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MARCH 2026

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- Mel Habanananda



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

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**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:

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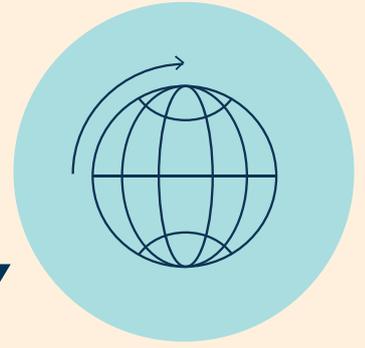
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Shivangi Tripathi

Dear BAMBI members,

This month, as we focus on the theme of, “Her Health, Her Power”, I am reminded of how early influences shape our understanding of well-being. Growing up, I watched my mother follow simple, consistent habits like morning walks, mindful eating, and staying active, which quietly taught me that caring for one’s health is a lifelong commitment. Today, seeing my mother-in-law in her seventies living independently and staying active without major health concerns is equally inspiring. It shows how discipline and healthy habits create lasting strength.

Women’s health has not always been seen as important and the experiences of women whose health was ignored makes this theme even more meaningful. As a mother raising a daughter, there is not only a desire to pass on healthy habits, but also to pass on openness, the confidence to speak about hormonal health, menstrual well-being, reproductive care, and menopause without hesitation. We are fortunate to live in an era where these conversations are becoming more informed and normalized, empowering women to better understand their bodies and approach each stage of life with clarity and confidence. Health is not only physical strength; it is emotional balance too.

As we celebrate women in all their strength and complexity this March, may this edition inspire thoughtful conversations, mindful living, and mutual support at every stage of womanhood. When women prioritize their health, they strengthen not only themselves but also the generations that follow.

Shivangi Tripathi  
BAMBI Secretary





When I was 10, I learned that on the 8th of March every year, the world comes together to celebrate International Women's Day. In the years that followed, I observed workplaces giving gifts to female employees or organizing parties to celebrate them, tv and print media ads showcasing messages acknowledging women's strengths and successes, and campaigns highlighting their progress and potential. I also noticed many women wearing purple, the official color of International Women's Day. All of this painted a very rosy picture, and I couldn't help thinking how nice it must feel to be honored for the contributions women make to society.

Fast forward to my late teens and early 20's, when, as a young woman more attune with the realities of the world, the rosy images began to fade. I began to wonder whether society really sees what it takes for women to persevere and accomplish their goals; whether people understand that to truly celebrate women, they need to look at women more closely. Not only at what women do, but at how they live inside their bodies, their roles, their responsibilities, and themselves.

This March, with the theme "Her Health, Her Power", BAMBI Magazine celebrates women in all their strength and complexity—their bodies, minds, and the delicate balance they nurture each day. We dive into what it means to care for ourselves, support each other, and stay well at every stage of womanhood.

First up on the theme, we have "Pelvic Floor Health" by Leanne O' Brien. For many women, the pelvic floor continues to be a mystery they've been quietly living with. Leanne elaborates on what it is and how you can keep it healthy.

If pelvic floor health is an overlooked part of our wellbeing, menopause is a powerful transition we're often taught to fear rather than understand. Claudia Gomes flips the script on this and explains how a little mindfulness can help us embrace this looming milestone more positively in "Menopause Mindfulness".

Moving on to "Raising Daughters with Body Confidence", Keren Granit asserts that the first step to taking care of our bodies—loving our whole selves—should be nurtured from very early on so that every little girl grows up feeling confident about the way she looks and feels, and can carry that into adulthood.

The loss of a pregnancy is one of the most painful and isolating experiences a woman can endure, both physically and psychologically. Sarah Russell's deeply personal account in "Between Grief and Hope" follows her journey through a period of heartbreak and emotional disorientation to one of light and resilience.

Women are experts at nurturing—often putting everyone else first and pushing through exhaustion to keep life running. Yet in doing so, we forget that our well-being isn't a luxury, but the foundation everything else rests on. In "Restorative Rituals: Self-Care that Fits Real Motherhood," Sonali Vongchusiri explains how rethinking self-care can help us refill our own cups in practical, meaningful ways.

In Readers' Corner, Kit Lang recommends "Unwell Women: A Journey Through Medicine and Myth in a Man-made World" By Elinor Cleghorn for adults—a compelling investigation into the gender bias embedded in medical history—and "Bodies are Cool" by Tyler Feder for children—a joyful picture book that teaches children to celebrate every kind of body.

In our non-thematic features, Joe Barker reflects on his newfound appreciation for education—and the unexpected gift of some me-time—now that his son has started school, in "A School Romance." Anatta Zarchi thoughtfully explores the complexities of offering both physical and emotional support to chronically ill children in "How to Support Chronically Ill Children," while Natasha Duffin-Jones outlines how and when to begin empowering children with an understanding of consent in "How and When to Start Teaching Kids Consent."

Womanhood is complex, and women's health is far more layered than we ever imagined. Our health isn't an indulgence, and putting ourselves first doesn't diminish our capacity to care for others. Rather it deepens it. So this month, let's give ourselves permission to tend to our own well-being because our health is our power.

Sanam Rahman  
Editor

# THE CALM AFTER THE STORM

Sometimes, learning doesn't need a spotlight. It begins quietly, with focus. In History, Year 3 students rode straight into the eye of the storm as they explored Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition. When the students were ready to write their thoughts, they were bursting with ideas and genuine emotion.

History is best learned when you re-live it.



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

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# Treatment for Child Snoring or Enlarged Adenoids

Snoring is common but may also be the first sign of obstructive sleep apnea, which is common in preschool and kindergarten children. It can have effects on daytime learning, behavior, and emotion. If your child makes noise when breathing during sleep or snoring becomes noticeable, you should consult a doctor.

## Obstructive sleep apnea in children is treatable

The most common causes are enlarged tonsils and adenoids, allergy, and respiratory tract infection. The diagnosis and treatment includes:

- Patient history and physical examination – asking for risk factors
- Sleep test – overnight sleep study to determine if your child suffers from obstructive sleep apnea
- Treatment – depends on cause and severity of the condition

## Surgical removal of the adenoids and tonsils

The tonsils and adenoids are tissues at the back of the throat that help fight infection. Tonsils are visible at the back of the mouth, while adenoids are hidden behind the nose. They are removed through the mouth, leaving no scars. The surgery takes about 15–30 minutes, and the child usually stays in hospital overnight and goes home the next day.

Although tonsils and adenoids support immunity, other defenses like the lymphatic system and vaccinations protect against infection, so removal does not increase the risk of infections.

## Taking care of your child after the surgery

- Avoid food or drink that will irritate the surgical wound
- 5-7 days after the surgery, take cold/liquid diet e.g. icecream and yoghurt. Avoid hot food.
- After a week, take soft diet e.g. boiled rice and congee. It is ok to take food at room temperature but avoid hot food.
- The doctor will schedule a follow-up appointment at one week and two months to assess the condition



Snoring can be found in **3-12%** of children.

## Surgical removal of tonsils and adenoids improves quality of sleep

The surgery can significantly improve symptoms of obstructive sleep apnea (75-100%). Studies show that the surgery will:

- Improve quality of sleep
- Improve overall health and behavior
- Improve brain function
- Improve small motor development and attention



### Dr. Pasakorn Thavornant

Otolaryngologist at Ear Nose Throat Center, Bangkok Hospital.

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# HOW TO SUPPORT CHRONICALLY ILL CHILDREN

When a child is diagnosed with a chronic illness, parents are often left unsure how to help. Anna gives us a firsthand perspective on helping children navigate chronic illness and mental and emotional healing.

Photo by Alena Shekhovtsova from The Alena Shekhovtsova Collection



## 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/](https://ncsbkk.com/ncs/)

**P**arenting is full of unforeseen challenges, and one that many may not be prepared for is caring for a child with chronic illness. Being diagnosed with a chronic illness is a type of grief that a lot of people may not understand—a grief that comes not from losing others, but from losing oneself and life as you once knew it to be. And although symptoms can be managed and remission is possible, the initial shock can be extremely painful, with feelings of denial and a loss of purpose and identity. Knowing that even if symptoms go away they may return can be extremely difficult to deal with.

As someone with a chronic illness, I have experienced this personally, and I have also seen the emotional toll it takes on parents who see their child's grief but are unable to make it better. So how can you help? How can you be there for your children emotionally and support them as they navigate their grief and treatment, and reach acceptance?

### **HOW PRESENCE HELPS CHILDREN NAVIGATE GRIEF**

It's tough to be there for someone in a way that really helps when you know that there's nothing you can do to solve their problems. I've come to realize that in situations like this, the best way to be there for someone is simply to be there. In my experience, the best thing my parents did for me in my hardest moments was just to be with me. There is no need to say anything because sometimes words can't make it better. However, if your child reaches out to you, you can sit with them, hold them, and be with them, even if there's nothing to say.

While you may feel the need to reassure them by saying that they will get better, this is not always as comforting as you might think, especially not in the first stages of grief. This is something I've seen a lot of chronically ill teenagers talk about online, and I can relate to it as well.

Instead, you can let them know that you will be with them every step of the way, that this is not something they have to navigate on their own.

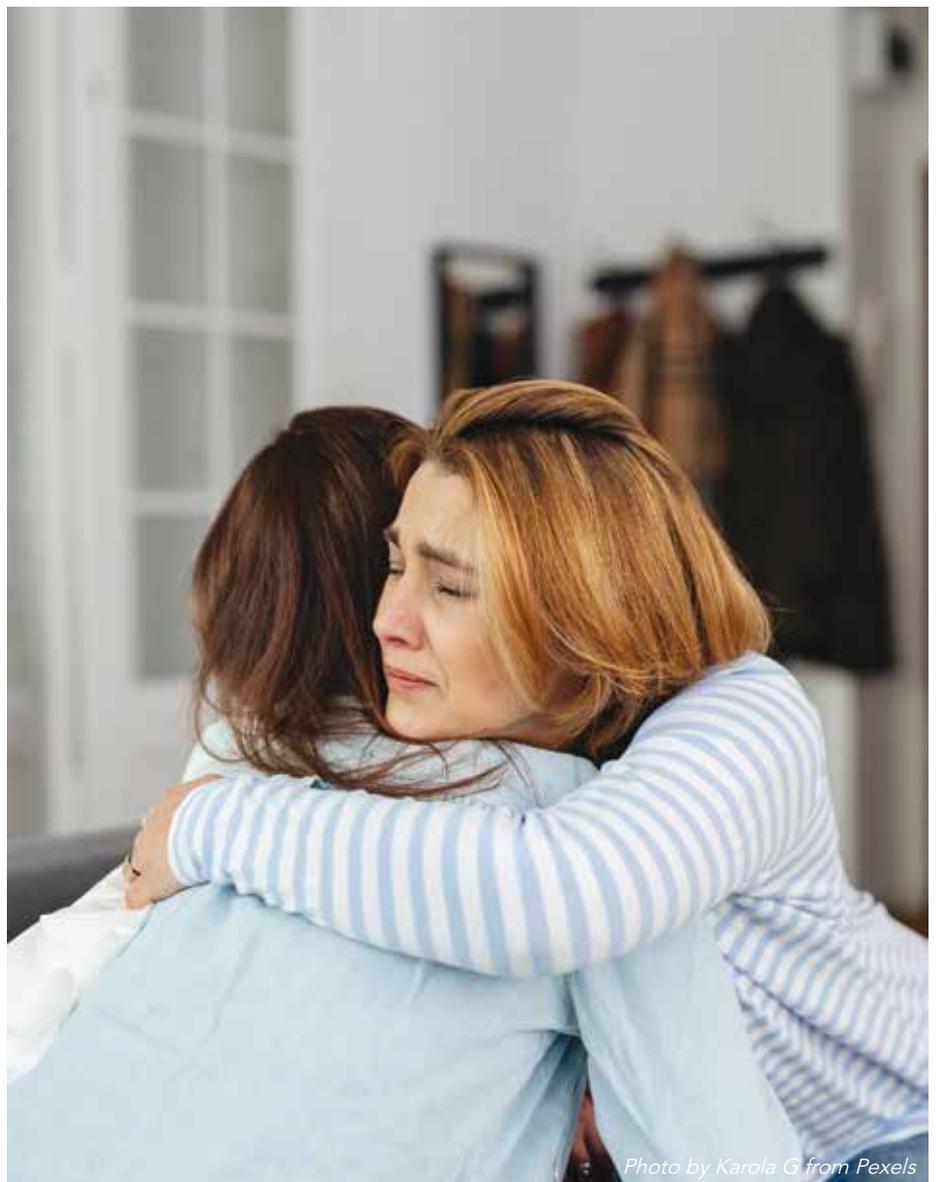
You will help them find the best treatment or lifestyle that works for them, you will be there at their appointments, and you will find a way together. This is very important as people dealing with chronic illness, especially in the early stages, may feel lost and isolated. You cannot share their pain, but you can provide reassurance that you will not leave them to deal with it on their own.

Counselor Savinee adds that it is also helpful to validate their emotions and to listen actively. If they tell you that they feel scared, you might say, "I understand why you feel that way. I would also be scared." This reassures them that it isn't wrong to feel what they feel. On the other hand, saying, "there's nothing to be scared of", even if it's meant to be reassuring,

can make them feel like they're not being heard or understood, or that there is something wrong about the emotions they're feeling. As they talk, you could answer at intervals, summarizing what they've said and actively responding to show that you are listening.

### **FINDING STRENGTH IN SHARED EXPERIENCES**

Once they have become more familiar with their condition, or they are feeling more emotionally steady, it can be more appropriate to bring up positives, such as treatments going well, or them being able to do certain things that they thought they wouldn't be able to do again. This can be especially empowering coming from other people with the same condition. This could be



*Photo by Karola G from Pexels*



Photo by Karola G from Pexels

through support groups, whether online or in-person, or by looking up people with the same condition on social media. Helping them find a community of people whose experiences and stories—whether stories of pain or hope—they can relate to may help them feel less alone. Painful stories can help them feel less alone because it shows that there are other people who have gone through the same things; hopeful stories that come specifically from this community can feel more tangible than hearing it from others. For me, seeing that remission was possible from other people with the same illness made me feel less alone, while hearing it from friends and family did not have the same effect because they hadn't experienced it themselves.

### **TAKING SMALL WINS**

Assuming the worst is often a coping mechanism—many people do not yet want to believe that things can be better, because if symptoms don't improve, the disappointment can be very painful. I've also felt like this, and it took me a year to realize that it will hurt regardless of whether I am prepared for it or not, so I might as well let myself experience

any small wins or joys that I can. This doesn't mean that this realization will eliminate negative emotions forever; the process of healing is far from linear. There will still undoubtedly be moments of fear, but those moments of acceptance can bring a lot of relief, no matter how brief.

As a parent, if you see that they are ready to do things and enjoy themselves, it's great to encourage them and help them learn how to balance enjoyable activities with any health risks. It is understandable to feel scared that they will overdo it and cause themselves pain, but if they want to do something and they feel up to it, then that is a great sign mentally. For example, if fatigue is a main symptom, you can help them figure out what activities they want to do and for how long they can do these activities without triggering symptoms. Or if they can no longer do certain activities in the way they used to, you could help them find a way to adapt.

### **GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP**

Personally, I found that getting professional mental health support made a big difference. If your child is struggling, you could gently suggest

counseling as a possible resource. Having parents that understand mental health and don't view counseling as taboo also makes it easier for children to ask for help. And, very importantly, if your child seeks counseling, respect their confidentiality and allow them to share what they are comfortable with. Parents are sometimes, understandably, concerned, and would like more details, whether from the counselor or the child. However, counselors are not allowed to share information on what is said in sessions except in emergencies or to give general updates for young children. Letting children confide in you when they are ready, without pressing for details, can increase their trust in you.

Finally, despite your best efforts, you may feel like you're not doing enough—that it's not enough to just be there for them, that you wish you could do more.

But remember that you are doing your best in a difficult situation, and that even though just being there may not seem like a lot, it often means more than anything.



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# PELVIC FLOOR HEALTH

Pelvic health physiotherapist Leanne O'Brien explains why pelvic floor health is so important for women, how pregnancy and birth affect it, and the practical steps that women can take to reduce tearing, incontinence, and long-term pelvic issues.

Photo by Alamin Teslim Ayomide from Pexels



## About the Author

Leanne is a UK-trained Pelvic Health Physiotherapist. She has a wide range of experience in public health care, sports injury clinics, and corporate settings. She previously developed and managed a large pelvic health service for two different London-based companies before moving to Bangkok in 2025.



Photo by Karola G from Pexels

The pelvic floor. Most women have heard of it. Some women know how to exercise it, but few really understand why it's so integral to our well-being, or how unique it really is. So let's explore.

### WHAT IS THE PELVIC FLOOR?

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that sits at the base of the pelvis. It forms a hammock-like structure, acting a bit like a trampoline, to support the internal organs and help stabilize the pelvis. There are two holes in the centre of the pelvic floor, one for the rectum to pass through, and one for the vagina and the urethra. The muscle fibres of the pelvic floor loop around the holes to form a seal, helping to keep us continent. The pelvic floor is also involved in sexual arousal and orgasm.

Considering that the pelvic floor does all of this, you can see why keeping it strong throughout life is so important. If you don't keep it strong, you may experience urinary or fecal incontinence, bladder or bowel urgency, issues with sexual function, pain or difficulty emptying your bladder or bowel, or prolapse.

### WHAT THE PELVIC FLOOR DOES DURING PREGNANCY AND LABOR

During pregnancy, your pelvic floor works hard to support the growing baby. It also supports the changing position of the pelvis, as your pelvis shifts more anteriorly, increasing the curve of your lower back.

Fluctuating hormones cause laxity in the pelvic ligaments meaning your pelvic floor works harder to maintain support and stability around the pelvis.

During labor, our pelvic floor stretches to over three times its original length. The length of the perineum—the skin between your vagina and your rectum—and the flexibility of your pelvic floor, partly dictate the stretch capacity and risk of tearing during labor. Perineums measuring under 3cm are at greater risk of more serious tears, while taut, less flexible pelvic floors increase the risk of damage to the connective tissue as the baby exits. Perineal massage has been shown to reduce the risk of tearing by stretching the perineal tissue in the weeks leading up to labor. You

should start perineal massage at 35-36 weeks gestation and aim to complete the technique 3-5 times per week. The UK NHS website has information on how to complete the technique effectively (1). Your obstetrician can tell you the length of your perineum. Shorter perineums require additional support during delivery to minimize tearing. In extreme cases, your obstetrician may recommend a cesarean section.

Postnatally, particularly after vaginal delivery, the pelvic floor muscles are weaker. Therefore targeted pelvic floor strengthening, and a gradual return to general exercise, is warranted. To strengthen the pelvic floor effectively you need to complete targeted pelvic floor strengthening exercises, as well as general strengthening such as pilates, yoga, or weight training.

If you've had a cesarean section, it's still important to complete pelvic floor exercises postnatally, as your pelvic floor will be weaker than it was pre-pregnancy. Forceps and ventouse deliveries cause greater trauma and stretch to the pelvic floor, meaning a longer postnatal



Photo by Aris Leoven from baseimage

recovery, and potentially more pelvic floor issues.

Continence issues postnatally are relatively common, but they're not a normal part of the postnatal process. They are not something you should have to put up with, and in the majority of cases, they are treatable. Targeted exercises and conservative measures such as pessaries (small silicon devices that you insert into the vagina during exercise), underwear that supports the perineum, and pelvic floor stimulation devices have all been shown to alleviate symptoms.

## EXERCISES FOR THE PELVIC FLOOR

Starting pelvic floor exercises at the beginning of your pregnancy ensures you maintain and increase strength in the pelvic floor as the pregnancy progresses. It's recommended that you start pelvic floor exercises as soon as possible during pregnancy. Most women start after their 12-week scan, which gives adequate time to strengthen

the pelvic floor as the baby grows and the pelvic floor is challenged with the weight of the baby.

If you are pregnant or postnatal, and you haven't started pelvic floor exercises, it's not too late! You can always make the pelvic floor stronger. It takes 12-16 weeks to see improvements. Completing pelvic floor exercises 5-7 times per week is optimum. Consistency is the key to improvements in muscle strength and symptoms.

There is a great app called Squeezy which guides you through the exercises and has a useful timer to ensure you are holding the contraction for long enough. If you've never done pelvic floor exercises before, the exercises below are a great way to start. Complete them five times per week.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor or bed.
- Squeeze your rectum, as if you are trying to avoid breaking wind, squeeze your vaginal

muscles and then imagine stopping the flow of urine. This creates a contraction of the pelvic floor muscles from the back to the front.

- Hold the contraction for 10 seconds. You should be able to breathe as you hold the contraction.
- Release the contraction and rest for 5 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times.
- To finish, do 10 quick lifts of the pelvic floor.

If you are completing the above correctly there should be no movement from the pelvis. Avoid squeezing your bum, thigh, and abdominal muscles.

You can do pelvic floor exercises whilst sitting and standing too. If you're doing them for the first time, it is easier to start lying on your back so you can feel the muscles engage effectively without over-using the abdominal, gluteal, and inner thigh muscles.

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# MENOPAUSE MINDFULNESS

Menopause marks a turning point in how women experience their bodies, emotions, and sense of self. Claudia Gomes explores this transition and how mindfulness can help women embrace menopause with compassion.



Photo by RDNE Stock project 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@claudiagomes.coach; [linkedin.com/in/claudiagomes-coach/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/claudiagomes-coach/)

**M**enopause is a major transition in a woman's life that affects the body, behaviors, emotions, energy, perception, and identity. Between mood swings, sugar cravings, hot flashes, memory loss, mental fog, and many other symptoms, this is a phase of life that deserves attention and compassion.

All women are different, so our bodies need different forms of care. There are more than 50 possible menopause-related symptoms, both physical and emotional. Some women experience almost none, while others experience many. So comparing ourselves to others is not always the healthiest approach, but it is useful to know what kind of things we might experience.

Menopause used to be a taboo that was rarely discussed. There was so little information available that many women suffered without even knowing that they were experiencing symptoms of menopause. Thankfully, this has begun to change. Today, information is more accessible, doctors increasingly specialize in menopause care, and women have more options to support their health. These options include Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), nutritious diets low in processed foods and sugar, specific forms of exercise (especially resistance training), and sleep routines that can help alleviate, and for some women even eliminate, many symptoms. Yet there is still much to be learned.

### WHAT REALLY SHIFTS

Menopause is a moment of profound transformation where many women will feel that they hardly recognize themselves anymore. Whilst alterations to the body are obvious, not all changes are physical. As the body changes, identity changes too. Menopause often activates a deep process of letting go. Emotional memories and old patterns start to surface, asking to be addressed. Situations are felt and seen differently, not because they are new, but because they need to be reorganized within a new identity. This can lead to existential questions, the reevaluation of



marriages and relationships, and a rebalancing of family dynamics.

### MOOD CHANGES AND EMOTIONAL WAVES

During menopause, emotions can feel intense, and that is okay. Hormones are changing and hormones influence emotions. All emotions are valid. They are a compass, helping us understand our needs, our desires, and who we are. It helps to remember that emotions are messengers. They have a short life span. They come, deliver their message, and leave. They are not enemies. But when we fight an emotion, keep replaying it, or overthinking it, we end up prolonging its impact. Remember it is okay to feel what you feel, menopause or not.

During menopause, women need compassion. Mood fluctuations are a very common symptom, as are irritability, sadness, apathy, and emotional sensitivity. This is difficult not only for the woman experiencing it, but also for those around her.

During emotionally intense moments we can do things to support ourselves:

- **Being present:** Breathe. Pay attention to your surroundings. Listen to the sounds around you. Gently remind yourself where you are.
- **Inner listening:** Observe what you are saying to yourself. Listen

as if you were an outsider. Ask yourself what this "inner voice" is trying to communicate, and imagine how you would respond if it were a close friend.

- **Naming the feeling:** This is surprisingly powerful. Saying "I am anxious," "I am sad," "I am nervous," or "I am happy" often reduces the intensity of the emotion. Once named, it becomes more manageable because you know what you are dealing with.

### MEMORY, FOCUS, AND THE FEAR OF "LOSING YOURSELF"

Menopause is often associated with memory lapses and hot flashes. But only women going through it truly understand the feeling of "losing your mind". When estrogen levels decline, they affect brain metabolism, energy, and cognitive functions such as memory and focus.

This can be unsettling because there is a sense of losing control. You walk into a room to get something and suddenly forget why you are there. Memories fade. Conversations are interrupted by the thought, "What was I saying?" Concentration becomes harder.

### IDENTITY SHIFT: WHO AM I BECOMING NOW?

An idea that has always stayed with me is that menopause is the moment a woman retires from her work as a procreator and her body finally gets



Photo by Изображения пользователя Be Easy

to rest. Looked at through this lens, menopause really does resemble a kind of retirement. A moment to see and enjoy life differently.

This might be the most important part of the journey: letting go of who we were in order to understand who we want to become. There may be a mourning period for who we were, it may be frightening and challenging, but it often becomes one of the most powerful and beautiful journeys of our lives.

This is a moment of deeper understanding. Women often become less multitasking and more intentional. The inner wisdom gathered from life experience is embraced and put into practice. There is a realization that many things matter less than we once thought. Perceptions shift. Priorities change. People are seen differently because life is valued differently. Femininity expresses itself in a new way. Desire changes. Connection changes.

It is a time to leave certain fears behind and embrace life more fully. It becomes less about performance and more about truth—when a woman suddenly starts sweating intensely with friends or strangers, she quickly learns what it means to

stop performing and start living her truth.

This is the moment when attention shifts from “Who do I need to be for others?” to, “Who am I now?”

### **MINDFULNESS AS COMPASSION, NOT CONTROL**

When we talk about mindfulness, we are talking about presence without control. It is kindness and compassion toward the changes that are happening. Mindfulness during menopause could look like:

- **Listening to your body:** Learning how to truly listen to your body’s signals, its needs, and your emotional responses. Feeling what is happening and offering the care being requested.
- **Respecting your limits:** This is often one of the hardest parts. Energy levels change. Women may move more slowly, need more rest, or experience more physical discomfort. Lifestyle adjustments become necessary. Respecting new limits makes life gentler.
- **Changing your relationship with time:** Menopause marks a chapter. After 50, many women begin reflecting on time, how much is left, how life will unfold

from here, and what truly matters. With increased life expectancy, many women may have 30, 40, or even 50 more years ahead. This phase often invites a deeper appreciation of time and a greater enjoyment of each moment.

- **Being kind to yourself:** Transitions are challenging. Be understanding. Be your own best friend. Speak kindly to yourself. Offer yourself the same care you would give a friend going through a major life change.

Remember you are not perfect. No one is. This is a learning journey.

### **A NEW KIND OF POWER**

Menopause is not a decline. It is a reorganization of personal power. This is when a woman grounds herself deeply in her truth. I have accompanied several women through this transition, and the change in their self-perception is unmistakable. The way they speak about themselves and their lives carries more gratitude, depth, and peace.

Every woman who reaches this stage of life will go through menopause. How she moves through it is a choice. Embrace the process, allow yourself to transform.



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# A SCHOOL ROMANCE

This month, Joe shares his adoration for education as his son thrives in preschool leaving Joe with a wonderful gift: free time.



## 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.

“School is amazing!” Not something I ever thought I'd say. I hated school as a child, and my failures as a teacher did nothing to change my feelings. Yet here I am telling you how great school is, because as a parent I love school, and I want everyone to know about my marvelous new infatuation. Now my love is not simply because of how wonderful it is to be allowed to hand your children over to someone else for six or seven hours—although that would have been enough to earn my undying devotion; school has also been good for Marty.

With a four-year-old, it's hard to know what changes are the result of learning at school and what are simply age-related developmental progressions, but in just six months of school, Marty has become so much more confident. Where he would shyly cling to us when adults spoke to him, he'll now talk to them. At the playground, he happily chases other children—whether they're as happy to be chased is another matter entirely; I'm starting to hope personal space and boundaries will be on the curriculum soon. Nonetheless, I'm loving seeing him confidently engaging with others. Then there is the academic progress; it is so exciting to see Marty forming letters, reading simple words and starting to do maths. Plus he's learning Thai so he's writing letters and having conversations that I don't understand at all. How great is that? Obviously, if your kids have been in school for a while the novelty has probably worn off, but I'm bubbling with excitement!

Homework is an unexpected joy. Now I thought homework for four-year-olds was a monstrous thing. They should be learning through play, I thought. It's bad enough that we're sending him to school, let alone then chaining him to a desk when he gets home—no actual chains are involved, although I can see how they'd be useful parenting tools. But this isn't that kind of homework, this is a few simple worksheets that take no time at all, and Marty is so excited to be able to do them. Like his paint-by-numbers or connect-the-dots books, these worksheets are play. He proudly takes them out of his schoolbag and tells us that he needs to do them before watching TV.

Now of course, there is nothing that our children enjoy that we, as good, caring parents, can't ruin. Try as we might, we can't resist hovering as he does his homework, criticizing his penmanship and pointing out every error almost before he's made it. Keep this up for a few more years and we should kill his enthusiasm for schoolwork. On the rare occasions when he gets to enjoy his homework in peace, he celebrates this academic freedom by drawing his letters five inches tall, reversing his numbers and coloring everything beautifully before scribbling over it in black. Not how we would have approached his tasks, and probably not what his teacher had in mind either, but at

four, it's more important that he enjoys doing schoolwork than that he does it right.

Naturally, school hasn't all been fun. The first few mornings were pretty traumatic as Marty wailed that he hated school and didn't want to go. Once we were out the door, he cycled happily to school talking ceaselessly of this and that, but as school got closer the tears returned, and hugs and high fives were mournfully exchanged before he marched, sobbing like the hero of some Greek tragedy, to meet his terrible fate in the classroom. On his first day, I was racked by guilt at the heartless way I'd deserted him, my conscience and tears only soothed when his teacher sent a picture of Marty happily playing. Nonetheless I was at school long before the end of the day, braced to scoop up a weeping boy. Instead I found a boy bouncing with enthusiasm who couldn't stop telling me how much he loved school. Although that didn't stop him sobbing again the next morning, nor muttering that he hated school, I was calmer since I knew he'd have a great day once I left. By the second week, he stopped crying at drop-off time and was asking me to collect him later so he could play more. By the time we got to Christmas, he wanted to join his class at school on Christmas day. Tempted



though we were to send him in, we thought it best to ignore his tears and insist on him taking the day off.

Even if Marty is now telling us how much he loves school, we've no idea why. When we ask, buzzing with curiosity, what he did that was so great he'll grudgingly tell us that he ate rice and egg and wouldn't try the vegetables. Other than that he refuses to give up his secrets and responds to every question with "Nothing". Politicians stonewalling a tough interviewer could learn from his resolute refusal to comment. A rare exception was the day John threw up in the playground, that we heard about, many, many, many times.

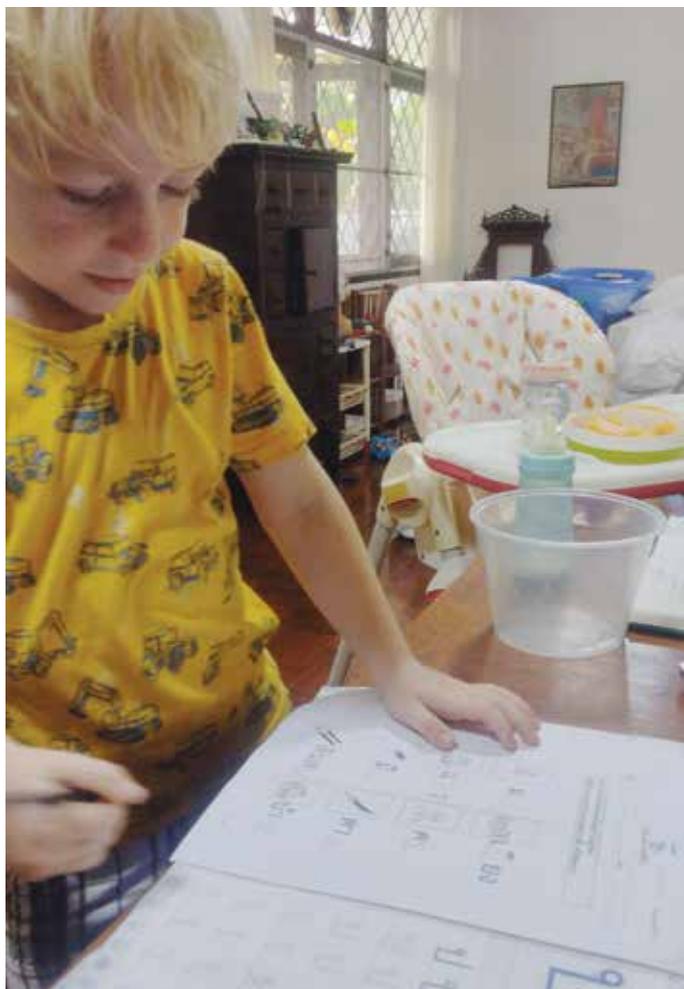
My favorite part of the school pick up, aside from hearing about the delicious rice and eggs and admiring Marty's clarity of diction when saying nothing, is chasing down the ice cream man, and then, while Marty enjoys his frozen bounty by the side of the road, searching Marty's school bag for treats. Thai parents are amazingly generous, or at least more generous than those at my old primary school; three or four days a week Marty will have a bag of goodies stashed in his rucksack. We've had lego cars, countless lollipops, and a lot—I suspect someone's parents must work for a relevant company—of baby wipes and soap. Doesn't matter how small or peculiar it is, I love a freebie and every one of these gifts excites me as much as Marty.



School has also been great for me and Alice. The new structure to our days means that once Marty is at school we get to play together without his constant interruptions. Obviously, this is hard on Alice as she'd much rather cuddle her lovely nanny than this strange daddy who's normally too busy with Marty to play with her, but I'm loving the chance to get more one-on-one time with Alice, and I'm hoping that she'll come to enjoy it too. Then there is naptime, once Alice is asleep I get some genuine alone time. As a former expert in the art of procrastination I usually waste this time, but every day I look forward to those two hours of uninterrupted productivity, or at least a chance to rest and recharge.

The biggest downside to school is that the weekends and especially the holidays now seem like extreme, and unfair endurance challenges that stretch daunting and endless before us. Childcare seems so much easier and more reasonable when someone else is doing it. In just a few weeks, I've become accustomed to being a one-child parent and it seems like a terrible imposition to have two again. Surely there's a way to keep him in school full time?

In the early days of a new romance, it is easy to think that our new flame is without fault, but at the moment, I see nothing but happiness ahead for me and school. It is a love for the ages.



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# RAISING DAUGHTERS WITH BODY CONFIDENCE

Body confidence doesn't start in the teenage years—it begins much earlier, in the small moments at home. Dietitian Keren Granit explores how shifting the focus from how bodies look to what they can do helps daughters grow up feeling capable, confident, and at ease in their bodies.



Photo by Nicola Barris from Pexels



## About the Author

Keren Granit is a dietitian based in Bangkok, specializing in family and pediatric nutrition. She helps parents confidently guide their children's eating habits, from picky eating to healthy growth. Passionate about evidence-based, practical advice, she shares resources and guidance at [EatWithKeren.com](https://EatWithKeren.com).



Photo by Gustavo Fring from Pexels

**D**By the time many girls reach their teenage years, body image worries are already deeply rooted. Parents often assume these concerns emerge in adolescence, but the truth is they start much earlier. Children begin forming ideas about their bodies in primary school, sometimes even before. They are listening long before we realize it.

They hear how we talk about food. They notice how we describe our own bodies. They pick up on what gets praised, what gets criticized, and what seems to matter most.

In a fast-paced, image-heavy environment like Bangkok, where social media, advertising, and comparison are constant, these messages add up quickly. The encouraging part is that body confidence is not something girls either have or don't have. It is something we can gently build at home, every day, through small conversations and daily habits.

### **BODY IMAGE BEGINS AT HOME**

Before children ever criticize themselves, they observe the adults around them. They notice if we skip

meals or constantly diet. They hear if we complain about our stomachs or thighs. They see whether we treat food with fear or ease.

These everyday behaviors quietly teach them what a body is supposed to be. If they grow up hearing that bodies are problems to fix, they learn to search for flaws. If they grow up seeing bodies treated with respect and care, they learn that bodies are simply part of being human. The tone we set at home often becomes their inner voice later on. And it starts with how we speak.

### **TALK ABOUT WHAT BODIES DO, NOT HOW THEY LOOK**

One of the most powerful shifts parents can make is surprisingly simple. Move the focus away from appearance and toward function. Children benefit from learning that their bodies are tools for living, not objects to evaluate. When we highlight strength, energy, movement, and capability, we help them see their bodies as helpful and trustworthy.

A body that climbs, runs, carries a backpack, hugs friends, and explores

the world feels valuable. A body that is constantly judged for how it looks feels like a project that is never good enough.

Over time, this small shift changes how girls relate to themselves. Instead of asking, "How do I look?" they begin to think, "What can I do?"

### **CREATE A RELAXED FOOD ENVIRONMENT**

Food language plays a bigger role than many parents realize. When foods are labeled as "good," "bad," or "junk," children learn that eating is tied to morality. They may start to feel proud, guilty, or ashamed based on what they eat rather than how they feel. This can create tension around food and sometimes lead to restriction or overeating.

A calmer, more neutral approach helps children trust their bodies. When food is presented as fuel, enjoyment, and nourishment rather than something to earn or avoid, kids are more likely to eat in tune with hunger and fullness. Balance becomes natural instead of forced.



Photo by Aflo Images from アフロ (Aflo)

This foundation protects them later, especially when dieting culture and peer pressure start to show up.

### BE THOUGHTFUL WITH COMPLIMENTS

Many of us grew up hearing that being thin was the ultimate compliment. Without meaning to, we sometimes repeat that message.

But even positive comments about weight can send a strong signal. If thinness gets praise, children may learn that staying small is important for approval and love. That pressure often increases during puberty, when bodies naturally change shape.

Broadening what we notice makes a difference. When we consistently acknowledge effort, kindness, creativity, and resilience, appearance becomes just one small part of identity rather than the main focus. Girls who feel valued for who they are tend to worry less about how they look.

### MODEL THE BEHAVIOR YOU HOPE TO SEE

Children learn more from what we do than from what we say. We can talk about body acceptance all day, but if they see us criticizing ourselves in the mirror or constantly chasing

the next diet, the message becomes confusing.

Modeling self-respect does not mean pretending to love everything about your body. It simply means treating yourself with basic kindness. Eating regularly, moving because it feels good, wearing clothes that fit now instead of “one day,” and speaking neutrally about your appearance all send powerful signals.

When a daughter sees her parent treating their body with care rather than frustration, that becomes her normal.

### PREPARE THEM FOR THE DIGITAL WORLD

Today’s children grow up surrounded by curated images. Even adults sometimes forget how filtered and edited those images can be. Kids rarely know this unless we explain it.

Teaching media awareness early can be incredibly protective. When children understand that photos are posed, retouched, and selected from hundreds of attempts, they are less likely to compare themselves to unrealistic standards. It becomes easier for them to see social media as entertainment rather than truth.

## KEEP COMMUNICATION OPEN

Even in supportive homes, challenges will come up. Friends talk about diets. School culture influences them. Social media sneaks in. It is impossible to shield children from everything. What matters most is that home feels safe.

When girls feel comfortable sharing worries or insecurities without fear of being dismissed or corrected, they are more likely to ask for help. Listening calmly and taking their concerns seriously builds trust that lasts into the teenage years. That trust is often more protective than any single strategy.

## THE BIGGER PICTURE

Raising a body-confident daughter is not about saying the perfect thing every time. It is about thousands of small, consistent messages over many years.

Messages that say her body is not a problem to solve. That food is not something to fear. That her value is not measured by size or shape. Eventually, these ideas become her own beliefs. The goal is not for her to think she looks perfect. The goal is for her to know that how she looks is only a tiny part of who she is.

As this simple example shows a small change in wording creates a huge difference in perspective.

**Not this:** “You look thinner today. That’s great.”

**Instead:** “You look strong and full of energy today.”

The first ties worth to size. The second connects value to vitality and capability. It is a subtle shift, but repeated over years, it helps build a completely different inner voice. And that voice is what stays with her for life.

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# BETWEEN GRIEF AND HOPE

A personal story about miscarriage and the quiet work of surviving loss. Sarah shares her experience of pregnancy loss, the stigma surrounding it and the long, non-linear path towards healing.

Photo by Dominika Gregušová from Paxels



## 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](mailto:stamburrini@gmail.com)



Photo by Ivan S from Pexels

*"I'm sorry, there's no heartbeat."*

Five words no prospective parent ever wants to hear. And certainly not twice.

The first kicks, the growing bump, the names you stored in the notes section of your phone, the first meeting you could vividly see and feel. All of it, gone in under ten seconds.

For us, making a human wasn't a romantic weekend away or a "just relax and see what happens" vibe. It wasn't a glass of wine and a bit of luck. It was science: clinical, and calculated.

One loss was horrific enough. Two was a total life-pivot.

I relocated to Australia, chasing a solution across the ocean, trying to outrun the silence of the last two times. I thought if I could fix what I felt was fundamentally broken inside me—I'd be OK. Don't get me wrong, this actually did help—but it wasn't the whole solution.

The heaviest and hardest lifting wasn't the international move or the

eye-watering medical bills. It was the quiet stuff. It was the grief hovering like dark circles under my eyes, the uncertainty I wore like a second skin, and the "what ifs" that kept me awake night after night—oh, how vivid that insomnia feels even now.

I carried it semi-well on the outside. Sure, I cried, I was paralyzed at times. I canceled, ghosted, and withdrew. But even today—though one of my losses was at the stage where I had to publicly announce we were no longer expecting—to most others, I still carry it silently, secretly, and shamefully. Some knew the news, but they didn't know the impact.

### **SILENCE. SHAME. SECRECY.**

For many, including myself, this journey is deeply, almost aggressively private.

There was the shame that my body was "failing" the one thing it was biologically designed to do. Then there was the uglier shame—the kind where I judged others who I deemed "less healthy" or "less dedicated" who seemed to conceive with ease. In that privacy, a dangerous,

suffocating silence grows. There is a lingering stigma around pregnancy loss that leads many to feel damaged or "defective."

Then there are the words. Words like infertile and infertility specialists—words that insurance companies really dislike too, by the way. Those words felt like an identity. At least, they did for me.

### **IT (SADLY) GETS (EVEN) HARDER.**

The world doesn't stop for your grief. Friends were announcing pregnancies—the muffled "we have some news" opening line still sends sickly chills up and down my spine. Baby shower invites filled my inbox. Babies "crashed" our coffee dates, and suddenly, the sight of a stroller made me want to cross the street. I quickly became a person I never dreamed I'd be: bitter, envious, and deeply, deeply lonely.

### **THE ERA I SHATTERED**

Even now, sitting here as a parent to two beautiful young children, I still don't really know how I did it. I still can't even bring myself to think about the logistics of that time too



*Photo by Letícia Alvares from Pexels*

deeply—though I'm working on it. This journey teaches you that you never really fully recover, and honestly? I'm at peace with that.

Because truthfully, this was the era I shattered. I didn't just "go through a hard time." I broke down to my core. My hopes and dreams felt even more painfully unknown than they already were. And to those people who told me to "work on expectations", "find joy in who I was" and "don't hang your hat on children making you feel fulfilled"—I just never got it. (But thanks anyway).

It wasn't all doom and gloom. Here's the bit that started to turn things around.

I recall a particularly bad test result that proved, internally, that things were getting really bad. It was a forced stop sign from the universe. So, I did one thing I know how to do really well: I started to talk.

Through talking, I (re)learned that I wasn't broken—I was just hurting. I learned how to find "glimmers"—those tiny, microscopic moments of light—in the middle of the hardest days. I learned to live with the juxtaposition of grief and hope, two things I never thought could exist in the same brain at the same time.

I learned that my grief wouldn't make me the "ideal" version of myself, but I tried to repair the cracks as best I could. I found a community of people who had walked this exact, jagged path. I felt seen, purposeful, and powerful. It was here that I realized I could do another thing I do really well: I could help others.

Helping others was the only thing that made me feel human again. That's where the faith crept back in.

I'm not a religious person in the traditional sense, but I did find a faith that felt guiding and grounding. I started to understand why people turn to religion in their darkest hours—you need something bigger than yourself to hold onto when you simply don't have faith in anything living and breathing around you.

I started a crystal collection—which, funnily enough, my kids now love to explore and investigate. I plastered positive quotes around my house—I still treasure a very faded statement I wrote to myself that got me through the darkest days. I religiously wrote in a gratitude notebook—three things, every single day, for years. Even when my heart was pounding with the fear of another "no heartbeat" scan, I was writing down:

1. The sun on my face.
2. A fridge full of food.
3. My husband, who still chooses me.

I can't fail to mention my team of support—it's important you find people who believe in you: my therapist, pilates teachers, acupuncturist and my hero doctor, who still gets a family holiday card every year. He took my hands, looked me in the eye, and said, "You might not have faith right now, but I do." And thank goodness for that.

### THE TWO-SIDED COIN

Even now, with two beautiful children sleeping in the next room, the agony remains. It's a lingering "feeling" I can't quite describe—the quiet wondering about the little ones I didn't get to meet. I remember their birthdays. I wonder how old they'd be now. I find myself questioning: Would they have had the same button nose? Their father's green eyes?

I have immense joy now, but I also hold space for the immense sadness of what I didn't get to experience. Those two things don't cancel each other out. They sit side-by-side.

Miscarriage isn't about "getting on with it" or "getting over it." You don't just wake up one day and forget everything that brought you to this moment. It's about learning to live a life that is permanently, fundamentally different.

By speaking out, we strip the power away from the shame and the stigma. I am always happy to speak with others about this. If you are in the middle of wading through grief and loss, please know it's not a journey meant to be walked alone. You don't have to erase your past to have a future; you just have to find the grace to carry both.

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# RESTORATIVE RITUALS: SELF-CARE THAT FITS REAL MOTHERHOOD

Sonali Vongchusiri examines common myths around self-care, why traditional approaches often fall flat, and what to try instead for a more sustainable, realistic way to care for yourself.

Photo by Jannet Trofimova from Studio Russia



## About the Author

Sonali is a parent coach, speaker, and founder of Forward Together Parenting. She's been where you are with her own sensitive, strong-willed kids and has worked with thousands of parents worldwide. Her work is dedicated to sharing how you can confidently parent, have fun, and create lasting change that feels good.

I'm curious about something. What are your feelings—your unfiltered, honest feelings—around the concept of self-care in parenting?

If you're anything like I used to be, you might be thinking, "UGH... yeah. I hear about that all the time. Everyone talks about the importance of self-care." And if you're really honest, does it feel like something you'd love more of and something that's frustrating at the same time?

### WHY TRADITIONAL SELF-CARE CAN FALL FLAT

We all know it's important to recharge and recenter. And we also know how much effort it can take to carve out time for the kinds of self-care rituals we usually hear about—getting a massage, having our nails done, taking a long bath.

When we do manage to carve out that time, it feels good in the moment. And then we return home, thinking, "Ahhh... now everything will feel easier," only to open the door to children running toward you, eager to tell you what their brother did while you were gone. It can feel like a shock to the nervous system. All the positive effects are gone. Your shoulders tense up again. And even though you don't mean to, you hear yourself speak to your children in a harsher tone than you'd like.

Which is so frustrating, because the whole point was to come back rested, rejuvenated, and ready to help your kids settle into calm. Instead, you start to wonder if self-care just doesn't work, or at least not for you.

If this sounds like you, I've been exactly where you are. That wasn't a hypothetical story—that was me several years ago. I'd come home from a massage to kids complaining about each other and all the effects of the 90-minute massage were gone in an instant.

### WHAT I THOUGHT SELF-CARE WAS

Before we go further, I want to share what I used to believe self-care meant:

- Carving out time for myself
- Doing something big that would "fill my cup"
- Things I did alone—after the kids were in bed, or when they were with a nanny or a friend
- And if I did this well enough—regular massages, consistent exercise—my nervous system wouldn't go on high alert as easily

But now I know there's a radically different way to think about self-care. A way that doesn't require hours away, or even a daily meditation practice.

Most of what we call self-care is focused on activities—things you do when time allows, ideally away from your responsibilities. And while those things can be enjoyable, they often don't touch the parts of us that are depleted on a daily basis. So before we go further, let's redefine self-care.

### WHAT IS SELF-CARE?

At its core, self-care is exactly what the phrase says: caring for yourself.

That means offering care not only through your actions, but also caring for your thoughts, your emotions, and your nervous system as you move through a typical day.

I'll say that again, because it was revolutionary for me: self-care is caring for yourself as you move through your day. It's not a separate act that exists outside of your already full schedule. What I eventually realized is that so much of what we've been taught about self-care simply doesn't work in real life, and especially not for mothers.

So let's debunk three common self-care myths. This shift gave me a way of thinking about self-care that actually fits inside busy, real-life days. I hope it does the same for you.

### MYTH 1: SELF-CARE IS SOMETHING YOU DO

We've been taught to think of self-care as an activity. Something you schedule. Something you do. Something that happens occasionally, when time allows. A massage. A jog. Getting your hair or nails done. A quiet cup of coffee with zero interruptions.

What I didn't understand for a long time is that self-care isn't just about



Photo by Karola G from Pexels



Photo by Karola G from Pexels

### MYTH 3: SELF-CARE IS INDULGENT OR EXTRA

Many of us believe that self-care is a luxury. It's something that comes after everyone else is taken care of. But real self-care isn't indulgent. It's relational. It's how you stay connected to yourself while caring for others.

For me, it's wearing earrings. Earrings bring me joy, and putting them on in the morning takes seconds, and yet it brings me back to myself. On days when I need more nurture, I might wrap myself in a shawl I love or wear my favorite shirt. Not because it's productive, but because it offers warmth, comfort, and a sense of being held.

These micro-rituals are teeny tiny acts that take almost no time, yet bring our focus to remembering who we are instead of just what we're responsible for.

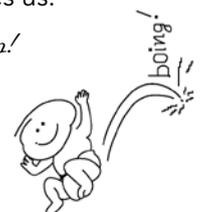
### MEETING YOURSELF, MOMENT BY MOMENT

Self-care, at its core, helps you remember who you are—it helps you ground into your identity, what makes you, you. Self-care isn't something you do away from your life so you can tolerate stress later. It's how you relate to yourself inside your life.

It's not about feeling better forever. It's about meeting yourself, again and again, in small, doable ways. That's what makes it sustainable and realistic.

Instead of looking for time, we can start creating moments. And those moments that happen in split seconds, those tiny, restorative rituals, add up to something that genuinely nourishes us.

*Here I am!*



doing nice things for yourself. It's about how you relate to yourself as you move through your day. True self-care includes caring for your physical needs and caring for your inner experience in real time.

**Not self-care:** You're angry. Then you get angry that you're angry because you have things to do and you don't want to stop your day.

**Self-care:** "Of course, I'm angry. I'm glad I'm not judging myself for it. Hmm...how can I let the anger be here, and still be kind and keep going in my day?"

**Not self-care:** "I just want a moment alone." Then comes "Ugh. I shouldn't think that."

**Self-care:** "I just want a moment alone...Ohhh. I need quiet. Or I need to ask my kids to help and work as a team right now."

These moments where you stop attacking yourself and offer even a little understanding are caring for yourself. They don't happen later, they happen right there in the middle of the emotion or thought.

### MYTH 2: I NEED TIME ALONE OR AWAY FOR SELF-CARE

For years, I believed self-care was something that happened once my kids were asleep or out of the

house. I just needed to get through bedtime. Then I'd relax. But rushing through bedtime never worked. The more I hurried, the less present I became. The kids felt it. Bedtime dragged on. I ended the night depleted and often not particularly proud of how I had shown up.

Here's what shifted things for me. Instead of treating self-care as something that came after my kids were asleep, I started weaving it into the process itself. I would put one child to bed. Then I'd give myself two minutes. Not two minutes of anything impressive. Sometimes it was a slow bathroom break. Sometimes it was flopping on my bed and staring at the wall. Sometimes it was listening to a favorite song. Then I'd put the next child to bed, and give myself another two minutes.

What surprised me was how much those tiny pauses changed things. I was more present. My tone softened. Bedtime became smoother and quicker. It wasn't because I was trying harder, but because my nervous system had a chance to reset.

I didn't add more time to my evening or leave the house. Self-care doesn't have to exist outside of your family responsibilities. And what if in-the-moment care can actually make daily routines more enjoyable?



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Little Panda	Nancy Language School
Little Treehouse	Little Treehouse Nursery
Saturday Nana	Storytime Preschool Bangkok
Yenakart	Noddy by Elizabeth International Playgroup
Little Tots <b>new!</b>	Tiny Tots International Learning Centre
Niko Niko <b>new!</b>	Sukhumvit (See registration for details)



## ACTIVITIES

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Toddler Music	Skyview Hotel Bangkok Sukhumvit24
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# HOW AND WHEN TO START TEACHING CONSENT

Drawing on her experience as an early years and safeguarding lead Natasha Duffin-Jones explains why consent matters from the very beginning—and how parents can teach it with confidence, care, and clarity.

Photo by Norman Milwood from Pexels



## About the Author

Natasha Duffin-Jones is a mother of two children as well as an Early Years and Primary Teacher with a Masters Degree in Early Childhood and a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. She is also a children's yoga teacher with her company, Story Time Yoga specialising in teaching yoga with children's stories developing literacy and emotional literacy. She likes visiting different places in Bangkok with her children and documenting their adventures on her Instagram page @bangkokmamayogi

Teaching children about consent seems like a relatively straightforward thing to do, until we start introducing the complexities of family dynamics, relationships, parental feelings, cultural sensitivities, and more! As a parent of children of both genders, I feel a drive to teach them about consent from an early age for a multitude of reasons.

## WHY TEACH CONSENT?

Firstly, teaching about consent promotes body autonomy, meaning that children feel in control of their own bodies and are able to set boundaries that they feel comfortable with. Furthermore, it promotes healthy relationships with others by showing children how to respect people's boundaries and understand social cues. Children will learn not to suppress their own feelings, and therefore know that they are not obliged to please others for the sake of their own sense of well-being. Finally, as part of the safeguarding team in an international school, my main motivator for teaching children consent is that it protects them from harm and abuse.

Children who understand consent are better equipped to trust their instincts and speak up if something feels wrong. The Safeguarding Alliance states that "Teaching the life skill of consent in early years is the first step to developing a generation of healthier and more trusting relationships in adulthood." (1) Some people may view consent as an "inappropriate" topic for early years, yet the foundations of boundaries, trust, and respect are essential platforms for all future learning.

## START WITH YOURSELF

In order to start teaching consent, firstly it is vital to examine your own feelings about consent. As an adult, can you say what you would



Photo by August de Richelieu from Pexels

do in a situation that makes you feel uncomfortable? Next, it is key that both parents are on board and are committed to teaching consent together and modelling behavior in the same way. It is important that you involve the whole family including nannies and helpers as well. When my daughter was young, my nanny taught her to say "please do not touch me" when they were out, as well as ensuring other people were not taking photos of her. As a parent, knowing this made me feel so reassured that her safety was taken seriously.

## NAVIGATING EXTENDED FAMILY BOUNDARIES

As well as having discussions with nannies, you may also have to have some uncomfortable conversations with wider family members. It can be difficult for relatives to understand why a child will not give them a hug, so it is useful to prepare the family in advance or have some responses ready if anyone questions your child's decisions. Explaining that denying consent is not rude may help relatives understand that a "no" is about the child's safety and comfort, not a personal slight or reflection on their relationship.

## PRACTICAL WAYS PARENTS CAN TEACH CONSENT

### Model consent daily

For parents, the most effective way to teach consent is to show it in action through your own behavior with your children and wider family.

- **Ask for permission:** Before physical contact, ask simple questions: "Can I give you a hug?" or "May I pick you up?"
- **Respect their "No":** If a child refuses a hug or kiss, even from a close relative, honor that choice immediately without guilt or pressure. You can give them options such as "would you like a high five or a hug?"
- **Narrate care routines:** For toddlers, explain what you are doing before touching them: "I'm going to wipe your face now, okay?"

### Build a shared vocabulary

It is important to teach children accurate and anatomically correct language so they can communicate accurately about their bodies and are able to tell a trusted adult when something feels uncomfortable.

- **Body ownership:** Use phrases like "Your body belongs to you" to reinforce autonomy.



Photo by Kampus Production from Pexels

- **Correct terms:** Use proper names for all body parts, including genitals (penis, vagina), to remove shame and ensure they can report issues clearly if needed.
- **Define boundaries:** Introduce the idea of "personal bubbles" or "private space" to help them visualize where their boundaries are.

### Use play and games

Children learn best through play. Playing with a trusted adult provides a safe environment to practice asserting and respecting boundaries.

- **The tickle test:** Start a tickle game, but stop immediately the moment the child says "stop" or "no," even if they are laughing. This shows that their words have power over their body.
- **Safe words:** Establish a "safe word" (like "red light" or "jellybean") during rough-and-tumble play that signals an immediate pause for everyone.

### Teach observation and empathy

Children need to be explicitly taught how to empathize with others. Helping children read non-verbal cues is essential for understanding when others might be uncomfortable.

- **Identify "Uh-Oh" feelings:** Encourage kids to trust their instincts if a situation feels "weird" or "wrong" in their stomach.
- **Read body language:** Point out cues in others, such as a friend pulling away or looking sad, and ask, "Do you think they are still having fun?"
- **Media literacy:** Use scenes from books or TV shows to discuss characters' actions. Ask, "Did they ask first?" or "Do they look like they want that hug?"

### Establish a safety network

Being in an international context, it can be difficult to ensure that children know who they can trust. It is important to make sure children know they can always talk to

someone if their boundaries are crossed.

- **Trusted adults:** Help your child identify 3-5 "safe adults" they can go to with any secret or "uh-oh" feeling. Teach children what trusted adults will or will not do, for example, a trusted adult will never ask you to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- **Secrets vs. Surprises:** Teach that "surprises" (like a birthday gift) are eventually shared and make people happy, while "secrets" that make them feel bad should always be told to a trusted adult.

Ultimately, teaching consent can create some difficult situations—such as when my son wants a hug from his sister and she says, "my body doesn't feel like hugging today," which results in tears as my son adores hugging her. However, from a young age, he is learning to respect other people's boundaries around touch, and voice his own boundaries. Hopefully, in the future this will help safeguard them both.

---

#### References

1. The safeguarding alliance, (nd) available online at: [www.thesafeguardingalliance.org.uk/](http://www.thesafeguardingalliance.org.uk/)



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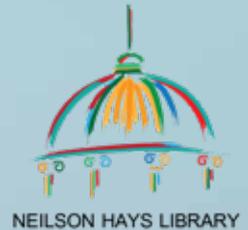
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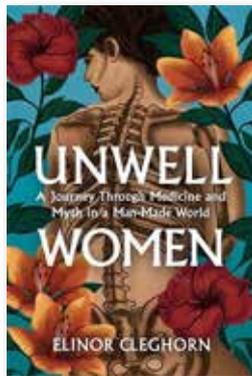
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## UNWELL WOMEN: A JOURNEY THROUGH MEDICINE AND MYTH IN A MAN-MADE WORLD

By Elinor Cleghorn

Unwell Women is a riveting and necessary history of women's health told through centuries of medical misunderstanding, cultural myth, and systemic dismissal. Cleghorn traces how women's bodies have long been treated as mysterious, unstable, or untrustworthy, revealing how those narratives shaped diagnoses and care in a "man-made" medical world. What makes this book powerful is not only the history itself, but the space it gives to women's lived experiences—pain, illness, trauma, and ultimately resistance.



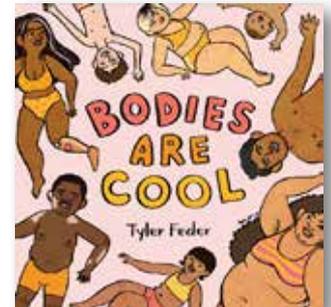
Unwell Women shows how knowledge becomes agency. By naming the biases and myths that still linger in today's clinics, Cleghorn encourages modern readers to advocate for themselves, trust their own bodies, and support one another through every stage of womanhood. This is a vital, eye-opening read for anyone interested in women's wellbeing, equity in healthcare, and the reclamation of power through truth.

*Unwell Women: A Journey Through Medicine and Myth in a Man-Made World* by Elinor Cleghorn was published in the United Kingdom by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 2021. Cleghorn is a writer, researcher, and academic whose work explores the intersections of feminism, medicine, and cultural history. A copy can be found in the non-fiction section of Neilson Hays Library.

## BODIES ARE COOL

Written and illustrated by Tyler Feder

Bodies Are Cool is a joyful, celebratory picture book that invites young readers to see bodies of all kinds as normal, wonderful, and worth appreciating. Through bright illustrations and rhythmic text, Tyler Feder showcases a wide spectrum of skin tones, body shapes and sizes, hair textures, disabilities, scars, birthmarks, and gender expressions. What makes this book genuinely special is how it centers representation without making it feel like a lesson—it's simply a party where every body is welcome.



Bodies Are Cool supports foundational body literacy and self-esteem. For young readers, seeing diverse bodies portrayed confidently encourages early acceptance of variations in bodies, reduces shame, and builds a sense of belonging. This is a warm, inclusive read that empowers children to notice differences with curiosity rather than judgment and to recognize that their own body, exactly as it is, is cool.

*Bodies Are Cool* by Tyler Feder was published by Dial Books in 2021. A hardcover copy is available in the Children's Corner of Neilson Hays 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.

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**Camp 7**

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**Language  
Camps**

**29 Jun - 21 Aug**

## Mandarin Explorers

**Camp 5 & 6**

Learn Chinese vocabulary & practice conversation through stories, role-play, & games—plus exciting activities inspired by animals living above & below oceans!

**PRICE (SNACK & LUNCH INCLUDED)**

SESSION 1 1PM 40,740 THB - 4 WEEKS / 10,260 THB - 1 WEEK  
2PM 41,790 THB - 4 WEEKS / 10,480 THB - 1 WEEK  
SESSION 2 1PM 35,000 THB - 4 WEEKS / 10,260 THB - 1 WEEK  
2PM 36,000 THB - 4 WEEKS / 10,480 THB - 1 WEEK

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