



139: Decide Once (with Kendra Adachi)

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 139. This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or if you just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful, but also distracting hum of entertainment, you're in the right place. I'll bring you a thoughtful story, a little prayer and a simple next right step.

Today's episode is a bit of a departure from our typical format, but before we jump in, I wanted to tell you about our episode sponsor: KiwiCo, who quite frankly is right on time because it's August, and here in the US, typically that means we're in the midst of back to school shopping, but heading back to the classroom feels a bit heavier than usual these days. KiwiCo is bringing the levity we need along with some remarkable learning opportunities for all ages.

They've created science and art projects that are as enriching as they are fun like the maker crate for kids 14 and up. When my box arrived, it contained everything needed to design colorful clay organizers with my older kids, and can I just confess to you that I, as a grown adult woman, squealed with actual delight when I opened this box. I love how KiwiCo is redefining play with hands on projects that build confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills, whether you're four or 44. Right now, you can get 30% off your first month plus free shipping on any crate line at kiwico.com/nextrightthing. That's K-I-W-I-C-O.com/nextright thing.

Now onto today's episode where, as I teased last week, I've invited one of my best friends in the world to sit down and to talk with us about simplifying our choices when we can, and remembering that we are the boss of our decisions and not the other way around. Listen in.

Emily: Kendra, I have been waiting for this conversation for months and months. In fact, the release of your new book is my highlight for August. I'm going to go ahead and say it.

Kendra: Oh, that's so fun. That's so fun.

E: The release of the book is like today. The release of the book is today and the book is called The Lazy Genius Way. Now this is a short podcast, but if you will, for a moment, take us back, Kendra. Take us

back to... Here on The Next Right Thing Podcast, we talk all about making decisions, but how making our decisions is actually making a life, which I always say in the intro, which fun fact... I record it fresh every single week. That is not a pre recorded intro, even though I say the exact same words. So you can go back and listen to that and know that I just said it.

K: That's funny.

E: The whole idea is that, yes, we want to make good decisions. We want to make wise decisions. Especially these days, decisions feel real hard, extra hard.

K: Yeah.

E: But this whole concept of The Lazy Genius Way. Can you take us back to kind of when that first clicked for you? You've always kind of been this way. This is always how you've seen the world, but I would reckon there was a period of time where it clicked for you in understanding naming it. We talk a lot about naming and how important that is. Can you tell us when that was for you?

K: Well, that's exactly what I was going to say is that, and you named it. You helped me name it. Literally, lazy genius... That was you. It's so funny because people are like, "You're so smart. Your name is so smart," and I'm like, "It wasn't me."

E: You can totally take credit for it.

K: It was Emily.

E: It is you, really.

K: Well, I've always been... You said I've always been this way. I've always been... I was about to say I've always been genius, which feels not what I meant to say.

E: Oh, that's good.

K: I mean that I've been like always trying.

E: Sure. Like the part where it takes the effort of... I'm going to make this the best it can be. That is fully you.

K: Yes, but in all the things.

E: And everything.

K: Not just in things that matter. So I think it came from having kids and just like getting older and realizing this is really exhausting and stupid. Why am I doing this? Why am I living this way? I had also done the whole, "Let's be a genius about everything," but then around kid two, I'd swung the other side of "Well, let's just not care about anything." That was also tiring. That didn't work because I still cared about stuff.

K: So I think it was around sort of baby three, but a little before of realizing that like, “Oh wait, there’s a middle that I don’t really hear talked about that much where like you actually can care about stuff and work hard at things that matter to you and even create systems and whatever that support what matters, but you don’t have to do that for everything. You can let other stuff go.”

K: So as I was figuring out how I wanted to talk about that on the internet...

E: On the internet.

E: Because that’s... What is it if you don’t talk about it on the internet? Did it really happen?

K: It didn’t happen. So I’m trying to figure this out, and I knew I wanted to kind of go in that sort of general direction, and it was just over a course of... What was it? We were on Boxer, I guess. It was just like a bunch of back and forths of “What is this thing,” and then you were like, “What about lazy genius?” And then almost, I feel like if I recall, correct me if I’m wrong, almost immediately, the tagline came right after that. When I did the tag line, it was, “be a genius about things that matter.” It was so exciting.

E: And to make me not sound quite so smart, I do remember you and I went back and forth a lot for at least several days, if not a few weeks with lots of words. I remember Nick Miller from *New Girl* was a big inspiration for us because he’s this oxymoron of a human. He’s a young man, but he’s old and he’s grumpy, but he’s delightful, and I remember feeling like I remember for you, on your behalf, for your work because this is one of my favorite things. If I could get paid to just name things, I would do that.

K: And you would make so much money. You’re so good at it.

E: Well, like I remember writing down opposite things. So that’s why lazy genius felt so right, and when we said it out loud, we were like, “Oh yeah, that’s what it is.”

K: That’s what it is.

E: Isn’t it interesting... Here’s a decision making principle, if you will. So many times what has us so stuck is a lack of a name.

K: Yes.

E: Not just, obviously, with this, with your business, but also... Sometimes people will talk about decisions they have to make or I’ll talk about decisions here on the podcast, and one of the first steps is to... If you can’t state your decision in a sentence, then it’s not time to make the decision yet. I think a lot of us rush too quickly to find a solution or to try to find some relief from the angst that we feel because we know there is an unmade decision, but we just don’t know exactly how to get from where we are to where we need to be.

E: These days, especially in these pandemical times that we’re living in, if you will, I’ve realized that is even more true because our whole life feels like an unmade decision. We have to make a whole bunch of... What used to be one decision is now five decisions. It used to be like, “Oh, do you want to go to that

event?” Now, it’s, “Is it safe to go to that event? Is the event still going to happen? Do we plan for if we do go or if we don’t go? And we have, if we do go...” There’s so many more decisions to make. So the book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, to bring it back to that, is, tell me if I’m wrong, 13 principles, basically, on how to kind of prioritize and also maybe de-prioritize certain things in your life. So can you maybe just give us a broad picture of what the principals are supposed to do for us?

K: Well, the principles don’t work unless you name what matters. The naming is essential because if you are trying to figure out what to do, how to fix a challenge in your life, even like you’re saying, where should my kid go to school? Should my kid go to preschool or not go to preschool or whatever? You get tied up in that, but if you don’t step back and name, what matters about that decision, then it really is hard to feel good about the decision or even know where to move forward. So you’re right. Even naming that is so important. So these principles are meant to not only help you name what matters, but then support what that is. So it’s kind of on either side. It’s hugging what matters from all around.

E: So there are 13 principles and you can use one on its own, you can have two or three talk to each other, you can run one particular challenge through the lens of all 13 and see what comes up because we’re not robots. So there’s not going to be a clear cut answer all the time. There’s not going to be a formula for every single person. That’s why I feel like a lot of books in this sort of self-help space leave us stuck or they only take us so far because you’re like, “Well, that doesn’t work for me. This is your formula, but that formula doesn’t work for me.” So like this book is meant to help you make your own formulas so you can answer your own questions about your own life, whatever’s happening in your life at the time, but you’re right. It all starts with naming what matters because otherwise, what are you even making decisions for?

K: Absolutely. To that point, my next right thing right now is to just choose one of these principles for us to talk about because it’s a short podcast, and I like to try to give people one thing to walk away with. This is an earlier principle that you talk with about in the book, and it’s one of my favorite. It just ties in so beautifully with doing the next right thing, and it is the principle of deciding once.

E: Can you tell us broadly what you mean by that? Then, I would love it if we could maybe both share some of the things that we’ve decided once on.

K: Yes. Perfect. So deciding once is pretty much what it sounds like. There are lots of things that we do in our lives that we decide over and over again. And over, and it’s like a tumbleweed going down a hill. That’s one of the reasons... You talk about this so much on your show in such a beautiful way of... There’s so many decisions. So if you think about just the vat of decisions that you have over the course of a week, a lot of them are repeated and could be decided one time instead of seven times or 14 times or whatever it is. So deciding once can be really, really practical and actionable right now. You can pick a thing.

K: If you think, “I’m so tired of deciding what’s for dinner every single day.” I always go back to dinner because we all eat.

E: Everybody eats.

K: Everybody eats. You’re like, “I’m so tired of deciding what’s for dinner every single day.” Well then decide. That’s why meal planning... It’s not about color-coded charts and having children who eat

everything. It's just deciding one time instead of seven times. That's all it is. It's just deciding for what's for dinner one time instead of seven. Then you don't have to think about it again. Then you have the margin in your life to actually put your energy into things that matter to you, and that's the whole thing.

K: The reason that we feel tired is because our energy is going in every single direction, and if we can cut it off at the pass in places where it doesn't matter as much... One of the ways that we can cut it off at the pass is decide one time.

E: Decide one time. That's where I think the things that you like to talk about and the things that I like to talk about hold hands so nicely because if you move through life doing the next right thing, you might discover you're making the same decision over and over again and over, like you said. So in order to relieve some of that decision fatigue that I think makes it necessary for us to really just focus on the next right thing, deciding once is such a fantastic practice, and I say practice on purpose because that does not come naturally for me.

E: I tend to be a person, though I've learned this in my writing life. I think writers often are guilty of saying, "Oh, I don't feel like writing today or inspiration hasn't hit." I have learned to train myself because I can relate to that, but I've trained myself. "No, you write because you're a writer and you have a deadline." It just takes practice in order to do it, even if it's dumb words and they will never be shared anywhere. So I've trained myself to work in my writing life, even when it doesn't quote, unquote feel like what I want to do or how I want to do it. I think deciding once can be scary for some of us because we're like, "Oh, but what if, what if I choose to wear black on Mondays, and then Monday, I just don't feel like wearing black." I think there's this weird brain that can happen, which... I know you have answers for that too. I'll give one example of something [inaudible 00:13:10] tripped us up as a family for years, Kendra.

K: Oh, I'm so excited.

E: But we decided once and now we never think about it again.

K: Tell me.

E: I'm going to tell you right now. It is the age old question with the extended family of where are we going to celebrate Thanksgiving? Where are we going to celebrate Christmas? My family's in Charlotte and I'm in Greensboro. They're an hour and a half apart, not a big deal, should be easy, wasn't. For years, for 10 years of our marriage. John I've been married almost 20 years now, 19 years.

E: Finally one year, this was probably six years ago, I was like, "You guys, can we just decide right now, we're always going to do Thanksgiving in a certain town. I don't even care if it's Charlotte or Greensboro, and we're always going to do Christmas in the opposite one rather than like the switching back and forth and the telling John's mom where we're going to be and the whole thing." So we just decided that one time, and I didn't know that's what we were doing. I didn't know this is an actual principle. This is a great way to live.

E: We decided to have Thanksgiving in Charlotte and Christmas in Greensboro and we've never really questioned it, and it's worked beautifully. Now that's one less decision we make at the holidays. We don't have an October conversation anymore about where are we going to... So that's one that tripped me up for

a really long time, but now it's working, which is so helpful. What about you?

K: Yes. Well, and I want to say too about the whole, "What if I don't want to wear black on Monday" vibe, and then hearing you just tell that stor, and then it's over. So you're allowed to change your mind.

K: Right because I'm a grownup person.

E: You're a grownup person.

K: We're all grownups.

K: Yes, and I think that we tend to think, like you just said, you make a decision and you're like, "Well, that's the decision I made and I have to stay and whatever," but you're in charge of the decision.

E: That's right.

K: So I think that what happens is when you decide once about something that matters or in support of something that matters or in support of trying to let go of something that doesn't or whatever it is, when you make that decision, it's going to feel pretty good. If it is indeed supporting what matters or ditching what doesn't.

K: If it doesn't do its job, then maybe you don't need to decide once in that area. You can just sort of be like, "I can wear whatever I want.

E: Would you say you might not know that until you decide once and try it out?

K: 100%. In the book, I give the example of like choosing... Because I have like a Monday uniform, but here's what's funny: I don't really do it as much anymore. Do you know why?

E: Why?

K: I have decided once... My closet is almost one fixed decision. I've decided once is that I wear... My uniform before was always chambray top, black pants on Mondays or some version of that, depending on the weather. Well guess what? My whole closet is black and white and denim at this point. I've sort of decided once for everything. I'm Steve Jobs and I'm here for it and it's fine.

K: So it doesn't even really matter as much anymore what I wear on Monday because the purpose of the decision in the beginning was to eliminate the stress I was feeling on Monday of like, "Oh I have to put clothes on. What am I going to wear," because there were so many things that I had to think about on Monday. So that one decision was such a lifesaver at that point, but then it started to actually seep into the entire closet where I was like, "Oh, I actually really like how I feel in this. I like these colors. This is pretty easy. This makes shopping easy. Don't buy color. You don't feel like yourself in color, just stop buying color. It doesn't matter." Another fixed decision for that: I decide once that I buy jeans from Madewell and nowhere else.

E: Amen sister.

K: Just don't even do it. It doesn't even matter, and that gives a lot of freedom for me. Now that decision itself is not a decision that everybody who's listening needs to walk away with because what it's doing to me is supporting what matters to me. What I wear, the simplicity of what I wear, actually does express me. I feel very at home in myself when I'm wearing black and denim and white and gray. That's it. No color.

K: So that supports something that matters to me. That doesn't mean that that works for everybody, but that's the whole idea of the principle. Just decide once in areas where you're like, "I'm really tired of making that decision or this is really stressful or is there a way that I could decide something just one time and see what happens, see if it sticks." What's the thing you say about the garden?

E: Plant what you like and see how it grows.

K: There it is.

E: Do you have any tips or red flags or things to look for in your week that would be a good indication that maybe that's an area in your life where you need to decide once or just try out the decide once principal and see if it works?

K: I think if you catch yourself saying, "I'm not going to think about that right now. I don't want to think... Oh, okay. Uh oh." That's what it is.

E: Oh, that's a lot of things for me. I think I said that like four times this morning.

K: Now, does that mean you have to decide once for all those things? No, but that's one indication.

K: That's an indication where you're like... Why don't you want to think about it? Just take three minutes, just such a short time and stop. That's one of the things I love about again, why our stuff holds hands so well is... You're like the contemplative soulful version that I need, where you're like, "Hey, just chill a second and think about it." So if you just take three minutes and go, "Wait, why do I not want to decide?"

E: There's not a moral judgment on that. It's just information. Why do I not really want to decide where... I can't even think of something because everything is always dinner and clothes because that's what I always think about.

K: If you think, why don't I want to make this decision right now? It can either be an indication of something deeper that is at work that you're maybe afraid to enter into. It could be really what it is... That you don't care enough about it to give it energy, and that is a perfect place to decide one time because you're like, "Oh, I don't care. Who cares what I decide? So let me just make one decision and walk away and see if it works," and if it doesn't you try again. So that is definitely one to pay attention to. When you say, "I don't want to think about that right now."

E: One of my favorite decide once decisions, I guess that's what you would say, that you've made is you give your kids teachers the same gift at the end of every school year.

K: Every single time.

E: That's one of those things, Kendra that I say, "I got to think about that later." I don't want to think about

that right now because you want to honor the teachers, you want it to be meaningful, but you want it to not be the same thing they get. I have teacher friends and we hear the things they get all the time and we hear what's great and what they'd rather not have. Right. So you don't want to be that parent, but then at the same time, it feels like you want it to be personal. When you said, "Oh, I just get the same one book every year for all the... Do you want to tell them what book you give the teachers?"

K: Oh, it's Cozy Minimalist Home. Yes. It's the best because everybody's got a house.

E: Everybody's got a house.

K: Everybody wants their house to feel like home, but they don't want to feel like they're drowning in their stuff.

E: Right.

K: So it's just the perfect book for anybody. It's not like overly faith-based, it's not overly anything. It's the perfect mid-range... It's just perfect for every single person. So that's what I give all my kids' teachers and have ever, since Myquillyn's book came out.

E: It's so great.

K: I think another thing about that kind of decision is, and I talk about this in the book as well... Sometimes we think that deciding once or having a fixed decision turns us into a robot because you're like, "Well, I want to think about it."

E: Yeah that's a fear I think that some people might have.

K: So what I would say to that is if you wait to decide what you're going to get your teachers, you usually are deciding in a frenzy the day before the last day of school because you forgot and then you don't really get them anything that matters anyway, because you're like kind of freaking out about it or you're not thinking clearly, and you just buy every like chevron thing that you can find and like throw a bunch of stuff at them.

E: Nothing wrong with chevron, but like, why not give it a moment and ask yourself, "Is there something that I could give every teacher every year that is personal and meaningful, but it's the same?" And if the answer is no, then no problem, then don't do it this way, but maybe there is an answer that is yes and then you can just go like, "That's what I'm going to..." So like, if you, I guess it was last year that Myquillyn's book was on massive sale.

E: Yes. I remember that.

K: I bought 20 copies.

E: Of course you did.

K: Because I was like, "Well, this is what I give the teachers."

E: They're going to have teachers.

K: They're going to keep going to teach...

E: Well, are they though?

K: Famous last words.

E: Are they going to keep having teachers?

K: Are there going to be teachers to give gifts to this year? I don't know, but again, it was a fun decision. "Oh, I'm going to buy these books and then not only do I know what I'm going to give them, it's already in the house."

E: Right. You already have it.

K: I already have it. Here's the thing. Only do it if it works for you. If it doesn't work, don't do it. There's no point.

E: It's an interesting point you bring up because you said we don't want to be limited by deciding once, and using the teachers as an example, giving them all the same thing, but we will still be limited by something eventually, whether it's time, whether it's... Well, a lot of times it is time. I'm running out of time. I have to make a choice, and then you're at the mercy of where you can get to, what they have available, Amazon's shipping...

K: What your energy level is about it, yes. All the things.

E: All the things. So there's always some limitation, and sometimes, that's a good thing. I think limits... Speaking of Myquillyn, my sister, who also is known as The Nester talks about lovely limitations and how limitations actually make way for us to be creative. I think there's a lot of artists who talk about limitation that way, and the same can be true in decision making.

K: I think that's such a gift. In many ways, the deciding once principle, while it can feel boxed in, in many ways, it can free us up to be a genius about the things that matter. In a way that's the genius, but also the lazy way of... Okay, when I paint my nails, I paint them either white or black. They're white right now because it's warm outside. That feels right. Not to say I'll never use color, but that fun nail thing that you use all the time and your nails are all different colors and so pretty. I never would have known that that would be one of your decisions that you would make in your life. Since I've known you, this is a side note...

E: This is new for all of us. Quarantine has turned you into someone who paints her nails.

K: I'm a nail polish person. I have to make different colors on my toes right now.

E: On her toes.

K: Yeah, I do. In a different color. Every couple of days, I get excited, but guess what? I decided once? I'm only going to use Olive & June nail polish because I love it and it works and it makes me happy. So I'm not

going to waste my time with or there aren't good nail polishes, but I love it. So I have decided this is my nail polish and now I am done and I don't have to waste my energy doing other things. It doesn't really matter. So yes.

E: It's so good. On Sunday night, I like to share some reflection images from the week, like photos that I've taken throughout the week. It's just, it's just a fun thing n Instagram stories.

K: I love it.

E: Somehow, because we go nowhere and do nothing, the two most featured creatures in our home is my cat and my dog. They are both black and white and people are so enthralled by the fact that our pets match, and I want to be like, "Oh listen, not only do our pets match, our house is black and white. Our walls are black and white..."

K: Your coffee cups are black and white.

E: All my coffee cups are black and white. My nail polish is black and white, and if I'm going to paint my walls, I already know. I do have some colored walls in my house leftover from 10 years ago, but if I'm going to freshly paint now, it's either alabaster white from Sherman Williams or tricorn black. Those are the two colors that I paint if something's going to be black or white. I's not like I will never choose a color, but these are some decide once things, things I've decided once.

K: And don't you feel like knowing that, it does not make the decision of whether or not to paint as daunting because what color you choose is so limited. It is fixed now. So you can go like, do I want to paint this water black? Do I want to paint this? It make the decision so much easier.

E: Yes because listen, if you've ever tried to tell yourself, "Oh, I'm just going to paint it white, it'll be easy," have you ever seen the paint chips in white?

K: There are so many white paint chips.

E: There are so many whites. So you just choose your white, even if you... choose your blue cheese or green, whatever it is, just choose that color. Again, here we're talking about some maybe more lighthearted decisions, but I think it is in those lighthearted decisions where we can practice without a lot of risk so that we get... It's almost like a muscle memory that we can get used to deciding once. Maybe, in some ways, in the things that don't matter. So that when we approach decisions that really matter, we have some agency there when we show up to those.

K: Amen, amen sister.

E: Well, Kendra, as we close it out,

E: I just want to ask you... Here we are, the week of your very first book releasing into the world, and in this week where you've never lived this week before, so who knows how it will go for you, but when you think about this week and maybe what's coming after this week, what's your next right thing?

K: To not think about it yet.

E: Nice.

K: Honestly, because if I think ahead too much, then I forget where I am. It's hard to be thinking in the future or the past and still be present, but that is very, very true of me. Because this is my first book and this is the first launch week that I will ever have and all that, I really want to be in it. Whatever I have to do or choose after this week will still be there at the end of the week versus right now. So my next right thing is to not think about it yet, because I don't have to.

E: Amen.

K: That's an amen right there.

E: I'm so grateful you joined me on this very special episode of the next right thing.

K: It's so kind. Thanks for having me. Yay.

Thanks for listening to episode 139 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of deciding once can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow because while it's true, this is a podcast about making decisions, the bigger truth is that our daily decisions are actually making our lives.

As always, you can find me on Instagram @emilypfreeman and online at emilypfreeman.com. You can find Kendra and her brand new book, *The Lazy Genius Way* at thelazygeniuscollective.com or at @thelazygenius on Instagram. I've mentioned this before, but I wrote the forward for this practical life giving book, and in the forward, I tell the story of one of my earliest interactions with Kendra, early in our friendship anyway, and how even then, she was teaching me how to be a lazy genius before we knew to call it that. Again, the book is called *The Lazy Genius Way*, and you can find your copy wherever books are sold.

In closing, here's some further encouragement to help relieve decision fatigue from Kendra in *The Lazy Genius Way*. She writes, "You have permission to let go wonder and go slow or to desire, hustle, and power through. Whatever you choose, make sure you're focused on what matters to you, not what matters to Instagram, your mother-in-law, or the ones in your head saying you're not enough. Every choice matters because each one matters to someone, but hold only the ones that matter to you as you live as a unique, stunning, powerful individual, embracing what matters and ditching what doesn't, you'll empower the women in your life to do the same. I'm glad we're in this together.

Thanks for listening. And I'll see you next time.