

Announcer:

Welcome to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast, a podcast all about leadership, change and personal growth. The goal? To help you lead like never before in your church or in your business. And now, your host, Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, hey everybody. And welcome to episode 439 of the podcast. It's Carey here and I hope this episode helps you thrive in life and leadership. I just want to start by saying thank you so much. Thank you so much to all of you who listen week after week, those of you who are so encouraging. I got to tell you, it's a tough world. And we're trying to create some good space on the internet, some good space in your AirPods, some good space for people to get together and try to figure out how to thrive in life and leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So if that's you, well, it is you because we know our listeners, just want to say thank you so much. You guys mean so much. We have a brand new episode today with Kendra Adachi, more about that in a second. Thank you to our partners too. They make such a big difference I know in your life and the lives of many others. We hand select them. Today's episode is brought to you by World Vision. You can sign up for their free web series, Right Side Up Soul Care with Danielle Strickland over at [worldvision.org/carey](http://worldvision.org/carey).

Carey Nieuwhof:

And by Remodel Health. Do you know our listeners have saved over \$2 million, that's just our listeners, by going to [remodelhealth.com/analysis](http://remodelhealth.com/analysis), use the code CAREY50 for 50% off. So we are going to double down on productivity over the next month. So most people I know are overwhelmed, overworked, over committed. And there was a Deloitte study that was just released that blew me away. Do you know that 82% of all senior executives, CEOs go home and they say, self-described, they're mentally and physically depleted by the end of the workday?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I used to live there before I burned out. And hey, some days are still tough, let's be honest. They still are. But when 82% are saying daily like, "My cup's empty," that's not a great way to live. So I got a new book coming out in September, September 14th actually called At Your Best, which is all about how to beat feeling perpetually overwhelmed, over committed and overworked. I have a lot more about that at the end.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But what we decided to do, what I decided to do is I'm going to bring you some of the other best thinkers in this space. So whether you ever buy my book or not, you are going to get a lot better at productivity, hopefully in managing your life. That includes a brand new coaching section at the end. So we're going to talk to a leader in South Africa today about managing your emotional productivity. So all that and more on this episode.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Kendra Adachi is going to talk about how to decide what to be a genius at, what to be lazy about and how to dismiss the negative voices in your head. She is a New York Times best-selling author. This book became an instant New York Times best-selling author. She is the host and creator of The Lazy Genius Podcast. She's an Enneagram one and former perfectionist who eventually had to give up on the notion that you had to do everything right and be a genius about everything. It's going to be a fascinating conversation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Our partners over at Remodel Health know that blind decisions lose you money, and you don't want to lose money. Sadly, a lot of organizational leaders make blind decisions all the time, especially when it comes to employee health benefits. You just have this plan, you run it, it gets more expensive every year. Well, what you can do is head on over and check out Remodel Health's exclusive health benefits analysis tool.

Carey Nieuwhof:

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Carey Nieuwhof:

Head on over to [remodelhealth.com/analysis](https://remodelhealth.com/analysis) today, and you can get your health benefits analysis. If you use the code CAREY50, you'll get 50% off. So go to [remodelhealth.com/analysis](https://remodelhealth.com/analysis). And yes, it has been a hard time, and World Vision cares about that. And they've got something that they would love for you to check out if you haven't already. If you don't know Danielle Strickland, she is one of my favorite people and somebody who really speaks into my life and makes me a better leader and a better human.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And Danielle Strickland and World Vision have a new series called Right Side Up Soul Care, and they want to make sure you make it through this crisis. My theory is 2021 in many ways is harder than 2020 was, and that was brutal. If you want to care for your soul, go and check it out. You can go to [worldvision.org/carey](https://worldvision.org/carey). And in this free web series, Danielle and leaders in the global church will share how they have learned to practice their faith and feed their soul through difficult circumstances.

Carey Nieuwhof:

There's a lot of difficult circumstances. Sign up today for free at [worldvision.org/carey](https://worldvision.org/carey). Well, let's dive into today's conversation with Kendra Adachi and we'll be back on the other side with some coaching. I'm very excited to take Mzwandile's question too. So hang on, we're going to come back to that. But here's the conversation with Kendra Adachi. Kendra, welcome to the podcast. It's good to have you.

Kendra Adachi:

Thanks for having me, Carey. I'm happy to be here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So how do you know you're a perfectionist? We hear that term banded about a lot. Our mutual friend, Jon Acuff has talked about that so many times in so many different ways. But you call yourself a perfectionist, how do you know you're that?

Kendra Adachi:

I think for me, it's definitely kind of black and white all or nothing, pass, fail thinking. It's the binary thinking. So if something isn't perfect, it's not right at all. There's no partial credit for me in any of that stuff. For things that aren't pass, fail things, things that don't even get grades. So I have definitely lived all of my life trying to hit an invisible mark across an invisible finish line.

Kendra Adachi:

And it's just really exhausting to reach for something that isn't there. But that's the thing is like, there's no movement for me in my own process and growth if nothing counts unless it's perfect. That's a terrible way to try to live. But that's the way I think for me, that's how it's defined, is nothing counts unless it's perfect. And things should count. They should count.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. Wow. What did that... because I'm sure we have a lot of perfectionists, recovering perfectionists listening. What did that do to you before growing up? How did that impact you?

Kendra Adachi:

Well, lots of different ways. I think it's kind of a nurture, nature sort of question, but my life as a kid was tricky because I came from a home of abuse and mental illness and eventually my parents split up. And so there was a lot of... and I'm not an only child. I have a little sister, but she didn't come around till I was seven. So I kind of have like the only child independence to me, but also kind of that big sister, oldest child responsibility vibe too.

Kendra Adachi:

And so kind of all of those things together just taught me implicitly that the only way to make sure that I was okay because home wasn't okay, my life wasn't, so the only way to know that I was okay was to control as much as possible and to make myself and everything I did as unobjectionable and as favorable as possible. And it's kind of like, I think a good specific example is I've always been a good student. That's been where I've... I cannot throw a ball, I struggle with paint. I'm not artistic in that way, but I can study well, I test well, I can retain information pretty well. I was good at school.

Kendra Adachi:

But when you're good at school consistently and you always get A's and then I would bring home A's and the reaction would be like, "Well, of course you got A's." Like, "We wouldn't expect anything differently." And so it wasn't celebrated. It's like the perfection wasn't even named as that, it was expected, that thing that I was like, "I'm going to do this, I'm going to do this." And then it kind of became expected. And I don't know that my parents realized that's how I was internalizing that.

Kendra Adachi:

So often, I mean, you're a parent, we say things to our kids and we don't know how they're landing really. We don't know how our kids are interpreting those things. And so I don't blame them for that.

But yeah, there was just a lot of striving, but for what and to what end? There was no end and there was never a tangible result I could hold on to that made me feel like it was worth it or working and so I just kept trying harder and harder and harder and harder. So, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thank you for being so transparent. And I'm sorry about that background. That's got to be hard. One of the things, Ian Cron's been on this podcast a bunch of times, Kendra who specializes in the Enneagram. And one of the things he says consistently about Enneagram ones, which is your type, you told me that, is that the critical voice in the head is deafening sometimes. I'm an eight with a wing seven. So I mean yeah, I think all humans have a critical voice in our head, but a perfectionist has a particular poison in the critical voice. What does that feel like to you unchecked?

Kendra Adachi:

Oh, unchecked. P.S. I was on Typology last year. Ian is so lovely to talk to.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Isn't he great?

Kendra Adachi:

Yeah, it was such a great conversation. Unchecked, it kind of feels like drowning. It feels like there's the image obviously that everybody knows of you've got the devil on one shoulder and the angel on the other shoulder. But I think that when it's unchecked, it's like I'm just always surrounded by devils, I'm always surrounded. Actually, it's not even devil's, maybe that's not even right. It's always because the devil is the one who's telling you to break the rules in that particular example. It's just more like, there are so many everything, every single thing that comes through my head unchecked is a downer.

Kendra Adachi:

Every single thing is a judgment, is critical, is, "You should have done this differently," is, "How dare you?" Everything is none of it is kind, none of it is ever kind, none of it has any empathy. That inner critic voice has no empathy. And so unchecked, it looks like everything being controlled constantly. I remember I might've shared this example in my book, but I remember when a friend of mine who's also a writer, Emily P. Freeman. She came to my house, it was the first time that we'd ever met.

Kendra Adachi:

And this was when I was deep in it. I had not gone to counseling, I didn't understand the Enneagram. I was just deep in this being perfect and afraid that everyone was going to find out that I wasn't. It was just a constant state of protection because I couldn't be found out. And she came over and on my refrigerator was a year long calendar, right? A dry erase calendar on my fridge. And I had written down some sort of cleaning task every single day of the entire calendar year.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Whoa.

Kendra Adachi:

I know. And she looked at it, she looked at me and she was like, "So wait, what is this? You have a cleaning schedule for a year." And I was like, "I mean, yeah." Because I just thought, "Well, a week isn't good enough, a month isn't good enough." It's sort of like getting the A's and being like, "Well, of course it's A's." Everything was so extreme. Everything I did was so deeply extreme. So my first job out of college was working at a church, I was the youth group kind of event director. And I was in charge of the weekly youth group meeting and all that kind of stuff.

Kendra Adachi:

And my very first day, my boss was like, "Hey, so just get familiar." Like, "Here are a couple of topics that are coming up," and whatever. I mapped out, including with graphics, lesson graphics, I mapped out lessons for six months worth of youth group meetings with graphics included. And I took it to my boss and I was expecting him to be like, "You're the best employee I've ever had. You're the best human I've ever seen."

Kendra Adachi:

And he was like, "Kendra, this is a lot." Like, "We haven't talked about, I've got topics laid out, I've got themes. We're going to pay attention to what the kids need." Like, "This is really lovely. Thank you for being so committed to this job. But also this is your first day. You haven't even talked to me about what I'm going to be teaching on." It was so intense. I'm very intense, Carey. So anyway, those are a couple of anecdotes. But yeah, when it's unchecked, it's so extreme and exhausting. It's exhausting.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yes. Well, I've read tens of thousands of comments on my website and more on social. I think you're describing regardless of Enneagram type or even the idea of being a perfectionist, the internal dialogue that happens in a lot of leaders' heads. We're not kind to ourselves. Acuff says, "I had the worst boss ever. He wouldn't let me go to the bathroom. And if I did, I only had 90 seconds." And of course, that boss is him, right?

Kendra Adachi:

Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's the punchline of the story. It's like, "No other human would do this to me, but when I'm writing a book, this is what I make myself do." You were going to be an English teacher and you ended up as a Lazy Genius. This is a month on productivity on the podcast. So we're going to go there, we're going to go into the system. But so you're in this place where you are just crushing it beyond crushing to the point where friends are going, "Hey, what the heck's going on?" How did you become The Lazy Genius?

Kendra Adachi:

Oh, man. Well, this is my third? Yeah, third kind of iteration of internet job. A lot of things have built up to this, but I started out actually as a cooking teacher. I was a food blogger and then I taught cooking classes locally. And then my next job was very deeply specific. I would write about the intersection of celebrities and pop culture and desserts. It was a very niche topic.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Very natural connection there. Every time I see pop culture and celebrities, I think, "Where's the ice cream?" That's what I'm thinking.

Kendra Adachi:

Exactly. I made cookies inspired by actors and stuff. It was weird, but it was so fun. But then the reason that The Lazy Genius began was because I had started... Well, I'd had a couple of kids by this time. And you don't have to have kids in order to be confronted with your own junk, but it definitely helps, it definitely helps. And so I had two kids. I had two boys two years apart and I wasn't very good at it. I wasn't very good at being a parent. And I'm not a very nostalgic person.

Kendra Adachi:

I was going to say, I'm not nurturing. I am nurturing, but I'm not very emotive. I'm not very soft. I'm a dependable mother and that's kind of how I saw myself then. And so anyway, I have these couple of kids, I start going to counseling. I start to kind of unpack all these things and break down these faulty machines and systems that I built up in my own soul and in my life for years and years. And then as I started to just slowly experience freedom in that of like, "Oh wait. This whole..."

Kendra Adachi:

I mean, even if we want to use Enneagram language, this whole idea of being a number, it doesn't mean that I am bound to be a perfectionist for the rest of my life. That I'm always going to be someone who's great at helping you pack your stuff for a move, that I'm always struggling with anger. What those things are, the beauty to me of self-awareness in any sort of way, whether you use the Enneagram as a tool or anything else is that it demonstrates like, "No, no, no."

Kendra Adachi:

These were coping mechanisms. These were skills that you developed. These were systems that you created to protect you from something, to serve you at some point in your life, right? But I don't have to depend on that anymore. I don't have to be perfect in order to be valuable. I don't have to always be yeah, in bondage to, "Well, I'm just always going to be a perfectionist." The number of times now that people say, "You're not really a one because there was this typo in your email, whatever." And I'm like, "Well, I mean, ones make typos, or maybe I don't care as much anymore." I don't let that be my value as much anymore.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Kendra Adachi:

So anyways, I was experiencing a lot of that loosening and freedom slowly and kind of having to see that having two kids under two, and we had just moved into a house and there were just a lot of transitions in my life, I couldn't hold everything anymore. There was just no way that all these things that I thought were important that I had to be good at literally everything and to be perfect at everything. It was literally impossible.

Kendra Adachi:

And so I started to go like, "Okay, well, I can focus on this thing. I really care about this thing, why don't I focus on this and I'll just let this other thing go?" And I started to kind of practice that in my own life and saw not just the benefits, but I mean, it was deeply freeing. I felt like myself. I started to feel more grounded. It was very slow, but it was really lovely.

Kendra Adachi:

And then as I was writing about Jude Law and cupcakes on the internet and was just interacting with people in general, as my audience grew and I noticed just this through line of people, especially women, I think who were like, "I have to be perfect at everything. And if I'm not, then I'm going to swing to the other side." That's where The Lazy Genius comes from. Everyone's trying to be a genius about everything. And when you realize that that doesn't work, you're like, "Well, I don't care anymore." And you give up and you act like you don't care about anything. But really you care very deeply about some things. It's this sort of try hard or give up spectrum and you think it's one or the other.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right. In other words, I have to be perfect or I'm just going to let it all go.

Kendra Adachi:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm just going to-

Kendra Adachi:

Like, "Screw it. I don't care." Though you care deeply. We're all made to care. We're all made to have a drive towards something and be passionate about something and characteristics and personalities that actually make the world and other people a better place and a safe place, a fun place, an organized place. We need all of it. But if we're all trying to cover all the bases, no one's covering anything and we're all just tired. So that's kind of where I started to think through like, "Should I start talking about this? Is there a way to structure this and start sharing this as my job?" And that's where things began.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what is The Lazy Genius in a nutshell? I know you got 13 principles, we're going to talk about some of them. But if you had to pitch me in an elevator, what is a lazy genius?

Kendra Adachi:

A lazy genius is someone who is a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't, but to them, to the individual person. Because we can't... Like I said, not everything can matter. And I think we know that intuitively or maybe intellectually, we know that, that not everything can matter to everyone, but we sure try really hard to make everything matter. And I think too this is a leadership podcast. I think that people who are leaders, who are in ministry, who are running companies, who are holding a lot of things at once, you feel like you have to be really great at a lot of things, that a lot of things matter.

Kendra Adachi:

And I know that I would often feel like, "I'm not doing a good job if I'm letting things go." Like, "Aren't good leaders supposed to be extra capable and hold all of these things?" And I would say no because that's why people burn out because they're trying to do too much and spinning their wheels in directions that aren't actually benefiting them, that don't matter. So yeah, a lazy genius is someone who is a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't, but to them individually. So it all starts with what matters.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right. So let's talk about that through a leadership paradigm. There is a sense in which and the older I've gotten, the more true I've seen this to be. We all really have a pretty narrow gifting. When I was a young leader I thought, "I'm good at everything."

Kendra Adachi:

Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And now I'm in my fifties, I'm like, "Yeah, I maybe barely half good at this one thing." So I realized most of the world is not my oyster. I don't do that. I'm not mechanical, I'm not an athletic, I'm not... there's lots of things. I'm not a graphic designer, I'm not all these things. But does that mean in a leadership context that there's stuff that it doesn't really matter? Or does that mean you delegate it? Can you be a lazy organization in certain areas or not? How does that work on a leadership paradigm?

Kendra Adachi:

Yeah, that's a good question. Well, in terms of-

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know you wrote the book for people, but I'm just curious.

Kendra Adachi:

I did. Yeah, no, I think it's a great question. I think that so much of it depends on, and this is why there's not a clear, sexy answer because every single organization's priority and mission is different. Every single church's mission is different.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Kendra Adachi:

And that's the freedom I think, is that when you can go, "Okay." We'll stay in the church zone because I worked at a church for five years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Sure, yeah.

Kendra Adachi:

"We're going to be great at missions over global missions, local missions. We're going to have an amazing children's program, we're going to have incredible discipleship. Our worship is going to be so..." You have all these things. "We're going to have community outreach and we're going to have all of these groups that are going to elevate the natural skills that we have and we're going to have fun together. We're going to have this basketball team that competes with other churches."

Kendra Adachi:

And you have all these things and then everybody on the team is like, "I'm sorry, wait, what are we doing? What are we doing? I don't understand." So it's so... I feel like that's where the hustle, that hustle culture of trying to be everything to everyone. To steal phrases from when I was in my twenties like, "Are we going to be a seeker friendly church? Are we going to really dig deep into theology?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Kendra Adachi:

And like, "Oh, we can do both. We can try both." And then when you try to do all of those things, I think it just muddies the mission. It doesn't give people a clear pathway on how to focus their own giftings because you're going in so many different directions. And so it's not that, here's the thing, it's not that you choose... we'll say that your church is going to focus on being part of the local community in some way, that's your mission.

Kendra Adachi:

Does that mean that if someone in your congregation is like, "We want to go to India, we're going to go be missionaries in India," or whatever. That you're like, "No, I'm sorry. We only do local missions. Thank you so much." No, it's not that. It's about prioritizing. It's about what really matters most. It's not that it's... again, it's not that black and white thing. It's not just this or that, it's prioritizing. So if you can name, all of these things really do matter.

Kendra Adachi:

We care about outreach. We care about community. We care about discipleship. We care about creativity. These are all things we care about. But when you name what matters most, when you name what matters most, it lets everything else fall in line. So I've been to a church where you know that, this is actually a little bit of how the churches that I currently go to, I always know when I go to a church that really values creativity in its people. You can see it in all of the things, right? Because the priority is, "To be creative expressions of Jesus and the ways that we've all been individually made."

Kendra Adachi:

"And we want to focus on makers and this is going to be... we're going to focus on aesthetics because we believe that aesthetics really point us to the beauty of creation and all these different things." It's not that the masthead on this church is like, "We only believe in creativity and nothing else is allowed."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right, right.

Kendra Adachi:

It's just about prioritizing and saying, "What matters most here?" And so I think it helps when you're, not confronted, when you're given a choice, when you have to make a decision as a leader of this or that, or how are we going to spend the money or how are we going to staff this or whatever. If you know what matters most, it helps clarify that decision.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And that goes into, so let me see, I'll just try this on you to make sure I got it right but I think I follow you. So it's the difference between the restaurant that has a 17 page menu and the restaurant with five things on the menu, right?

Kendra Adachi:

Yes, exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're probably going to have a better experience with the restaurant that has five things on the menu. "This is all we do, this is what we're good at, this is what we figured out." Or this seems to be my year of the NBA, I don't know why I'm just interviewing all kinds of... keep bumping up against NBA people, which is awesome.

Kendra Adachi:

I love it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But it's like, "Hey, we're going to get good at basketball. We're not going to worry about swimming, we're not going to worry about volleyball or major league baseball. We're a basketball organization. And so yeah, we need HR, yeah, we need coaches, yeah, we need trainers, but we're all going to filter it through that lens." As opposed to this idea, which I do think a lot of businesses struggle with, "We're going to be all things to all people."

Kendra Adachi:

Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So this would be, we're going to get lazy. You can't be maybe lazy about your website. You can't be lazy because that's your gateway. You can't be lazy about the products that you offer. But it's kind of what Steve Jobs said, that he is more proud of what he said no to than what he said yes to.

Kendra Adachi:

Sure, sure.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Than what he actually did.

Kendra Adachi:

A couple of things come to mind when you say that, because first of all about the website, you're right. That for most people listening, probably you don't want to be lazy about the website because that is the gateway. But what if you are a business that is I think about a... there's a local business here called Out of the Garden and they started out as backpack food distribution to kids after school on the weekends who would depend on food at their schools. But they went home and there was no food. And so they would send that through. Well, those families are very unlikely. That's not how their business is going to spread, is through their website. They actually could probably be lazy through their website because the structure-

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a good point.

Kendra Adachi:

... of the business doesn't depend on the website. So I think that's what happens sometimes, is we assume, understandably, I do it all the time, we understandably assume through our own paradigm, through our own experience. But what I'm hoping to encourage people in is just because most people might be a genius about this thing, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to. If it doesn't actually fit in with the priority, then I'm not trying to call out your example. I think it's the perfect example to say like, "Some people actually could be."

Carey Nieuwhof:

No. But every digital content company.

Kendra Adachi:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I think for churches-

Kendra Adachi:

So you better have at least a website.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I better have a decent homepage. And I think for most churches, it is sort of the you need... you can't be lazy about your website. But you're right. That organization you mentioned, it might be a case of having a minimal viable product.

Kendra Adachi:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You've got a homepage, you've got some contact information, a fill out form, a brief mission statement, an about us page and you let it go.

Kendra Adachi:

You let it go.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you update it once a year as opposed to hiring a web developer to make it.

Kendra Adachi:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Killer, right?

Kendra Adachi:

And the other thing that came to mind that I think could be clarifying is when you were talking about the menu and the 17 page menu and the five item menu. So certain restaurants, every time I think of 17 page, I think of The Cheesecake Factory. The Cheesecake Factory is safe, right? That's a safe option.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that's right. You're not going to miss.

Kendra Adachi:

You're not really going to miss anything. It's not going to be the greatest meal you've ever had, but you'll be fine. Everybody can get their needs met the way that they need to, but you're not writing home about The Cheesecake Factory. But that's not their purpose, that's not their goal. Their goal is that when you have a big group of people, you have family visiting and you're all going out to dinner and you're like, "Well, nobody can agree on anything. Let's go to The Cheesecake Factory, they have 17 pages of options."

Kendra Adachi:

That's their whole thing, is to be safe, is to be a safe option. That's not a bad thing. If that's what matters, do that. Now for the five menu, the five item menu restaurant, that restaurant is not for everybody. It's just not going to be. And so I think that that's another thing to pay attention to as leaders, is that if you try and have a 17 page menu, it's not that you're going to make everybody happy. You're going to make everybody be like, "Yeah, okay, cool." But if you really want to go into that thing, then having the specifics.

Carey Nieuwhof:

In restating it Kendra, maybe it's, you've gotten really comfortable with yourself. Is that fair?

Kendra Adachi:

Me personally or in general?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Like you've gotten comfortable saying... Well, when it comes to, "Here's what I'm going to focus on and here's the things I'm not." That idea of here's what we are as an organization, here's what we specialize in as a church and here's what we don't. It's a little more like that. So you might be the 17 page menu, or you might be the five item menu, but you're like, "That's cool. I don't feel the pressure to add pages two through five and the 17 person menu doesn't feel that they have to be a five item menu."

Kendra Adachi:

100%.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is that what you're talking about?

Kendra Adachi:

It is, it is. And I-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay, that's super clarifying.

Kendra Adachi:

Yeah. Because I think that we assume... Let's see, how do I say this? Whenever an individual is really passionate about something, right? You care about something so so deeply, it is in your marrow, it matters to you. You can clarify that to a point. Because it matters to you so deeply as a leader, you're like you want to be an evangelist for that thing and our hope really is that everyone resonates with it. Because when something is so deeply personal to us and someone does not resonate with it, they can very quickly lead to like, "Oh, well, something is wrong with me." Or we're not comfortable with what we have to offer not being for everyone.

Kendra Adachi:

And so the more, it's exactly what you just said, the more comfortable you are with who you are, where you're leading your team, your business, your church, whatever it is, wherever you're leading them to go based on what matters most to you, there has to be a practice of accepting and even embracing if this person is not happy here, if we're not serving them because this is our priority, but that person's priority is over here, that this is actually not the right place for them.

Kendra Adachi:

There are other places that are beautiful for them. It's not like, "Get out of here." It's just more like... It's kind, it's actually a really kind thing to, I think, to be specific. If you're choosing to be specific about... if you don't want to be the 17 page menu, there's a kindness there because the people who really resonate with that thing are going to attach quicker, they're going to be more passionate and excited about it and want to be part of that thing. And they're going to understand what you're trying to do more. And so I think you're absolutely right. It's being comfortable with yourself and with what matters to you but part of that has to be being okay with, or at least having the process to get through in your own head being okay with it not being for everyone because that can be really hard.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you have advice for people on how to get comfortable with that idea? Because I think you've stumbled on a really tough nut. For a lot of people they're like, "Well, no, but I need to have six months of curriculum planned out in advance. I got to have something to clean every day for the next 365." Like, "Thank you so much for your opinion, but you don't understand. I need to be that person." Can you talk about the process of letting go and discernment? Because I wonder if there's a fear underneath that, "Well, what if I let go of the wrong thing? What if I get lazy about something I should be genius about or I decide to be genius about something I should be lazy about?"

Kendra Adachi:

Sure. No, it's totally true. My question to that would super dupe be therapy. I think that's really important part of being comfortable with those things. And I-

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've been through my share. I can say yeah, I agree, amen.

Kendra Adachi:

I don't say that in a joking way really. It's like-

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, no, no.

Kendra Adachi:

Or in a not joking, but in a dismissive way. It's like we all have stories and we all have hurt that we probably don't know we're carrying. We all have lenses that we see the world through based on things that have happened to us before. And those things are reinforced. The longer we go without naming them maybe, the longer that they become defense mechanisms or systems or personalities because I learned this from Ian, personality is a construct, personality is a construct. It is.

Kendra Adachi:

And so... which is a really scary thing to say out loud if you haven't gone into any of that. You're like, "I'm sorry, what? Personality is not a construct." But it is. All of these things have been weaving together for years. And it's really a unique situation for a person to be self-aware about all of that without some help. It's just really hard to do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I think you need help to get comfortable with that fact. 25-year-old me, 35-year-old me would've been like, "No. Hit pause on this. I'm going to skip to the next episode because I'm good at everything." What was that inside me that was driving that?

Kendra Adachi:

Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So this is a really good philosophical framework because I'm glad we... It's surprising that we spent this much time on it, Kendra, but here's why I'm grateful we did. You're going to give some hyper practical tips. And honestly, if you haven't done the deep work, the soul work, the cleansing work, your little strategies, hacks and things will probably fall apart. Is that fair?

Kendra Adachi:

I think it's pretty fair.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's like, could you just go back and fill in the other 300 days after you swipe it off the fridge? You're like, "I still need to do that." Right?

Kendra Adachi:

Well, and I think that's why I find this particular approach in The Lazy Genius way to be really valuable for people to start to kind of shine a light in those dark places where they realize that the hack and the trick and the applying this one principle in this place is great, but it can only take you so far. And that is because every single thing, every single thing about everything that I put into the world begins with what matters to you.

Kendra Adachi:

And it's really, really hard to articulate that if you're like, "Well, I have no idea. I don't even know who I am." Or, "I'm always caring about everyone else's needs and so everything matters." And well, if I let this, like you were saying before, if I let this thing go, then that's the worst. I can't let anything go. And you don't have a framework to say like, "Well, what's the worst that can happen if you choose the wrong thing?"

Kendra Adachi:

There's also so much morality on things that don't need moral value. There are a lot of things that we say are right or wrong and they're not right or wrong at all, they're just different things. And so there's so much pressure that we put on ourselves to get it right all the time and to not mess up and that we can't... What's the worst that can happen if you pick the wrong thing? Well, you stop and you pick a different thing.

Kendra Adachi:

It doesn't have to feel so desperately urgent all the time. And that's something that is hard to accept and practice when we don't have a language to better understand ourselves. So naming what matters, being forced into that, of like, "This works the best if you know what matters to you." And so many people are like, "Well, how do you do that? How do you name what matters?" It kind of opens the door to this exploration that we're talking about.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So let's switch to practical. What did you decide still matters that you want to be genius about? Give us a list of three or four. And then tell me some things that you decided to push to the lazy side.

Kendra Adachi:

Well, it's funny because your season matters. The things that you decide to be a genius about, it could be like, "What am I doing about this week?" Because this week is a really different looking week than next week. And I just need to think about-

Carey Nieuwhof:

But this is not decades long decision.

Kendra Adachi:

It doesn't have to be decades. I do think that there are things because of our humanity, because of how we're made, there are things that we do deeply carry and care about for a long time. Like community and gathering will always be something that I care deeply about, always. Now it looks different as I go through my life. It definitely looked different in 2020 because I couldn't have people in my home. I couldn't gather together, I couldn't connect with my people.

Kendra Adachi:

It was a very dark time because that is something that matters to me so much. It makes me want to cry thinking about it. It matters to me so much. And so I think that's the first thing, is to not put a certain time limit on it, or like, "This is my forever choice." It's not your forever choice. It is for a season and you get to decide what that season is. Like if you have... I remember, I think I put this example in the book too.

Kendra Adachi:

There was a woman who sent me a message on Instagram and she said, "So I've got two boys who are in middle school and high school or something and they're both on traveling baseball teams. And I just can't figure out how our whole family can eat dinner every night at 5:30 because we have practice. I can't figure it out. What do I do?" And I said, "This isn't the season for dinner at the table at 5:30. It's just not. You're not doing anything wrong. This is just a season you're in. And so it's time to shift.

Kendra Adachi:

What really matters here? Is it that you want to see your whole... You want to gather as a family unit every day? Is that really what matters? And dinner used to be the placeholder for that and now the dinner's gone, you just think the problem is that dinner's gone. Not necessarily that maybe we need to rethink what to do with this connection that we're missing. So it could be like, all right, you could have family breakfast. You could, this is the season for picking up takeout and eating it in the back of your... lifting the lid up on your minivan and everybody's sitting out there and eating food before the practice or the game begins." We just get so stuck on, "It's this way," and then it's over. Like, "You have to choose this until you die."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Kendra Adachi:

It's not that way.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's much about values and principles.

Kendra Adachi:

Yes, it is. It is. So to answer your question about what I'm a genius about now, the list is different now than it would have been a year ago, five years ago, maybe even six months ago.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, give us a sample.

Kendra Adachi:

But, yeah. Some things that I... like I said, I definitely want to be a genius about gathering and connecting. That really matters to me. My physical environment deeply, deeply impacts my inner environment. And so I have to, not have to, I choose to be a genius about our main living area. We call it the L because it's an open concept living room, kitchen situation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Sure.

Kendra Adachi:

So we say like, "Tidy the L," to the kids. But that is something that I try to be a genius about. Like this room, this space, I really want it to be clean. Not because of perfection, not because it's impressive, not because it means I've got my life together. Because I feel more at ease in my own body when my environment is not messy. That matters to me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is very hard to explain to other people, isn't it?

Kendra Adachi:

It is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But I'm the same way. If it is disorganized, I feel disordered.

Kendra Adachi:

Yeah, it's hard.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It is really challenging for me. The aesthetic is important. And I've known that about me since I was a kid. I was the kid with the neat room because I just couldn't handle chaos.

Kendra Adachi:

Couldn't handle the chaos. And it's interesting because there has been, especially in... I don't know if this is necessarily true in church culture and leadership, but I know that in parenting and in mothering, there has been this really terrible conflation of order equaling being fake. There's been a conflation of order

and fakeness, that if your house is together or your hair is washed or you're wearing lipstick when you go to Target, you must be pretending because you're trying to hide something. And then on the other side is a conflation of disorder and chaos and vulnerability, that in order to be vulnerable, you have to not care at all and you're just so messy in whatever-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now that's a really good insight.

Kendra Adachi:

And it's not true. I am such a mess and deeply vulnerable and my house is generally tidy. We need to stop assuming things about each other based on how organized our throw pillows are on our couch. It makes me a little bit crazy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So order is really important to you or there's others?

Kendra Adachi:

Order's important to me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Couple of your park.

Kendra Adachi:

Food, love food. I will say it's funny because right now we are definitely in a season and we have been for a few years now of not a lot of variety. I used to cook tons of variety. I love to try new things. I'm a self-taught cook like, "Oh, I just love it so much." But because of the season of life that I'm in with little kids who are pretty picky, we're two working parents. There's just not a lot of time for that. And so we eat the same 20 things kind of over and over again. And I miss that, but right now, that's the season we're in. That's The Lazy Genius principle, is to live in the season. It helps reframe.

Kendra Adachi:

Food does matter to me, but this is a season where the thing that matters most actually is for me to feel enjoyment in the kitchen. And if I am hustling because I don't have all the ingredients that I want for this thing, or I know that my kids are absolutely not going to eat this or even try it, I will attempt to give it to them, but it's just going to be a fight. That takes away that enjoyment. So in order for me to be a genius about food right now, it doesn't mean that I'm making gourmet dinners all the time, it just means I'm choosing, the priority is for me to enjoy it. And because of my season, that looks different than it did 10 years ago.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What's one or two things you decided to be lazy about?

Kendra Adachi:

Gardening my yard. Our yard is really ugly and I know that's kind of a simple thing or maybe even a silly example, but that's the perfectionist. It's like everything has to be perfect. "Your curb appeal needs to be beautiful and your yard is lovely and your home is clean," and all that stuff. And I don't like... I was given pulling weeds as a punishment when I was a kid and so I just really hate it. I just really hate it. And I don't understand, it's a weird thing to say, I don't understand things that grow.

Kendra Adachi:

You know how there's certain things that someone tries to explain it to you and it's so deeply simple and it just doesn't connect? That's how I am with growing things. And so I just don't... I don't care about having a garden. I would like to be the kind of person who grows my own tomatoes, but I'm just not. So I'm going to go to the farmer's market. I'm going to let somebody else do it and I'm going to buy their tomatoes.

Kendra Adachi:

And I'm going to hire a landscape company to make my yard pretty with plants that don't need a lot of maintenance so that I can care about the aesthetic, but I don't have to be the one to do it. So that's one. And then I think the other one that I'll try to take away from home and back into sort of like business and leadership is I have very much become lazy about trying to do everything. I tried to start this business on... Well, I did start this business on my own like many of us do when we start something.

Kendra Adachi:

And it was fine for a while as it was growing and then I was just like... yeah, I was so exhausted trying to do everything myself. And I hired one person just this last week. I hired two more people. We've expanded our team to four people, which is so thrilling. And to see that these people are bringing their individual strengths and their own genius. I can be lazy about that so that I have more time to be good at the things that I'm good at and to spend my time on those things.

Kendra Adachi:

And the more that we all are able to work within our giftings, the better. I think that's why it's like a little side tangent, but maybe you'll understand what I'm saying about this. I get a little bit frustrated sometimes with the language, especially in the church and maybe even in the corporate world too about being outside of your comfort zone. And I think that there's a lot to learn when you are uncomfortable. I think that's a very valuable place to be. But I think sometimes we take it a little bit far that like, "You need to be doing work that you don't even care about."

Kendra Adachi:

I think about Greg McKeown who you've had on the show before. His most recent book Effortless. It's like, "No, do the thing that you are actually really deeply good at that's almost easy to you, that feels like work to other people but doesn't really feel like work to you and everyone is better for it." So I just think there's something really lovely about being lazy about like, "You know what? I'm not good at that so I'm just going to have someone else do it." And to not be territorial about that, to not, let that go.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I hear what you're saying. So I'm going to run through a couple of The Lazy Genius principles. There's 13. If you can give us a little riff on everyone, and then I'm going to ask you if I missed some of your

favorites. So these are random, but I really thought that they held potential for practical implication. The power of advanced decision-making. What is that Kendra?

Kendra Adachi:

So that's the first principle, decide once. Because we have so many decisions and it's just so... I'm not saying anything revolutionary here. It's just really nice to go and make some decisions and not have to think about them again. And you can decide once in literally anything. So you can decide once that we are only going to use this email platform for this thing.

Kendra Adachi:

We're going to decide once that when we're launching a product, that we're only going to launch it for a week, because outside of that, our team just starts to kind of lose it and we're going to have open and close, and then we're going to be done with it. You can decide once what a gift you get whenever you're invited to a wedding, what you're going to wear on a certain day, what you're going to eat on a certain day, what day you call your mom on the phone. There are just so many things that we're like, "Should I do that?" And they take up a lot of energy in our own brains.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, they do.

Kendra Adachi:

Which prevents us from being able to use our energy in those ways that are really, really life giving, on the things that we want to be a genius about. So deciding once is a way to just kind of automate decisions that are less important.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Greg McKeown talks about that, I talk about that in At Your Best about categorical decision-making. Largely in the context, it can work as a yes or a no, too, right? So you could decide once, "I'm not doing breakfast meetings." You could decide once, "I'm not going to do these kinds of events." Or you can decide like I decided a few years ago, "I don't do weddings," which is really weird for a pastor. But our church was growing like crazy, it was my only time with my family. And so one answer is simply, "I'm sorry, I don't do weddings." Now, did I make exceptions? Yeah, for my family and my immediate close staff. Well, if you're my executive assistant who's worked with me for 10 years, then maybe I'll do your wedding.

Kendra Adachi:

Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And if you're not, then I don't do your wedding, right?

Kendra Adachi:

Right, right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So it's sort of that categorical decision-making, that decide once.

Kendra Adachi:

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. And what's so great about that too, is that you make the decision until it doesn't work for you anymore, and then you change it. If you get to a place in your life where you're like, "Yeah, I miss doing weddings. And I have more margin now, and there's a new generation coming up in my church and that I've been spending..." You can change your mind, we can change our minds.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Bring back breakfast meetings, right? We can do that.

Kendra Adachi:

Bring breakfast meetings, right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay, that's super helpful. But that even gets into, if I remember right from your book, like picking clothes that I always wear this on Mondays, or I always wear a black t-shirt, right? It just eliminates decision fatigue, decision-making. So that's one strategy. You talk about home a lot. What are some good rules or shortcuts to bringing order to your home without having the 365 day calendar?

Kendra Adachi:

Oh yeah. Not a great idea, everybody, just that calendar, that calendar. And what's funny.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm so glad you shared that, but you talk a lot about super practical things in the book about keeping things in order at home.

Kendra Adachi:

Sure. That's not one of the ways, don't do that. There is another principle in the book is to put everything in its place. And that is a very practical home one that can be used in other ways too, which I can get to if you like. But it's so helpful to think about your stuff, not in terms of the amount, but in terms of its home. Because I think what we think is that we're supposed to be minimal, we're supposed to like... everybody needs to simplify and have less stuff.

Kendra Adachi:

But for some people, that doesn't necessarily make sense for their priorities, for what matters to them in their lives, for if they've got little kids at home or... I'm looking at literally in front of me stacks of books because I was able to name recently, I would call myself a book hoarder. And my sister was like, "No, you're a book collector. You love books. There's nothing wrong with wanting to love books and having them around." And so I'm not going to get rid of all my books because I have so many, just arbitrarily.

Kendra Adachi:

I love books, they matter to me. As long as they have a place, it's great. So that's why the principle is not just simplify because simplifying is tricky. It's different for everyone based on what matters to you and how you want to even define simple. So I think a broader principle for that is to put everything in its place, which means everything needs a place. So it's kind of like the... Clutter's a magnet, on your desk, on your kitchen counter. You put one thing down, not in its place and then suddenly you're like, "Why can't I see the surface of this anymore? What just happened?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

So true.

Kendra Adachi:

And so that is something that's really, really helpful is to go like, "Oh, this is its place." And taking the time, I talk about in that chapter of put everything in its place about stuff habits. And stuff habit number one is to follow through, to put it in its place. Don't just choose the spot or know, but actually do it because if you do leave it out not in its place, then again, that kind of magnetic, exponential clutter begins to happen.

Kendra Adachi:

And then perhaps you feel unnerved and unsettled on the inside. If you're like either of us, you're like, "Burn the house down." I call it big black trash bag energy. When you feel like your house is just full of piles and you're like, "Just throw it all out, burn it all down. We're starting over, I don't care." And rather than doing that, just put everything in its place.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, that's such good advice. We did a renovation three years ago and there was this little drawer we didn't know what to do with, and I'm like, "I know what I'm going to do with it." I claim it as my junk drawer. That's where my keys, my wallet go. I don't look for my keys anymore because they're always in the same place. I mean, there's a ridiculous stat, I forget what it is. But people spend months or years looking for lost items. You're going to spend what? A meaningful percentage of your 70, 80 years on earth looking for things you can't find? But that's what happens, right?

Kendra Adachi:

And I would say too-

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that's good.

Kendra Adachi:

And I would say too to kind of add out a bonus tip to that one is that when you're trying to find out what the place is, don't think like, "Oh, I need to..." Like, "What's the most aesthetically pleasing place?" Or I don't know. Think about, "Where am I going to look for this? Where's the first place I'll look for this? If I can't find it, where's the first place I'll go?" Just put it there, put it in the first place. Even if it doesn't make any sense to other people. If it makes sense to you because that's the first place you would look, that's its home, that's where it needs to go.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's good. So let's talk about batching. It's been around as a concept for years in productivity. Many have talked about it. What is your take on batching? First of all, define it and then what's your advice around that?

Kendra Adachi:

Well, batching is, yes, that's not a new concept to a lot of people. It is simply to do a repeated task all at once rather than spreading it out, doing that task all at once.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Kendra Adachi:

And I think that what I particularly love about it is that it actually gives you permission to be lazy. So if you are like me, if you are a recovering perfectionist and you're like, "I'm not going to be lazy about anything." I think batching is a productive way to be lazy because we think that things that are automated, sort of getting in the groove, whether it's a mindless groove of folding towels or a creative groove of you map out all of your sermons or something for a whole month on one long day, that kind of thing.

Kendra Adachi:

We think that it's sort of lazy to do that and I'm like, "Yeah, maybe it is, but what's wrong with that?" It's a helpful paradigm shift to go like, "It's okay to actually automate things. It's okay to be lazy about certain things." And you can still get them done. You can still get those things done. It doesn't mean they're forgotten. It just means that you're automating them whether mentally or physically.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You also get a certain flow. If I'm writing a series of emails that might be sent over multiple days, it's easier to get in the groove and then write three of them rather than to write one, come back at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon, try the next one the following morning at 11:00.

Kendra Adachi:

Totally.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's almost like there's a... Cal Newport talks about this. It's almost like there's a stop start cost. What does he call it? The busy hive mind kind of thing. Would you agree with that?

Kendra Adachi:

Absolutely, absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That you get a flow when you're in the groove for a few hours on something?

Kendra Adachi:

Yes, absolutely. And that can be a propulsive flow, that can be a flow that feels like it's getting you somewhere, that you're going to have a result that is really gratifying at the end. And sometimes that flow could honestly be like, "I'm just going to turn on a podcast." It's mindless. Again, it's like folding laundry or washing dishes or rather than washing one dish at a time, you're going to batch it. You're going to do them all at once and just be like, "All right, I'm here for a little while. Let's just wash them." So it's kind of... it's interesting to me that it can give you permission to be lazy, but even for both things that matter and things that don't just because of how batching is structured.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So we've talked about Greg McKeown already, and you have a section in there on essentializing, if I can call it that, figuring out what's essential. I would love for you to coach leaders on getting clarity around what is essential and what isn't.

Kendra Adachi:

I loved Greg's book, Essentialism, it's such a good book. And when I read that and a lot of that is focused on kind of business and time management in your work. But I started to notice how much could be essentialized just all over the place. Even my own thoughts, my drawer in the bathroom. And the way that I process it, it's like a three-step thing. It always starts with what matters, name what matters. Then to essentialize, you get rid of what's in the way of what matters.

Kendra Adachi:

If something is not supporting what matters to you, then go ahead and get rid of it or put it lower on the priority list or whatever. And then the third one is to make sure that you have what you need to support that thing that matters most to you. So for example, like in work, it is essential to me, what matters to me about my work is that I have a single place to go. I need to have one, it's a decide once. Like I used to do my work where I would just take my computer, I'd sit at the kitchen table and then I'd sit at the counter, depending on where the kids were.

Kendra Adachi:

I would just wander to a room where they were not, and it was always movable. And it was really hard for me to get in any sort of groove because of that. And so I named that what mattered to me was one place, one spot that I could work. Now the things that were in the way of that were not having a desk in a secluded place in the house, right? I didn't have... I literally had in our L that I mentioned before, at one time I had three desks in our L, three. Because I kept thinking like, "Well, maybe the desk is wrong. I can't get work done because my desk isn't the right size."

Kendra Adachi:

We sort of like put all this pressure on things that aren't actually important. And then I was like, "Wait a minute. The problem is that the desk is in the wrong room. It's not the desk, it's that what matters to me is quiet and a set space that I don't have to leave. So I need to pick a place where my kids are usually not going to be and put a desk there. That's what I need to do."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Kendra Adachi:

Then I get rid of what's not supporting that and make sure that I've got a computer charger that I don't have to trip over when I'm... Because my desk is my room, I'm literally staring at my bed right now, it's at the foot of my bed. Even for a little while, my computer... This is so specific, but I think details are really nice. My computer, my charger was behind me because I'm an outlet right behind me. Well, when I would walk to my bed at night, I would trip over the charger constantly, constantly. And so it was just simple things like-

Kendra Adachi:

What matters to me is that I have a place to work, but also what matters to me is that I don't get angry and resentful about the fact that I have to work in my bedroom like an animal and I don't have an office. It sort of spirals into this thing. And I was like, "No, wait. Okay, what matters is that I love my work and I have a place to do it. And also what's in the way of that? What can I get out of the way? I need a power strip that goes under my bed. It sends it a different direction so I don't trip on my charger." It's so simple, but it's those things.

Kendra Adachi:

And I've experienced this with my audience for years. It's those tiny things. When we pay attention to those tiny things, they make such a huge difference. If you're just noticing like, "This is in the way of what matters to me. Let's just adjust this one thing. It's starting small." That's another principle in the book, is just start small. Because we think if you're tripping over your charger, you start searching for office space. You start thinking about renovating your garage where your cars aren't in there anymore and you're going to put your office in there. It's like you go so big rather than being like, "I need to plug my charger in a different outlet. That's really all this is."

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's such a good point. I love to sit out and do my work on the front porch in the summer, but there's no outlet. So I have a two and a half year old MacBook Pro and the battery's terrible on it now. I'm waiting for the new one. And I was going to spend like, what are they? \$2,000 for a new one? And then we had an electrician in the house and I'm like, "Hey, how much would it be just to pop an outlet in here?" There was one in the living room on the other side. He's like, "I don't know, 100 bucks, 200 bucks?" I'm like, "Well, that's a lot cheaper than a new computer." And I'm so happy.

Kendra Adachi:

Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It just sits there, it's plugged in and now we have power on the front porch and like... But you're right. You can play these games where I need a computer. I don't like this computer, the battery isn't lasting long, can't go on a Zoom call and then it's like, "Oh, I have a new outlet, now it's solved or a power strip, even better."

Kendra Adachi:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One more principle then I want to see what I've left out, but super practical. Right order. What is going in the right order about?

Kendra Adachi:

Yes. So going in the right order, this is a good segue into the examples that we just had. So everything can benefit from going in the right order, making soup, cleaning your bathroom, getting into a groove in your work. Everything can benefit from going in the right order. And a lot of things can run through these three steps. Number one, guess? Name what matters. So name what matters about the situation. And you can be very, very specific about the situation that you're in in the moment that you are in it, but name what matters right now.

Kendra Adachi:

Number two is to calm the crazy, calm the crazy. Because generally, we need to go in the right order when we're overwhelmed. And usually we're overwhelmed by things that have elevated our stress response that's actually disabling, science corner, is disabling our prefrontal cortex and we can't actually make rational decisions because of our stress levels. Our brain's like, "Oh, you're really freaking out. We need to send our resources to the base of your brain because we're worried about survival right now."

Kendra Adachi:

It's fascinating to me. It's fascinating. So if we can calm the craziness and whatever we're feeling and that overwhelm, then the third thing is to trust yourself with what comes next. And just take a deep breath and go, "Okay, what's the next thing here?" So an example I have in the book is I would always get so annoyed with my kids and markers. And my kids are 11, 9 and 5, and they all love art. And so we have a... I'm not even kidding when I say the basket that we have that is full of markers. You could fit a Saint Bernard in it.

Kendra Adachi:

It is a massive, massive basket and it's full of markers. But what would happen before that, we just had markers everywhere. They were just everywhere. And I would get so irritated with my kids when they would ask to color and that's not great. I want my kids to be creative, I want them to actually be able to do something as simple as color when they want to color. And so when I was like, "Okay, go in the right order. Name what matters."

Kendra Adachi:

What matters is that my kids know that they can color, that they can be creative. That's really great. What's making me crazy here? It's the markers. The markers all over the house are making me crazy. So how can I calm that? And at the time, I didn't have a place for the markers. So putting everything in its place is the principle. I didn't have a place for them. The kids didn't have a place to put them away so they'd just leave them on the floor, they'd leave the caps off. They were in their rooms, they were all over the place.

Kendra Adachi:

And I was like, "What if I got a basket the size of a Saint Bernard and we put all the markers in there? What would happen?" It was great. And it calmed the crazy. But then because I was so overwhelmed

with our whole living situation, I was thinking about, "We need a big old art cart. I need to invest in some sort of like big storage system for all of their papers. I need to have the equivalent of a chore chart on the refrigerator of who's going to clean up the art because..."

Kendra Adachi:

Building this big old machine when really once I calmed the crazy of the markers, it was like, "Oh, we just need to clean up the markers. We just need to put them away. Everything's fine." So going in the right order is naming what matters, calming the crazy, and then trusting yourself with what comes next. And you can do that with any number of things.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, that's great because overwhelm is a massive problem right now and it is constant energy to fight against it. That's a helpful framework. Anything else? Again, there's 13 principles, anything else you'd like to touch on before we wrap up?

Kendra Adachi:

I think probably for this audience a good one to highlight is to schedule rest, that's principle number 12. I imagine that this is probably a group of people who aren't super good at that, or don't feel like they have the margin to do that. When we are in charge of things, when we're running our own business, when we are working in churches, there is such a perceived expectation. I don't know that it's always an explicit expectation, sometimes it's actually an internal expectation to just hustle and hustle, hustle. And it's also complicated.

Kendra Adachi:

I would say for anyone listening who does work in the church, that Sunday is not a restful day. And I worked with... There was a pastor who he was at church all day on Sunday because of course he was. But he still was in the office all five weekdays because that was sort of like the rhythm of like, well, you go to work Monday through Friday. I'm like, "But you're here all day on Sunday working, when are you resting?" He's like, "Well, I mean, I have Saturdays." He's mowing and doing the regular things, trying to cram rest and domestic stuff and hobbies and connection with people and all of this on one day.

Kendra Adachi:

And so I was like, "Dude, you need to pick a day. One of these days don't come in. You don't need to be here all of these days." I think there's just this resistance, not just to rest, but to being intentional about it and to scheduling it. And so that's why the principle in the book is not rest because we're like, "Oh yeah, I need to rest. You're right. You're right, right, right." But if you don't schedule it, you don't do it. You just don't do it. And so that's something that I would say here, is to these particular listeners, is to schedule rest.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'll have a full report on my month off in July scheduled.

Kendra Adachi:

I'm so excited for you about that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I am too. We're recording it before. This will be broadcast months after, but that's part of it, right? You're working ahead so that you can take time off.

Kendra Adachi:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And Kendra it's great. The book is called The Lazy Genius Way. You can get it anywhere books are sold. It's highly practical. I enjoyed the first part of the conversation though, where we weren't practical. Because if you can crack nuts like that, that's going to pay off for decades.

Kendra Adachi:

Agreed.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then the tactics can really do what they're designed to do. But again, if you're chasing yourself around corners and you only listen to the negative devils, the voices, then it doesn't matter what strategies you adopt from your book, from other books. It's only going to give you a partial relief.

Kendra Adachi:

It's true.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So Kendra, where can people find you online these days?

Kendra Adachi:

If you Google The Lazy Genius, that's where I am everywhere. So the book is The Lazy Genius Way. I have a podcast called The Lazy Genius Podcast. I'm on Instagram at The Lazy Genius. And then the website is thelazygeniuscollective.com.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Amazing. Thank you so much, Kendra.

Kendra Adachi:

Thanks for having me, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, we got more where that came from. We're also going to hear from David Allen, the legendary leader from Getting Things Done. Erin Meyer is going to talk about Netflix's culture. Chris McChesney is going to talk all about how to organizationally get better. We're going to talk to Juliet Funt as well, Charles Duhigg all about habits. Mike Todd is back. Well, that's not on productivity, but I probably will ask him one or two questions about that, and so much more. That's what's coming up. Subscribers, you get it automatically. If you're brand new, welcome. I hope you'll subscribe.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And if this episode encouraged you, would you let Kendra know and let me know online, share it on your Instagram. We often reshare on those channels as well. And if you want show notes, go to [careynieuwhof.com/episode439](https://careynieuwhof.com/episode439). There's everything there, including insights and transcripts and links to everything that we talked about. Next episode, as you may know, I've talked about it, I took a whole month off.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And one of the books I brought with me on my vacation was John Mark Comer's brand new book, I got an advanced copy called Live No Lies. I could not put it down. Started texting John Mark said, "This is just genius." And then as soon as I got back, we spent a couple hours together. And well, it's a long one next time, but you want to give it a listen. Here's an excerpt.

John Mark Comer:

If you educate people from birth to believe there is no God, all morality is a social construct often developed by elites in power to keep themselves in power and oppress other people and you are an animal aided by time and chance through survival of the fittest, propagation of the species by domination and the meaning of life is to be happy and feel good and hedonistic moment just don't harm anybody else, keep it consensual, if you tell people, that's the messaging they literally receive, "There's no God, there's no transcendent immorality, you are an animal." If that is the messaging that you hear from birth, then we should not be surprised when people act amorally and in self-interest and in violent ways.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a rich one. So enjoy that, that comes out right after Labor Day. That's our next episode. And I mentioned all the others who are coming up, so make sure you subscribe so you don't miss it. And it's almost time for Ask Me Anything About Productivity. I'm going to talk about your emotional health. Got some tips for a leader who left me a question. And I would love to get your questions. So you can head on over to [careynieuwhof.com/podcast](https://careynieuwhof.com/podcast). And you'll scroll down and you'll see the microphone or the button or whatever. Just click that and leave me a voice message and I will coach you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You got a particular problem, particular situation, let me know. The segment is brought to you, this episode is brought to you by World Vision. You can sign up for their free web series Right Side Up Soul Care with Danielle Strickland at [worldvision.org/carey](https://worldvision.org/carey). And don't miss out on what Remodel Health is doing to help change the healthcare industry period for churches, businesses and not-for-profits.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Go to [remodelhealth.com/analysis](https://remodelhealth.com/analysis) to get your health benefits analysis. Be one of the people saving \$2.1 million, that's the collective savings of our listeners. Use the code CAREY50 for 50% off. Well, it's time for Ask Me Anything About Productivity. And to get into that space, let's switch hemispheres and continents and go to South Africa.

Mzwandile:

Hey, Carey, Mzwandile here from South Africa. Your podcast is such an amazing platform for us young leaders to grow. So being in ministry, having a coaching program that I run and working a lot with young people, it's a super helpful resource which enables us to navigate the space we find ourselves off leading Gen Z. My question then to productivity would be within the emotional component. How do you, especially, because when it comes to your emotions, there's really not a lot of yardsticks or metrics that one can look at to be able to gauge how far in they are.

Mzwandile:

How do you manage or rather I love on your book, there's that needle of At Your Best. So what do you look for within your emotional wellbeing to check if the needle is moving in the right direction? How do you measure productivity in your emotions? Because oftentimes it can translate into other areas of functioning. But when it comes to emotions, emotional wellbeing, how do you measure your productivity? I'm looking forward to hearing from you. Thanks.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thank you so much, Mzwandile. I really appreciate your encouragement about the podcast and your question. It's a perceptive one because productivity is about more than just, "Did you crush it at work?" I've always believed because I did burn out 15 years ago. If you're crushing it at work, which I was, but losing at home, you're losing. And this is about your whole life and this is about you. So any productivity system that you embrace should, as your question implies, really be caring for your emotional health as well and your spiritual health I would add.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So the needles, by the way, if you haven't seen the cover of my new book, and thank you for noticing is really the cover art on the book is a fuel gauge and it's got red, yellow, green. And so you're talking about how do you stay emotionally in the green, in the good zone, in the healthy place? So let me give you three things to look for. These are things I look for in my own life. I would encourage you to look for them in your life as well Mzwandile and to all of you who are listening.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So there are three indicators that I think tell you whether you're emotionally healthy. Ask yourself this question. Do you feel what you're supposed to be feeling? You are, when you're a healthy person, supposed to be feeling the highs and lows of life. And yeah, that means you are supposed to feel the lows. For a while I thought, "Oh, you should be happy all the time." No, that's not actually emotional health. Emotional health means you are feeling the good parts of life and the bad parts of life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now, when you're burned out, a common feeling for people who are burned out is you feel numb. In other words, you don't feel anything. So you're supposed to feel like when someone says, "Hey, we're getting married," and you're really excited about it, you're supposed to feel excited about it. On the other hand, when somebody tells you they have a cancer diagnosis, you're supposed to feel sadness for them, empathy for them. And when you're burning out, you often don't feel anything.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now you might have enough muscle memory to kind of smile and say, "Oh, that's good news." Or to say, "Oh, that's so too bad." But on the inside, you're kind of dead. So what I look for in my own life is when I hear different pieces of news, good or bad, am I feeling those emotions? So that's sign number one, do I feel what I'm supposed to be feeling? Second question is, are my reactions appropriate? Because even people who are burned out and might normally feel numb most of the time, they will have emotional reactions, but when you're burned out, they're often inappropriate.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So for example, maybe you ask your 13-year-old to clean his room and he didn't clean his room. Shocker, right? Okay, so that's probably a three or four out of 10 on a crisis scale at home. But if you start to react like it was a 12 out of 10 and you have a nuclear meltdown on your 13-year-old because, "You didn't clean your room and da da da," that's disproportionate. On the other hand, let's say, we'll pick on your 13-year-old, your 13-year-old comes home with a terrible report card and you should be concerned for him and you're just kinda like, "Eh, whatever."

Carey Nieuwhof:

All right, see, you're getting reactions, but they're not appropriate to the circumstance. So if you have a three out of 10 problem, your reaction should be around a three out of 10. If it's a 12 out of 10, yeah, we all get there once in a while. But if that's an irregular thing where you don't feel anything and then you just snap, that's not good. And conversely, when you should be concerned about something and you just blow it off or you're like, "Yeah, I know he's partying and I know it's not good for him and I know it's hurting him, but I don't really care. I haven't got the energy to deal with that." That's a sign that you might be burning out.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So the first is, do you feel anything? Are you feeling the highs and lows? Secondly, when you are, are they appropriate to the situation? And then the third, shifting gears a little bit, is ask yourself this question, are you becoming cynical? Have you lost hope? When I burned out, I had gone from 95% optimist to about 5% optimist and 95% cynic. And that's not great. So what you have to ask yourself, the question is, are you becoming cynical?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now, I hope to write a book on cynicism at some point. I think this really deserves a deep dive. And there's not a lot of go-to books on cynicism, but one little hack for that is, am I still curious and have I lost hope? Am I still curious about other people? Am I still interested in other people? Am I still hopeful for the world, hopeful for people? Do I believe progress can be made? And if I believe those things, that is a good sign.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So now about the fuel gauge, I'll give you a backstory. So you always debate cover art as an author. For those of you who have published books know that can be one of the hardest parts, right? You did all this work like, "What are we calling it? What is the cover art?" So we pick this fuel gauge and it's red for like, "Hey, I'm redlining it," not in good space. Yellow, which, "I'm doing okay, but not great." And green, which is obviously where we want you to be.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But however, and this is interesting, Mzwandile, we toyed with where to put the needle. So the needle is in the middle of the green zone. One earlier version had the needle all the way at the top of the green zone. In other words, "I'm 100%." And we looked at that and I thought, "You know what? Nobody's 100% all the time." I've been burnout, and 15 years ago it happened, it hasn't happened since. I hope it never happens again. I want to help you stay out of burnout, get out of burnout, never fall into burnout. That's why I wrote the book *At Your Best*.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But I put it in the middle because we live on this side of heaven and nothing's perfect. And however, as a rule, when you're in that green zone, you should be feeling the emotions you're supposed to be feeling. Your reaction should be appropriate and you should be reasonably hopeful. You're probably saying, "That's wonderful. Now I know what to look for, but what if I'm not there? How do I get there?" So obviously that's a long answer, but let me give you a shortcut.

Carey Nieuwhof:

First of all, some of that may involve counseling, obviously some spiritual direction. But for me, I had to get my emotions sorted out at a counselor's as well. A good Christian counselor can really help with that. But then it's still going to go awry from time to time just in normal everyday life. And that is where the *At Your Best* system, which I describe in the book comes in so handy because what it's designed to do is give you margin.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And margin is a leftover space. Margin is extra, margin is, "I have time to breathe, I have time to heal." And so when you get margin in your life, which is getting time, energy, and priorities working in your favor, you'll be able to disentangle some of the mess that is inside you and you'll be able to say, "Hmm, I really didn't respond particularly well to that." And maybe pray about it if you're a Christian like I am.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And margin in itself, when you're properly rested, when you don't have your really big priorities hanging over your head every day because you didn't get it done yet again today, when you know how to say no, when you implement categorical decision-making so that you actually have the time in your calendar to do what you want to do, you will find a lot of those every day aggravations, annoyances, cynicism, your not feeling things kind of go away because suddenly you're in a place where you're living at a sustainable pace.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And when you're living at a sustainable space, when you're out of the Stress Spiral and into the Thrive Cycle in the language of *At Your Best*, you just get emotionally healthier. Now, sometimes you're going to have to go back to a counselor, sometimes you're going to have to drill down on that issue, sometimes you're really going to have to pray about stuff. I get that. But just having margin in your life really helps. So I hope that helps.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thanks for all the good work you're doing with Gen Z, really appreciate that. And if you've got a question, do head on over to [careynieuwhof.com/podcast](http://careynieuwhof.com/podcast) and drop it to me. I've got a few in the bank,

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would love to answer yours though. And if you haven't pre-ordered At Your Best, we have some special incentives on if you act now. I filmed a masterclass in Toronto that I'm so excited about. We brought a good video crew down, poured my heart and soul into it. Right now it's free, after the book launches, it will not be, but right now it's free.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So if you pre-order, fill out the form at [atyourbesttoday.com](http://atyourbesttoday.com), that's [atyourbesttoday](http://atyourbesttoday.com), don't forget the today, [atyourbesttoday.com](http://atyourbesttoday.com), you can get the masterclass free which will give you access to the content of the book. You will also get all of the companion resources for free, and you can take a burnout test to see where you're at as well. So all of that is at [atyourbesttoday.com](http://atyourbesttoday.com). You can pre-order wherever you get your books.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We even have a link to Indie booksellers at [atyourbesttoday](http://atyourbesttoday.com). So check that out [atyourbesttoday.com](http://atyourbesttoday.com). If you pre-order before September 14th, all kinds of freebies come your way. And afterwards, well, you get a book which is really exciting as well. Thank you so much for listening. We're back next time with John Mark Comer. It is a long episode, but one you do not want to miss. I'm so excited for that conversation. And I hope our time together today will help you thrive in life and leadership.

Announcer:

You've been listening to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change and personal growth to help you lead like never before.