

[MUM'S DIARY]



Life in the *fast lane*

Speed is a relative notion – just ask the hare and the tortoise, says **Alana Kirk-Gillham**.

Last week, when my mum came to stay, she took half an hour to make a tuna sandwich. I was incandescent with impatience. In the time it took her to butter two slices of bread, open a tin, spread some mayo and slam it all together (although in fairness, she would never slam, but gently place together – herein lies the beginnings of our differences methinks), I had fed the baby, detached screaming toddler from self-imposed prison under the dining room chair, prepared our dinner, read half the paper, watched the news headlines, put the babes to bed and sent two text messages. I was about to start

vacuuming the house in a fit of agitated pique when the plate finally arrived at my table.

It certainly looked the same as mine would have. It didn't seem to taste any different than the ones I make. But there it was in all its glory – the Half Hour Tuna Delight. And so began one of those mother daughter debates (you can use other words here such as argument, rant or fight, but for the purposes of diplomatic relations, I'm sticking with debate). She says I do everything too fast – I eat too fast, I talk too fast, I walk too fast, I drive too fast, I even – God forbid – get ready in the morning too fast! Of course I splutter my indignation at such

suggestions – doesn't she understand I have so much to do? If I don't do everything at warp speed I'll fail as a mother, lose my husband and the house will disintegrate around our very ears. As for the children, how else am I to get through the day with two little monkeys if I don't move at Olympic pace?

She gives me that look. You know the one. The look that says, 'Oh please. You think you have it hard now? Try doing all that – but with none of the time-saving devices you have. I had no washing machine, no tumble dryer, no microwave oven, no steriliser, no disposable nappies, no car! And by the way, how did I

produce such a drama queen?' It's amazing how much one's mother can say with one slightly raised eyebrow. Naturally I pooh-poohed her with that condescending tone that we reserve for our

“If I don't do everything at warp speed I'll fail as a mother, lose my husband and the house will disintegrate around our very ears”

mothers, something along the lines of 'in your day you didn't have half the pressures we modern mums do' and raced off to hang the washing out. But between you and me, I think she's right. I barely finish one task before my mind has moved on to the next. My children must wonder who the mad woman is who attacks them with a facecloth every morning before ramming a toothbrush into their mouth, swirling it around and yaking at them to 'spit' before they've swallowed their last bite of breakfast. I'm not sure I've ever actually walked down my front path to the car – I'm usually just a blur of movement with a baby under one arm and 14 bags hanging off the other, shouting at my toddler to hurry up.

So, it's a bit late being February and all, but here's my New Year's resolution. Chew my food. Walk down my path. Let my kids finish their breakfast. I'm not sure I can stretch my tuna sandwich-making skills to half an hour, but I'm going to give it a damn good try.