vacations that will occur sometime in a mythical future, look for tiny wedges of time that you can carve out right *now*. Even on your busiest days, you can spend 15 minutes checking in with yourself. On a weekly basis, you could schedule half an hour of exercise, and every few months you can plan a full day to yourself. If even this feels impossible, ask yourself why that is. Often it's about not feeling entitled to rest, rather than not having time.

Once you've tuned into your intuition, you'll be able to identify – and name – your desires and values. You'll also gain a sense of what gets in the way of focusing on

those things. What kind of mental noise do you need to get rid of?

We can't escape difficult situations, but we can change how we respond to them.

Our lives have different seasons, or phases. These seasons are influenced by the natural world, by the rhythms of jobs and school semesters, and by big events over which we often have no control. For example, the arrival of a new baby will completely change our priorities. Losing a job can spark the beginning of a new season of discovery as we search for work.

Some of these seasons are difficult, uncomfortable, and even painful. This is very subjective. While some new parents may feel they're on cloud nine as they look after their newborn, others will experience that phase as lonely and frustrating. Both experiences are valid. Instead of comparing yourself to anyone else, you should acknowledge your own feelings and allow yourself to sit with them – even if it's painful.

This is the key message: We can't escape difficult situations, but we can change how we respond to them.

That's easier said than done, of course. It's very natural to try to escape from difficult feelings. But in many cases, this is just not possible. You won't be able to fast forward your baby's growth, however much you wish she was in the toddler phase already. And you can't stop mourning the loss of a parent just because mourning is so very painful. So what can you do? You can show up for your life – no matter the season – and see what it has to teach you.

Staying engaged is an act of bravery, and one that will allow you to grow instead of shutting down. Accepting where you are isn't the same as giving up. On the contrary, you'll notice that it will allow you to take action more easily. Instead of being wrapped up in doom-filled predictions of the future, you'll become attuned to just doing the next right thing, whatever that may be.

No season lasts forever. Just as sludgy winter is broken by the unfurling of spring, your personal circumstances will change. And if you've stayed engaged with the world, you'll discover that you've changed, too. You'll discover that you can do hard things – and emerge all the more resilient on the other side.

We need to become our own best friends – and then allow other people in.

All perfectionists are driven by an intense fear that they will fail. So they desperately try to fix and change themselves all the time.

Perfectionists often use self-development strategies as yet another stick to beat themselves with. You may even

be tempted to do that with the strategies you've learned in these blinks. You may criticize yourself for not managing to implement all the good advice. Or you may wonder how you can use the Lazy Genius tactics to become a better version of yourself.

But the thing is, you're not some self-improvement project. You're a person, intrinsically valuable just the way you are. So how about showing yourself some open-hearted kindness – the kindness you would show a good friend you care about? How about focusing on the growth you've achieved, rather than beating yourself up for not reaching your own impossible goals?

The key message here is: We need to become our own best friends – and then allow other people in.

By starting to accept yourself, you'll also create space to let other people into your life. Whether you realize it or not, chances are you're probably surrounded by people who want to support you. But they won't be able to reach you if you're still pretending to be perfect.

True connection is possible when you're vulnerable with other people, and allow them to meet you exactly where you are. Is your house messy? Do you feel anxious and depressed? Well, you're in the perfect place to make a friend. Practice inviting people over into your mess without apologizing.

Order a pizza if you're worried about your cooking or are short on time. Friendship isn't about sharing perfect food, or showing the people around you how you've got it all together. It's about making space to connect with people, and allowing them to support you. The great thing is that vulnerability is contagious. When you let your guard down with your friends, you give them the space to do the same with you.

Sharing daily worries and stresses with friends is essential. But it's equally important to make them a part of your celebrations. Celebrate your achievements, great and small. Celebrate the fact that someone's dog had a birthday. Celebrate the fact that it's fall, and the leaves are such beautiful hues of red and yellow. Celebrate the fact that you're alive – imperfectly and wonderfully alive, and here to live another day together.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

Lazy Geniuses are authentic about their own needs and desires. Rather than being ruled by their perfectionist tendencies and the desire to impress others, they pour their energy into designing a life that truly suits them. They know that there's nothing wrong with embracing life hacks that make parenting and domestic drudgery more pleasurable. Lazy Geniuses are pragmatic, and trust that small changes can

yield big results. They practice vulnerability and aren't afraid to ask for help.

Actionable advice:

Don't bring anything home unless it has a place.

The next time you're tempted to make an impulse buy, stop and ask yourself where you will put it when you get home. Is there really space on your cluttered desk for yet another animal figurine? Do you need to stuff two more packets of pasta into your already bursting pantry? If you can't visualize where to put it, then you don't really need it.

Got feedback?

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What to read next: *Accidental Genius*, by Mark Levy

Now that you've learned all about how to be a Lazy Genius, you're ready to transform your life by doing some strategic forward planning and spending your energy on the things that are most important. But if you want to develop your problem-solving skills even further, then check out our blinks to *Accidental Genius*.

You'll learn all about how to develop your creativity through freewriting. The simple practice of scribbling down your thoughts on the page can help you think through ideas, come up with solutions to problems, and get your creative juices flowing. If you're ready to take the next step in your personal development, then our blinks to *Accidental Genius* are just the thing for you.