

# All hail the return of routine!

BY SHERALYN ROMAN

September, for me, has always been a bit of a 'Happy New Year.' It's a time to start fresh and develop some new habits after slacking off all summer long. I tend to view September as full of optimism and hope. Hope that I'll get back in shape, hope that a 'routine' will make my life easier and optimistic that the cost of university won't bankrupt me! (Perchance to dream?..) More than anything, what I think September offers is a chance to return to a regular routine and as boring as that sounds 'admit it' secretly we all prefer a little routine and structure. It provides predictability and with a Federal election coming up and Doug Ford at the helm in Ontario 'couldn't we all use a little more predictability?

Hopefully you've spent at least part of this past week peeling the kids down off the ceiling, you've cut back on the number of freebies they are consuming and have attempted to get them to bed a little earlier than midnight! Take pity on our poor teachers who are currently using this week (and probably a lot of their own money) to gear up for another school year, decorating classrooms and preparing for your little (and not so little!) ones. The least you can do is start weaning your kids off their sugar summer high and the 'free for all' attitude that, if your house is like mine, has wreaked havoc these last two months. Actually, full disclosure, my house isn't like that at all anymore. Times have changed as the kids get older and for a while there was no havoc at all. Rather, it involved teenagers sleeping in till at least noon or whenever I screamed at them to get out of bed. THEN it morphed in to me having to drive kids to work at ungodly hours of the day or night! If anyone wants a 'return to routine' it's me! Helping to establish a routine and structure a few days before school will help your child transition smoothly and I've been there 'trust me' your child's teacher will appreciate it.

There's a certain comfort that comes from routine. You can plan for regular meal times and maybe even do a little advanced meal planning. Get your kids involved and you'll avoid the common refrain of 'what's for dinner?' or 'I don't like that.' September also means it's time to schedule after school activities, sports and dare I say it, maybe even your own fitness time (or girlfriend time, or wine time 'I'm not judging.) If you've been thinking of trying something new, there's nothing like a new school year to try implementing new routines, try a new sport or even learn a new skill or instrument. (Don't forget to take a peek at the Town of Caledon's Parks and Recreation Guide to see what's available!)

Here is something else to consider. Use September as an excuse to switch gears, literally, from driving in the fast lane, top down or sunroof open, without a care in the world and instead assume a more kid-friendly and responsible driving attitude. In other words 'SLOW DOWN, especially in school zones. Do you know the rules of the road when it comes to school busses? Every year in my neighbourhood I watch car after car swerve around a stopped school bus with it's lights flashing. Don't be that person 'EVER! Check out the Ministry of Ontario website at <https://www.ontario.ca/document/official-mto-drivers-handbook/stopping> in order to refresh your knowledge about the stopping and/or passing rules when it comes to school busses. Do your part to help keep everyone safe.

Oh and don't worry, I can already predict what we will all be saying after just a few weeks. We'll be posting all over facebook about how much we hate making school lunches and wringing our hands over what to serve for dinner. The insane hockey practice schedule your coach just emailed you will require you to enlist friends, family, total strangers and maybe even the odd Uber driver in order to get your kid to all the games, practices, dry-land trainings and tournaments he/she is supposed to participate in. Folks will be asking about how much homework is appropriate for a 5 year old (ummm?...none!) and why is every second letter home from the school asking for yet MORE money? That's the joy of routine 'I can predict all of this even now, during these last lazy, hazy days of summer. What I can't predict? Whether Mr. Ford, who just recently shook up classroom sizes yet again, will make yet another new announcement that will mess with our efforts to establish a predictable routine. Sigh, I guess as it turns out, the only thing predictable about him is that he's unpredictable!