

Start school year with consideration and support

By Christina Muryn

"Who decided to send their kids back to school? A good mom. Who decided to keep their kids home? A good mom. Who had already been homeschooling and is going to carry on? A good mom."

When I recently saw this on social media, it brought a smile to my face. It was something encouraging on social media - a rarity. And it is a great reminder that we are all making decisions now with many variables and much uncertainty. We can easily find ourselves in a critical mindset of decisions different than our own. But because we don't always know what's best for others, I want to make a few requests - some old and some new - as we find the new rhythm of the school year.

Be considerate. Consideration means "careful thought, typically over a period of time or thoughtfulness and sensitivity toward others." Both of these are great uses of the word. Hopefully, over the previous few months, you have been giving consideration to others. Being patient with the grocery store teller, or the waitress, and soon the teachers and staff at schools and day cares.

I have tried to practice being more considerate of others. A prime example is when someone sends me a nasty email. I am not talking about a reasonably laid out argument against my decision or viewpoint - I am fine with those all day long. I am talking about an email with false information, cruel words, and no logical argument. When I read these, I try to think of what may have prompted this communication and what else may be going on in the writer's life. Typically, as I read their words again, I can hear the fear of the unknown, stress from other factors, and misunderstanding. Therefore, I don't respond in kind, as "good" as it would feel. Instead, if appropriate, I pause and respond, providing clear information and the opportunity to further discuss.

I ask that as you try to find your new rhythm, you remember that others, too, are finding theirs, all while navigating new stress and uncertainty. So be considerate. Be slow to speak, quick to listen, and lend a helping hand when you can.

I also ask that you support teachers and staff. Man, oh man. Does everyone remember back in March when, on two days' notice, all of our teachers had to completely change how they did their jobs? Let us not forget that their job is always one of the most challenging to start with.