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## Friendship, Focus & Fresh Starts

Dear Friend,

September has a way of making everything feel more grounded. The pace slows, routines return and even the air feels as if it's urging us to reset. Whether you're easing out of summer travel or jumping back into a full schedule, this month's newsletter is here to help you feel more centered.

I always aim to fill these pages with helpful ideas, thoughtful shifts and some inspiration to make life more enjoyable — at home and beyond.

And, of course, if you have real estate questions, want to refer a friend or need a trusted opinion about anything home-related buying or selling, then I'm always here for that, too.

Wishing you a cozy, clear-headed and beautiful September.

Warmly,  
Jim Urban

### The Night Paris Lit Up The World

During September 1937, the Eiffel Tower was reimagined not just as a marvel of engineering, but as a luminous beacon in the Paris night.

During the Paris International Exposition, the tower was illuminated from base to tip in a breathtaking display of electric lights that captured the world's imagination.

SEPTEMBER 2025

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Although the tower had stood since 1889, this night marked one of the first times it was fully lit after dark, which heralded a new age of modern lighting and nighttime urban design. For those fortunate enough to witness it firsthand, the scene was unforgettable.

This moment redefined the Eiffel Tower as a structure and as an experience. Parisians and visitors alike gathered in awe as it sparkled against the evening sky, setting the stage for a future where cities would glow after sunset. From Times Square to Tokyo Tower, this new approach to illumination would ripple around the world.

Today, the Eiffel Tower's nightly light shows remain one of Paris's most-cherished sights. What began as an engineering feat has become a symbol of magic, imagination, and enduring beauty.

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## One-Minute Heart Hack

Here's a health trick that takes almost no effort: Breathe in for four seconds and out for six seconds. Doing this for 60 seconds can lower your heart rate, calm your nervous system, activate your parasympathetic nervous system (the "rest and digest" mode), reduce stress and support cardiovascular health.

A 2023 study published in *Cell Reports Medicine* found that this kind of slow, controlled breathing, especially with a longer exhale, had a more significant effect on stress reduction and heart rate variability than mindfulness meditation.

It's free, instant and requires no yoga mat. Just breathe.



## Logging Off To Tune In

As summer fades, a growing number of people are quietly unplugging. The emerging trend is a “digital quiet season,” in which users delete apps, reduce screen time and post more intentionally. According to a 2025 *Pew Research* report, more than 34 percent of Americans under 40 have removed at least one social media app since June, and several more are using features such as Focus Mode or setting time limits to reclaim their attention.

Instead of constant updates, people are turning to private group chats, voice notes and face-to-face hangouts. The energy has shifted from “look at me” to “be here now.” This shift reflects growing digital fatigue and a hunger for a deeper and more personal connection. For many people, social media feels more like work and no longer feels fun or fulfilling. And during a time when attention is the most-valuable currency, people are choosing to invest their attention more wisely.

There are growing micro-movements, too, such as screen-free Sundays, app-free phones and the return of the analog planner. A surprising number of Gen Z users are embracing flip phones and digital cameras for more-deliberate and less-curated content creation. Others are simply turning their attention toward hobbies, community or real-world experiences that don’t come with like counts.

Whether it’s a full-on social detox or simply muting your stories for a few days, September is shaping up to be the perfect time to hit reset. Think of it as spring cleaning — for your brain. The best part is that you don’t have to delete everything to feel better; you only need to be intentional.



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*"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes — including you." — Anne Lamott*



## IN THE AGE OF AI, BEING HUMAN IS THE NEW SUPERPOWER

In the near future, even the most brilliant humans may no longer be the leading experts in any field. Artificial intelligence is rapidly redefining what it means to be accomplished, and our children and grandchildren will grow up in a world where intelligence is no longer a uniquely human advantage.

Writing in *The Free Press*, economist Tyler Cowen and Avital Balwit of Anthropic describe a looming identity crisis sparked by AI's ascent. As machines outperform us in knowledge, strategy and creation, the question becomes: *How do we stay relevant?* Their answer: *double down on the things only humans can do.*

### Here's How We Adapt:

**1. Get Your Hands Dirty:** Carpenters, electricians and tradespeople remain irreplaceable for now. Blue-collar work might evolve into a new status symbol of skill and independence.

**2. Inspiration Will Still Matter:** Coaches, speakers and leaders who move people emotionally will continue to be essential. The ability to stir hearts isn't something AI can fake.

**3. Charisma Is Currency:** People who can genuinely connect will stand out. In a world where machines are smart, being human will be rare.

**4. Human-Only Spaces:** Hobbies, art, relationships and family, areas in which presence and emotion matter, will grow more valuable.



## How To Recover From A Summer Of Late Nights

Summer's long days and late nights can wreak havoc on your sleep schedule. If you're feeling the effects now, then you're not alone.

September is the ideal month to reset your circadian rhythm. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends 15 to 20 minutes of early-morning sunlight, reducing screen time after 8:30 p.m. and adding magnesium-rich foods, such as pumpkin seeds or dark leafy greens, into your routine.

Consistent sleep and wake times are key.

Try winding down with a book instead of a scroll, and make your room as dark as possible. Yes, even that blinking router light counts. If you prioritize rest now, then your fall energy will thank you later.



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## SEPTEMBER HOME TIPS

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Now is the perfect time to give your home's exterior some attention. These easy end-of-season updates will help keep your property looking sharp and transition-ready.

1. **Mow Tall One Last Time:** Before putting the mower away, give your lawn a few final trims at about three inches high. Longer grass retains moisture better and provides more shade to protect roots when temperatures fluctuate. It also helps crowd out weeds and crabgrass and prepares your lawn for a healthier comeback next spring.
2. **Refresh House Numbers:** Consider upgrading to larger, more-readable numbers in a clean, bold style. This small update improves visibility for guests, deliveries, and emergency responders.
3. **Add Driveway Reflectors:** With shorter days ahead, adding reflectors to your driveway helps guide visitors and increases safety. They're especially helpful if your home is on a dark street or in a rural area. It's a low-cost, high-impact improvement.
4. **Repair Walkways While Weather Holds:** Fall is your last good stretch of weather for outdoor repairs. If your walkway is cracked or outdated, then consider replacing it with interlocking pavers.
5. **Transition Flower Boxes To Fall:** Replace tired summer blooms with fall favorites, such as mums or autumn sage. When those start to fade, cut them back and tuck in evergreen branches for a simple way to keep things looking fresh into the holiday season.

A little upkeep now can go a long way toward maintaining your home's charm—and saving you time and effort later.

### The Rise Of The 5-Minute Hobby

Think you don't have time for a hobby? Think smaller. Micro-hobbies bite-sized activities that take 5 to 10 minutes are trending during 2025 by offering a low-effort way to recharge your brain without overhauling your schedule.

Popular picks include doing origami, learning one word in a new language each day, partaking in five-minute sketches and brewing a perfect cup of tea. These quick bursts of creativity or calm act like mental palate cleansers by helping reduce stress and boost focus.

They're also surprisingly habit-forming; what starts as five minutes can easily turn into something more meaningful. And in a world that's always rushing, these tiny rituals offer a gentle way to slow down.





# GOLDEN THREADS: THE VALUE OF OLD FRIENDSHIPS

As children, many of us learned this rhyme:

*Make new friends but keep the old, one is silver and the other gold.*

It's actually a paraphrase of a quote by 19th-century Welsh composer Joseph Parry, and its message still rings true today.

It's easy to assume that growing apart from old friends is just a natural part of life. And while that does happen, it doesn't have to. In fact, building friendships takes a surprising amount of effort—research published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* shows that it takes about 50 hours of time together for someone to move from acquaintance to casual friend, and around 200 hours to develop a close friendship.



That's a serious investment—and one worth protecting.

Yet many people hesitate to reconnect with old friends. In a study shared in *Communications Psychology*, social psychologists Lara B. Aknin and Gillian M. Sandstrom found that over 90% of people had lost touch with a friend, and most felt either neutral or uneasy about reaching back out.

As time passes, it seems, people begin to view their former friends almost like strangers.

But maybe that's exactly why reaching out matters. Because behind the time and distance, those old friendships might still hold something golden.



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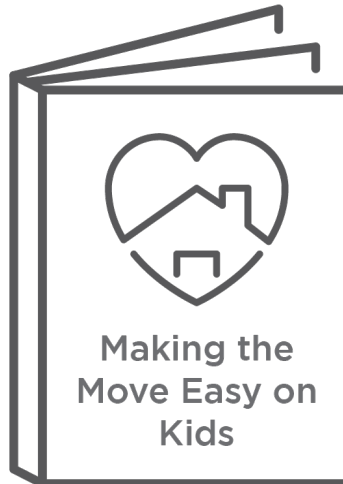
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