

You have a blazer. Congratulations and welcome to the dapper ranks of upperclassmen. Right now, you probably feel vaguely uncomfortable. The sleeves are maybe too long, or the arms too tight. Maybe it's just that shoulder pads are a new experience for you. This is a special moment — when your blazer is almost as awkward as your new role as upperclassmen, the leaders of our school. It is a moment we ritualize and make a ceremony, because we recognize it as something worthy of celebration, joy, and honor. As you accept the blazer, you accept a whole new realm of unspoken duty and responsibility. Of course that blazer is going to feel a little uncomfortable.

But soon enough, you're going to put on that blazer with deceptive ease. You'll learn to roll up the sleeves. The buttons, which almost inevitably pop off, you may sew back with bright gold thread. Or perhaps you're one of those rare individuals who actually knows how to fold pocket squares, and show off as such. Your blazer will become fitted to you, your style, and your sensibilities. As you become more comfortable in and with it, you will also become more comfortable with leading, guiding and cultivating the GP culture. And that's the problem.

With comfort comes routine. We remember our pale pink nail polish, our patternless socks, our id badges. We put them on in a rush, without remembering what they represent, without reflecting on their deeper meaning and promise. We become irritated when we forget our new dress shoes, or leave our belts at home, because we have been caught out on an imperfect routine. We forgot something, because we slipped into the comfort of its permanence in our lives — if it *is* always there, and *will* always be there, why think about it at all? Your beautiful blazer will often be left at home because of this, because it hasn't been a dressing routine for five years — why would it become one now? Besides, it's just an extra layer, and wrinkles so easily.

The way we dress is the way we live: we follow our daily routine. We repeat the same questions every year without urgency or excitement — is it good? Well, is it true? I mean, is it beautiful? We say hello to the same people, have the same conversations, sit in the same spots at lunch, and generally feel pretty good about our daily grind.

But routine wears. In the same way your blazer elbows will wear down, or your cardigan elbows already have, routine will not reveal why we do what we do, only that we do it. It makes us forget our first principles. We forget that our uniform unites us, our blazers lend us authority, our badges distinguish us. We forget that our culture is not an endless process of rinse and repeat, but a finite gift of new ideas, wondrously strange experiments, and friendship. Long days of only routine leave our souls threadbare and far too worn out.

But there is a ready repair for routine. And this — THIS — is it.
Ritual, ceremony, celebration.

Renew your life by celebrating it. Make dressing for the day a new ceremony. If you must wear a polo, pull it on and remember — You are an adventurer on the search for

the beautiful, exciting things of this life. You are Bilbo, throwing on his cloak to head out his door, though you're not quite sure where you're going to end up. Your polo should remind you — you have a duty to be bold and brave in the face of new experiences and unexpected journeys.

Lizzie Bennett teaches that two inches of mud on the hem reflects ardency, earnest care, and brilliance. So, high school students, do not be ashamed of the daily ink stains, chalk smudges, and frayed edges of your oxfords. Remember that you are working through the prejudices of life, so that you may truly know yourself and place in it. Wear the symbols of your efforts and care proudly, and start each day fresh, ready to walk five miles in mud for that which you love.

And upperclassmen? Slip your blazer on again. Make it a new ritual. Though even Prince Hektor had to take his helmet off, he always put it back on. It is not ever easy, but reflecting on the nature of the blazer — as armor, as duty, as hope — will help galvanize you on days when it feels like all of Troy is burning down. Don't be afraid to lead and don't be afraid to change. Celebrate successes, and shake the dust off of loss.

It is not easy, turning routine into ritual, and transforming comfort into celebration. It takes thought, and effort, and intention. We have a finite number of days, every one of us. And every one of us has a choice. Will you celebrate these days? Or will they be left neglected, wrinkled and patched, like an old high school blazer?