

# KARREN BRADY

OUR BRILLIANT COLUMNIST WRITES EXCLUSIVELY FOR W&H EACH MONTH

“Back to school and having to get everyone out the door by 7.30am!”

**Where's the summer gone? One minute I'm rearranging my wardrobe to stuff the thick black tights into the back of the drawer and contemplating how I'm going to get a bikini body quickly (I thought about trying a fitness DVD, but couldn't find *The One Minute Workout* on the shelves!), and the next minute, I'm shopping for long grey trousers and new pencil cases.**

Yes, it's back-to-school time. For me, this is the key symbol that autumn is drawing in. The simple gesture of going to WHSmith for pencil cases and Bhs for school uniform is the sign that summer has officially closed for business. It's also a sign that I'm no longer going to have the kids at home all day. The dreaded realisation that now I'm going to go from having them in bed until midday to having to get them up, dressed and out of the door by 7.30am. I tried a practice run, but we all overslept! Even the dog looked at me with disgust.

I remember the feelings I had as I approached a new school year as a child, which started as August was drawing to a close. A cross between getting caught red-handed smoking by my dad and finding out your best friend had moved away; deep-rooted sadness you can't shake off and burning anxiety of what punishment was about to be inflicted.

But then I did go to a boarding school run by nuns in the middle of nowhere (which by some parallel universe is now a five-star hotel). One of my worst recall sounds of school is the crossing of a cattle grid. There were two on the approach to my school, which was straight out of a Dickens novel. The first brought on a sinking feeling and by the time you hit the second, which was the point of no

return, the black cloud had descended. No such feelings from my kids, who actually love school. They have never once pulled any of the sore throat, bellyache or earache tricks I was always trying on my mum. With very limited success, by the way. She was always far too sharp for that!

But then my kids' school trips involve things like skiing in Colorado, a week in Rome or even a sports tour to South Africa. What's wrong with camping in Devon and a canal boat trip? Yes, you're right, let's not debate that!

So, it's official. Summer is turning into autumn and, for me, this is far more like a new year beginning than 1 January can ever conjure up. This mini new year feeling also signals that the football season is well under way, and with that comes new expectation. New targets are set and a lot of new energy is required to handle them all.

I was recently called a new name – don't worry, it's not rude; a Life Squeezer, the definition of which is someone who crams plenty into every day, week, month and year. Well, I guess I know all about that. My football club, my two non-executive roles, a new book next year, my work with Lord Sugar, my column, my charities, my house, my husband, and absolutely above all, my two kids.

Yes, I am busy, and with this new season starting, I have to find a new energy and determination. A new school term begins and the summer is officially over. I'm strangely excited about the pencil cases on offer; it's a toss-up between Justin Bieber and Harry Potter in my household. And, more importantly, the bikini diet fades into the Christmas party dress diet, and a much more serious event is about to occur... *Junior Apprentice* starts! w&h

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