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LITERACY**

**HAPPY
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TO ALL**

**KINDNESS COUNTDOWN
CALENDAR**

DECEMBER 2023

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A project of Childbirth and Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand

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the common bond of
parenthood"**

- Mel Habanananda



We are a group offering support and companionship to each other through the early years of parenting.

We offer prenatal and postnatal support, regular playgroups, fundraising for charities and more. If you wish to join, come to our New Members' Coffee Morning or any other regular BAMBI activities. To volunteer or serve on the committee, email vicechairwoman@bambiweb.org or visit bambiweb.org.

BAMBI is a project of the Childbirth & Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand (CBFT).

Mission Statement

The CBFT is a non-profit networking and resource center dedicated to ensuring the best possible start in life for our babies. We believe that this can best be achieved through:

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- Providing information and training to health professionals involved in maternity care.
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Rocky Farheen



Sara Chow



Chiaki Takegawa

As we bid farewell to this year, I extend warm seasons greetings to our cherished community. Your presence has made this journey extraordinary, filled with shared moments of learning, laughter, and camaraderie.

As we reflect on the past and anticipate the future, may the holiday season envelop you in joy and the company of loved ones. Wishing you peace, prosperity, and the simple pleasures that make this time of year truly special.

Here's to a wonderful close to the year, filled with gratitude for each of you. Looking forward to stepping into the new year together, united by the spirit of our incredible community.

Rocky

And just like that, we are in December—that super festive and joyful month of the year! Bangkok, albeit being the capital city of a Buddhist country, sure knows how to celebrate Christmas, as you can see from all the amazing decorations throughout the city. There will be Christmas activities, parties, and events all over the city—in restaurants, malls, schools, and more.

Aside from hosting one of our biggest events of the year, BAMBI's Cosmic Christmas Party, we will also be running special Christmas playgroups throughout the month. So enjoy the remainder of 2023, and we wish you all the best vibes from the universe for the new year!

Sara

As we reach the end of the year, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for an amazing 2023. It's been a pleasure to work together and support the BAMBI community for another year, and I'm so proud to have had all of you with us. Words cannot express how grateful we are for the willingness and dedication all of our community members have shown—especially all our volunteers!

The year's end brings with it the start of a new one filled with new possibilities. We know there will be many challenges ahead, but we are so excited about 2024!

Best wishes and happiness to you and your families over the festive season!

Chiaki





Sanam Raisa Rahman

Every year, as the weather turns cooler in December, kitchens across Bangladesh—where I'm from—turn into warm, bustling hubs of creativity and tradition. A culinary celebration, the Pitha Utshob, takes place, and through the preparation, sharing, and consumption of traditional rice-based sweet treats, Bangladeshis collectively rejoice in the bonds of kinship and community.

December is also when the wedding season starts so the fun doubles. Think week-long events, crowds of people decked out in fancy clothes, music, dancing, lights, colors, and a whole lot of scrumptious biryani cooked in large cauldrons over an open fire. Suffice to say, December is the party season in Bangladesh, and if any December I'm unable to travel home, I know for sure I'm missing out big time!

What I've learned from living abroad though is that even when you celebrate different festivals and have different beliefs, by being open to the traditions and customs of other cultures, December can be party season anywhere in the world.

I went to university in the UK, and during the festive season, I would bake Christmas cookies and decorate Christmas trees with friends. Similarly, my daughter has enjoyed playing with a dreidel during lessons on Hanukkah in school. Such experiences not only create joyful memories but also reinforce that no matter what traditions you follow and what your beliefs are, December is a month when homes across the globe resound with laughter and hearts fill with warmth from sharing beautiful moments together. We get a chance to slow down and mark the passing of another year around the sun with friends and family, and this alone is reason enough to celebrate.

So join us as we bid farewell to 2023 and close off with content that explores how to make the most of this party season.

First up, we have "Happy Holidays to All" by Rachel Ofo, which serves as a reminder to be respectful and accommodating when people choose not to celebrate mainstream holidays or to celebrate them differently from the norm. Next we have "Party-Powered Lessons" by Sheena Low, who discusses how social events can provide great opportunities to teach customs and etiquette to our little ones.

In this month's The Dad Diaries, Joe Barker reflects on how Christmas has changed since he was a boy and how experiences from past and recent Christmases have inspired him to set new traditions to share with his son, Marty. And in Creation Station, Anelia Van Zyl describes how to create cute sock snowmen that will surely double the holiday spirit in your homes.

A challenge faced by many parents this season is finding the perfect gifts for our children. If you want something fun and educational, turn to "Great Gifts for Growing Literacy", in which Kelly Patten presents unique gift options that can boost your little ones' literacy skills and provide oodles of fun.

Fun Corner recognises that kindness lies at the heart of this season, so families are invited to participate in a Kindness Countdown Calendar this month. Readers' Corner showcases a book that teaches children about different celebrations throughout the year, and another which offers over 100 recipes and stories to share with guests at your dinner table. Lastly, we have "In Tandem", a poem by Cecilia Yu in which she expresses gratitude towards her body for serving her well over the years.

I hope you enjoy what we've put together this month, and on behalf of the magazine team, I wish you all a joyous holiday season and an exciting new year ahead!

Sanam
Editor



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Yui Walsh

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FROM BAMBI!



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Emmett Malone
Jianvi Kapadia
Noah Yoon
Parisa Amranand
Rick Omura
Ryusei Kawahori
Samantha Roach



OUR COVER KID

NAME

Hyo

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

I’m Japanese, but I haven’t been to Japan yet!

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THAILAND?

Since I was born eight months ago

FAVORITE PLACE TO GO AS A FAMILY IN THAILAND?

Benjakitti Park

WHAT’S ON YOUR THAI BUCKET LIST?

I’m looking forward to my first Christmas here in Thailand.

WHAT DOES BAMBI MEAN TO YOU?

I love going to BAMBI events with my mommy and sometimes with my big brother, Toh, and our daddy, too!

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL



As many of us start to get excited about the holiday season, Rachel provides us with a timely and personal reminder that not everyone celebrates the same things or in the same ways.

But why don't you celebrate Christmas?

A question I was asked throughout my childhood, not only by my peers, but by my teachers and neighbors as well. As a child, growing up not celebrating the mainstream holidays sometimes meant not only feeling left out as I didn't partake in activities with classmates and neighbors, but oftentimes feeling disregarded entirely. Some people would even try to convince me that my parents were "overreacting".

The cycle continued every year. No, I do not sing Christmas carols. No, I do not dress up for Halloween. No, I'm not searching for eggs in the grass. And I totally get it; people are passionate about their beliefs and traditions and sometimes feel slighted when others don't agree—because it can feel like their beliefs are being called "wrong". But that is not the case at all.

In all honesty, people's personal beliefs and why they do what they do should have no bearing on how we treat them. If someone says, "no, thanks", we should accept that and continue going about our lives. There are hundreds, if not thousands,

of different cultures in this world, and respecting them all is another channel of tolerance and education that we should open to our children.

The five biggest religions in the world are Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism (1). Within these, there are several sects. However, it's fair to say that most of the world is only familiar with the practices and celebrations behind a handful of them. I remember moving to Thailand and being surprised at just how many Buddhist holy days were celebrated in a year. None of them were even mentioned in my schools growing up.

Interestingly, even within a country like Thailand, whose population is predominantly Buddhist, you can be certain to see one, or three, Christmas trees adorning the entrances of Bangkok's major malls, despite Christmas not being a Buddhist holiday. Sure, the lights are pretty and make for fun social media photos, but who has stopped to think about the people whose beliefs don't fall in line with the masses?

One mom recalls her daughter's sentiments when faced with celebrations in school. Her family practices Islam, and her daughter pondered on why Christmas was so much larger





and appeared “more important” than Eid-ul-Fitr, which is one of the most important celebrations for Muslims, marking the end of a month-long fast and spiritual reflection. Her daughter longed to share her festival with her friends and classmates. This situation is common to those practicing beliefs in a land where they are in the minority. We don’t want our children to feel left out, but we don’t want to compromise on our own beliefs.

So, what to do? It’s as simple as talking to our children before they even begin school. Explain the differences between celebrations and dive into appropriate etiquette. That

could mean reminding our children not to announce their knowledge of the “truth” behind Santa Claus. This goes for all parents who don’t partake in that tradition. For those who do celebrate mainstream holidays, leaving space for those who don’t is just as important.

It’s understandable. The time off work to spend with family, the few weeks of not having to get kids up early, the smiles on your children’s faces when they open their favorite candy, that new gift, or the Easter egg they found behind the bench. Holidays are great and important, but holidays are also very specific

to us. Just because most people are as excited as we are to celebrate this day or tradition, it doesn’t mean there isn’t some angst brewing within others. This also means that not everyone in your child’s class will be comfortable singing “Happy Birthday”, and that’s OK.

How do we navigate this? The first step could be understanding the differences in beliefs. Again, it’s not necessary, but it’s helpful. Another step involves educating our children. Letting our kids know that the world is a big place, and the variety is what makes it so amazing. This can benefit not only our children but also those they may come into contact with, especially in school.

So what about those whom we leave our children with: classmates and teachers? The good thing is, whether we celebrate these holidays or not, if we’ve educated our children on how to be inclusive, that’s half the battle. Our children can navigate the conversations around not only their beliefs but also around respect for others’ beliefs. And what about the adults who’ve already been raised and maybe haven’t had the same insight into the feelings of the little





people whom they care for, when it comes to various celebrations? For me, I simply emailed my daughter's teacher, requesting that either she or I provide an alternative activity for my child, not centered around that holiday. Fortunately, she was very understanding and assured me that she wouldn't be doing any holiday-themed celebrations for the year.

However, not all situations may be as easy as this. People often feel passionate about their beliefs and may even take offense at your requests. One of the best pieces of advice I've heard in my parenting journey is "you can't control what others do". If you've done all you can with your children and those who care for them, that's it. What they choose to do is their decision.

That's the great thing about free will. And we can choose to react (or not react) accordingly. As a child, I never argued, I never fought, but I knew every obstacle I faced was practice.

As I look back, I was never deprived. My family never withheld anything from me, whether it was a new toy or a week-long vacation. We had fun, we had laughs, we had each other. And if there was some other celebration, like a graduation or a wedding, trust me, we would be the first to arrive and the last to leave.

My family may not celebrate the same things as you, but we enjoy celebrating nonetheless. So the next time you're teaching your child, teaching a class, or preparing a holiday-themed party, don't feel pity

or anger toward those who politely decline. See it as an opportunity to either learn something new or to challenge yourself to attempt to create something more inclusive. The world is full of different beliefs, traditions, and celebrations. The more we embrace each other's practices the easier it will be for everyone.

Photos from Canva.

Here I am!



References

(1) Pew Research Center (2012) The Global Religious Landscape. [pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/)



About the Author

Rachel Ofo moved from the US to Bangkok in 2016 and spent six and a half years there. She has a daughter, whom she loves dragging around on various adventures like hikes and fishing trips. In her free time, she enjoys reading, watching movies, and trying new restaurants. She also enjoys being out in nature.

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PARTY-POWERED LESSONS

It's party time! We love a good party and with Sheena's help, parties with our little ones can be even more fun. From finding the meaning behind celebrations to showing off our best behavior, parties are the perfect place to learn valuable lessons!

Hey there, parents of Thailand's tiniest social butterflies! If you're wondering how to make your little one's party experience a lot more meaningful, we've got your back. From using good manners to embracing the hidden messages behind celebrations, we've rounded up ten lessons parties can teach your child. Get ready to add some wisdom into the chocolate-fuelled chaos!

1. Good manners are like confetti—sprinkle them everywhere!

First things first—manners! These are the magic sauce that makes any party pop, and amid the excitement, you'll find plenty of opportunities to teach your little one to say "please" and "thank you".

A classic way to teach this is when your kiddo asks for that cookie or balloon animal without saying "please", just ask them "what's the magic word?". This reinforces a good habit and you may even find your kiddo reminding you back like my two-year-old, Augie, does.

2. The art of gifting

It's not about the size of the gift; it's the thought that counts. A heartfelt note or a homemade drawing can

mean the world to someone. Teach your child this by helping them make a card for their friend's birthday and letting them pick out a small but thoughtful gift.

3. Party time: More than cake and balloons

Parties are like life's sprinkles—they make the everyday extraordinary! Your little one may not yet understand that parties aren't just about cake; they're also about celebrating love, achievements, and togetherness. That's OK! Taking your child along and sharing tales of your family's epic celebrations will teach them all about your traditions.

I didn't understand the importance of tradition until I got older. And boy am I glad I had all of those family celebrations, ranging from an aunty and uncle's wedding anniversary through a brother's graduation ceremony to a cousin's first job offer. Even if I was sometimes forced to attend when I just wanted to read and play, those memories are ones I'll cherish forever. I'll always remember my mom explaining to me why we're celebrating and what it means. It's a tradition I'll pass down to Augie, knowing she'll have that aha moment when she's older.

4. Family: The original party crew

You know what's cooler than a disco ball at a party? Your family! Celebrations are the perfect chance to reinforce the value of family. Encourage your little one to spend time with grandparents, cousins, and siblings—those connections are the real presents.

It's always scary meeting new people, so do your best to make it fun. We started off introducing Augie to all of her aunties and uncles by asking her "who do they look like?". This helped to build recognition and comfort. Using proper terms like "por por" (grandma from mom's side), "nai nai" (grandma from dad's side), and "fu fu" (uncle), helped her to build vocabulary and a sense of connection.

5. Community connection

Parties aren't just confined to your inner circle; they're a chance to build bonds with the community. Take your little one to local festivals and celebrations. Show them the power of belonging to a larger world where friendship is the golden ticket.



6. Culture and customs

Living in Bangkok is like having a party passport to a world of cultures and customs. If you're at a Thai party, introduce your child to traditions like the "wai." Or, if it's a global affair, explain different customs and why they're meaningful.

Cultures enrich us. I often ask Augie "where were you born?", "what ethnicity are you?", "what nationality are you?". Combined with key events like the Mooncake Festival, it really ingrains a sense of culture. It's also never a bad thing to have an excuse to eat dumplings.

7. Respect: The golden rule of parties

The secret to being a star guest? Respect! Show your child how to thank the host, help with the cleanup, and be welcoming to others. Remember, a polite kid is like the disco ball of the party scene!

8. Sharing and parental expectations

Ah, the age-old sharing dilemma. Kids can quickly get overexcited at a party and forget that they know how to share. The valuable lesson

here is in reminding ourselves that it's perfectly OK for a child to keep what's theirs to themselves—like the piece of cake they're still finishing which another kid wants to gobble up. As well as keeping your own expectations realistic, take this opportunity to model how to politely refuse when another child has their eye on something that belongs to your little one. If conflict crops up, validate any hurt feelings and redirect.

9. Emotional exploration: It's OK to be shy or disappointed

Parties can be a whirlwind of emotions, from shyness to delight to disappointment, so it's important we manage our own expectations and show our kids it's perfectly fine to feel these feelings. If your child is a bit shy, let them hang out on the sidelines until they're ready to dive into the dance circle. And when they want to blow out the birthday candles, but it's not their birthday, talk about how it's natural to feel a little disappointed. Create a safe space for everything they're feeling, both the lows and highs. Often we ignore our own low feelings and can habitually do this with our kids too. Teaching children to ignore their own feelings can only be bad

for them in the long term. So let's encourage a safe space.

Sometimes Augie just wants to chill when we're at a loud party. Instead of creating shame by saying "hey, this is so fun! Go out and play!", we say, "don't want to join in yet? That's OK. Sometimes Mommy and Daddy just want to chill too. Can we chill together?"

10. Gratitude: More valuable than a party favor

Lastly, parties are the perfect backdrop to teach your child about the power of gratitude. Help them understand it's not just about getting stuff but about cherishing the people and love in their lives. A heartfelt "thank you" is the ultimate party favor that never goes out of style!

Thailand's vibrant party scene is more than just a glittery whirlwind; it's a classroom for life lessons. So, get ready to rock the party scene with your mini-me, sprinkling life lessons as you go. And remember, it's a party—keep it fun, keep it real, and don't forget to dance like no one's watching!

Photos courtesy of the author and Canva.



Practice makes perfect!

Before heading to the next exciting party, you can engage in a little role-playing session with your child. This fun and educational activity is a fantastic way to model how to act at parties and impart valuable social skills, like including shy or alone children. This is especially relevant if you're the host. Imagine you and your child are in your living room, getting ready for the upcoming shindig. You set the stage:

"Alright, kiddo, we're about to have a blast at the party. Let's play a little game to practice how to act."

Scenario 1: Welcoming the shy stranger

You start by pretending to be a new child at the party. Your child takes the role of the host. You approach the party, looking a bit shy and uncertain. Your child, in their role, welcomes you with a warm smile.

Child (host): "Hi there! I'm so glad you could come to the party. My name is [your child's name]. What's your name?"

You (shy newcomer): "I'm [make up a name]. I'm a bit nervous; I don't know anyone here."

Child (host): "No worries at all! We're all here to have fun. Come meet some of my friends, and we can play together."

Through this role-play, your child learns how to approach and include someone who might be feeling shy or alone. They understand that a friendly introduction and inviting the newcomer to join in can make a big difference to someone's party experience.

Scenario 2: Sharing and including

For the next scenario, you can pretend to be a child who wants to join in a game. Your child takes the role of a partygoer who is already playing a game with friends.

You (child wanting to join): "Hey, can I play with you guys?"

Child (partygoer): "Of course, join us. Grab a seat and get ready!"

This role-play demonstrates the importance of sharing and including others. Your child learns how to be a gracious host and a friendly partygoer by being open to new friendships and shared activities. Role-playing helps your child practice and understand the importance of inclusivity, kindness, and making others feel welcome. They can then carry these skills and attitudes with them to the party, ensuring that everyone has a fantastic time and memories to cherish. So, party on, little social butterfly, and let the inclusive games begin!



About the Author

Sheena Low is an aspiring children's book author, mother to two-year-old August, and runs Super Fly Honey, a pole activewear brand. In December 2020, anticipating the need for a nanny following her surprise pregnancy, she moved from Amsterdam to Bangkok. When August was born, it turned out she wanted to swap her more-than-full-time working hours for life as a full-time mom. She's still baffled how that seismic shift of identity occurred.



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IN TANDEM

On my 46th birthday, to my surprise, I awoke feeling an enormous sense of gratitude for my body. Strange. Really, it was. Because just the night before, I was fretting about all the ways my body had sagged, folded, wrinkled, weakened, and basically become worn out by the last 14 years of motherhood. But miraculously, I snapped out of that self-pity rather quickly. I was reminded how incredibly fortunate I am to have woken up and be able to celebrate having orbited another year around the sun.

As my gratitude seeded and took root in my heart, I quickly realized and was reminded of the incredible body parts I still have—working for me, in tandem and mostly in my favor and for my highest good. And in tandem, my brain, my heart, and my fingers waltzed collaboratively on my keyboard and orchestrated this poem.

My birthday wish is for you to see how your body is also in tandem with your soul's callings.

These eyes—
they might squint,
to make clear the little details
of what's in front of me.

But they never fail
to see the ginormous love my
kids' eyes speak out loud for
me.

To witness the despair of
humanity that tears my heart.

This heart—
the ability to hurt because
of its unlimited capacity.
To love even those who test
my limits.

To forgive those who have
burned holes in it.

To mend those holes,
sometimes seared with scars
of ashes, with hope that all—
even misery—is impermanent.

For my hands have shown me
that anything can slip through
and vanish.

Happiness.

Grief.

But when held close to the
heart and savored for the
briefest moment,

They can become the
sweetest,
sometimes bittersweetest,
of memories,
of lessons.

Oh those lessons—
the ones that my legs walked
me to
and sank my heart knee deep
into.

How I wished I had the
willpower to dash from those
situations so many times.
But my heart somehow always
raced forward, led, and
reminded me to
stay.

To linger until the lesson was
learned.

Until my lungs can fully exhale
and say,

Lessons learned.

It's OK.

Let it go.

It will be OK.

You are enough.

You are worthy.

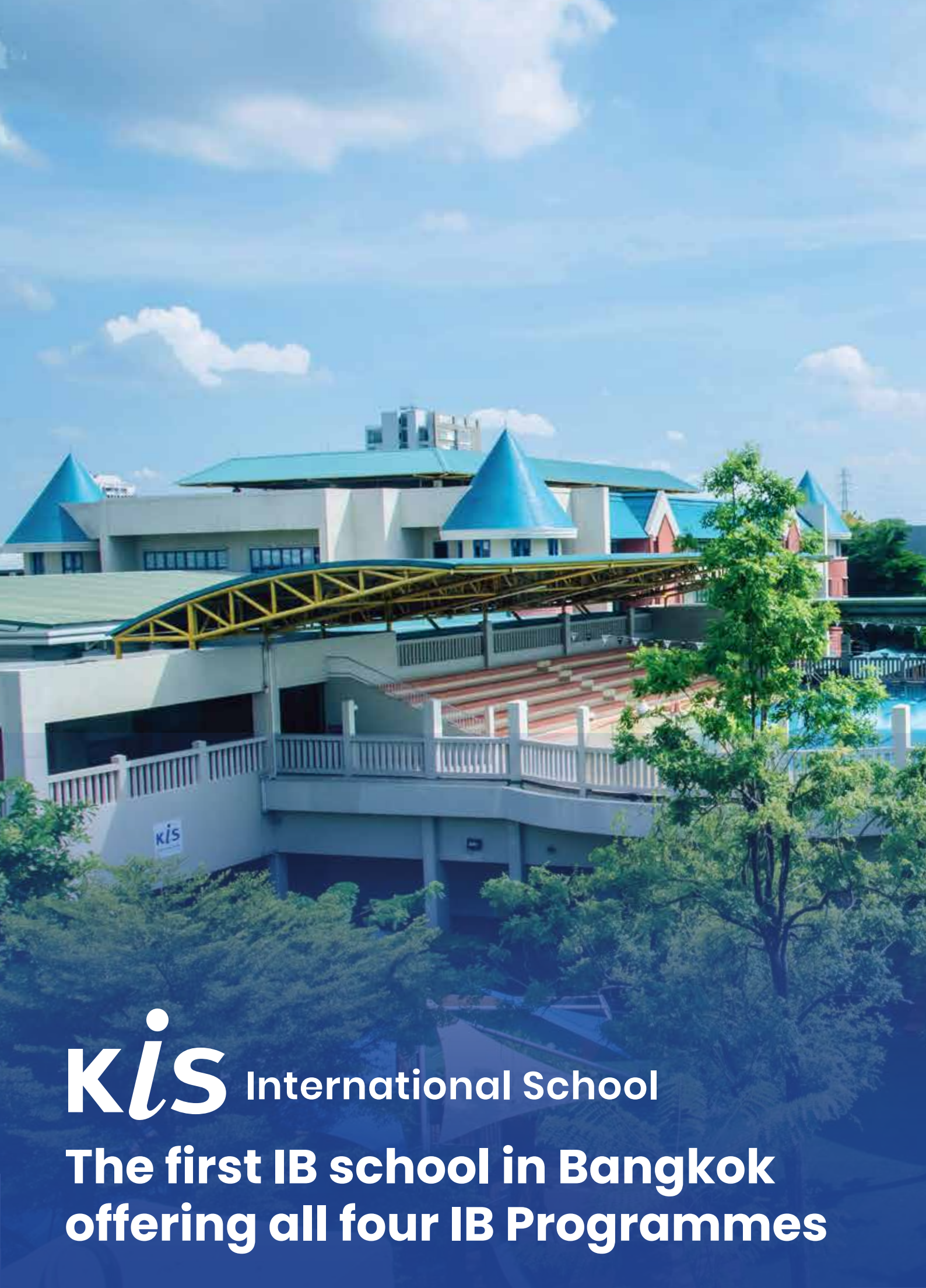
In tandem,
this body worn from
motherhood, womanhood,
humanity,
still works.
Without fail.
In synchronicity.
And for that I am incredibly
grateful.

Photos from Canva.



About the Author

Cecilia Yu is a self-compassion enthusiast and coach. Certified in Integrative Nutrition Coaching, Culinary Nutrition, Goddess Yoga and Women's Circle Leadership, Cecilia empowers mommies and their loved ones to lead a healthy, soulful life through anti-inflammatory dietary lifestyle, meditations, yoga, journaling, and her Self-Compassion Circles for Moms. For inspiration, follow her on @CeciliaADoseofVitaminL (FB/IG).



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GREAT GIFTS FOR GROWING LITERACY

The holiday season often brings with it toys and games which our children can lose interest in rather quickly. Kelly, a literacy specialist, shares suggestions for gifts that keep on giving the love of literacy to your child.

DParents face a universal dilemma as the holidays approach: What gifts do we get the kids? Before becoming a parent, I naturally assumed that we would go for the minimal approach to maintaining our child's play options—just a few tasteful wooden toys that appear aesthetically pleasing on that Montessori shelf. But as the mom of a two-year-old with a newborn on the way soon, I have quickly realized that's just not the case for us. Perhaps you're also swimming in cars, dolls, blocks, Paw Patrol, and a myriad of other random bits while wondering "why does my daughter have a collection of bowls she wants to sleep with each night?". While I can't help you organize your toy collection, I'd love to share some tips for intentional gifts that support a literacy-rich environment in your home.

What is a literacy-rich environment?

When we hear the word "literacy", we often immediately think of reading. However, traditional literacy refers to reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Whether your child is two or ten, creating a space with an intentional focus on literacy allows them to interact with language independently and with adult guidance and support. So, before the grandparents ask if the fire truck with flashing lights and five different siren

sounds is what the kids need, here are a few suggestions.

ABC books and rhyming books

You can never have too many books in your home library! ABC books begin to expose your child to alphabet symbols as well as the sounds that each letter makes. They come in all shapes and sizes, so look for something that piques your child's interest and helps them to build knowledge and vocabulary. Rhyming books help your child to develop phonological awareness or the ability to manipulate and play with spoken sounds (1). Take a stroll through Kinokuniya, Asia Books, or visit a secondhand bookstore like Dasa Books on Sukhumvit Road.

Magnetic or foam letters

Magnetic or foam letters allow your child to interact with letters, sounds, and words in a fun and tactile way. Keep them on your fridge or in the bathtub, and give your child the freedom to explore and build words at their own pace. Encourage them to say each letter sound as they build words, but avoid making the letters feel like homework or a chore. Magnetic or foam letters are easy to find on Lazada or Shopee.

Writing center

A writing center empowers your child to become a creator and take ownership of their language. It sounds fancy, but you can easily put





one together by searching through online sales boards and taking a trip to B2S, Muji, or IKEA. You will need a child-sized table and chairs, fun markers, pens, pencils, stickers or stamps, and paper. Choose a few styles of interesting paper: colored, lined, envelopes, postcards, old magazines, or blank greeting cards. You might also consider adding an alphabet chart or picture dictionary (2).

Book nook

A book nook is a cozy space for your child to read and interact with books and language. Consider a front-facing bookshelf to display favorite books or library books. IKEA and Lazada both have options for various budgets. Other possibilities include a tent or cozy corner filled with comfy pillows and blankets.

It's easy to get caught up in holiday shopping. I'm already anticipating the joy a new dollhouse will bring to our family playtime! The holidays are about sharing our love and spending quality time with each other. One

of the best gifts you can give your child is the experience of cuddling up and exploring books, literacy, and language together as a family.

Photos from Canva.



References

- (1) Reading Rockets (2023) Basics: Phonological and Phonemic Awareness. [readingrockets.org/reading-101/reading-and-writing-basics/phonological-and-phonemic-awareness](https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/reading-and-writing-basics/phonological-and-phonemic-awareness)
- (2) Illinois Early Learning Project (2023) The Power of the Pen: Let Children Choose Writing Centers. [illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/writingcenters/](https://www.illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/writingcenters/)

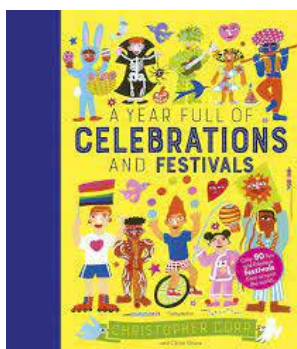


About the Author

Kelly is currently a stay-at-home mom who has lived in Bangkok for over seven years. She previously worked as a primary educator and literacy specialist. Kelly loves reading fiction books, listening to podcasts, and exploring Thailand with her family.

BOOKS TO INSPIRE

Brought to You by Neilson Hays Library



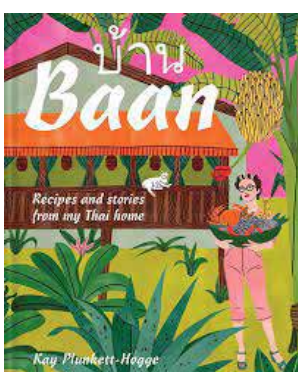
A YEAR FULL OF CELEBRATIONS AND FESTIVALS: OVER 90 FUN AND FABULOUS FESTIVALS FROM AROUND THE WORLD!

by Claire Grace & Christopher Corr

One of the many joys of expat life is the celebration of holidays from around the world. This is especially true in our vibrant metropolis of Bangkok with a population of around 11 million. Whether it's with colleagues, neighbors, or school mates, families are exposed to local and international festivities as well as the opportunity to share our own customs.

"A Year Full of Celebrations and Festivals" is the perfect book for families curious to learn more. Organized by season, the book includes big celebrations like International Women's Day in spring, Ramadan in summer, Diwali in fall, and Hanukkah in winter. Also included are less well-known festivities like Japanese Hanami, Swiss Désalpe, Spanish La Tomatina, and Thai Monkey Buffet Festival. The illustrations are fun and bright, and each page includes historical facts and current diasporic traditions.

Published by Frances Lincoln Children's Books in 2021. "A Year Full of Celebrations and Festivals" is suitable for ages 3–10. A hardcover copy can be found in the Children's Corner of the Neilson Hays Library.



BAAN: RECIPES AND STORIES FROM MY THAI HOME

by Kay Plunkett-Hogge

Aptly titled "Baan", the Thai word for "home", food writer Kay Plunkett-Hogge's 12th book is a cozy collection of over 100 recipes and stories. "Baan" is inspired by Plunkett-Hogge's real life experiences as a British expat born and raised in Bangkok in the 1960s and 70s. The book is meant for homecooks who aim to entertain, each recipe clearly written with amusing storytelling woven throughout. The author honors Thai cuisine with honesty, advising readers not to compromise flavor if certain ingredients are unavailable. After all, pad kra pao would not be complete without the kra pao!

Plunkett-Hogge's other titles include "Siam", "The Art of the Party", and "Make Mine a Martini". She also collaborated with actor Stanley Tucci on his bestselling cookbook "The Tucci Table".

Published by Pavilion Books in 2019. A hardcover copy and more of Kay Plunkett-Hogge's books can be found in the non-fiction section of the Neilson Hays Library.

Prepared by Angela Chen, a Neilson Hays Library Board Member and the Children's Program Chair. The Neilson Hays Library is Thailand's premier English-language library. The Children's Program offers Saturday Story Time, a cozy Children's Corner, and special holiday events. Adult Programs include concerts, art exhibitions, book club, and book sales. Located in a beautiful historic building with a garden and cafe on site: 195 Surawong Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand. Follow us on Instagram and Facebook.

BAMBI PLAYGROUPS & ACTIVITIES

BAMBI holds regular playgroups and activities around town, open to both BAMBI members and non-members. BAMBI playgroups are characterized by free play and the use of venues' toys and playgrounds. BAMBI Activities provide a wide range of activities for children aged one to six years old to develop their athletic, creative and cognitive skills.



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PLAYGROUP**



**BRITISH CLUB
PLAYGROUP**



**WONDERKIDS
PLAYGROUP**



FOOTBALL



**TODDLER MUSIC &
TODDLER TUNES**



KUNG FU

SCAN NOW

To find out more about all of our playgroups and activities, scan the QR code to visit our website. We also have a non-BAMBI playgroup listing. We look forward to seeing you soon at one of our events.



BAMBI PLAYGROUPS



**NON-BAMBI
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The Purple Elephant Toddler Centres take play seriously; play is the most effective way young children learn by capitalising on a child's natural curiosity and wonder to create meaning. Play enhances development across the critical domains of motor skills, emotional processing, social and communication skills, cognitive capacities, and the foundational knowledge required for literacy and numeracy.

Our boutique facilities are designed specifically to fuel the imagination of young learners from 18 months to 3 years old. Materials are thoughtfully chosen and arranged to invite investigation.

The role of the environment is to inspire and support the children as they approach and dig deeper into new concepts.

The consistency of experience and expertise of our staff of over 30 years nurtures a strong community that is responsive to the individual needs of each Purple Elephant family.



For further information, please visit our website: <https://www.elc.ac.th/>
email: purpleelephant@elc.ac.th



Merry Christmas

AT THE PURPLE ELEPHANT

'It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas.'

As we get closer to Christmas our children at The Purple Elephant have enthusiastically participated in the festivities and made their own ornaments for the tree. We offered the children, gold and silver paint, glue, gold and silver glitter, as well as copper wire to decorate cinnamon sticks. The children carefully chose which mediums they wanted to add to their ornaments.

Using their fine motor skills, the children painted the natural materials with gold and silver, then sprinkled glitter and tied it up with gold thread, creating a beautiful ornament ready for our little Christmas celebration.



CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS



Want to have fun, work together with other great parents, brush up on your professional skills, and do something for the BAMBİ community? This is your chance.

BAMBİ is run by a group of lovely and dedicated volunteers, and from time to time, a number of critical roles need to be filled to ensure ongoing service to our members. BAMBİ is a fun and welcoming community of like-minded parents trying to support and improve the parenting experience for all families in Bangkok. If you have some time and passion to spare, come and join us. To apply or if you have any questions about these volunteer opportunities, please email vicechairwoman@bambiweb.org, detailing which position(s) you are interested in. Please note that as per BAMBİ constitution, interested candidates are required to have an active membership at the time of applying.

The following opportunities are currently available:

CHAIRWOMAN

The chair is our CEO, our liaison with CBFT and other volunteer groups in Bangkok, and acts as BAMBİ's official representative in the wider community.

Responsibilities & duties

- coordinates the work of the committee and chairs the monthly committee meetings
- prepares annual reports for the AGM and CBFT
- together with the treasurer, sets the budget for each area of BAMBİ
- responsible for recruiting new volunteers and is the first contact for new people interested in volunteering
- writes a bi-monthly column for the magazine
- ensures compliance with accounting/bookkeeping

EVENTS COORDINATOR

The events coordinator attends monthly committee meetings as a voting member and organizes and coordinates BAMBİ's parties and events.

Responsibilities & duties

- coordinates the planning and delivery of BAMBİ's large events such as our splash party and Halloween party. This includes sponsor solicitation, setting-up and tidying up before and after the events, organizing volunteers to help during the event, and organizing kids' activities and food vendors.
- organizes internal team events



NEW MEMBERS COORDINATOR

The new members coordinator attends monthly committee meetings as a voting member, and is the person responsible for welcoming and introducing BAMB! members and their families to the community.

Responsibilities & duties

- arranges monthly New Members' Coffee Mornings (one weekday morning per month)
- arranges Pop Up Playgroups (usually one Saturday morning per month for 2–3 hours)
- maintains liaison with schools and other venues via email and site visits to arrange and host New Members' Coffee Mornings and Pop Up Playgroups

ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

The activities coordinator attends monthly committee meetings as a voting member and is responsible for organizing and managing activities for older children between the ages of three and six.

Responsibilities & duties

- plans and organizes profitable activities in coordination with venues and instructors
- ensures all activities are running to BAMB! standards
- recruits and trains activity leaders to assist in the management of activities and activity bookings
- steps in to support the running of an activity on the day if needed





PHOTOGRAPHERS

PHOTO EDITOR

The BAMBI photographer works with other members of the team under the direction of the editor to take clear, dynamic photos at BAMBI events and activities as well as the cover images for BAMBI Magazine.

The photo editor works together with the editor and deputy editor of BAMBI Magazine and is the first point of contact for anything picture-related.

Responsibilities & duties

Responsibilities & duties

- maintains clear communications with the editor (and other members of the BAMBI committee as appropriate) to comprehend assignment guidelines and for timely delivery of photographs that comply with them
- assists the editor and cover models in setting up time and location for cover photoshoots and manages the session on the day of the shoot
- edits and retouches images as appropriate and archives them in appropriate folders on the BAMBI Google Drive

- works directly with the BAMBI Magazine team, Bumps team, and playgroups and activities leaders to source photos for articles and photo feature pages in the magazine
- takes photos at events or coordinates with event staff and photographers to have photos taken
- organizes and oversees the magazine cover photoshoot
- designs the magazine cover

* Interested candidates must have their own photography equipment, knowledge of photography techniques and an eye for detail, color, and form.

* Interested candidates must have their own photography equipment, knowledge of photography techniques and an eye for detail, color, and form.

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A CHRISTMAS CAROL: DADDY EDITION

This month, Joe reflects on Christmases past, sets goals (some realistic, some perhaps not) for a cheery Christmas present, and dares to dream of new traditions for the future.

I loved Christmas as a child and although some of the magic has faded with age, I still love the festive season. I was confident that the addition of a small child could only increase my yuletide joy. Not that this is the only reason I had a child; obviously that would have been deeply irresponsible. There were also the exciting opportunities to play childhood games, eat children's snacks, and countless other excellent, and highly responsible, reasons for procreating.

Christmas present

So far, Marty has proven a great disappointment at Christmas. At six months, he showed a vague interest in chewing some baubles and wrapping paper, and we got some photos of him with the Christmas tree and with Santa. But where was the Christmas magic? The growing excitement as the day approached? Singing carols and eating mince pies together, waking up at the crack of dawn to open stockings and then spending the day building Lego together on a continual, chocolate-induced sugar high? He gave us none of this. Perhaps I was expecting too much of a baby? In his defense, he did wake us at the crack of dawn, but I suspect that wasn't because of Christmas Day excitement.

For his second Christmas, I brought several old Advent calendars out of storage and spent a happy December counting down the days to the main event. The traditional Christmas Eve

rush around the shops to impulse buy the gifts for my wife and son that I should have planned days, if not weeks, in advance, was as much fun as ever. Incidentally, having set the bar incredibly low over a number of years, I basically haven't ruined Christmas as long as I remember to buy my wife a box of chocolates.

Naturally, Marty was still too young to fully appreciate the Advent calendars, although he chewed a couple of them in a markedly festive manner. He also showed more interest in the tree than we really wanted: like a magpie, he slowly collected the shiniest baubles and hid them around the house, until only the top branches were decorated. While he did, once again, provide the early start which is such a critical part of Christmas morning, he still wasn't really getting into the excitement of the day.

This year, I think we might start to get a proper Christmas. At 30 months, he will definitely be excited by Christmas chocolates and cakes. The Christmas tree will be in a continual state of undress and the wrapping paper a source of fascination. I think he will also show some interest in his gifts. There may even be something at the hotel buffet brunch that he will be prepared to eat!

With this in mind, I think it's time to start planning what kind of family Christmas traditions we want. In planning for our future Christmases, it is probably best to start by looking

at Christmases past to see which traditions we want to keep.

Christmas past

My wife and I had very different Christmases as children. I grew up in rural England with lots of brothers and sisters, so Christmas involved lots of family activities. There were open fires, comforting foods and, on one or two memorable occasions, snow. By contrast, my wife grew up in Bangkok as an only child. Apparently it never snowed, and they rarely needed to light the fire. Sounds awful, so let's focus on me instead.

Stockings were an essential part of Christmas, with Santa stuffing an old football sock with apples and satsumas, chocolate, and gifts. The first magical hours of Christmas—around 4 or 5am—would be spent comparing our goodies and stuffing ourselves with chocolate. It was then time to wake our parents and show them all the noisy and exciting things Santa had brought us, which at 6am I'm sure they were delighted about. Then it was time to get down to the serious business of the day: eating.

Ironically, given what is about to follow, one Christmas tradition that I am determined to lose is the Christmas walk. Having stuffed ourselves with turkey and potatoes, we would be just ready to play with our new toys when our parents would insist on a vigorous walk. A loathsome experience that I never wish to revisit.



So afternoon walks are out, but Christmas parkruns are in! I loved our 5 km run at 9am on Christmas morning. The runners and volunteers, no matter how tired and hungover they were at the start, would all be in a good mood by the end of the run, feeling smug for being awake and running when the rest of the country was fast asleep. Sometimes there was carol singing, and there was always champagne and mince pies and a great helping of festive cheer! The perfect way to work off some of the early morning chocolate and build an appetite for the heavy eating that was to come later in the day.

Christmas future

So what Christmas traditions do I want Marty to have, and what am I going to do this year to start those traditions? You will obviously have your own family traditions and may look with horror at some of the things I intend to inflict on my unfortunate family—most likely the running.

Advent calendars are definitely in, and nearly as important as the Advent calendar is Advent running. This is something I do with a group of friends on Facebook, and we

encourage each other to do at least 30 minutes of exercise every day of Advent. In some years, I've done yoga or cycled to work rather than running every day, while one memorably exhausting and hopefully never to be repeated year, I ran 1 km on December 1st through to 24 km on December 24th. Not running was definitely the most exciting part of Christmas Day that year! Ideally, this should culminate in a Christmas day parkrun. Sadly we don't have parkrun in Thailand, so we will do a family run on Christmas morning, and two-year-old Martin may be allowed to ride in his stroller (I'm not a total monster). This may be a race or just a little jog in the park. Whatever we do, it'll be a great way of getting a little bit of exercise into a very unhealthy day!

I think it's going to be important to establish this tradition before Marty is old enough to realize that Christmas doesn't have to involve so much running. It's amazing what weird things children will accept if you don't let them know that there are alternatives. Hopefully all the chocolate in his stocking will give him plenty of enthusiasm for his Christmas runs.

Stockings and running out of the way, it will be time to get down to the real business of Christmas: eating. For the last few years we have gone for a Christmas buffet at a hotel: an excellent range of foods and no problems achieving that authentic Christmas feeling of over-tight trousers and a certainty that if you eat another morsel, you'll vomit. But for the future I'm wondering if there might be better options. Does Marty have to associate Christmas with mindless gluttony? Could we, given the natural glories of Thailand, not start a tradition of Christmas on the beach or in the mountains?

Hopefully this year we'll start to put some of these Christmas traditions together. I'm getting excited at the thought of opening those first Advent doors, running those first few kilometers, and starting to find those perfect gifts. Although of course I mustn't peak too soon and miss the glorious thrill of Christmas Eve shopping.

Wishing everyone a splendid December, a merry Christmas, and a happy New Year!

Photos courtesy of the author and Canva.



About the Author

Having enjoyed taking his son to BAMBI playgroups over the past months, Joe is excited to volunteer with BAMBI. He and his wife moved to Thailand from the UK in 2018. In 2021 they were delighted to be joined by their son, Martin. They love exploring Thailand as a family, especially anywhere with a playground or sand!

HOW TO BECOME A BAMBI MEMBER

SIMPLY SCAN THE QR CODE ON THE RIGHT AND SIGN UP TO BECOME A MEMBER!



Becoming a BAMBI Member is simple. Just sign up online and pay by bank transfer.

Please note: the processing time for new and renewal membership applications is 6-10 days. We recommend submitting your application a minimum of one week before attending a BAMBI event to ensure your membership is active on the day. If your membership is not active, you will be required to pay the non-member ticket price for the event.

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WWW.BAMBIWEB.ORG/FAQ



If you have any membership issues, please email: database@bambiweb.org

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*Terms & conditions apply on all BAMBI benefits & discounts

SOCK SNOWMAN



Get crafty this Christmas with Anelia and her sweet sock snowman! Working on this simple craft together is the perfect way to spend time with your little one this festive season.

Christmas, a season of joy and warmth, brings families together in the embrace of twinkling lights and festive decorations. The air is filled with the beautiful melody of Christmas carols, and the aroma of cinnamon and pine needles creates a sense of enchantment. From opening gifts to eating sweet puddings, Christmas is a time when hearts are aglow with love and fun. For December, I've chosen this simple snowman craft for kids that will add to the Christmas excitement. It's easy to make, and you will have loads of fun putting it together.

Please note: young children should be supervised when using scissors and hot glue.

Supplies

- 1 white tube sock
- 1 smaller colored sock
- 1 tablespoon
- 1 kg rice
- 2 rubber bands
- Colored ribbon
- Scissors
- Glue gun and glue stick
- 3 buttons
- 1 permanent marker (Sharpie works best)

Instructions

1. Begin by using a spoon to stuff rice into your white sock to make the snowman's body. Make sure to add enough rice because this will make the body (bottom part) of the snowman sturdier. Once you have the desired amount, secure the top with a rubber band.
2. To form the snowman's head, fill up the top part of the sock with more rice. Use less rice for this part as this is the head of the snowman. Adjust it until you're satisfied with the proportions, and secure the top with a rubber band.
3. Carefully trim off any excess sock above the head.
4. Add a scarf by wrapping a ribbon around the snowman's neck, and fasten it with a small amount of hot glue.
5. Moving on, give the snowman a stocking hat by taking your colored sock, rolling the open end down a couple of times, and placing it on the snowman's head.
6. Use the hot glue gun to attach three buttons vertically on your snowman's body. Finally, use your Sharpie to draw the eyes, nose, and mouth and ho-ho-ho, your no-sew snowman is ready to go!

This snowman can be used as a doorstop, a table decoration, a paperweight, and much more!

Photos from Canva.



About the Author

Anelia is a performing artist from South Africa. She has been living and working as a teacher in Thailand for nine years. She also writes educational children's books, makes music, and loves to spend time in the kitchen. Follow her adventures on IG @aneliavz.



PHOTOGRAPHER
KANA

Contact Me



@KANAANA_117



BAMBI

COULD YOU BE OUR NEXT

PHOTO EDITOR?

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. If you have a way with photographic words, why not join BAMBI as our new photo editor?

We're looking for someone who can tell a story with a single image. From sourcing photos to organizing cover shoots, this is a fun and rewarding role for someone with a strong sense of photographic awareness and excellent communication skills.

If you think this could be you, send us an email at editor@bambiweb.org.

ACTIVITIES



BAMBI'S 2023

A RECAP OF SOME OF BAMBI'S HIGHLIGHTS THIS YEAR

This is an opportunity to delve into the various moments, milestones, and experiences that have shaped BAMBI's journey in the past 12 months. Let's embark on this journey through time and memory, celebrating the moments that have made this year uniquely BAMBI's!



PLAYGROUPS



BUMPS & BABIES

DID YOU KNOW?

Bumps & Babies has been at the heart of what we do since BAMBI began! We're proud to have been supporting new parents with sensible, trustworthy advice for over 40 years.



GIVING TREE PROJECT



Images courtesy of Giving Tree Bangkok



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DAY



WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Everything we do at BAMBI is only possible because of our many wonderful volunteers. Every year, we hold a volunteer-only event to show them how much we appreciate them!



DID YOU KNOW?

Our dedicated volunteer magazine team works tirelessly year-round to create 11 issues of our famous membership magazine for you every year.



HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

BAMBI's annual Halloween party is always a highlight of the year, and this year's was no exception!

Events as great as this one can't happen without our volunteers and sponsors, so we'd like to say a huge thank you to every one of them! Special thanks to Wells International School, Thonglor for providing us with the venue and for their amazing support.





YARD SALE



THANK YOU FOR A GREAT 2023!



As we bid farewell to the remarkable year that was 2023, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our fellow parents for joining us on this incredible journey. Your support and enthusiasm have been the driving force behind our efforts.

Thank you to each and every one of our volunteers who captured the moments we've shared in this feature.

With great anticipation, we now turn our gaze to the exciting adventures that await in 2024. Together, we'll continue to explore, learn, and grow.

Wishing you a wonderful year ahead!

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 **St. Stephen's International School**

Kindness Countdown Calendar

There are many special days being celebrated around the world this winter! What is your family celebrating? Use this cool calendar to count down the days until your special celebration with kindness!

Start here



6
Listen carefully
when someone
is talking to you.

5
Say one thing
you love about
each person in
your family.

3
Help someone
with a task they
need to do.

4
Write a note
and give it to a
special friend.

2
Practice saying
"thank you"
throughout the
day.

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BANGKOK SUPPORT GROUPS

There are a range of support groups in Bangkok. Most are open to everyone, some ask for a small donation, and some require a reservation.

The groups listed here are run independently of BAMBI, except where otherwise noted. This listing is provided for informational purposes only, and inclusion does not constitute endorsement by BAMBI. Please contact the respective groups for more information.

PRE- & POST- NATAL SUPPORT

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BUMPS & BABIES
BANGKOK

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ADOPTION
SUPPORT
FOR FAMILIES
IN THAILAND

TWINS
AND MULTIPLES
GROUP

DISABILITY & NEURODIVERGENCE SUPPORT

LEAP
(LEARNING
& EDUCATIONAL
ADVOCACY
PROGRAM)

RAINBOW
ROOM

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN

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MEET WAKAKO

Japanese mom of two, Wakako, shares how she and her husband made Bangkok their home—and added two little ones to their family in the process!

Where are you from and what's your nationality? Can you tell us about your life backhome?

I'm from Japan. I was born and grew up in the suburbs of Tokyo, so Bangkok, where I'm living now, seems to be quite a big, exciting and wonderful city in comparison!

After graduating from university, I worked for some years in Fukuoka, Hamamatsu (a big city in Shizuoka), and Tokyo. During my time at university, I went to Kenya for almost a year of volunteer work.

Can you tell us something about your career and work? And what about your spouse?

I previously worked for a Japanese musical instrument manufacturer for five years and an educational company for three years. After that, I left my job to move to Thailand with my husband. Currently, I'm a full-time mom, but I'm always open to new career opportunities.

I actually met my husband while we were both working for the same company! He currently works for a Japanese government organization closely related to Japanese culture.

Please tell us a little bit about your family.

My family has four members: a three-year-old son, an eight-month-old daughter, my husband, and me. When we moved to Thailand five years ago, it was just me and my husband, but we've been lucky to add two new family members while here! Toh, my son, is an energetic and super cheerful boy. My daughter, Hyo, was born in March of this year. She is a little shy, but she loves her big brother so much.

When did you come to Thailand? What do you miss the most about your country?

We came in September 2018. I had traveled here ten times before moving because I've always loved Bangkok! Honestly, there is nothing special that I really miss about Japan as Thailand has plenty of quality Japanese items, food, and restaurants. However, I do sometimes feel a little sad and worried about not being able to see my family in person as often as I would like.

Can you tell us a bit about your routine here in Bangkok?

I take my son to kindergarten on weekdays. Sometimes the hot, rainy climate of Bangkok makes me feel uncomfortable, but I love seeing my son have fun there,



and I enjoy chatting with his teachers, schoolmates, and their parents. On weekends, we spend most of the time together as a family at home or around the city.

What do you love most about Thailand? Which parts of Thailand have you traveled to, and which did you enjoy the most?

I'm always deeply grateful to see the warm hearts and smiles of the Thai people, especially towards children! Our family loves to travel in Thailand. We've been to Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Hua Hin, Phuket, Koh Samui, Pattaya, and Koh Samet. Interacting with protected elephants in Chiang Rai is one of my greatest memories. But more than anything, I feel happiest in my ordinary life in Bangkok!

What were your main challenges when you first arrived in Thailand?

I can say without doubt that it was the pandemic that started in 2020. Stores, restaurants, and even public parks were all closed. We weren't allowed to meet with friends, so we were forced to spend long days at home. As it was truly challenging for us, we're now very happy to be living a healthy, free, and normal life.

How did you find out about BAMBI?

My friend in the same apartment introduced me to BAMBI during my pregnancy with my first child. After my son was born, I became a member of BAMBI at the baby massage session.

Are there any specific suggestions you can give to BAMBI's new members here in Bangkok?

BAMBI is a great partner in parenting! I hope you guys enjoy the lovely time here.

I will sadly be leaving Thailand soon, but I will always treasure the memory of joining many playgroups with my children and the friendships I made through BAMBI.



BAMBI

THE TEAM

BAMBI is managed by an elected committee of volunteers and all BAMBI members are encouraged to volunteer. Vacancies can be found on the Call for Volunteers page in this magazine and are posted online; you are welcome to contact vicechairwoman@bambiweb.org with inquiries.

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