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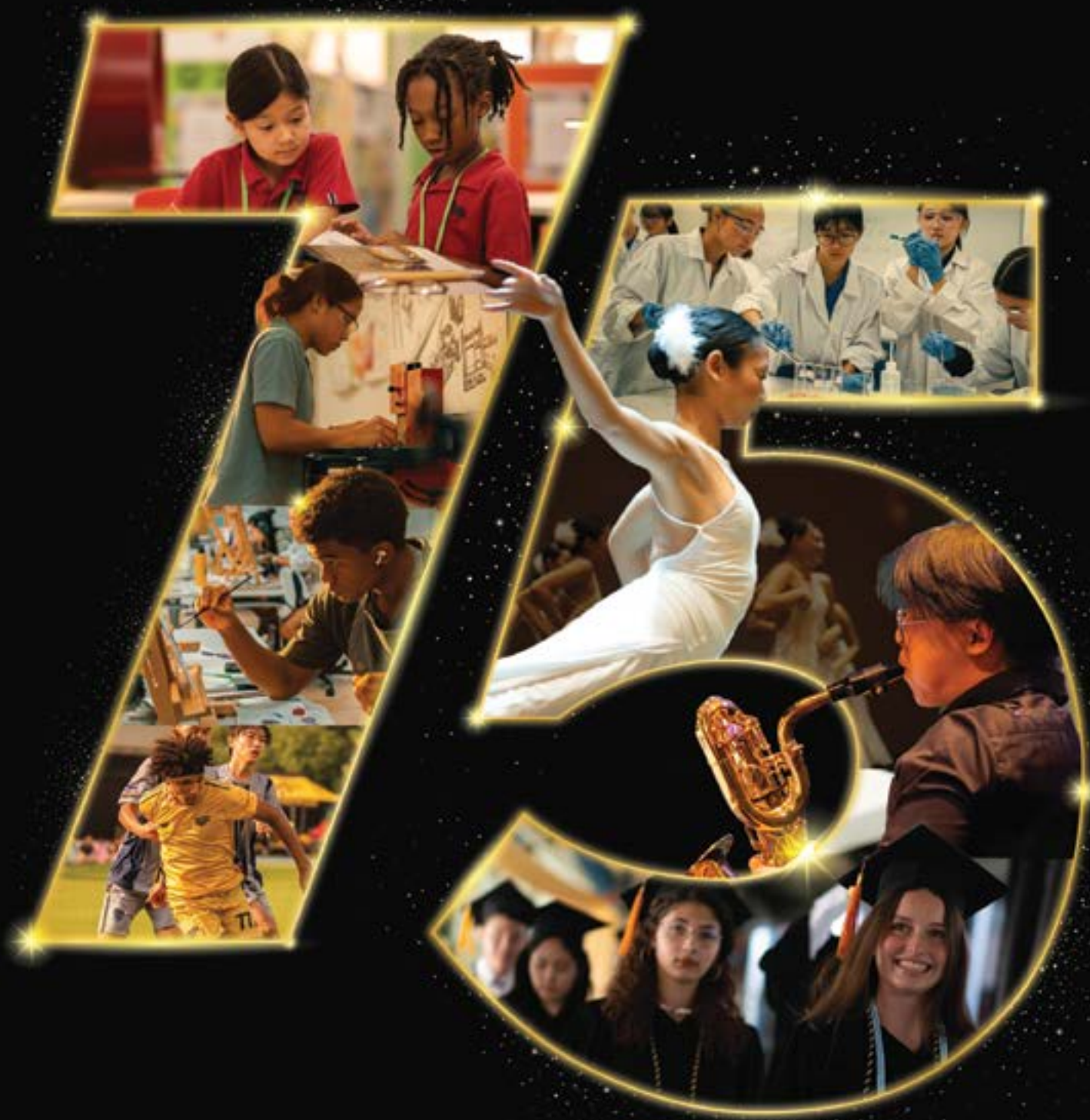
**POTTY TRAINING AND
OTHER MILESTONES**

SEPTEMBER 2026

Photo by Jana Capek

A project of Childbirth and Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand

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Welcome to **BAMBI**

**"Support and
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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.

Follow us on social media:



facebook.com/BAMBIBangkok



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

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



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Please contact our Little Lions coordinator Ms. Gena for more information and to book your place:
monrada.srasamran@regents-pattaya.co.th



Dear BAMBI families,

I hope everyone had a fulfilling summer break. As the academic year starts this month, many families may already be shifting gears—our theme for this issue. When I think of my own life, the biggest shift was not only becoming a parent, but also changing my whole style of living.



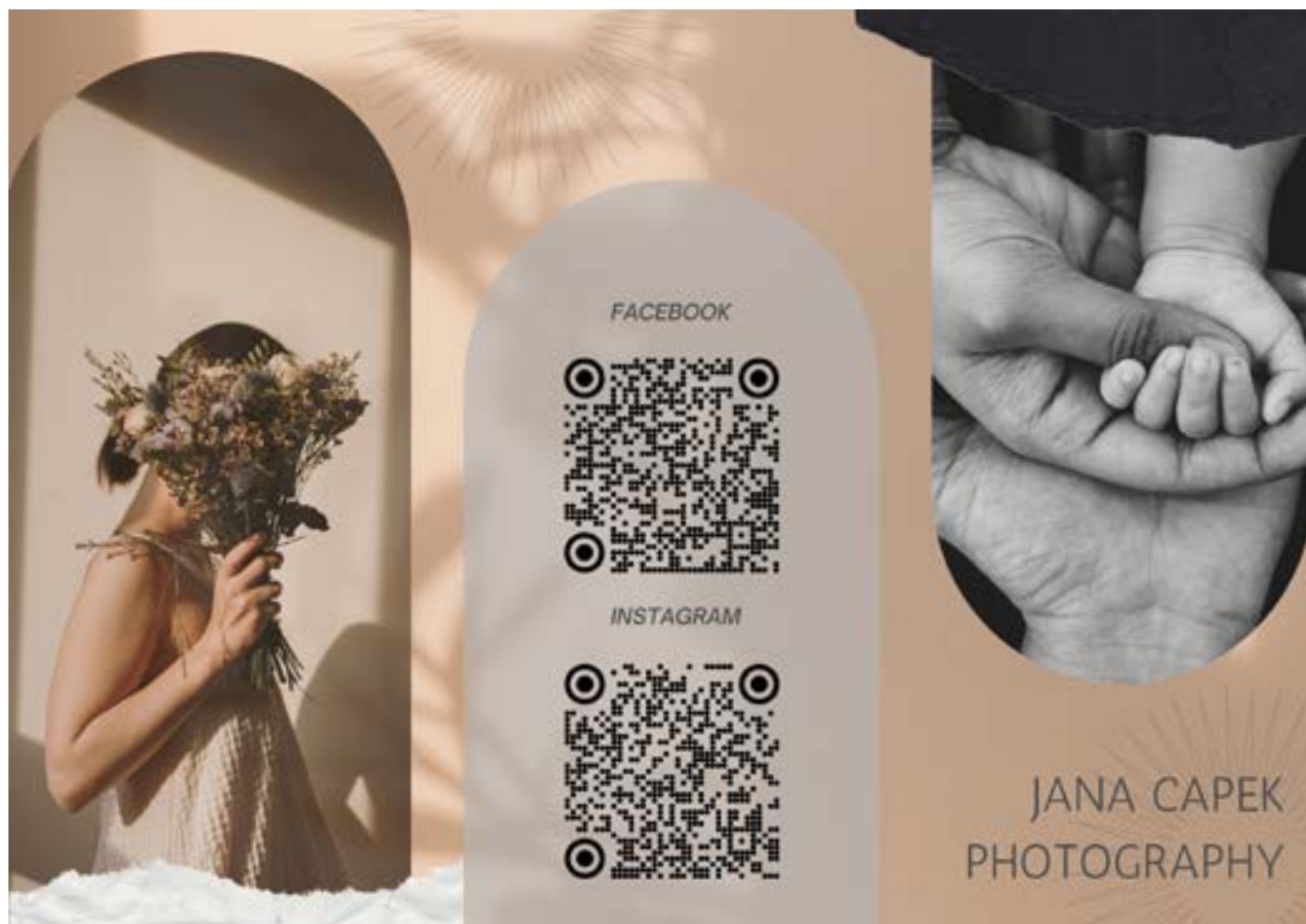
Before having a child, I had spent many years in Bangkok, with my days shaped by my own interests, social life, and familiar routines. I had always imagined that becoming a parent would make my world smaller and more private. Instead, it made my life more shared. One of the most unexpected parts was living in a shared home with friends I had known before giving birth and watching my child grow up surrounded by adults outside our little family. They read him books, shared snacks, listened to his little stories, and simply greeted him warmly when they came home.

I had unconsciously imagined a more typical family life: parents and a child, a private home, and clear boundaries between family and others. It was a model I had often seen in my hometown, Tokyo, and in many other modern cities. But life in Bangkok showed me a different way. For my son, my friends became familiar adults who were neither relatives nor teachers, but people who naturally belonged to his everyday world. Our Thai nanny also helped him connect with the warmth of local Thai communities that I cannot reach on my own.

This lifestyle gave both me and my son a wider sense of belonging. It showed me that there is more than one way to build a family life. I came to realize that shifting gears for me meant widening the circle around our family, while the Bangkok expat environment offered us the opportunity to discover this.

As a Me-Time Coordinator, I hope our events can offer parents a similar kind of experience: a chance to explore beyond our familiar interests, meet people from different backgrounds, and discover new ways of belonging. I look forward to seeing you there.

Tomomi Furuyama
Me-Time Coordinator





W

When my family and I packed up our lives and moved to Bangkok almost four years ago, we arrived with our first child on the way. There was a mixture of excitement, uncertainty, and far more questions than answers. Call it naivety, but at the time we weren't even thinking about schools or child-friendly neighbourhoods. Instead we just wanted to get through the first year and navigate all the changes and challenges that came with it. Looking back, that season of change reminds me that parenthood is full of moments that ask us to adapt, grow, and embrace the unknown. It's a fitting introduction to this issue's theme, *Shifting Gears*,

where we explore the transitions every family faces, from new beginnings and growing independence, to life's many milestones and how we can navigate them with confidence, empathy, and heart.

Once we had settled in, I realized I had no "village" and found myself searching for connection, for people who understood the unique joys and challenges of raising children in a country that, while wonderfully welcoming, was still unfamiliar.

It didn't take long before I discovered BAMBI.

What struck me wasn't simply the wealth of practical advice or the calendar of family-friendly events. It was the sense of community that ran through everything BAMBI did. Here was an organisation built by parents, for parents, where every article, event, and conversation carried the reassuring message: you're not doing this alone.

Fast forward three years, and it is both an honor and a privilege to be part of the BAMBI community that helps so many families find the village we all need to raise a child.

As editor, I hope to bring people together by telling meaningful stories and creating spaces where communities can thrive. Throughout my career, I've believed that communication is at its most powerful when it helps people feel seen, informed, and connected. Those same values are at the heart of BAMBI, making this role feel like a natural home.

I've always had a deep affection for printed magazines. In a world of endless scrolling and endless notifications, they invite us to slow down. While digital content is designed to keep us scrolling, print encourages us to be present, to savor a story, revisit a favorite recipe, or bookmark an activity to enjoy with the kids. It doesn't compete for our attention; it simply waits until we're ready.

What makes BAMBI Magazine truly special isn't the paper it's printed on, it's the people behind every page. I'd also like to acknowledge the remarkable work of my predecessor, Sanam Rahman. Over the past six years, she has nurtured this magazine with extraordinary dedication, warmth, and vision. Her passion has helped shape BAMBI Magazine into the trusted resource and welcoming voice it is today.

As we look ahead, my hope is to continue building on that legacy while welcoming new voices and fresh perspectives. Parenting is constantly evolving, and so too should the conversations we have about it. Whether we're exploring child development, education, wellbeing, relationships, life as an expat family, or simply sharing experiences that remind us we're all figuring it out together, I hope these pages continue to inform, encourage, and inspire.

So, whether you've been reading BAMBI Magazine for years or this is the very first issue you've picked up, thank you for being here. Thank you for being part of this community and for allowing us to be part of your family's journey. I look forward to meeting many of you over the coming months—at events, through your stories, and within these pages. Together, let's continue making BAMBI Magazine a place where parents find not only information, but also encouragement, friendship, and a genuine sense of belonging.

Here's to the stories, connections, and community that bring us together.

Kim Narrandes
Editor



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CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS



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.



Please scan for more details about the available positions.

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A THERAPIST MOM'S GUIDE TO GENTLE SCHOOL SEPARATIONS

True independence starts with feeling completely safe, not with a fast exit. Sarah shares the three evidence-based pillars that turned her son's heartbreaking drop-offs into secure ones.

Photo courtesy of the author



About the Author

Sarah Russell is a proud mother of two boys and the Director and Senior Consultant of Spring for Kids, a mobile children's occupational therapy clinic specializing in school-based support and home visits. She leads a dedicated team providing neuroaffirming, attachment-focused care. To contact Sarah, please visit springforkids.com

As a Director of a children's clinic and a practicing therapist, I have spent years educating parents on child development, including emotional regulation, attachment theory, and the intricacies of starting school. When my first child transitioned into preschool with the standard, predictable bouts of hesitation, I quietly patted myself on the back. We've got this sorted, I thought.

Then came my second son, Max. Max completely upended my professional confidence and rewrote many things I thought I knew about goodbyes and transitions. Unlike his older sibling, Max didn't just experience the "usual" developmental separation anxiety; he experienced a deep, visceral distress that left us both heartbroken at the classroom door.

That painful season gave me a humbling reminder about the subtle, meaningful details of the separation process. While we are often well meaningly told to make goodbyes short, sharp, and abrupt, to "rip the Band-Aid off" and walk away while the child is distracted or crying, this experience reaffirmed that as a parent and a clinician, I don't believe in painful goodbyes for children. Instead, my work as a professional and a parent is rooted in the evidence-based importance of a safety-first approach.

I believe it is our responsibility as parents to build a sense of deep respect for our children's emotional wellbeing through predictability and individual attentiveness and responsiveness so our children feel truly seen and acknowledged.

When we cultivate this psychological and physiological safety, we start paving a secure internal compass within our children that eventually allows them to say goodbye with a little less trauma and a lot more ease.

THE DOUBLE STANDARD OF INDEPENDENCE

I often reflect on the double standard between what we consider acceptable for adults versus what



Photo by Aflo images from (Aflo)

we expect from a child. As adults, we set ourselves up meticulously to feel secure. Hand on heart, I would feel petrified walking into a brand-new environment without a familiar, trusted person by my side to give me confidence.

Yet, we regularly deny this exact courtesy to our children. We drop them into highly stimulating environments with adults they barely know and expect instant independence, telling them to "be a big boy". It is an incredibly massive task for a very little person with a still-developing body and brain.

Reality check: While we absolutely shoot for independence—focusing on whatever respectfully aligns as the "best fit" for each unique child—true independence is actually a by-product of deep dependence. A child can only confidently step away from us when they know, with absolute certainty, that they are truly safe and supported.

To support Max, we knew we didn't align with compliance-based strategies. We didn't use sticker charts, presents, rewards for "not crying", or punishments for resisting. Instead, we focused on three intrinsically motivating, safety-centered strategies. Did this make the process easy? No. But did it feel inherently more respectful to my child? Absolutely. Here, I must deeply acknowledge our beautiful, family-run early years center for their incredible co-regulatory support

alongside us. They felt like a real partner.

THE THREE PILLARS OF A SECURE GOODBYE

When a child is facing a separation that feels threatening, their nervous system perceives it as an actual danger or a threat. From a neurological standpoint, when the primitive brain shuts down or goes into survival mode (fight, flight, or freeze), the prefrontal cortex—the area responsible for logic, time orientation, and language processing—"switches off". This means that when you stand at the door saying, "I will be back after lunch," your child cannot process those words. Instead you need to have created the structures for a goodbye before you actually say goodbye. Our goodbye was based on three pillars.

Pillar 1: Photo story book / visual schedule

Max needed to know what he was going to be doing at school and the exact sequence of his "goodbye". This started at home with a visual schedule used on weekends and during quiet evenings. It became a natural, conversational fixture of our family life, not a tool rolled out only on stressful school mornings. We used photos of Max, which his preschool made into a little book, to create beautiful talking points at home: "Oh look at the turtles! What do you like to do when you visit



Photo by Satrio Ramadhan from Studio Indonesia

them?" or, "Tell me more about the fun you have in the sandpit!"

Then, because children thrive on sequence, we created a similar schedule for our morning routine. Our schedule used simple photos detailing the steps of our morning and the exact steps of the goodbye sequence at preschool. Max knew precisely where we would say goodbye, how many hugs he would get, and what the goodbye would look and feel like.

Pillar 2: A champion adult

When we dropped Max off, I didn't want him handed over to just anyone who happened to be on morning duty. We intentionally partnered with his educators to establish a "Champion Adult". A Champion Adult is a specific, trusted educator who actively steps into the role of the secondary attachment figure while you are gone. We worked closely with his teacher to ensure that when Max arrived, she was waiting for him.

This adult was someone Max felt deeply connected to, someone who could co-regulate with him when his system was overwhelmed. Putting my therapist hat on, I loved that his teacher supported activities that aligned perfectly with where his body and brain were in that moment. If he appeared more unsettled than usual, she would encourage "heavy

work"—sensory input like digging in the sandpit, building with large, heavy wooden blocks, or pushing around a toy truck or digger—to help ground his nervous system.

Pillar 3: The "Open Arms" policy

Perhaps the most countercultural shift we made was implementing an Open Arms policy.

In a world obsessed with grit and forcing children to "tough it out," we decided that if Max was having an exceptionally bad day—if his nervous system was entirely blown out and the distress was too high—we would alter the plan. We called ahead to the school, we communicated openly, and we maintained a core philosophy: if it just doesn't feel right, we are here to support you further.

This is not the same as enabling avoidance or giving up at the first sign of a tear. Rather, it is an acknowledgment that emotional thresholds fluctuate. Some days, due to poor sleep, an oncoming cold, or sensory overload, a child simply does not have the capacity to brave a separation. In practice, this meant:

- We never forced him to just "push through."
- If a drop-off was escalating into genuine panic or trauma, we paused, stepped back, and re-regulated together.

- We let him know that his feelings were valid and that we were there to help him feel more comfortable.

These pillars allowed us to create the foundations of a secure goodbye that we were confident was the best way to help Max feel comfortable in his new school.

PROGRESS ISN'T LINEAR

Ultimately, I had to hold onto patience and trust the process, knowing that so much of parenting is simply having faith that the pieces will eventually fall into place and comfort will follow.

Although Max still has some tearful goodbyes where he clings to our legs—because development is not linear—we have more days now where he whispers his "secret word" (dinosaur poo) that lets me know he is feeling safe and secure. On the harder days I remember that we all move in and out of comfort and insecurity, but the way we support children when their world feels fragile, always matters.

RECOMMENDED READING

Neufeld, G., and Maté, G., *Hold On to Your Kids*

Siegel, D. J., and Payne Bryson, T., *The Whole-Brain Child*.

Kranowitz, C. S., *The Out-of-Sync Child*



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BOOK A VISIT



ATTACHMENT STYLES: SECURE, ANXIOUS, AVOIDANT, DISORGANIZED

When psychology terms go viral, they build awareness but lose nuance. Anna breaks down what secure, anxious, avoidant, and disorganized attachment actually mean and how they're shaped in childhood.

Photo by August de Richelieu 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. For more information visit ncsbkk.com/ncs/



Photo by Alfo Images from (Alfo)

The word “avoidant” has recently become quite popular online as a personality descriptor, and when a term from psychology becomes a buzzword, it sometimes has the dual effect of building awareness while also losing nuance. In research, this is called “Concept Creep”, which means the term begins to cover a lot more than was intended. While avoidant attachment, and its less trendy sister—anxious attachment, sound pretty self-explanatory, it is often used to describe present behavior without understanding how past experiences shaped these patterns.

First, let’s define “attachment style”. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines this as: “the characteristic way people relate to others in the context of intimate relationships, which is heavily influenced by self-worth and interpersonal trust.” While later experiences in life can affect how people interact with others, attachment styles are formed early in childhood, and are determined by the quality of the relationship between child and caregiver. However, attachment styles can

change in adult life as a result of long-term intimate relationships or through therapy.

SECURE ATTACHMENT

NCS affiliate counselor Yuliya explains, “If a child feels certain that the caregiver will be available and responsive to their needs, it gives the child the needed foundation to go and explore the world, knowing that in case of a danger or discomfort, they can return to the caregiver—the secure base.” We call this secure attachment, meaning the child develops an internalized picture of the world as a safe and welcoming place. If a young child grows up without feeling stable support, they may develop an insecure attachment style, such as anxious, avoidant, or disorganized.

Yuliya brings up the viral monkey, Punch, and his plushie as a prime example of secure attachment. “When Punch the macaque was released into the troop and had to integrate into monkey society, he carried around his plush mama, hid behind it when attacked, slept on it, and used it for comfort. As

he progressively became more integrated into the social structure of the monkey society, his need for his plush mama decreased. It was the stable presence and availability of his plush toy that allowed Punch's social development. Similarly, it is the relationship in the baby-caregiver dyad that creates the child’s model for their relationship with the world,” she explains. With that, let’s take a look at what can happen when a child does not feel secure in their relationship with their caregiver.

ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT

In adults, anxious attachment—not to be confused with anxiety—manifests as a deep fear of rejection or abandonment, accompanied by a strong need for reassurance. When a young child does not receive consistent love or experiences unpredictable parental behavior, this impacts how they form their internalized image of the world and this is carried forward into other relationships as they grow up.

“Children and adults with anxious attachment often feel unworthy of love and rely on those they love

to feel secure,” NCS founders and counselors Johanna and Rex explain. Parents being there for their child while also gently helping them understand that there may be times when they aren’t available can help children understand that their bond with their parents is secure even when they aren’t together.

AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT

In adults, avoidant attachment will manifest as a high need for independence and discomfort with emotional intimacy, often resulting in withdrawal from, or difficulty building, close relationships. For those who enjoy Taylor Swift, you might be familiar with her song “The Bolter”, which many hail as the ultimate avoidant anthem.

This attachment style may develop when caregivers are not consistently present and responsive to their child’s needs. Parents don’t always have to respond immediately to their babies, but when they are consistently not present and unresponsive, whether because of their obligations, depression, or substance abuse, their baby may develop an inner model of the world as a place where their needs will not be met and where everyone has to fend for themselves. Being there for them and providing a safe, non-judgemental space for children to share and experience their emotions will help them learn that vulnerability is okay.

Children with avoidant attachment often find comfort by escaping into their own world, whether through games, books, movies, or imagination. They may also try to avoid others’ emotional displays and keep their own emotions to themselves.

DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT

And finally, the least common attachment style: disorganized or fearful-avoidant attachment, which is a mix of avoidant and anxious attachment. In adults, this manifests as a desire for closeness but also a tendency to withdraw from it. This paradox is often exactly what makes disorganized attachment the most



Photo by Pezibear from Pixabay

difficult to manage in adulthood.

Psychologists Mary Main and Erik Hesse coined the concept “fright without solution” as an explanation for this attachment style. With secure attachment, the child feels safe in their relationships. With anxious attachment, the child fears rejection and therefore craves closeness. With avoidant attachment, the child feels that it is safer to avoid emotional intimacy. But with disorganized attachment, the child fears their caretaker—who is also the person they look to for comfort—resulting in the paradox: that avoidance triggers fears of abandonment, but closeness triggers the urge to withdraw.

For example, if a parent is loving and supportive one moment, then suddenly completely unavailable or angry the next, this could cause the child to fear the caretaker while also experiencing love from them. Yuliya shares that disorganized attachment style tends to originate in families suffering from addiction or severe mental health issues. It is the least common attachment style.

WRAPPING UP

As we’ve gone through each of the attachment styles, you may have noticed a pattern, which is this: the caregiver’s own mental health is the foundation on which the child will build their attachment style. While insecure attachment can

be a result of abuse and neglect, it can also be a result of the caregiver’s own attachment style and behavioral patterns that they may be unaware of, even if they are well-intentioned. No one is perfect, and it is natural that parents carry their own unresolved burdens, worries, or learned behaviors into their relationship with their children, but building self-awareness and change is possible, and can make all the difference for your child. Ultimately, around 60 per cent of children develop a secure attachment.

It’s also important to note that attachment style is a research-based theory, and not an exact science. People interact with different circumstances in unique ways, and there is no set formula to guarantee specific outcomes. Embrace your children in all that they are, and let them go into the world with certain knowledge that a loving person is always waiting for them when they come back.

Scan this QR code to check your attachment style.





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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CHANGE

Our brains don't chase happiness, they chase certainty. Claudia unpacks why even good change feels bad and offers practical ways to sit with the discomfort.

Photo by Ketut Subiyanto from Pexels



About the Author

Claudia Gomes is an expert in Emotional Intelligence and Intercultural Awareness, and an ICF-certified Level 2 Transformative Coach. With 20 years of international experience across Spain and Thailand, 17 of them based in Bangkok, she specializes in bridging cultures, strengthening human connections, and fostering meaningful global collaboration. Contact Claudia at: contact@claudiagomes.coach; [linkedin.com/in/claudiagomes-coach/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/claudiagomes-coach/)

Imagine driving through Bangkok. Traffic suddenly stops. Your GPS recalculates the route, and you have to change direction. Even if the new route is shorter, your first reaction is often frustration rather than relief.

Change is the only constant in our lives. When we learn to deal with it peacefully, life tends to become lighter and far more interesting, because new experiences are always unfolding. Our perception of circumstances shapes the way we experience change. Our beliefs about how things should, would, or could be influence how we feel.

Change can be uncomfortable: moving to a new country, changing schools, entering a new phase of life, starting a new job, ending a relationship, or retiring. Yet these transitions are often essential for our growth as human beings.

OUR BRAIN PREFERS PREDICTABILITY

Our brains are not looking for happiness; they are looking for certainty.

We naturally seek situations that make us feel safe, comfortable, and confident about what lies ahead. Certainty creates a sense of safety, while uncertainty consumes mental energy. Our brain is constantly predicting what will happen next, which is why anxiety, irritation, difficulty concentrating, and tiredness are often part of the process of change, even when the change is welcome. We are wired to find solutions, fill in the blanks, understand what is happening, and do anything that helps us move away from uncertainty, the scary unknown.

WHY GOOD CHANGES CAN FEEL BAD

What makes change difficult is that, even when it happens for a positive reason, we are always letting go of something in the process. Every decision we make involves gaining something while giving something else up. It is the act of letting go in order to welcome something new.



Getting married opens a new chapter in life while leaving behind the independence of being single. Having a baby may require changes in your career. Moving abroad limits the time you spend with family and friends in your home country. Buying a house can reduce your flexibility to move elsewhere. A promotion often brings greater responsibility.

These are just a few examples of what may happen when we embrace change. But one of the biggest shifts is often the transformation in our self-identity. To become the person who lives this new chapter, we usually need to let go of old beliefs, familiar ways of thinking, or habits that no longer support the path ahead.

THE "IN-BETWEEN" SPACE

This is where the scary unknown lives. This is the bridge between the old and the new, between the old you and the new you. It is the stage where you are learning, not yet fully aware of everything that is changing, and often wondering whether you will be able to handle it. You are no longer the person you were, but you are still discovering who you are becoming.

Moving abroad or watching a child leave home are good examples. In your home country, you know who you are, your family, friends, work,

language, and culture all help define your identity. A new country creates space for exploration and discovery, especially about yourself and how you will adapt to this new reality.

Similarly, when a child leaves home family dynamics change. A mother no longer needs to care for her child every day. Suddenly, she has more time and the opportunity to rediscover another part of her identity.

This in-between space often brings confusion, impatience, a sense of feeling lost, lower productivity, and many questions. Many people assume something is wrong, when in reality the brain is simply reorganizing its internal map. These types of transition are necessary. It is part of moving forward.

GROWTH DOESN'T ALWAYS FEEL LIKE PROGRESS

A common misconception is that growth should always feel exciting, inspiring, or rewarding. In reality, growth often feels uncomfortable, uncertain, slow, and vulnerable.

Developing new abilities requires us to let go of our automatic ways of doing things. When a child learns to walk, they fall many times before they succeed. They hesitate. They lose their balance. Yet every attempt teaches them something new.



Photo by Aflo images from (Aflo)

As adults, we go through the same process emotionally. Some people have developed emotional maturity over time, while others are still learning these skills. To navigate change consistently and with resilience, we need to be emotionally grounded.

The truth is that most of us were never taught how to understand or regulate our emotions as children. Instead, we learn later in life, through experience, therapy, coaching, or other forms of personal development.

HOW TO MOVE THROUGH CHANGE MORE GENTLY

We have to remind ourselves that we are always doing the best we can with the knowledge and resources we have at the time. If we had known something different, perhaps we would have made a different decision.

Here are some practical suggestions:

Don't rush to certainty: Allow things to unfold naturally. You will find your answers—you always have.

Keep small routines: Take one step at a time. Start small and build from there. Allow yourself and your body to adjust gradually. If you haven't exercised before, don't aim for the gym five days a week. Start with one day and increase slowly. The same applies to changing your eating habits: change one thing at a time.

Sleep well: Good sleep is fundamental to every area of life. Create a consistent bedtime routine. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends. Turn off screens about an hour before bed, read a book, and allow your mind to settle.

Allow mixed emotions: It is perfectly normal to feel confident one day and completely uncertain the next. You may feel excited about your progress while also grieving what you've left behind. Emotions fluctuate during transitions. Rather than resisting them, learn from them. They are like a compass, helping you find your way.

Ask for support: This can be one of the hardest, and most important, parts of change. Many people are

uncomfortable asking for help and end up facing challenges alone. Allow others to support you, just as you enjoy supporting those around you.

Celebrate small signs of progress: Small victories make the journey more enjoyable. Learning one new word in a different language, eating less sugar today, going to the gym for twenty minutes, or having coffee with a local who introduces you to a wonderful restaurant. Every small step matters if you choose to recognize it.

Remember, discomfort is not always a sign of danger. Often, it is simply part of the process of becoming.

FINAL REFLECTION

Changing gears is not about stopping. It's about finding the right rhythm for the road ahead. Every transition asks us to release something familiar before we can fully embrace what comes next. The discomfort doesn't necessarily mean you're going the wrong way. Sometimes, it's simply the feeling of becoming someone new.



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THE JOY OF BIRTHDAYS

Cake for breakfast, candle-related chaos, and the eternal struggle to buy his wife a decent present: Joe on the joys of birthdays with young kids.

Photo provided by author



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 Thai beach holidays. Find Joe on SubStack: BangkokDad bangkokdad.substack.com/



Photo provided by author

I love birthdays and always have. Even as I am increasingly beset by age-induced infirmities—I'm looking at you, dodgy knee and whinging back—I still feel a thrill as March rolls around and I can start counting down to my birthday. No longer do I get a barrage of cards containing crisp five-pound notes from kindly aunts, nor do I take a box of jellybabies into school to share with classmates, who, for at least a day, have decided they want to be my friends. And my mom has long since ceased to cook a magnificent football pitch or tractor-themed cake that will be the envy of all my birthday guests. Nowadays I'm lucky if anyone remembers to send me a card and my wife only buys me a fraction of the presents I so deserve. Yet that birthday joy remains.

Fortunately it's not only my birthday that I enjoy. As a child, I got nearly as much pleasure out of eating my brothers and sisters' birthday cake and scavenging their leftover party food as I did from my own party, so as an adult I can thrill at others' parties. I love an excuse to celebrate with friends, and children's parties are even better. You are guaranteed a cake and plenty of party food, as well as any number of parents desperate for a glass of wine, and

a therapeutic discussion of the challenges of parenthood. Fun for all the family. Best of all, though, are my children's birthdays.

There is the excitement in the days leading up to the festivities as my wife and I discuss the toys we are going to get: will this be the year we finally become a pirate-Lego-ship-owning household? Something I've coveted since I was a mere stripling of eight. Then there is the excitement of going around the toy shops and buying just one more thing. I return home a little nervous about what my wife is going to say about my uncontrolled shopping spree, only to find that she has been snapping up Facebook bargains with a gay abandon that physical shopping could never match. Which means we now get the thrill of exploring each other's purchases and imagining how much fun the children will have with all these goodies.

Finally, the happy day arrives and it starts in the finest possible fashion: cake for breakfast. A family tradition that I entirely credit my wife for, and frankly what better way can there be to begin a birthday? The blowing out of candles adds a frisson of danger to the whole experience as well as

delaying my breakfast cake more than I'd like. Eventually, though, we find the matches and achieve fire. This year, as a newly minted two-year-old, Alice promptly attempted to eat the flickering candles. Fortunately I was prepared for such an eventuality and caught her before breakfast was delayed yet further by a child conflagration. Once the flaming cake has been successfully extinguished, I produce a painfully tuneless rendition of Happy Birthday and finally we eat.

Things get even better after the cake, as it's now time to unwrap the presents. For Marty, this involves a frenzy of tearing that makes me glad we used old newspaper rather than pretty wrapping paper to cover his presents. Only once his feverish frenzy has reduced the wrapping to scraps does he pause to admire the treasure haul. As new books, Lego, and a toy castle emerge from the chaos, I'm at least as excited as he is. It's a great personal disappointment when he has to get ready for school and I realize I'll have to stop playing with my, ahem, I mean, his new toys. It's worth the wait though, as with fresh slices of cake we spend an evening building castles, looking at books, and sifting through Lego blocks.

As a lady of leisure, with no school making unreasonable demands on her time, Alice sets a gentler pace with the unwrapping, focusing on tasting every piece of paper before carefully shredding it and hurling it, with hysterical giggles, to the floor. She then runs from person to person emitting excited squeaks and thrusting her latest goody at them.

The birthday excitement doesn't end after a single day as there is still a party to come. I don't know how long this can last, but at the moment we look on the children's birthdays as an excuse to invite all our friends to come and eat cake. We have a lovely time and the children aren't old enough to realize that this should have been a kids' party with them, rather than us, as the focus. Any excuse to meet up with friends and cake is good, but this has the added advantage that despite our protestations, some of them will come bearing gifts, and so we get the thrill of unwrapping more presents and discovering new toys for me to enjoy.

Marty will be six next birthday and I fear that by that age he may want fewer adults and more children at his party. I don't look forward to sharing my cake with hordes of ravenous children, but the party games will be some compensation. This may also signal the end of joint parties for Marty and Alice. Since she was three days old, Alice has been turning up to her brother's birthday parties and stealing his limelight, but will a six-year-old want his baby sister at his party? I doubt it, not that I will give in without a fight since shared parties are undoubtedly easier for Daddy.

Fun though the parties in Bangkok have been, the best parties have been at granny's house with all the cousins. One year, my sister, remembering the magnificent cakes our mom used to make, produced a stunning construction-site-themed chocolate cake, complete with toy diggers. Then my mom designed a treasure hunt that thrilled the four-year-olds with its ingenious clues and beautiful pictures. They have set a high bar, but I intend to make themed cakes and treasure hunts the



Photo provided by author

centerpieces of Marty and Alice's birthday parties for years to come.

Now, as we all know, it's the exceptions that prove the rule, and there is one birthday I do not love: my wife's. It falls two days before mine, which has always seemed to me like a selfish attempt to distract from my obviously much more important anniversary. Worse than that is the present-buying: while shopping for toys is fun, thinking of something my wife will like strains my mental processes to their very limits. All too often, despite weeks of sleepless nights, tossing and turning in desperate thought, the only thing I can come up with is chocolate. Again.

Now, my wife loves chocolate and this would not be a problem, except that a mere two days later, my paltry offering will be cast into dismal perspective as my wife showers me with a generous range of thoughtful gifts; each beautifully wrapped and appearing to whisper, recriminatingly, "I'm so much better than a box of chocolates." My wife doesn't seem to mind, but I always feel guilty. Fortunately, the enormous chocolate cake that inevitably marks our joint birthday celebrations provides delicious consolation, and I comfort myself that maybe next year inspiration will finally strike!

“

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STARTING OVER AS A PARENT ABROAD

International moves are hard for both parents and children. Laura suggests ways in which parents can embrace their new homes alongside creating a sense of security for their children to confidently adapt to their new environment.

Photo by galih-jelih 46jdCBSpDI from Unsplash



About the Author

Laura Devos is a certified Parent Educator, mama of three, and founder of Extra Roots Transformational Courses & Coaching. She supports a wide array of families and specializes in supporting families with transitions abroad and third-culture kids. Learn more at www.extraroots.com or contact her at laura@extraroots.com or on Instagram @extraroots_global



Photo by laurentiu-morariu YwhiwSOdp3A from Unsplash

Raising a child isn't easy. And when you add to the mix an international move—a change of culture, language, even climate (cue the intense heat!)—it can add completely unforeseen layers of complexity to it all. We also know that the expression, “it takes a village to raise a child” is true.

When you leave home, you're also leaving behind your circle of family, friends, neighbors—people you've depended on through thick and thin. Whether you came for a demanding job or your job title just changed to “stay-at-home-parent” this, in itself, is another massive transition that needs to be addressed.

So, where do you start when everything is new and it feels like the carpet has been pulled out from under you, and you're suddenly on your back looking up? Well, first, you get back up. Remember, when times are hard, it's not only you who are feeling this way, but also your child. Children are little sponges. They absorb our feelings and emotions and they're constantly observing our

verbal and non-verbal cues for signs of safety. If we are feeling nervous, uncomfortable and very stressed about a move, then chances are that they will be too. Our children rely on us for safety and security, first and foremost.

In order to be able to exude safety and security, we need to get ourselves up and proactively find ways to support ourselves in our new country.

STEP 1: DIVING INWARD

Spend some time thinking about what foundations you need to build your community, and how you can do that in your new home.

Reflect: What has been important to you and what are you missing? Think about what the most important parts of your support network were back at home and which components you can replicate here. What support did you need in the past? What made you feel held? You may not be able to bring your parents or extended family with you but what

else felt supportive? Were you highly engaged in your child's school? Did your neighbors help you out with the children?

Small steps: Taking the first little steps leads to big differences, so what are the first small things you can do? If school is an important component in your community, which it often is for parents, then look into what your child's school offers. Perhaps a board, a committee, or an association? If there isn't one, can you help to start one? If your little one isn't in school yet, you can check which baby groups or playgroups are near your house. Where could you start to connect with other parents and potential neighbors?

Start outside your door: Sometimes your support system is waiting just the other side of your door. If feeling connected with your neighborhood is important to you, can you knock on doors and introduce yourself to neighbors in your building or compound? Maybe pass by with food from your country to share



Photo by oannob-a-F6COjIKVrvo from Unsplash

and say “hi”. Once you build a community around you, you’ll not only start to feel more supported, but your children will also feel it. They’ll see you ease up, and eventually they’ll feel like they can also safely expand their circles.

Be intentional in finding joy:

Beyond the foundations of your community, you can think of your move as a way to expand and grow in the direction that you’ve always wanted to. Frame the move as an opportunity. Always wanted to play tennis? Find a court and sign up. Keen to connect on books? Find a book club or even start one! Does helping others light you up? Look into one of the many volunteering opportunities in Bangkok, supporting you to give back, as this brings both value and connection.

STEP 2: EXPANDING OUTWARD

Embrace the newness, look on the bright side and pass this positivity and security on to your children.

Geography: Get a Lonely Planet Guidebook that has colorful pictures and maps, then you can curl up

on the couch with your child, either ahead of the move or when you’re already here, and explore your new world. Point things out and ask questions, “What do you think the people are doing in that picture?” “Wow, that food looks yummy—would you like to try it one day too? Should we highlight it so we remember it? What color highlighter will you use, and mine will be another color so we know where to go back to?” “Look at the map—wow, Thailand is so big! Look, here is Bangkok... did you know...?” Engage in conversations, circle places that you want to go to together and connect experiences: “Ooh that beach looks pretty! It reminds me of the one we went to last summer... Do you agree?”

Language: Your child might be learning Thai at school. This might be a challenge for them, or they might feel uncomfortable or pushed back. Remind them that language is such an important tool to communicate and to get to know this new country. Sign up for a Thai language class yourself; see if some other parents from school are in one or want to start one. This is a

great and fun social activity. Taking Thai classes shows your child what curiosity and effort look like and it might motivate them to try as well. It will also make daily life easier to navigate and Bangkok will start to feel a little more like home.

Culture: Take time to get to know Thai culture. Visit temples, engage in public celebrations like Songkran in April or Loy Krathong in November. Share what you learn about the holidays with your child. This helps in bridging, learning and communicating with those around you, and models respect and interest to your children.

As you build your community and network in Thailand, no matter how long you’re here for, you’ll start to feel connected and engaged—both vital to feeling like being part of a community. And as you find that ease within yourself, your child will also follow: softening, leaning into and embracing change, stepping away from anxiety and into excitement for this new chapter as a family.



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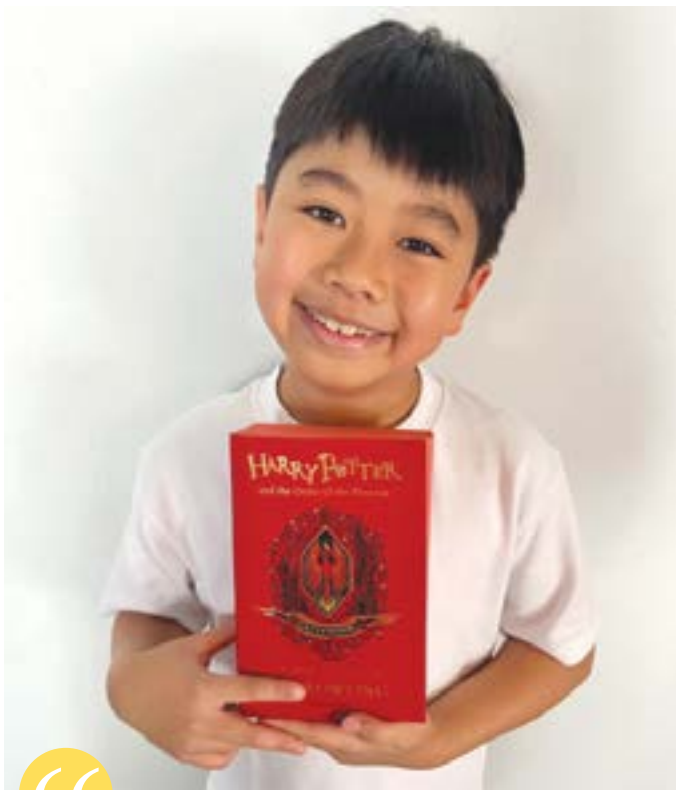


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INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY: KIDS' BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

To celebrate International Literacy Day, we asked nine children from our BAMBI community (ranging from toddlers to tweens) to tell us about their all-time favorite book. The answers ranged from picture books about noisy babies to junior novelizations of Netflix hits, and every recommendation came with its own reasons: a favorite character, a page they ask to reread, a scene that makes them laugh every single time. Read on to find out, in their own words, what they had to recommend.



“

Samuel Rayson, age 9**Book: *Harry Potter* by J. K. Rowling**

I recommend Harry Potter because honestly, it pulls you in and won't let go. Harry thinks he's just a normal kid stuck with a mean family, then finds out he's a wizard. The world feels so real that I keep thinking, if Hogwarts actually existed somewhere, I'd want to go and be a wizard like Harry. What I really like is that the brave, loyal kids aren't always the popular ones at first, and it doesn't matter. From Ron, I learn that friendship matters more than being the strongest, and Hermione proves girls can be the smartest in the room. It's a bit scary in some parts, but the good, exhilarating kind. Read it slowly so you notice all the clues before watching the movies. You won't regret it.

”



“

Samantha Arden Rayne, age 6**Book: *Dog Man* by Dav Pilkey**

I am obsessed with dogs so my favorite book is Dog Man and I love it so, so much. Dog Man is a policeman with a dog's head and a man's body, which is already so funny before anything even happens. He catches bad guys like Petey the cat, but Petey isn't all bad, and that's the part I like. Sometimes people do mean things when they feel sad inside. The pictures make me laugh and the words are easy so I can read lots by myself, which makes me feel proud of myself. My mom laughs too when I read it to her. If you like silly stuff and dogs, you should read it. It's the best.

”



Millie Nagasawa, age 6

Book: *Lulu and the Noisy Baby* by Camilla Reid and Ailie Busby

I like Lulu and the Noisy Baby because it is a fun story. I like Lulu's name because it sounds cute. My favorite part is when Daddy is cooking. He helps Lulu's mommy. I also like the pictures in the book. My favorite pictures are the cats. I like the colors of the cats because they are bright and beautiful. The story is easy to read, and I enjoy reading it with my family. I like Lulu because she is kind and cute. This book makes me feel happy every time I read it. I want to read it again and again because it is one of my favorite books. I think other children will like it too.



Ben Briet, age 4

Books: *Bizzy Bear series, Thomas the Tank Engine, Het Gouden Voorleesboek*

Ben's favorite books are the Bizzy Bear series, Thomas the Tank Engine, and Het Gouden Voorleesboek (Dutch for "The Golden Read-Aloud Book"). He has loved them since he was one year old and still asks us to read them, even though he is almost four years old. His favorite stories are De Gele Taxi (The Taxi That Hurried) and Meneer Mooi Weer (The Good Humor Man). He loves turning the pages, pointing at the pictures, and talking about the characters. He can now identify individual letters. This helps him learn how to spell words. These books have helped him develop a love of reading, and reading together has become one of our favorite daily routines.



Shota Tsuyuki, age 2

Book: *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin Jr and Eric Carle

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? is a colorful picture book that children love. Each page shows an animal and asks what it sees, leading to the next surprise. The simple words and bright pictures help kids learn colors and animals while enjoying reading. It is perfect for English study, too. One heartwarming scene is when older brothers or sisters read it aloud to younger ones. Children often memorize which animal comes next, so it also strengthens memory skills. The repeating question makes reading fun, and families enjoy sharing the story together.





“

Avira Jain, age 4

Book: *We're Going On A Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury

We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury is my all-time favorite book! I love the way the family is so brave as they go through the swishy grass, the deep cold river, the oozy mud and the dark forest. Every time we read it, I join in with all the sounds—swishy swashy, splash splosh, squelch squerch, stumble trip! My favorite part is when they finally find the bear and have to run all the way back home. It always makes me laugh! This book makes me feel excited and happy, and I love reading it over and over again. I hope every child gets to go on a bear hunt too!

”

“

Ezekiel Barandon, age 7

Book: *Spy School Secret Service* by Stuart Gibbs

One book that I really love is Spy School Secret Service by Stuart Gibbs. The story is about a spy named Benjamin Ripley who pretends to be friends with the president's son, even though the president's son is a real jerk. Benjamin pretends to be his friend so that he can find out if anyone is going to do something to the president. And just so you know, the president knows that he's a spy. I like it because it has a lot of action scenes in it. I would recommend this book to people who like undercover stories.

”



“

Liam Kai M. Barandon, age 10

Book: *Stranger Things: The Junior Novelization* adapted by Matthew J. Gilbert

One of my favorite books is Stranger Things: The Junior Novelization, adapted by Matthew J. Gilbert from the Netflix series. I like this book because after I watched Stranger Things, I wanted to read the book too. In the story, Mike, Dustin, and Lucas look for their friend Will, but one night while searching the forest they find a mysterious girl instead. I recommend this book because the writing is very descriptive and it creates a vivid scene in your head. I recommend it for people who like mystery and action thriller books.

”



“

Sebastian Gerard Delevaux, age 6

Book: *Minecraft Creative Handbook*

My favorite book is the Minecraft Creative Handbook. I also have the other editions, like Combat and Survival, but the Creative Handbook is my favorite. The book teaches you what's different when you play in creative mode. Like, you have no health or hunger bar, you can fly, and you can mine in one tap. But what I like the most is that you have unlimited resources, so you can practise building anything before you play in the other modes. It helps me get better at making cool things. If you love Minecraft like me, this is the best book to read.

”





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POTTY TRAINING AND OTHER MILESTONES: WHY SECURE KIDS HANDLE MILESTONES BETTER

School readiness isn't about rushing milestones. Sara, a mother of twins, shares how building emotional security and confidence at home can help children navigate transitions smoothly.

Photo by Elina Fairytale from Pexels



About the Author

Sara Salam is a mother to energetic boy-girl twins who keep her on her toes and regularly challenge her ideas about patience, boundaries, and quiet. She writes about parenting as she learns it—one day, one mistake, and one small win at a time.

As the start of a new academic year approaches, many parents focus on practical school-readiness skills such as eating and dressing independently, potty training, or separating comfortably from caregivers. Yet one of the most important ingredients for a successful transition is often overlooked: a child's sense of security.

Children thrive when they feel safe and supported. Major developmental milestones are not simply checklists to complete; they are significant transitions that require children to adapt to new expectations. When these changes happen in a familiar environment surrounded by trusted caregivers children are more likely to embrace them successfully.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMING

The weeks before a new school year begins are an ideal opportunity to focus on age-appropriate milestones. Starting these transitions at home allows children to learn new skills gradually, without the added pressure of adjusting to a new classroom, teacher, routine, and peer group. Imagine a child who is simultaneously learning to use the toilet, spending longer periods away from their parents, and navigating an unfamiliar school environment. Even for the most resilient child, this would be a significant amount of change to navigate all at once. By introducing these milestones before school begins parents can help reduce stress and build confidence.

WHY SECURITY COMES BEFORE SUCCESS

Children are naturally more willing to try new things when they feel emotionally secure. A child who trusts that a parent or caregiver will respond calmly to accidents during potty training is more likely to persist. Likewise, a child who has already practiced independent skills at home enters the classroom with a sense of competence rather than uncertainty. When children feel secure, they are better able to:

- Take healthy risks and try new skills



Photo by Aflo Images from (Aflo)

- Recover from mistakes and setbacks
- Adapt to changes in routine
- Build confidence and independence
- Form positive relationships with teachers and peers

In contrast, introducing too many changes together can leave children feeling overwhelmed, resulting in resistance, anxiety, or regression.

FOCUS ON AGE-APPROPRIATE MILESTONES

Every child develops at their own pace, but parents can use the period before the school year begins to encourage skills that are generally expected for their age group. One practice I have found particularly helpful is speaking with teachers before the end of the school year to understand the expectations of the next classroom. Knowing which skills children will be encouraged to develop can help parents use the break purposefully, focusing on building confidence rather than rushing to meet a checklist.

For preschoolers, this may include:

- Beginning or progressing with potty training
- Washing hands independently
- Following simple routines
- Dressing and undressing with minimal help
- Managing toileting independently
- Packing and unpacking their belongings
- Following multi-step instructions

For children moving into primary school, milestones may include managing personal belongings, following classroom routines, opening lunch containers independently, taking responsibility for simple homework tasks, and communicating their needs confidently to teachers.

The goal is not perfection. Rather, it is to provide children with opportunities to practice and gain familiarity with skills before they are expected to use them in a group setting.

START AT HOME, WHERE MISTAKES FEEL SAFE

Home provides a safe space for children to practice new skills, make mistakes and learn without fear of judgment. A child learning to use the toilet at home can have accidents without embarrassment. A child learning to put on their shoes can take extra time without feeling rushed.

By practicing at home, parents create a safe environment where children can develop skills through repetition, encouragement, and patience. This foundation makes it easier for children to then transfer those skills to the classroom.

PROGRESS OVER PRESSURE

Perhaps the most important reminder for parents is that reaching milestones is not a race. Children are more likely to succeed when they feel supported rather than pressured. Celebrate small achievements, maintain consistent routines, and remember that confidence grows one step at a time.

School readiness is not simply about what children can do; it is about how they feel while doing it. When children feel secure and confident in their abilities, they are far more likely to embrace new challenges and thrive. The strongest foundation for any milestone is not pressure or perfection; it is the security of knowing that someone is beside them every step of the way.

PLAYGROUPS & ACTIVITIES

BAMBI holds regular playgroups and activities around Bangkok, open to both BAMBI members and non-members. BAMBI playgroups are characterized by both structured and 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	The Tiny Seeds International Pre-School
Kiddieville	Playville
Little Steps	Future Steps International School Bangkok
Little Panda	Nancy Language School
Little Treehouse	Little Treehouse Nursery
Saturday Nana	Storytime Preschool Bangkok
Little Tots	Tiny Tots International Learning Centre
Niko Niko	The Prestige 49 (Sukhumvit Soi 49)
Kira Kira new!	KiraKira kids international kindergarten school



ACTIVITIES

Name	Location
Toddler Music	Skyview Hotel Bangkok Sukhumvit24
Football	Noah Futsal
Little Athletes	The Racquet Club
Lego Construction STEM	Bricks4Kidz - K Village
Junior Tennis	See registration for details

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THE MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL: A CELEBRATION OF FAMILY, GRATITUDE, AND MOONCAKES

Mooncakes, moonlit strolls, and the legend of Chang'e. Iris shares how Bangkok families can celebrate one of Asia's most cherished traditions with family, gratitude, and togetherness.

Photo by Rino Adano from Pexels



About the Author

Iris Huang is a Chinese mother living in Bangkok who enjoys sharing Chinese culture, traditions, and family recipes. Through her writing, she hopes to connect people across cultures and generations by telling stories that celebrate family, food, and meaningful traditions.



Photo by jhengyaolin

The Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival, is one of the most important traditional holidays celebrated by East and Southeast Asian communities around the world. The festival falls on the 15th day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar, when the moon is believed to be at its fullest and brightest. This year, the Mid-Autumn Festival falls on Friday 25 September.

For thousands of years, this special day has been a time for families to gather, share a meal, and give thanks for the year's harvest. Much like Thanksgiving in the United States, the Mid-Autumn Festival celebrates gratitude, abundance, and togetherness.

A FESTIVAL WITH ANCIENT ROOTS

The origins of the Mid-Autumn Festival can be traced back more than 3,000 years. Early celebrations were connected to the harvest season. After months of hard work in the fields, families could finally enjoy the fruits of their labor and pray for favorable weather in the coming year.

Ancient emperors also performed ceremonies to honor the moon and give thanks for a successful harvest. Over time, the festival evolved into a celebration enjoyed by people from all walks of life.

By the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE), the Mid-Autumn Festival had become an officially recognized

holiday. The traditions of family reunions, moon appreciation, lantern displays, and mooncakes grew increasingly popular and continue to this day.

THE LEGEND OF CHANG'E

No Mid-Autumn Festival celebration would be complete without the story of Chang'e, the Moon Goddess. According to Chinese legend, there were once ten suns in the sky, scorching the earth and causing great suffering. A heroic archer named Hou Yi shot down nine of the suns and saved humanity. As a reward, he received an elixir of immortality.

Hou Yi did not wish to leave his beloved wife, Chang'e, so he kept the potion hidden. One day, a greedy man tried to steal it. To prevent it from falling into the wrong hands, Chang'e drank the elixir herself and floated up to the moon, where she has lived ever since.

Heartbroken, Hou Yi placed Chang'e's favorite foods beneath the moon and gazed upward, hoping to feel close to her. Many people believe this legend inspired today's custom of moon appreciation during the Mid-Autumn Festival.

A MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL IN THE TANG DYNASTY

During the Tang Dynasty the Mid-Autumn Festival would be the occasion for a large family gathering. While the wife would be up early preparing a family feast, her husband

would be attending an official moon ceremony. Through the day, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins would arrive carrying gifts, fruits, and materials for making lanterns. The children would eagerly gather around their grandfather, as he taught them how to build beautiful lanterns by hand.

In the kitchen, generations of women would work side by side making mooncakes. They'd chat, laugh, and share family stories while preparing the holiday meal. Moments like these would remind everyone how precious family time is.

As evening approached, the family would gather around a large table filled with delicious dishes. Roast duck, steamed fish, taro, dumplings, seasonal fruits, and fragrant osmanthus wine would be shared among loved ones.

After dinner came everyone's favorite part: mooncakes. The children would eagerly reach for sweet fillings such as red bean paste and lotus seed paste. Some adults would prefer savory varieties, while others would enjoy traditional five-nut mooncakes packed with seeds and nuts.

The family would move outdoors to admire the bright full moon. Stories of Chang'e would be told once again. Poetry would be written. Laughter would fill the air. Later, the older children would head to the lantern festival, excited to participate in riddles, games, and performances. The day would end with wishes for



Photo by nguyentuanhung from pixabay

happiness, prosperity, and another year of good fortune.

CELEBRATING THE MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL TODAY

Modern life often makes family gatherings more difficult. Many people live far from their parents, siblings, and childhood friends. Even so, the Mid-Autumn Festival continues to remind us of the importance of staying connected. Today, families may celebrate with video calls, messages, or small gatherings. Businesses often send mooncakes as gifts to customers, partners, and employees as a gesture of appreciation.

No matter how we celebrate, the spirit of the holiday remains the same: gratitude, reunion, and love.

WHERE TO CELEBRATE IN BANGKOK

If you're in Bangkok, there are several wonderful places to enjoy the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Take an evening stroll along the Chao Phraya River and watch the moon reflected on the water. For a quieter experience, visit Lumpini Park or Benjakitti Park and enjoy

the peaceful atmosphere under the moonlight.

Bangkok's Chinatown (Yaowarat) is especially lively during the festival season, with decorations, mooncakes, cultural performances, and festive celebrations for the whole family.

EASY SNOW SKIN MOONCAKES

While you can always purchase mooncakes from a bakery, making them at home is a wonderful way to celebrate the festival with family and friends. These no-bake snow skin mooncakes are simple enough for children to help make.

Makes 16 mini mooncakes Ingredients

For the snow skin

- 200 g mochi ready-mix powder
- 200 ml warm water
- 30 g neutral-flavored oil

For the filling

- 25 g filling per mooncake (lotus seed paste, red bean paste, chocolate, or your favorite filling)

Other

- Cornstarch, for dusting
- Food coloring (optional)

Instructions

1. Mix the mochi powder, warm water, and oil until smooth
2. Cover the mixture and let it rest for 10 minutes
3. If desired, divide the dough and add different food colors to create a colorful range of mooncakes
4. Divide the dough into 20 g portions and the filling into 25 g portions
5. Flatten a piece of dough into a small circle
6. Place the filling in the center and carefully seal the dough around it
7. Lightly dust a mooncake mold with cornstarch
8. Place the filled dough ball into the mold and press firmly
9. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving

Enjoy your homemade mooncakes with a cup of tea while admiring the full moon with family and friends. After all, the Mid-Autumn Festival is not really about the mooncakes. It is about taking a moment to appreciate the people we love and remembering that, no matter how far apart we may be, we are all connected under the same moon.

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FINDING COMMUNITY THROUGH BOOKS: MY JOURNEY WITH THE NEILSON HAYS LIBRARY

Kit didn't just find a library in Bangkok. Instead she found a 150-year-old community that's still all-women-led, still growing, and still welcoming newcomers like her.



Photo provided by author



About the Author

Prepared by Kit Lang (@mskitlang) for Neilson Hays Library, Thailand's premier English-language library. 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.

When my family moved to Bangkok in 2022, my daughter was a year old and my son was three. We knew no one and were searching for a sense of community. I remembered something my grandmother always said: "When you move somewhere new, put up your curtains and find the local library." It was simple advice, but it proved to be exactly what we needed.

On one of our very first weekends in Bangkok, I searched for the Neilson Hays Library and attended Saturday Story Time. Ms. Sammy enthusiastically shared stories before leading the children through a fun craft activity. Surrounded by the library's beautiful historic architecture and warmly welcomed by families and staff, I realized we had found something special—we had found our community.

From that day on, Saturdays at the library became a family tradition. We attended Story Time almost every week, made lasting friendships, became members, enjoyed concerts, and watched the library community continue to grow.

In 2024, I was honored to join the library's Board of Directors as the Children's Programming Coordinator. Continuing the tradition established by the Bangkok Ladies' Library Association in 1869, the library's Board of Directors remains an all-women board. More than 150 years after its founding, the library continues to be a place where literacy, learning, and community come together.

Following the death of Jennie Neilson Hays in 1920, her husband, Dr. Thomas Heyward Hays, commissioned the beautiful neo-classical building that stands today in her memory, honoring her dedication to building community and championing literacy in Bangkok. It remains one of the city's most treasured historic landmarks, welcoming generations of readers, families, and lifelong learners through its doors.

Today, the Neilson Hays Library offers a wide variety of programs for children and adults. Every Saturday



Photo provided by author

from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., resident storytellers Ms. Sammy Thompson and Ms. Ashley Moles, along with guest authors and storytellers, bring books to life through engaging read-alouds followed by creative crafts. Story Time is free for library members and 250฿ per child for non-members. Throughout the year, the library hosts festive holiday Story Times celebrating Halloween, Christmas, Children's Day, Easter, Songkran, and more, with themed activities that make each event memorable for young families.

The library also partners with Pro Musica to present children's concerts that blend classical music with storytelling. These events introduce young audiences to music in a warm, welcoming environment while showcasing the remarkable acoustics of our historic building.

For adults, the library offers book clubs, flower arranging workshops, and Jennie's Reading Corner, which encourages visitors to gather in the courtyard, enjoy the adjoining Fix Café, set aside their phones, and simply spend time reading together.

Visitors can browse our collection through the Oliver online catalogue, making it easy to explore more than 20,000 English-language books, including fiction, non-fiction, and an extensive children's collection. Each month, I feature two books from the library in BAMBI Magazine, highlighting just a small sample

of the wonderful titles available to borrow.

The Neilson Hays Library is more than a historic building or a place to borrow books. It is where children discover the joy of reading, friendships are formed, and newcomers can find a sense of belonging. It has been that place for my family, just as it has been for countless others over the past 150 years.

Four years later, I often think back to my grandmother's advice about settling into a new place. Our curtains have long been hung, and not only do we have our library cards, we've found a community. What began as a Saturday morning Story Time has grown into friendships, opportunities to serve, and a place my family now considers home. Whether you're looking for your next great read, a welcoming community, or simply a quiet place to pause, I hope you'll discover what my family did—that sometimes a library offers so much more than books.

Here I am!



WHEN LEARNING GETS HARDER: HOW TO MOTIVATE AND ENCOURAGE THROUGH ACADEMIC CHALLENGES

As schoolwork becomes more demanding, progress can be harder to see. Nitnem explores how parents can help children stay motivated with encouragement, patience, and realistic support.

Photo by Yan Krukau from Pexels



About the Author

Nitnem Singhsachakul is currently a psychology student who is passionate about understanding how people think, learn, and grow. She enjoys writing, exploring new ideas, and investigating how psychological concepts can be translated into practical insights which can be applied in everyday life.

The majority of children grow up believing that effort and results naturally go hand in hand. Study a little longer, improve a little more. Practice enough, and progress follows immediately.

While this is often true in the early stages of learning, it becomes less straightforward as academic demands increase. Effort still matters, but the results may be gradual, less visible, and harder to recognize. Children may be improving in ways that are initially difficult to see, making it easier for parents and children alike to confuse a temporary struggle with a lack of progress.

For many children, this is the point where motivation begins to shift. Parents may notice increased frustration with homework, reduced confidence in class, or reluctance to engage with challenging tasks. It can be tempting to assume that motivation is the problem. However, in many cases, motivation has not been lost. Instead, it has been weakened by the frustration of consistently putting in effort without seeing immediate or meaningful results. Understanding this gap between effort and visible outcomes is an important step in helping children confidently navigate academic challenges.

THE SHIFT FROM VISIBLE TO INVISIBLE PROGRESS

When children are young, learning often comes with immediate feedback. For example, they learn a new word and then use it in conversation, or memorize multiplication tables and instantly improve their math. In these early stages, progress is visible and easy to recognize.

What is often overlooked is that as learning becomes more advanced, progress becomes less obvious. Research in educational psychology suggests that understanding often develops before it appears in performance. A child may be building stronger reasoning skills, developing deeper conceptual understanding, or refining learning strategies long before these



Photo by Vitaly Gariev from Pexels

improvements are reflected in test scores.

This creates a distinction between the two types of progress: visible and invisible. Visible progress is what we tend to celebrate because it is easy to measure. It appears in test scores, correct answers, and completed assignments. Invisible progress is less tangible and harder to notice. It may appear as improved persistence, better-quality questions, fewer repeated mistakes, or a stronger ability to respond to feedback. The challenge is that children often judge themselves by visible progress. When improvement is not immediately obvious, they may conclude that they are not improving at all. Yet, some of the most crucial aspects of learning take place before the results become apparent.

WHY DIFFICULTY IS OFTEN MISINTERPRETED

Learning the content is only part of the challenge. The way children interpret difficulty can have an equally significant impact on their motivation.

When students encounter challenges, they can interpret that experience in different ways. Some interpret difficulty as a sign that they need more practice, while others interpret it as evidence that they lack capability. These interpretations significantly influence motivation and persistence.

Research on growth mindset suggests that students who believe abilities can be developed over time are more likely to persist through challenges and show resilience. Importantly, a growth mindset is not simply about encouraging children to “try harder”. It is about reframing struggle as part of the learning process rather than a sign of failure. When children see ability as fixed, academic challenges can feel discouraging and final. However, when they understand that ability develops gradually, difficulty becomes part of progress rather than proof of limitation.

Children benefit from understanding that struggling with a concept does not mean they are incapable of learning it. It simply means they are still in the process of understanding it. This perspective becomes particularly important during academic transitions, such as moving to a new cohort, adjusting to more demanding coursework, or gaining greater independence in learning. During these transitions, confidence often fluctuates before performance improves. Without the right support, these periods of adjustment can easily lead to mistaken assumptions about a lack of ability.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP SUPPORT MOTIVATION

Fortunately, there are several evidence-based ways to support children when learning becomes difficult. One of the most effective



Photo by Karola G from Pexels

strategies is helping children break large tasks into smaller, manageable steps, often referred to as chunking. When students are faced with large or complex assignments, their working memory can become overwhelmed by the amount of information they need to process. Breaking tasks into smaller, manageable parts reduces cognitive strain and makes it easier to begin. Smaller steps create clarity and reduce avoidance or procrastination.

Importantly, this approach is not about lowering expectations. Instead, it is about making progress visible and easier to recognize. Completing several smaller tasks often feels more motivating than confronting one large, undefined goal.

Parents can also support children by shifting attention from perfection to progress. It is easy for children to believe that success means getting everything right immediately. However, this expectation can make mistakes feel far more significant than they really are. On the other hand, focusing on progress offers a different perspective, as it encourages children to recognize growth over time and to view mistakes as part of the learning process. Over time, this perspective helps children develop confidence, resilience, and a more realistic understanding of learning.

WHY ENCOURAGEMENT WORKS BETTER THAN CRITICISM

When children struggle academically, it is natural for adults to focus on what still needs improvement rather than what has already been accomplished. However, research consistently shows that encouragement is more effective than criticism in sustaining effort and motivation over time. This does not mean avoiding constructive feedback. Instead, it means balancing correction with recognition of effort and improvement.

Encouragement helps children recognize forms of progress they may otherwise overlook. Statements such as, "You kept going even when it was frustrating," or "Your time management has improved since last month," highlight growth that may not yet appear in grades. This reinforces the message that learning is a process rather than a single result. When children feel that effort is seen and valued, they are more likely to maintain confidence and continue engaging with challenges, even when visible progress is limited.

REDEFINING SUCCESS

As learning becomes more demanding, both children and parents need to shift their definition of success.

Success is not always reflected in a perfect score or immediate understanding. It can also be found in persistence, willingness to ask for help, or returning to a difficult task after feeling frustrated. Even though these behaviors may not be as visible as academic results, they are strong indicators of long-term development and remain important indicators of progress.

Ultimately, it is important to understand that difficulty is an inevitable part of learning. Parents play an important role in helping children understand that effort remains meaningful, even when progress is not immediately visible. When learning gets harder, motivation is strengthened through encouragement, realistic expectations, patience, and the confidence that progress is still happening, even when it may not be obvious.

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