

BAMBI

SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN BANGKOK SINCE 1982

**THE UNHURRIED
CHILD**

**THE
EMOTIONAL
IMPACT
OF GREAT
TEACHERS**

**ALIEN
INVADERS?**



Cover photo by Jana Capek

A project of Childbirth and Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand

SEPTEMBER 2025

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parenthood"**

- Mel Habanananda



We are a group offering support and companionship to families 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.

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bambibangkok

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:

- Encouraging the appropriate use of technology and medication for all births.
- Promoting breastfeeding for every mother and baby in the community.
- Providing information and training to health professionals involved in maternity care.
- Supporting parents through the pregnancy, birth and postnatal period.

For more information on CBFT, contact:

English speaking, Tel 05-310-4573;

tanitmel@btinternet.com

Thai speaking, Mobile: 081-776-9391;

info@cbfthai.org or

sobsamai@yahoo.com. Or

visit: www.cbfthai.org and www.facebook.com/pages/ChildbirthBreastfeeding-Foundation-of-Thailand

5 Committee Letter

6 Editor's Corner

On the Cover

10-12 The Emotional Impact of Great Teachers

26-28 The Unhurried Child

30-34 Dad Diaries: Alien Invaders?

Special Features

14-16 Teachers Who Shaped Us

19 Readers' Corner: Books to Inspire

20 Fun Corner: Meet my Mentor

22-24 Raising a Multilingual Child

36-38 Two Weeks Without my Daughter

40-42 Finding Calm in the Chaos

In Every Issue

8 BAMBI Playgroups & Activities

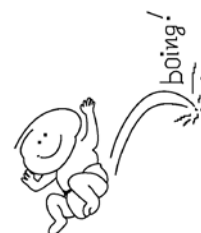
18 Call for Volunteers

44 Bangkok Support Groups

45 BAMBI Member Benefits

46 BAMBI: The Team

*Hello!
Can you find me
in the magazine?*



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Dear readers,

As parents and caregivers, we often find ourselves in the position of a guide—gently shaping our children’s view of the world, nurturing their curiosity, and supporting their growth. But just as our children need guidance, we, too, rely on others to light the way: mentors, educators, and those who patiently share their wisdom with us.

During the early days of the pandemic, I found myself sitting beside my niece, a fifth grader at the time, as she navigated online classes from our living room. What began as a simple gesture of support turned into a lesson in itself—for me. Watching her teachers lead a virtual classroom with calm perseverance, adapting to unfamiliar tools and managing a sea of small faces on screen, gave me a profound appreciation for their role. It was then I truly understood the patience, creativity, and care that go into teaching—not just content but connection.

Since then, I’ve made it a point to maintain strong bonds with the mentors in my own life, as well as with my children’s teachers. A kind note, a thank-you message, or even a moment of genuine conversation can go a long way. Expressing gratitude is more than good manners; it’s a practice that strengthens the fabric of community. It tells our guides: “You matter. Your efforts are seen.”

As we celebrate this month’s theme of Honouring our Mentors may we take a moment to acknowledge those who walk with us, offering insight, encouragement, and perspective. Whether it’s a teacher who helped our child thrive, a friend who shared parenting advice when we needed it most, or a mentor who guided us through uncertainty—let’s give thanks.

Sara Salam
BAMBI Activities Coordinator





September will always mean the start of school to me. It may be well over twenty years since I had to watch the calendar's remorseless progress tick off the passing days of summer, but I still remember the sadness of knowing that what had seemed an endless holiday was coming to an end. I never looked forward to going back to school, and once we were back, I would count the minutes until the bell rang for the end of each school day. Despite always being fascinated by learning, I hated primary school and secondary school, and only started to enjoy education at sixth form college and university.

I don't know if this was because I hadn't yet found the right mentors or whether I was just a difficult child, but this month's theme, Honoring our Mentors, has made me think about who my mentors were and how they affected me. I've remembered teachers I've not thought of in years, and lessons I've long forgotten learning. Yet teachers are not

the only mentors we have; parents and grandparents, family friends and childhood friends, colleagues and partners are just as important.

As a parent I now look forward to the approach of the school term and the opportunity to pass my children on to someone else with great excitement. But I don't want school to just be a means of getting good exam results; I also hope that they will love school in a way that I never did. I look at the schools we could send them to and I'm excited by the passion of the teachers, the range of topics they'll cover, and the extra-curricular opportunities they'll have. In this environment I hope they'll quickly find the right mentors who will help them become ever better versions of themselves.

We're never too old to learn new things or find new mentors, and I'm thrilled to introduce this month's articles by our many exciting contributors who always inspire me to try and become a better parent and person.

In Readers' Corner, Liz Ainsworth recommends two great books. One is the story of a mountaineer who became a builder of schools in the Himalayas, and the other is a valuable reminder for children that even the scariest teachers are people, not monsters.

Ally Galloway talks about the many benefits of multilingualism and shares tips on ways to support our children in their linguistic development in "Raising a Multilingual Child". In "The Unhurried Child", Sarah Russell champions the benefits of a slow childhood, and explains how we can incorporate these principles into our parenting.

Rachel Ofo and Anna Zarchi reflect on how the impact of great teachers extends well beyond the classroom. In "Teachers Who Shaped Us", Rachel remembers an afternoon on a tennis court that inspired her philosophy for life, the many mentors she's had, and the ways they've made her into the person and teacher she is today. Meanwhile, in "The Emotional Impact of Great Teachers", Anna remembers the teacher who, while gently correcting her Thai, taught her resilience and emotional intelligence, and explains how we can help our children develop these essential life skills.

By detailing the ways they've overcome tough times, Jacqueline Ainsbury and Deshna Bhansali provide ideas for how we can become stronger people and parents. Jacqueline shares the seven simple tools she uses to find emotional stability when life threatens to overwhelm her in "Finding Calm in the Chaos". And in "Two Weeks Without my Daughter", Deshna describes a fraught fortnight away from her child and how it reminded her that she was her own person, not just a mother—a lesson she encourages all parents to learn for their and their children's benefit.

Finally, in an off-theme Dad Diaries, I consider whether or not my children are actually dangerous aliens.

I hope you also find food for thought in this month's magazine.

Wishing you all an exciting and joyful return to school.

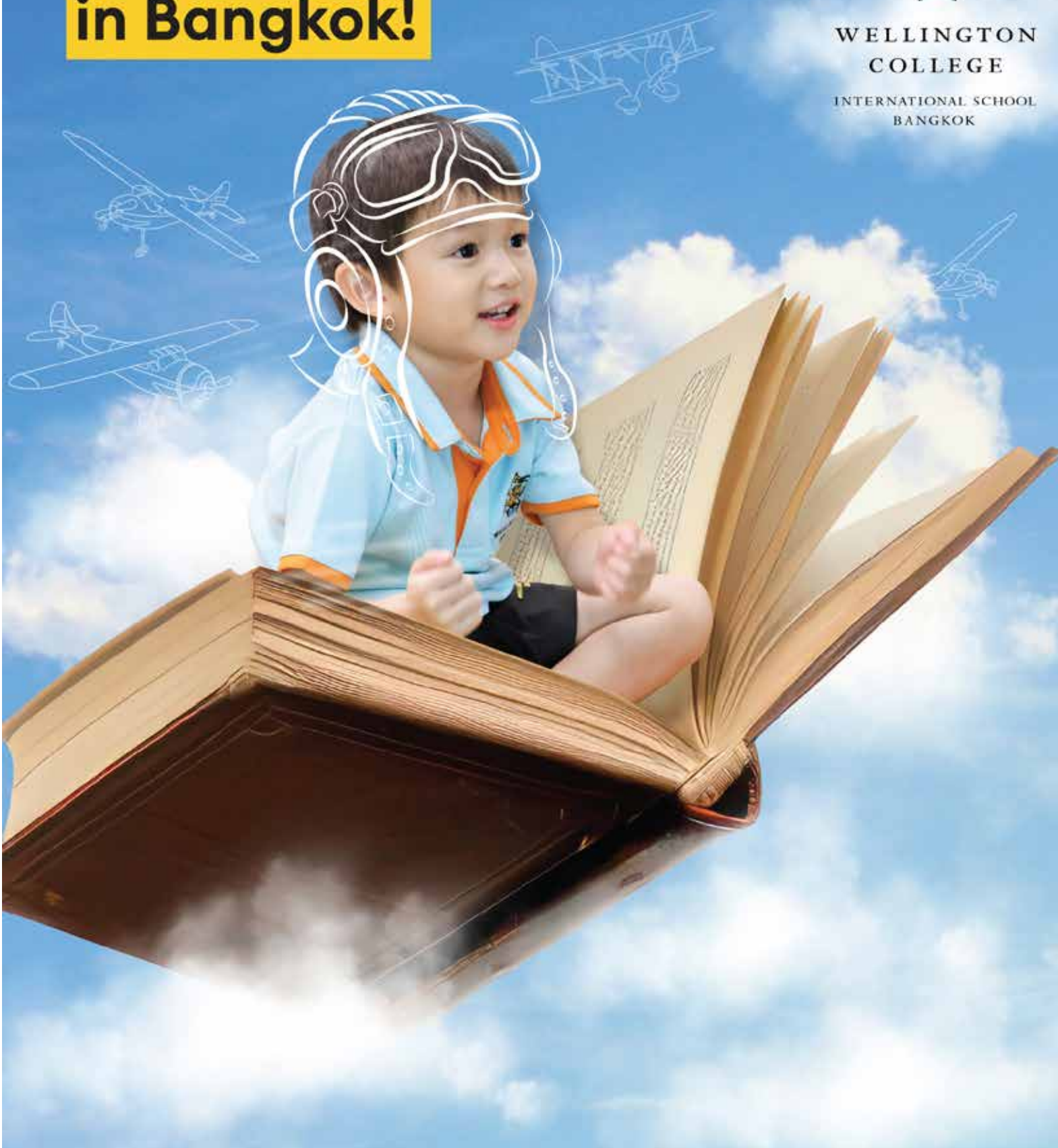
Joe Barker
Deputy Editor

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PLAYGROUPS & ACTIVITIES

BAMBI holds regular playgroups and activities around Bangkok, 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 opportunities for children aged one to six years old to develop their athletic, creative, and cognitive skills.

PLAYGROUPS

Name	Location
Wonderkids	Wonder Woods Kids Café & Co-Learning Space
Little Seeds new!	The Tiny Seeds International Pre-School
Kiddiezilla	Market Place Nanglinchee (3rd Floor)
Kiddieville	Playville
Little Steps new!	Future Steps International School Bangkok
Little Panda	Nancy Language School
Little Treehouse	Little Treehouse Nursery
Saturday Nana	Storytime Preschool Bangkok
Yenakart	Noddy by Elizabeth International Playgroup



ACTIVITIES

Name	Location
Toddler Music	Skyview Hotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 24
Football	Noah Futsal
Little Athletes new!	Noah Futsal



SIGN UP TODAY!

For the latest information and further details on our playgroups and activities, scan the QR code on the right. Bookings are required to join playgroups and activities. Register today for unlimited fun and a welcoming community!





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THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF GREAT TEACHERS

Anna recalls how a special teacher taught her resilience and helped build her emotional intelligence, and then shares some strategies that both teachers and parents can use to help children develop these crucial life skills.



Photo by Katerina Holmes from Pexels



About the Author

Anna works for New Counseling Service (NCS), an internationally recognized mental health center in Bangkok with a diverse team of licensed counselors. NCS has provided counseling services in Thailand and surrounding regions for over 20 years, with therapists specializing in a wide variety of issues such as anxiety, depression, work stress, relationships, and more.



Photo by Yan Krukau from Pexels

When I was 12, my parents hit me with a big surprise: I was going from an international school to a Thai one. This sent me into complete shock—my reading and writing in Thai were very weak and definitely not at a Thai-school level. I braced myself—they were going to make me feel bad about it for sure. My previous approach to things I wasn't good at was this: minimal effort; keep my head low; avoid.

I remember the terror of handing in my first Thai writing assignment, sure I was about to get wrecked, but my new teacher never said a word—just handed it back with all her corrections. Weeks turned into months, and she continued to quietly correct my work without ever saying anything to make me feel less able than my classmates, letting me learn independently from my previous mistakes. She praised me as my Thai got better, but did so in a casual and appreciative manner.

As the weeks and months passed, I grew more confident in my writing even while making mistakes. Over the years, this slowly translated into a general newfound ability to bounce back and keep going, even at things I struggled with. There are many teachers who contributed to this, and many who set me back, but I will always credit her as being the

one who laid down the foundations of my resilience through her gentle and non-judgmental approach.

We tend to think of school purely in terms of academics, but teachers do more than that—they also have the ability to impact children in ways that will change them beyond solving for x or remembering what happened 500 years ago, and this includes building resilience and emotional intelligence.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

When it comes to building resilience, NCS counselor Pam, previously a school counselor and teacher, shares that being an enjoyable teacher goes a long way. "Kids pick up on that passion and joy and they get inspired from it," she explains. "This leads them to finding their inner purpose, which then leads to resilience." Counseling intern Jonathan, a passionate educator of psychology at a university level, thinks that, "In class, if teachers are open and encouraging, this communicates that authority figures can have compassion within a place where there are simultaneously expectations. Out of class, if teachers are approachable and willing to communicate with students, this can instill trust and communicate attention to the whole person."

He also shares that in his experience, encouraging objective thinking can help foster resilience. He says, "I have challenged students to 'leave right/wrong or good/bad at the door' and think in terms of risk and reward, or risk of doing vs risk of not doing an action." This encourages flexible thinking based on facts rather than judgment. Looking at things from a more objective viewpoint helps us to take things less personally, which can make them less overwhelming, thus giving us the strength to keep going.

"Try to gain a deep understanding of each child and what works best for them as an individual without judgment and with comparison," Pam adds. "This helps the child to feel truly seen and valued in a way that enables them to develop life skills that come from a true sense of self-worth." Think about the story I shared—my teacher knew from my parents that I didn't react well to harsh criticism, and instead tried a gentle approach which kickstarted my ability to keep trying, so that I can now face harsh criticism without giving up. The same approach wouldn't necessarily work for everyone, so it's important to have an individual approach for each student.

BUILDING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EI)

When it comes to building EI, counselor Dave explains that a good first step is to help kids label, recognize, and accept their emotions. Help them understand what it is they're feeling and that it is OK to feel this way; this makes it easier for them to get through the challenge they are facing. Our counselors shared a few different techniques for this:

Child-friendly emotion wheel: This can help children add more nuance to their emotional vocabulary beyond feelings that they are already familiar with such as sad, mad, happy, angry, and so on.

Develop empathy: Think of activities like dramas, plays, or play-acting. Stepping into someone else's shoes can help children see things beyond their own perspective.

Creative activities: Using your hands for things like drawing or coloring can help with emotional expression and finding different expressive outlets.

Work together: This helps them learn how to navigate balancing the thoughts, emotions, and approaches of different people and making it work.

Emotional expression: Adults often try to shut children's emotions down, but allowing them to express their emotions is part of learning to process and navigate them.

Encourage interaction and open discussion: For example, present them with different scenarios and ask them to argue from both sides.

Encourage understanding among conflict: When conflict occurs, it is useful to help children understand the other person's experience; this builds empathy and helps them learn how they can better navigate a similar situation in the future.



Photo by RDNE Stock project from Pexels

Support reflection: Help children reflect on past challenges involving their emotions so that they can identify what they were feeling and how it affected them.

Be explicit: Talk simply and clearly about emotions to help make the emotional process clearer and easier for kids to understand.

Finally, it's important to remember that EI and resilience often go hand in hand—knowing how to cope emotionally supports resilience and can create the strength needed to bounce back.

THE AGE FACTOR

Though it is always great to foster these skills from a young age, there is no official time limit on learning them. Each person's circumstances, character, or the challenges they face at each stage of life can influence the development of these skills. Though some resist these skills at a younger age, they may become more open to them later on. As counseling intern Emma says, "It is very important to keep planting the seeds of EI as you go along and not only in early childhood."

Parents often worry as their children reach adolescence: Are they resilient enough? Can they face this? Though these concerns are understandable, it is good to be reminded that this is simply what a lot of teenagers are like, and doesn't

necessarily mean they don't have those life skills. Jonathan shares, "In my own experience, I was more impactful with university students [than high schoolers], likely because I felt comfortable speaking to their level of maturity and direction. I also found university students and emerging adults to have a keener sense of independence and willingness to question rules and laws, which I see as part of the development of EI." So even if you are concerned about your child's resilience and EI throughout adolescence, this doesn't mean it's not something they can't learn later on, or that they don't already possess those skills—they could just be hiding behind the usual teenager traits, waiting to show up later.

A POSITIVE IMPACT

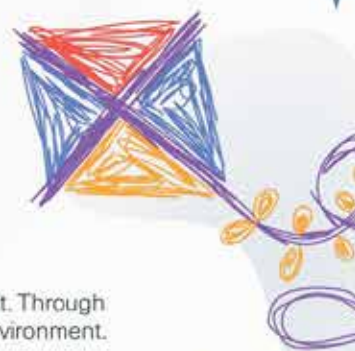
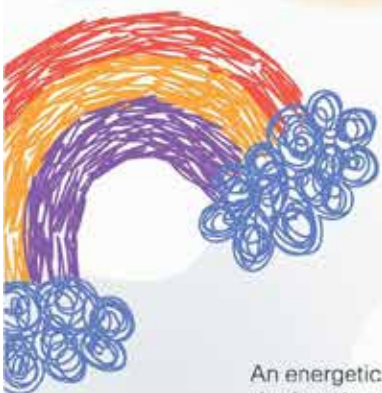
I can confidently say that I've had many teachers who have left both a positive and negative impact on me that I still think about years later. Though I have learned important things from both, I'm always grateful for the teachers that helped turn things around and made the bad experiences a learning moment instead of a permanent wound. Those teachers made a huge difference in how resilient I am today and how I interact with the world. A teacher does more than just teach facts—and it is important for both parents and teachers to keep this in mind as they guide children through their education.



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Bright Beats

Wednesday, 10:00-11:00

For children aged 1.5–3 years | Parent and Toddler Room

An energetic, music-filled session designed to ignite your toddler's love for sound and movement. Through singing, dancing, and rhythm games, children develop key early skills in a joyful and engaging environment.

Bright Explorers

Thursdays, 12:30-13:30

For children aged 1–3 years | Parent and Toddler Room

This hands-on session invites young explorers to dive into a world of sensory fun. With activities such as painting, water play, mud mixing, and natural material exploration, children develop key early skills in a joyful, creative environment.

Bright Tumblers

Friday, 08:00-09:00

For children aged 1.5–3 years | Prep MPH

A fun-filled movement session designed to support physical development through purposeful play. Children build strength, coordination, and confidence while exploring soft obstacle courses in a safe, supportive environment.

Scan to register

Bright Beats



Bright Explorers



Bright Tumblers



TEACHERS WHO SHAPED US

Many dozens of teachers shaped Rachel. Here, she reflects on what she has learned from each of them and how they helped craft the person, mother, and teacher she has become.



Photo by Mikhail Nilov from Pexels



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.



Photo by Fernando Veloso Leão from corelens

Between kindergarten, middle school, high school, and university, I've had around 85–100 different teachers, and a few of them have made a significant enough imprint to have shaped who I am today.

Teachers can affect us in different ways, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. Either way, regardless of whether we have an extremely fun, boring, or mean teacher, our brains react accordingly and a teacher's impact goes well beyond a few homework and test scores. The quality of a teacher's skills and the support they provide can affect our mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

Think about your favorite teacher. Remember what they looked like, what they sounded like, how they taught, what they taught, and most importantly, how they made you feel when you were in class. Excited? Inspired? Safe? Now, consider a teacher you didn't really enjoy. Why not? Was it their teaching style? Their attitude? The way their shoes squeaked on the ground? I had just as many teachers I adored as

I didn't, and for various reasons. However, regardless of what was taught—or not taught—in the classroom, I was still able to learn a lot about myself.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT GRADES

In my younger years, I was what one calls an "overachiever". I naturally enjoyed learning and befriending all my teachers. It was easy to hop into a new grade and grasp new concepts. However, that zeal was challenged once I entered middle school. We were constantly reminded that we were no longer children and shouldn't be treated as such. This was when I encountered the first teacher I didn't like, and that's putting it lightly. Without boring you with all the details of the daily struggles and arguments I had with him, I will admit I was absolutely thrilled to complete that grade; although I was top of his class, I loathed every moment, despite the subject being my favorite. This goes to show how "good grades" should not be the only indicator of a good class or skilled instructor.

A LIFETIME OF INSPIRATION

On the other hand, I had another teacher in high school who was the most nurturing educator I could ever ask for. Even though I struggled with a few concepts, he never made me feel incompetent. He always, gently, pushed me to try a little bit harder or try something completely new. I can confidently say the route my life has taken and many of the decisions I have made up until this point were due to one conversation at the tennis courts, when he simply said: "But just try it out. You never know what might happen." I've carried that simple but impactful motto with me since I was 13 years old. That's probably why I ended up packing my bags and moving to Thailand. Thanks, Mr. Desai!

Because of the compassion shown by this teacher, I have been able to build a teaching foundation where I lead with the same compassion in my classroom, on the court, and even at home.



Photo by Pavel Danilyuk from Pexels

MY LIFE AS A TEACHER

I've been fortunate enough to have had a variety of teaching experiences. After university, I assisted in an adult language school. After that, I found myself teaching in Thailand. Once that was completed, I continued with private teaching of younger learners. Then I decided to take on homeschooling my daughter, which I've been doing for a few years now. And finally, I recently began coaching volleyball.

Although all these variations of teaching have come with their own sets of skills and challenges, the goal is the same: to inspire. Regardless of whether I'm teaching adults how to write a sentence in the past tense or teaching a child how to serve a ball, I want to ensure they feel inspired, even when it gets difficult—and anyone who's taught or learned English knows how difficult it can get.

A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Between learning and teaching, I understand that another important

skill to have is the ability to support others. This support doesn't start and end with those who struggle, either. Even the learners who seem like they have it together may need a little hand or commendation now and again. That's what I appreciated the most about the teachers I've bonded with. Although I had strengths, it was always nice to know that someone was there to catch me if I fell, or failed—which happened a couple of times. So, I take this idea with me, and I know it will stay relevant to teaching, even as society and methods of teaching change.

Learning in the era of budding technology was fun. I remember when our school received new iMac G3s—you know, the big, colorful, see-through computers—we felt like the coolest kids in the area. I remember learning how to type words on my clunky Ti-83 graphing calculator. Now, everyone, including some children, has a computer and calculator in their pocket. So, how do teachers keep the excitement of learning? Simply put, by taking advantage of the technologically

inclined, socially connected world around us. As an adult, some of my favorite teachers have come from social media. For teaching anything from complex chemistry, to fun foraging, to the perils of parenting, I've been able to use social media to aid me while still holding on to this idea of inspiring and supporting.

The takeaway is to learn how to use the good, the bad, and the ugly to teach. The best teachers are always the best learners, so don't be afraid to adjust and try something new, because "you never know what might happen". Let's continue to find the beauty in new ideas and enjoy the journey of learning new ways to inspire ourselves and those around us. And while this article has highlighted conventional teachers, let's not forget that teaching comes in various forms. As parents, as friends, and as residents of the world, those around us inadvertently learn from us. Let's be the teachers we loved growing up.

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Book visit



BAMBI Committee, 2025

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

BAMBI 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. BAMBI 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 BAMBI's constitution, interested candidates are required to have an active membership at the time of applying.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS



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- 🔍 Playgroup Leader
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- 🔍 Me-Time Assistant
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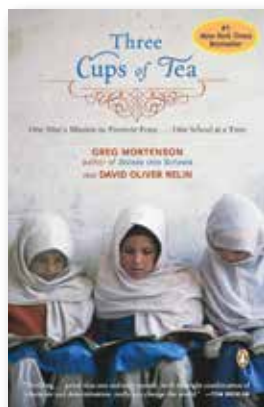
THREE CUPS OF TEA: ONE MAN'S MISSION TO PROMOTE PEACE...ONE SCHOOL AT A TIME

By Greg Mortenson and
David Oliver Relin

"Three Cups of Tea" tells the true story of Greg Mortenson, an American mountaineer whose failed attempt to climb K2 led to a greater mission: building schools in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Moved by the kindness of the villagers in Korphe, he promised to return and build a school for their children. What follows is a journey of humility, perseverance, and a deep belief in the power of education.

Mortenson is guided by local elders and teachers whose wisdom shapes his path. His story highlights the importance of listening, learning, and building lasting connections rooted in mutual respect. He honors his mentors not with words but through action—constructing schools that bring hope to entire communities. This memoir is a powerful reminder that educators and mentors come in many forms, and that true gratitude, when expressed through service, can create life-changing impacts for generations.

Published in 2006 by Penguin Publishing Group. "Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace... One School at a Time", can be found in the non-fiction section of Neilson Hays Library.



MY TEACHER IS A MONSTER! (NO, I AM NOT.)

By Peter Brown

In this witty and heartwarming picture book, Peter Brown explores how perception can shift with understanding. Bobby sees his teacher, Ms. Kirby, as a terrifying green monster—loud, stern, and completely unapproachable. But when they unexpectedly meet in the park, a quiet adventure unfolds. As they share a few simple moments outside of school, Bobby begins to notice the human side of Ms. Kirby. With each page, the "monster" fades away, revealing a teacher who isn't so scary after all.



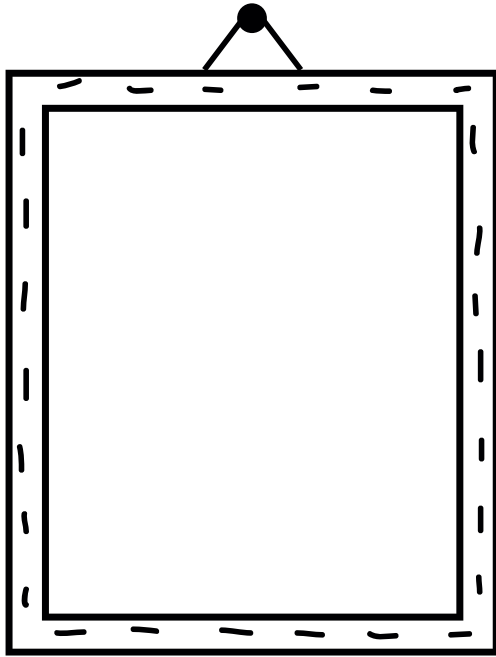
Told with clever visual storytelling and gentle humor, this book reminds young readers that teachers are more than just authority figures—they are real people with stories, quirks, and kindness to share. It's a touching tale about how small moments of connection can transform relationships, and how looking beyond first impressions often leads to mutual respect and meaningful understanding between students and teachers.

Published in 2024 by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, this book by Peter Brown can be found in the Children's Corner of the library.



Prepared by Kit Lang @mskitlang for Neilson Hays Library, 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. The library is 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.

MEET MY MENTOR

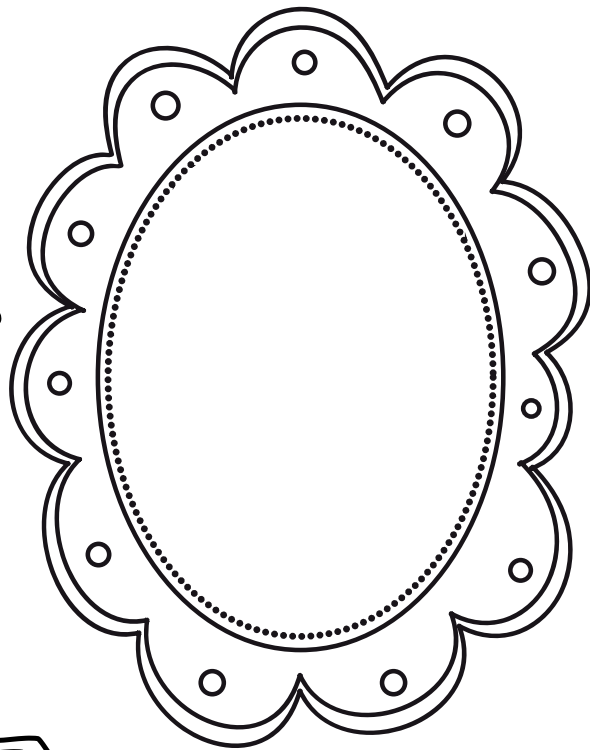


Name: _____

Age: _____

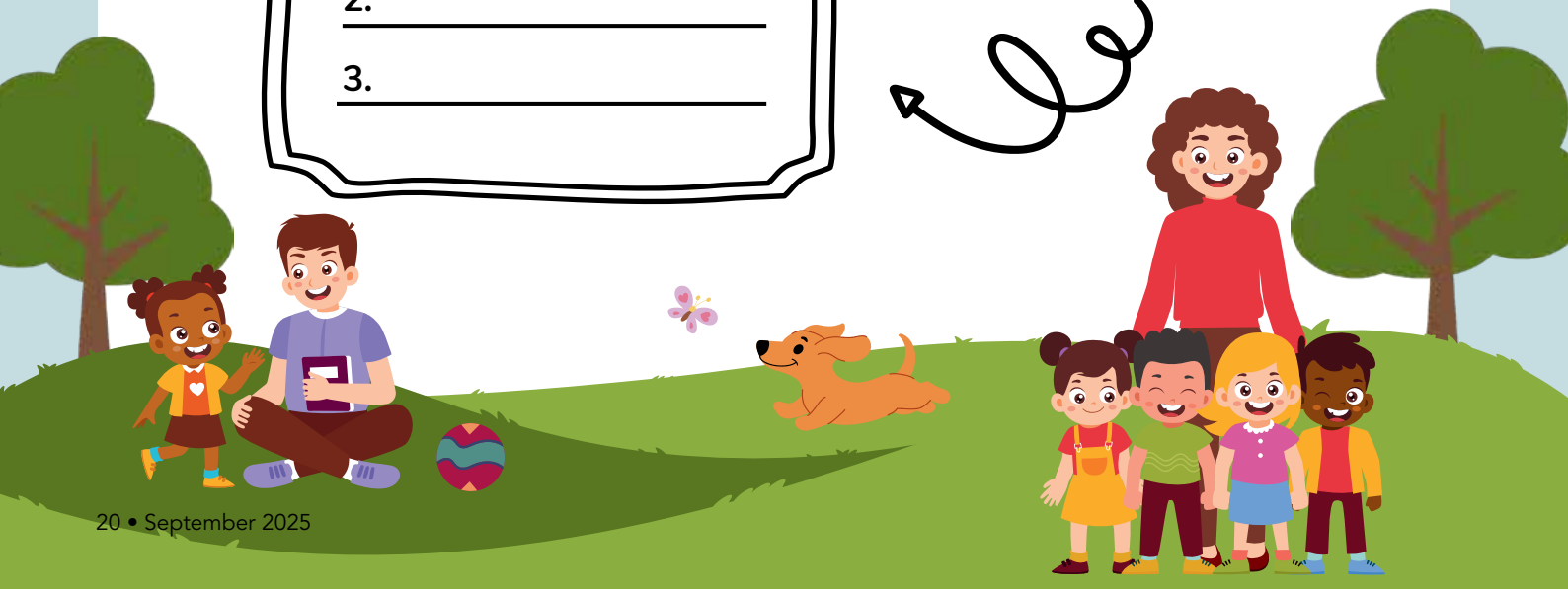
Nationality: _____

My favorite activity to
do with them



1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____

Three qualities
I like about them





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RAISING A MULTILINGUAL CHILD

It can feel tough getting our kids to speak more than one language, but Ally reminds us that this is a gift that will last them a lifetime, and that with a few simple strategies it needn't be a struggle.

Photo by Annushka Ahuja from Pexels

About the Author

Ally Galloway is the new Early Years and Elementary Principal at the Canadian International School of Thailand. With a background in education and communications, Ally is a proud mother of three and a passionate educator, deeply committed to the importance of connecting curiosity and learning for a positive and meaningful educational journey.



In our increasingly interconnected world, raising multilingual children is more than a cultural advantage—it's a life skill. For many families, especially those living in multilingual regions or diaspora communities, the decision to nurture two or even three languages from early childhood is often influenced by a mix of heritage, opportunity, and educational aspirations.

As both a mother and a teaching professional who works closely with bilingual and trilingual students, I've witnessed firsthand the incredible benefits—and very real challenges—of raising multilingual children. More importantly, I've seen how powerful it is when families and schools work together to create supportive, language-rich environments.

Whether you're a parent considering a bilingual path, or you're already navigating the ups and downs of multilingualism at home, this article is designed to offer you practical insights, age-appropriate strategies, and a few reassuring reminders that you're not alone on this journey.

WHY RAISE A MULTILINGUAL CHILD?

Children raised in multilingual environments benefit cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Multilingualism can help develop stronger problem-solving skills, better multitasking abilities, and enhanced memory. On a more personal level, being multilingual helps children connect with grandparents, understand their cultural roots, and engage meaningfully in diverse communities. But the benefits don't come without effort—and it's effort shared between family and school.

UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE FATIGUE AND THE COMFORT LANGUAGE

One question I often hear from parents is: "Why does my child speak English at school all day but only wants to speak their home language the moment they walk in the door?"

This experience is what I call reverting to the comfort language—the language in which the child feels safest, most relaxed, and emotionally connected. For many young learners, especially early talkers and preschool-aged children, the brain can feel quite stretched after a day of processing and producing a new language. Returning home is like slipping on a pair of comfortable pajamas, and that often includes slipping back into their comfort language.

Rather than resisting this, we can support it by making home a haven for language growth and play. It doesn't mean you give up on practicing the second language—it means being strategic about when and how to introduce it.



Photo by Ron Lach from Pexels

ACHIEVING MULTILINGUAL SUCCESS

Here are some of my favorite strategies for multilingual success broken down into three key age groups: Toddlers (1–3 years), preschoolers (3–5 years), and early primary (6–8 years). Each stage has unique language needs—and opportunities.

Toddlers (1–3 years): building foundations

Language learning is still passive for many toddlers, so don't worry if they aren't "speaking" both languages yet. At this age, exposure is key, so find ways, like the following, to increase language exposure.

One parent, one language (OPOL): If feasible, have each parent consistently speak one language. For example, mom speaks Mandarin and dad speaks English.

Routine-based language use: Assign a language to specific routines, for example, bathtime in French, bedtime stories in Tagalog.

Music and rhymes: Toddlers absorb language rhythmically. Choose songs, rhymes, and simple books in all target languages.

Home tip: Avoid correcting your toddler too much. Instead, model the correct phrase in a warm, playful tone. Toddlers learn by hearing, not by being corrected.

Preschoolers (3–5 years): vocabulary explosion

Preschoolers begin combining words and expanding vocabulary. This is a great time to introduce consistent language expectations at home and to partner with educators. You could try some of the following ideas.

Language days: Alternate "language days" at home—Monday, Wednesday, Friday in your heritage language; other days in the school language.

Shared reading: Read the same book in two languages. For example, one night in Korean, the next in German.

Play-based learning: Set up play scenarios like tea parties or shopkeeper games and act them out in the target language.

At school: Communicate with your child's teacher about your language goals. Share key vocabulary in your home language that your child uses often. This builds bridges between environments.

Early primary (6–8 years): consolidating skills

Children at this stage begin reading and writing independently. This is the perfect time to introduce some of these more structured activities without making it feel like “school at home”.

Bilingual journals: Encourage your child to keep a diary where they draw and write in both languages.

TV with subtitles: Watching shows in the home language with second-language subtitles—or vice versa—helps build visual and auditory links.

Grandparent calls: Regular video calls with relatives who speak a different language can provide natural practice.

School collaboration: Ask if bilingual books can be brought into the classroom or if your child can share a cultural story with peers.

THE ROLE OF EXTENDED FAMILY AND CAREGIVERS

Multilingualism isn't just for parents—it's a team effort. Encourage grandparents, nannies, and other caregivers to consistently stick to one language. Consistency builds confidence. One mother shared with me that her child spoke Mandarin only with grandma, and those daily afternoon chats became the foundation of the child's fluency. That's the power of intentional exposure.

AVOID LANGUAGE CONFUSION AND PRESSURE

A common concern is whether children will get confused when learning multiple languages. The answer is: not if you stay consistent. Children are brilliant at differentiating languages, especially when they understand the context—English with dad, French with grandma, Thai at school.

That said, the pressure to “perform” can backfire. If a child senses stress or judgment, they may withdraw. Celebrate effort over correctness. Let mistakes be part of the journey.

LANGUAGE LEARNING SHOULD BE A JOY

The most successful multilingual families I've worked with share one trait: they make language learning fun



and connected to real life. Cooking together in English, bedtime stories in Japanese, birthday cards written in both Thai and English—these are the things that shape identity and fluency.

SNAPSHOT TIPS FOR BUSY FAMILIES

Keep books accessible: Have a rotating shelf of books in all target languages.

Use audio: Listen to audiobooks or children's podcasts during car rides.

Make it routine: Link languages to daily habits—Monday songs in Spanish, Friday cooking in Tamil.

Get creative: Use art to label household items in both languages.

Talk to your teachers: Share your family's language goals and strategies with your child's educators.

Be patient: Language growth comes in waves. There will be times of silence followed by bursts of speech.

Encourage, don't correct: Repeat sentences with the correct form gently—model, don't reprimand.

Celebrate multilingual wins: Acknowledge every little moment, whether it's a new word or a full sentence.

FINAL THOUGHTS

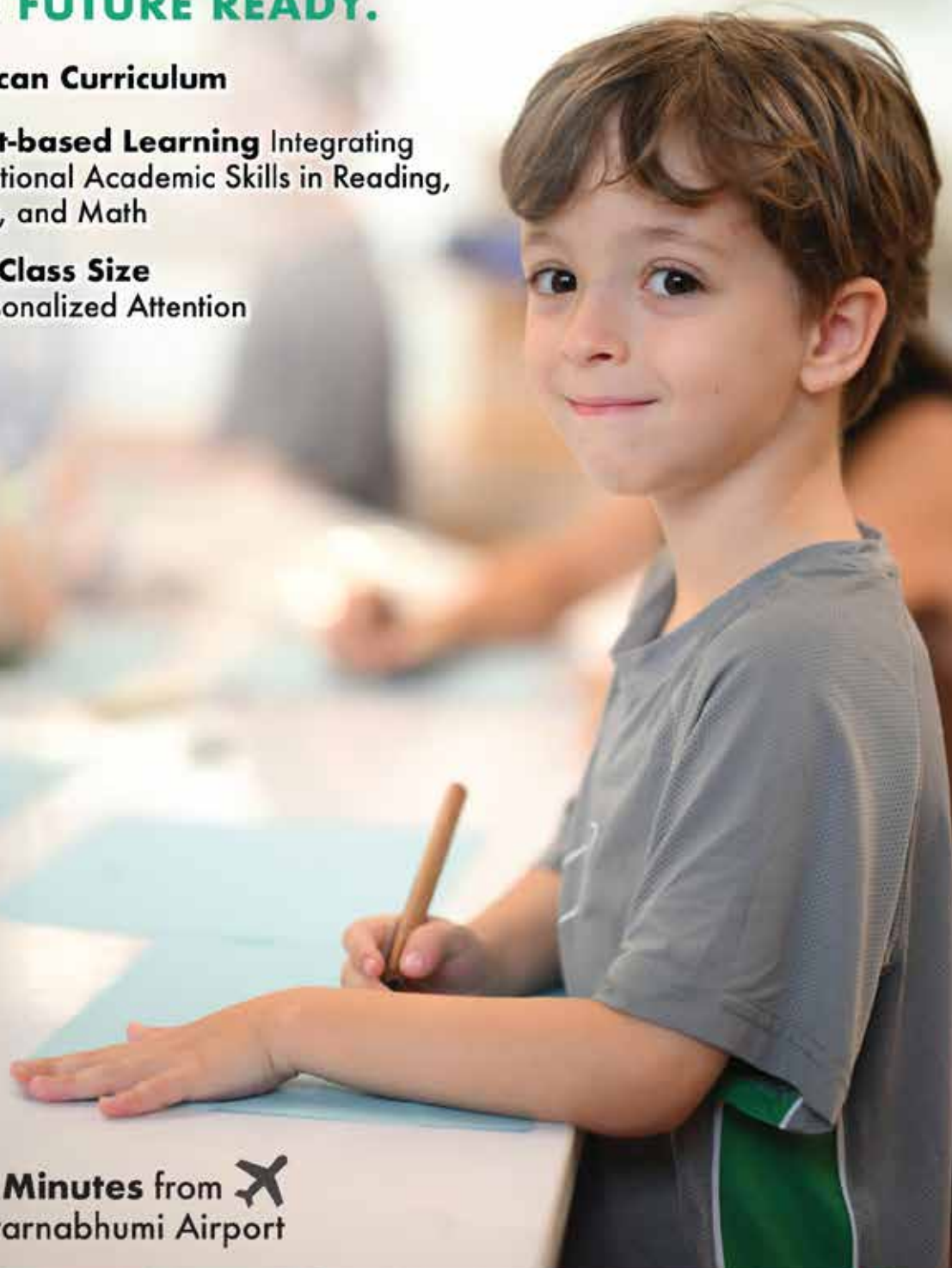
Raising a multilingual child isn't about perfection, it's about connection. It's about giving your child the tools to express themselves, understand others, and carry their identity with pride. As parents, we may worry we're not doing enough, or that we're doing it “wrong”. But every bedtime story, every shared laugh in your home language, every phrase your child experiments with, is a step in the right direction. Multilingualism isn't just a skill. It's a gift. And with the right blend of support at home and in school, it's a gift your child will carry with them for life.


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THE UNHURRIED CHILD

Sarah feared that her children would never experience the magic she remembers from her childhood, but by embracing the principles of a slow childhood, her family are reclaiming the magic of an unhurried upbringing.

Photo by Pablo Merchan from Studio Colombia



About the Author

Sarah Russell is a mother to two young boys and a children's occupational therapist. Her passion is respecting and protecting childhood, for which a slow and unhurried childhood is a foundational cornerstone. You can connect with Sarah via stamburrini@gmail.com

W “What are some of your favorite childhood memories?” I curiously asked a friend, as we watched our young children climbing, swinging, and digging in the sandpit. My friend turned to me, her eyes misty, as she recalled possibly some of her most carefree and magical moments. “I spent hours outside,” she began, “Making mud pies, picking flowers in the garden, giving the trees different names and personalities. On a sunny, balmy night, my dad would take us out for a bike ride. I can still remember the smell of the summer’s night, the sounds of the cicadas. But my favorite memory is skipping in the backyard with my siblings, until our legs hurt and got tangled in the rope...” She trailed off, lost in her own memories, her stories catching in her throat.

Watching our children wipe beads of sweat from their foreheads with sandy hands, while the others ran barefoot across the grass, I replied, “I remember moments like that too.” My voice was tinged with sadness amid the cheerful chaos. “Not only does that seem like a lifetime ago, it feels like a life lost for children,” I continued, almost at a whisper, for it felt too sad to speak aloud.

A SLOW CHILDHOOD

I fondly recall growing up in Australia with ample space, neighborhood friends, and playing in the neighbors’ houses, all while my mother managed the delightful chaos of three young children and a sizable home. Childhood felt magical, fun, and expansive. We could move about freely, we could explore readily: jumping on the trampoline, running under a sprinkler on the grass, and climbing ladders to explore cubby houses. This was the magic of my generation’s childhood.

What then feels different and lost, as I raise my two young boys, some 35 years on from these cherished memories? A lot. I’ve come to know that the childhood legacy I long to hold onto for my children is known as a “slow or unhurried childhood”. This approach to childhood “is a conscious decision to prioritize quality over quantity in your child’s life. It’s about stepping

back from the pressure to overschedule and create a more relaxed, connection-focused environment.” Core principles include: embracing unstructured play, focus on quality time with your children, simplifying schedules, and following your child’s lead (1).

With depression on the rise for children and young people I’ve come to understand that the problems with children’s mental health are heavily influenced by a shift in the way we as adults view children and therefore raise them (2). There is a robust debate addressing the fundamental belief that children are exposed to more pressure and stress each decade, made worse by the overarching issue of developmental readiness or reality vs expectation. Being in the modern day parenting bubble it’s obvious that: education is generally more academic; school days are longer; children are typically spending more time involved in sedentary activities, engaged in more screen time; schedules, activities, and entertainment extend beyond regular school hours; and weekends are packed with sports, classes, and organized activities. Childhood today is becoming a mini adulthood.

Therefore, turning to a slow approach to raising children might be key in:

- Reducing childhood related stress and anxiety
- Strengthening parent-child bonds
- Boosting children’s creativity and independence
- Enhancing children’s social and emotional development
- Supporting children’s attention and self-regulation through more regular, meaningful movement.

Living abroad in Bangkok, a bustling city with minimal similarities to my suburban childhood—with differing cultural expectations that shape how we view and raise children—I’ve found myself increasingly drawn to this concept, and its profound importance in nurturing a healthy and joyful childhood. My interactions with children, whether my own or my clients, are centered around a simple



Photo by Pablo Merchan from Studio Colombia

yet powerful mantra: to respect and protect childhood. And in this fast-paced world, that often means actively choosing to slow down and embrace the fundamentals of a childhood that feels most relevant and important to me: slow and unhurried.

HOW TO EMBRACE AN UNHURRIED CHILDHOOD

Embrace a slower family life:

Change starts with us as parents. Try to spend more time outdoors, away from technology and screens, especially when in the presence of your children. Discuss and model to your children what downtime, rest, and relaxation looks and feels like.

Prioritize unstructured play:

A cornerstone of childhood, unstructured play allows children to develop creativity, problem-solving skills, and social-emotional intelligence. It fosters imagination and provides a vital outlet for physical activity and exploration without the constraints of adult-imposed rules or goals.

Embrace boredom and downtime:

It might seem counterintuitive, but allowing children to experience boredom can be incredibly beneficial. In our on-the-go society, children are often



Photo by feeling_blue from pixabay

overstimulated and bombarded with sensory input. Develop a rhythm where children have rest periods and quiet time.

Connection over competition: Focus on nurturing genuine connection within your family. This means prioritizing family meals, reading together, spending time in nature.

Address your own internal underlying beliefs around childhood:

Are your thoughts and feelings driven by genuine need, or by external pressures and a fear of “missing out”? For me, slowing

down has meant saying “no” to some activities, even if they seem “beneficial”. It’s meant embracing the messiness of play, even when it makes me slightly twitchy. It’s meant prioritizing outdoor time, even when the weather isn’t perfect. And it’s meant consciously carving out pockets of unscheduled time in our day, allowing the children to complete chores with me and cook with me.

Of course, this isn’t about striving for some unattainable ideal of perfect parenting. There are times when my children watch a screen,

when days feel over-scheduled and tightly managed, and when I feel far from the calm, slow-living mum I aspire to be. But it’s about intention, about consciously choosing to lean towards a slower rhythm whenever possible. Respecting and protecting childhood isn’t about shielding our children from the world, but about providing them with the space and time to truly experience it, at their own pace. And in this beautiful, messy, and profoundly important journey of parenthood, slowing down might just be the most radical and rewarding act of love we can offer.

Recommended Reading

Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life by Peter Gray

The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed. by Jessica Lahey

Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier, and More Secure Kids. by Kim John Payne with Lisa M. Ross

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A photograph of two young children playing on a colorful plastic play structure. In the foreground, a boy with dark hair and a bright orange shirt is smiling and looking towards the camera. Behind him, a girl with dark hair is also smiling. The play structure has large yellow arches and blue base pieces. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

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ALIEN INVADERS?

Thwarted in his search for a few minutes peace and quiet, a chocolate deprived Joe starts to question whether what he thought was parenthood is in fact an alien invasion.



Photo by Gustavo Fring from Pexels



About the Author

Joe and his wife Diane moved to Thailand in 2018. Since the arrival of their son Martin in 2021 and daughter Alice in 2024, Joe has been a stay-at-home father. The whole family enjoys BAMBI playgroups and beach holidays. Find Joe on SubStack: BangkokDad.



Maybe I'm just going through a difficult phase or perhaps I've not been eating enough chocolate, but recently I have been thinking of my children less as adorable, cute creatures and more as parasitic life forms that threaten to steal my last drops of energy and enthusiasm before leaving me a dry hollow husk of a man as they move on to seek new prey.

However, after careful consideration, I've decided that comparing my children to parasites isn't a nice thing to do and probably isn't encouraged by parenting experts. Much better, surely, to compare them to an alien invasion, so that's what I've done. Naturally, I'm thinking more horror, along the lines of *Alien*, and *Predator*, rather than cute and cuddly like *ET*.

Now, for aficionados of horror movies, I must apologize if I'm about to completely misrepresent the main characteristics of these popular film franchises. The truth is that as someone who frequently has to watch PG movies from behind the couch with my hands over my eyes,

I'm far too much of a scaredy cat to have ever actually seen either of these movies.

Nonetheless, the broad premises are, as I understand them, that *Alien* consumes its host from the inside before ripping its way out in a sickening and bloodthirsty manner. Meanwhile, *Predator* is a creature of boundless energy and unbelievable speed, who remorselessly hunts down his prey no matter where they hide, leaving even the few survivors too exhausted to function as useful or productive members of society. The parallels to parenthood are uncanny, I think you'd agree.

FIRST CONTACT

The similarity between *Alien* and pregnancy is clear. Having successfully invaded their host—henceforth referred to as their mother—our cherished aliens gradually increased in size. Incidentally, I've previously expressed my heartfelt gratitude for the fact that pregnancy is primarily a female affliction, and I can confirm that my relief remains just as sincere

today. Undoubtedly, men have it very, very easy during pregnancy. So apart from providing chocolate, I was largely a helpless spectator as my wife's energy and good cheer were consumed by her alien invaders, leaving her lying on the couch an ever larger and grumpier shadow of her former fun-filled self.

As a sensitive and squeamish man I shall draw a veil over the horrifying process by which these creatures finally burst into the light of day. Suffice it to say that it was everything that I've tried to avoid in horror movies, and that I can only imagine it was worse from where my wife was lying.

OUR NEW OVERLORDS

I believe *Alien* escapes its host and disappears in search of fresh prey. Here our analogy somewhat breaks down as our little monsters showed no inclination to leave and we found that the hospital was bizarrely keen on us keeping and cherishing these strange new creatures. So, reluctantly, we took them home with us. From the beginning,



Photo by Yan Krukau from Pexels

they made it clear that they were our superiors and overlords. We were tolerated only for our role in sustaining and nurturing them, and were expected to respond instantly to their commands. Any tardiness or perceived failings on our part were, and continue to be, loudly reprimanded.

A DRAINING EXPERIENCE

Our beloved little aliens seem to thrive on our physical and intellectual energy. As they learn to run and think, we seem to become ever less capable of either.

Hard though it is to believe, looking at me now, but I was once well-read with an interest in current affairs. I could talk intelligently on a wide range of topics and had opinions on all the important issues. Now if it doesn't have pictures, I've not read it, and the only thing I have strong opinions about is the importance of child-free time. Even when the children are in bed I'm far more likely to pick up a Julia Donaldson book than anything more age-appropriate. Only once

they're asleep do I get to enjoy the plot and the pictures at my leisure and satisfy my curiosity as to how Stickman got home. Is it just Marty, or do all children get two-thirds of the way through a book, and then, just as the plot is getting gripping, decide it's time to stop reading and play trains?

Where once I had, at my fingertips, the names of the current cabinet and the averages of all the England cricket team, now I know all the words to "Goodnight Moon" and "Peepo" and can recite them while half-asleep. Not very useful in a pub quiz, but essential when Alice wakes up at 2am. Given that I've had several impassioned arguments about children's books with formerly politically knowledgeable friends, it could be argued that this represents a change of intellectual direction rather than a child-induced decline. However, there is other evidence that the child-aliens have been devouring our mental acuity.

Mailing a letter should not be a challenge, yet it recently took my

wife and I three attempts to get a letter in the post. My wife had the first go—she has a solid track record of success in letter mailing and we assumed all would go well. She got Marty on his bike, with helmet and shoes on, and set off for the post office, which, given what subsequently unfolded, is fortunately not far from our house. She had successfully reached the post office—Marty fell off his bike en route, but since he refuses to look where he's going, this is not an uncommon occurrence—and handed over the letter, before realizing that she'd forgotten to take any money with her. So they and the letter returned home.

I made the second attempt. Mindful of my wife's failure, I stuffed my pockets with money before battling Marty into his bike helmet and shoes, escaped a tearful Alice who didn't understand why she wasn't coming too, and boldly set course for the post office. Shortly after Marty fell off his bike, I realized that while I had plenty of money, I was short of letters. So back home we went to fetch the letter.

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Photo by Crystal Sing from corelens

The third attempt was a roaring success: Marty didn't even fall off his bike, and our letter was soon on its way. Not our finest hour, but emblematic of the challenges that the simplest tasks pose when you have children.

PHYSICAL DECLINE

It's not just mentally that children seem to have knocked us from the top of our game. Where once my wife and I were both keen, if slow, runners, we now barely have the energy for an occasional jog. Games of chase and bike rides, pushing strollers, and carrying children use the energy and enthusiasm we once had for sport. Meanwhile, Marty and Alice are ever more energetic.

Wherever we go, Marty wants to ride his bike while Alice disdains her stroller in favor of walking, which at least she does nice and slowly, for now. At thirteen months she is already determinedly trying to join in with every game of chase and is clearly bursting with enthusiasm to start making us run ever farther and faster.

A HUNTED EXISTENCE

Like any good predators, Alice and Marty are always alert to their prey, and as their primary prey I can assure you that it is a wearing existence to be continually hunted. Desperate for a few minutes' peace and quiet, I'll notice that Marty is deeply engaged with a book and sneak upstairs for a quick lie down and email check. Just as I reach the sanctuary of the second floor, I'll hear a cry of, "Daddy, where are you going? I'm coming too." Then a blur comes hurtling up the stairs and a hot little hand clutches mine, so rather than peace and quiet, I get a monologue about an imminent dinosaur attack. Meanwhile, Alice has now noticed that something exciting is happening above her head and is rattling the stair gate and loudly demanding that she gets to come and play too. With as good a grace as I can muster, I accept that my bid for freedom will have to wait and return a reluctant prisoner of these remorseless hunters.

But us hunted animals are always developing our tactics, and if I do escape, I no longer make the

mistake of resting in my room—oh no, that's the first place Marty will look. Instead I'll hide in Alice's room, possibly under the bed. I certainly don't make the mistake of going back to fetch anything I need; once I've escaped, returning to fetch my laptop or find food is simply asking for trouble. No matter how happily Marty and Alice are playing, if they see me, those hunting instincts cut in and they'll sink their metaphorical talons into me and won't let go.

Of course, come bedtime, all the horrors of the hunt are forgotten, and as they splash happily in the bath, they're as cute as ET ever was. As they drift off to sleep, my heart warms to them and I start to wonder if I've maybe got these little aliens all wrong and they're actually here to fill my life with love rather than terror and exhaustion?

Here I am!



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TWO WEEKS WITHOUT MY DAUGHTER

As she embarked on two weeks away from her child, Deshna was left with feelings of guilt and self-judgment. What followed was a journey from self-doubt to greater self-confidence, calmness, and a clearer sense of self-identity.

Photo by Camila Berrio from *diversifylens*



About the Author

Deshna Bhansali is a finance professional and storyteller, originally from India and now building a life in Bangkok. With quiet grit and relentless effort, she's created her own support system. Her daughter, Avira, is her joy and mirror—reflecting the strength and self-belief behind her journey.

On a quiet Saturday morning, I held my three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Avira, a little tighter than usual. We were on our way to the airport—she was flying to India with her papa for her summer break, and I had decided to stay back in Bangkok for work.

I smiled at her, kissed her forehead, and tucked her little doll into her backpack—pretending to be strong. But inside, I was falling apart. I went to the airport to drop them off, and as I waved goodbye and saw her little frame disappear through the boarding gate with her father, a knot formed in my stomach. The moment she was out of sight, a part of me felt hollow.

That was the beginning of one of the most emotionally intense weeks of my motherhood.

QUESTIONING MYSELF

The house—once filled with giggles, questions, mess, and warmth—was suddenly silent. Deafeningly so. I walked into her room, sat on her tiny bed, and the tears came. Uncontrollable, guilt-ridden tears. How could I let her go? What kind of mother stays behind? Was I selfish for staying back just because I had work to finish? My brain didn't stop. Should I have flown with her? Should I still go?

What made it worse was the wave of unsolicited opinions. Messages from well-meaning relatives, and not-so-well-meaning ones, started flooding in:

"She's too young to be without you."

"A child needs her mother the most."

"How can you stay back while she goes away?"

Some were gentle, some judgmental. But every word added to the storm inside me. And the guilt—oh, the guilt. It wrapped

around me like a thick, suffocating blanket. I couldn't think straight. I couldn't tell whether I'd made a rational decision or an unforgivable mistake.

Saturday was a blur of tears, doubt, and emotional self-torture. I replayed every moment leading to the decision: rationalizing, rethinking, regretting. Maybe my job can wait. Maybe I should take emergency leave. Maybe she's crying right now and wondering why Mumma didn't come.

But by Sunday evening, something softened inside me.

I finally sat down and asked myself honestly: What am I really punishing myself for? I didn't send her away out of neglect. I stayed because I had an important work commitment I couldn't cancel. If I flew the next weekend, half her trip would already be over. Would that help her, or just soothe my guilt?

That's when the fog lifted, just a little.

MOTHERHOOD ISN'T MARTYRDOM

We've been raised to believe motherhood is martyrdom. That to be a "good mother" you must constantly sacrifice—your rest, your dreams, your career, your space. That guilt is a necessary part of loving your child. But slowly, I began to see how flawed that belief is.

Staying back that week didn't mean I loved Avira any less. It simply meant I trusted that she was safe, loved, and well cared for, and that I too deserved space to breathe.

That week, something unexpected happened.

Avira was in India, surrounded by people who love her—her father and grandparents. She was bonding, learning, being pampered, hearing stories from a home I once called mine. And me? I was rediscovering pieces of myself that had gone quiet.

I joined swimming classes—something I always wanted to do



Photo by Kaboompics.com from Pexels



Photo by Ketut Subiyanto from Pexels

but never found time for. I began sleeping better. I ate proper meals. I paused to just be. I made a skincare routine, started walking more, looked at my body in the mirror without rushing to get dressed.

Each night, I recorded a short video message for Avira—just to say hi, sing a rhyme, or show her a new flower I saw that day. I started planning little surprises for her return. I cleaned out her shelf, prepared her favorite book corner, and even began drafting plans for things I'd love to do with her once she was back.

In that quiet time, I began hearing my own voice again—the voice that isn't just "Mumma" but Deshna. And it didn't feel selfish. It felt grounding.

But then one night, around midnight, she called. In a soft, sleepy voice, she said, "Mumma, I'm missing you."

That single sentence shattered me. My heart cracked wide open. I stayed awake for hours, feeling like I had made the wrong choice. The next day, I couldn't concentrate. I cried in silence. That one moment, that one line, made everything come crashing down again.

But this time, I didn't run for my suitcase. I didn't spiral. I held myself together and reminded myself: this is life too. Distance doesn't dilute love. Our bond is not broken by two weeks apart. It's stronger because it's built on trust, on presence, on everything we've already shared, and everything we'll continue to share. That moment taught me something profound—that space, when given with love, can help a mother heal and a child grow.

As mothers, we live under constant pressure, not just from society or family, but from within ourselves. We glorify sacrifice. We wear guilt like a badge. We're praised for being selfless and judged the moment we choose our own joy, even for a minute.

REWRITING THE STORY

It's time to rewrite that story. Sometimes, space is a gift. For the child. For the mother. For the family. It doesn't make us cold, selfish, or detached. It makes us human. It teaches children that love is safe, even when it travels across borders. That they're surrounded by more than one person's love—mumma's, papa's, dada-dadi's.

And none of this would've been possible if my husband, Nikhil, hadn't stepped in with strength, calm, and kindness. He agreed to take her on this trip when I couldn't. He became her anchor, her comfort, her constant for those two weeks. And for that, I am deeply grateful. It's easy to say "a mother can't stay without her child", but we rarely ask: why must she always be the only one carrying that load?

When Avira comes back, I know our hugs will last longer. Our stories will overflow. And I'll be able to greet her, not with exhaustion or buried resentment, but with fresh energy, love, and presence.

These two weeks taught me something I wish more mothers were told: You don't have to lose yourself to love your child. You can be both a loving mother and a woman with needs, dreams, and a name beyond "Mumma".

To every mother who has ever felt guilty for taking a breath, for choosing herself, for pausing just long enough to hear her own thoughts, I see you. I am you. And you are not alone.

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FINDING CALM IN THE CHAOS

Caring for a loved one can leave us feeling exhausted and disconnected from who we really are. Here, Jacqueline shares the tools which have helped her find emotional stability and calm while caring for her mother.

Photo by Kampus Production from Pexels



About the Author

Jacqueline Ainsbury has lived many lives, from Bangkok to Byron Bay, beauty, burnout, and becoming. A writer, artist, and listener by nature, she speaks little of herself but writes with quiet wit and sharp simplicity. Back in Thailand to care for her mother, she lets experience shape her words.

I'm not a parent. I don't pretend to understand the daily reality of raising a child. But lately, I've been caring for my mother as her health declines, so I do understand what it is to be exhausted, overstimulated, disconnected, and to forget what peace even feels like. I've been in dark places. I've lived in the buzz of Bangkok, feeling like the noise never stops, inside or out.

My mother has carried so much for me my whole life. Now I am holding space for her. In some ways, it has been the most painful thing I have ever done. And yet, through it, I've started shedding the unspoken roles and responsibilities she always carried for me. Slowly, I am learning to carry myself. It is heartbreaking and healing at the same time.

So while I can't tell you what it's like to parent, I can gently offer what's helped me climb back towards clarity, presence, and emotional steadiness. These tools helped me, but they may not be right for you. We all have different nervous systems, needs, and rhythms. What matters is that you begin collecting tools that do work for you.

These aren't overnight solutions. They're small, often free, science-backed practices that helped soothe my nervous system, rebuild my energy, and reconnect me with the world. If you're feeling overwhelmed, maybe one of these will give you a breath of space too.

1. COLD WATER THERAPY (1)

It started with just thirty seconds of cold at the end of a hot shower. It was awful at first, but then I noticed I felt strangely alive afterwards. Clear-headed. Calm.

Cold water activates the vagus nerve and reduces inflammation and stress hormones. Over time, it helps the body regulate itself more easily. Some days it's all I can do to manage my mind, and this tiny physical act helps.

No time for a full shower? Splash some cold water on your face, or keep a bottle of rose water spray in your bag or by your bed. Even this



small shift can cue the body to reset.

If you have time to escape for a while, Bangkok has a few Japanese-style onsens. Contrast bathing from hot to cold has been shown to improve sleep and mood.

2. BREATHING FROM THE BELLY (2)

Forget the apps and playlists for a moment. One of the most helpful real-world practices I've found is this: I place my hands on the lowest part of my belly and breathe from there, just whenever I think of it.

This kind of breathing, slow and low, signals safety to the body. It shifts your nervous system out of fight-or-flight and into a state of calm. No special setting required. Just a moment of reconnection, even while you're washing dishes or walking down the street.

3. TAPPING (EFT) (3)

Another practice that changed things for me is tapping, also known as Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). It involves gently tapping on specific acupressure points while acknowledging your feelings, like stress or overwhelm.

At first, it felt silly. But EFT has been shown to significantly lower cortisol, the stress hormone, and improve symptoms of anxiety and

depression. For me, it often gives instant relief when emotions start to spiral. You can find guided sessions on YouTube or free apps, like The Tapping Solution, with some, limited, guided videos.

This can also be fun and playful to do with your child. It's a way of teaching them healthy ways to process feelings when overwhelmed. A short session can take less than ten minutes.

4. SPOTIFY AFFIRMATIONS (4)

This one surprised me. I didn't think affirmations would do anything until I started playing them every morning while making tea.

Free playlists like "I Am Enough," "Self-Love Talk," or anything by Fearless Soul rewired something in me. Hearing words like "You are allowed to rest" and "You are growing, even when it doesn't show" made me softer with myself. It lifted shame. And that softened how I showed up for others too. It also helps to repeat the affirmations back in your head or whisper them out loud.

5. THE TRUTH ABOUT HABITS (5)

I recently started reading "Atomic Habits" by James Clear. One of the biggest lightbulb moments was this: it's not about having more time, it's about having better systems. When



Photo by PNW Production from Pexels

I stopped trying to be disciplined and instead started stacking small habits together, things clicked. So now I listen to a positive podcast while cooking, breathe deeply after brushing my teeth, and say one kind thing to myself in the mirror each morning. They're small actions, but they build a life. You don't need to feel motivated. You just need to begin.

6. YOU'RE NOT MEANT TO DO IT ALONE (6)

The book "Lost Connections" reminded me that depression is not only about brain chemistry—it is also about being disconnected. From people. From purpose. From nature.

I realised I felt better when I joined groups, even casually. A creative

circle. A WhatsApp group of honest friends. An online forum of strangers who got it. You don't need to overshare. Just being seen helps. The more I opened up, the more people related to me. And I didn't feel so alone.

If you're reading this in the thick of parenting, please remember you are not meant to hold everything by yourself. Community can help carry the weight. And we want to. We are in a time when people are beginning to reach out again. Asking for support is not failure—it is strength. And while we still need to be discerning, I have found there are more good people in the world than bad. Maybe I've just been lucky. But when I wasn't taking care of myself, I met a lot more of the bad ones.

7. BE KIND TO YOURSELF (7)

You deserve to feel safe with yourself, so always speak kindly and gently inside. Speaking to yourself as you would a close friend actually changes, for the better, how your brain processes stress. Harsh self-talk isn't harmless. It is a form of emotional self-abuse that increases anxiety and depression, while self-compassion supports emotional regulation and resilience.

And one last thing. Yes, of course, exercise and eating well matter.

This is your job, not to fix everything but to build your own gentle, evolving toolbox of self-support. Because your well-being matters. Not just for you, but also for the people in your care watching you.

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