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**OVERCOMING IDENTITY CHALLENGES
AS A FAMILY**

NOVEMBER 2025

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- Mel Habanananda



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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:

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For more information on CBFT, contact:

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

5 Committee Letter

6 Editor's Corner

On the Cover

10–12 Overcoming Identity Challenges as a Family

14–16 Raising Children Who Don't Fit the Mold

26–28 The Power and Paradox of Multi-generational families

Special Features

20–22 Recipe Room: An Autumn Pumpkin Extravaganza

30–32 Dad Diaries: Jetlag With Joy

34–35 Finding Support With Fertility Treatment

36 Readers' Corner: Books to Inspire

38–40 Beyond Words: Nurturing the Unspoken Language of Childhood

In Every Issue

8 Call for Volunteers

18–20 Member Profile: Meet Kim Narrandes

24 BAMBI Playgroups and Activities

45 BAMBI Member Benefits

46 BAMBI: The Team



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Hello dear BAMBI families!

I'm the Playgroup Co-coordinator, and I'm delighted to greet you in this November issue. This month's theme, Family, Redefined, couldn't feel more real to me. I'm Korean, my husband is Dutch but carries a French surname from ancestors who once moved from France, and his maternal grandfather was Chinese-Indonesian. Our child was born in Thailand, and we are supported by our nanny, who is Burmese but strongly identifies as Nepali.



Blending these backgrounds isn't easy, but it is rewarding. At home, we are creating our own family culture, borrowing from Korea, the Netherlands, and Thailand. It's sometimes messy, often complex, but always meaningful.

This reminds me that family is not about fitting into one single mold, but about love, respect, and learning to grow together. In some societies, the idea of a "modern family" is still narrow, but I believe that the more we celebrate diversity, the more inclusive and welcoming our communities will become. My hope is that one day families of all shapes and structures will be valued equally without judgment.

That's what Family, Redefined is really about—breaking molds and building bonds in new ways. And BAMBI is a wonderful place to see this in action: families from every corner of the world, all supporting and learning from each other here in Bangkok.

I'm also excited to share some updates from the Playgroups Team. After the summer break, we successfully launched two new playgroups, and we're preparing to add even more. Playgroups continue to be the heart of BAMBI, where children play and parents find connection and support.

Wherever you're from and however your family is shaped, know that BAMBI is here to celebrate your journey.

Erica Jeong
Playgroups Co-coordinator



Christmas

MINIS

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PHOTOGRAPHY



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A long time ago, my oldest daughter came home from nursery and casually mentioned that her best friends, twins, had an “egg mummy” and a “tummy mummy,” but only a dad at home. I’m sure their conversation hadn’t gone into the whys and hows of birth, and my daughter didn’t ask me for any explanations either. But her matter-of-fact announcement—and her complete comfort with it—gave me pause.

I realised then that growing up in a multicultural environment, her sense of what a family looks like was far more open and diverse than mine was at her age. To her and her friends, it didn’t matter what a family looked like—family was simply wherever you found love and a sense of belonging.

Over the years, both my girls have met different kinds of families—mixed families, blended families, single-parent families, and those raised by same-sex couples. And yes, I’ve faced the inevitable question from time to time: “Why don’t they have a mum/dad?” I’ve tried my best to answer them truthfully and in age-appropriate ways, but it hasn’t always been simple. Every conversation, though, was a valuable learning opportunity to understand how the concept of “family” has evolved over time, and how non-conventional structures have come to be accepted in society.

With the theme, “Family, re-defined”, this issue of BAMBI Magazine explores the diverse and evolving nature of modern families, celebrating non-conventional structures. Turn the pages to delve into unique family dynamics, breaking traditional molds, and embracing new definitions of love and support.

First up we have “Overcoming Identity Challenges as a Family” by Sonali Vongchusiri, a powerful reflection on how one single mother helps her children embrace their identity, differences, and questions from others with honesty, humor, and belonging. Next, we have “Raising Children Who Don’t Fit the Mold” by Anatta Zarchi. Anna offers expert advice from counselors on supporting children from non-traditional families in navigating stigma, embracing their identity, and growing with confidence and resilience. These are followed by “The Power and Paradox of Multi-generational Homes” by Deshna Bhansali, an honest look at the joys and complexities of multi-generational families, and how love continues to connect them across generations and distance.

In Readers’ Corner, Kit Lang reviews “All Adults Here” by Emma Straub and “And Tango Makes Three” by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell. The former is a witty and heartfelt novel about family dynamics, parenting, and the messy, beautiful process of growing up, no matter your age; the latter is a charming true story of two male penguins at New York’s Central Park Zoo who create a family together, celebrating love, diversity, and belonging in all its forms.

We also have an interesting variety of non-thematic features. In Dad Diaries, Joe Barker shares how even the chaos of jetlag can bring moments of unexpected magic, laughter, and connection. In “Finding Support With Fertility Treatment”, Kelly Patten talks about how finding the right doctor and a supportive community transformed her family’s IVF journey in Bangkok, and in “Beyond Words: Nurturing the Unspoken Language of Childhood”, Ally Galloway explains how eye contact, touch, and tone form a child’s first language—and how parents can nurture it.

As you read through this issue, I hope you find stories that both comfort and challenge you—reminding us that there’s no single blueprint for family life. Whether built by birth, choice, or circumstance, every family has its own rhythm, struggles, and joys. What truly defines a family is not structure, but love—the constant that ties us all together.

Sanam Rahman
Editor



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BAMBI Committee, 2025

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

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



Please scan for more details about the available positions.

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OVERCOMING IDENTITY CHALLENGES AS A FAMILY

Sonali shares what makes her family unique and explains how they use the questions and challenges they inevitably face to strengthen their family bond and build their own sense of identity and belonging.

Photo by Cottonbro studio from Pexels



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.

Families don't all look alike. Mine certainly doesn't fit the norm. My kids are learning how to navigate a world where people regularly have questions about us. Our appearance and our differences get noticed and remembered. And while that can feel hard or isolating, I've learned it can also be the foundation for deep belonging, confidence, and strength.

OUR IDENTITY

Saying identity is complex is an understatement in my household, and my kids feel it too. Let me explain:

I am a single parent.

I have a disability. I'm legally blind. I'm light-sensitive, and I don't have depth perception or facial recognition. Sometimes I use a cane, but not always, which can create a lot of awkward situations—from people not knowing whether to offer help, to even me doubting if my disability is "real enough".

I am a person of color with no color. My heritage is Indian, and I have albinism—that means I don't have pigment in my skin, hair, or eyes. On the outside, I present as white, or "really white". My kids all have Indian pigmentation. Now add to the mix my American accent, and it's one more layer that has people pause, stare, and ask questions.

THE QUESTIONS WE'RE ASKED

My kids get questions all the time:

"Why is your mom so white?"

"Where's your dad?"

"Why do your mom's eyes look like that?"

"Why does your mom wear sunglasses inside?"

For a child, these questions could be identity-crushing. They could plant seeds of shame or confusion about who they are, or who we are as a family. Knowing that my kids will face questions like this throughout



their lives, I've made it my mission to support them in turning these moments into building blocks: tools for confidence, for resilience, and for belonging.

We don't get to choose the questions people ask us. We can't hide from them. Where we do have choice is in how we respond, and we choose to respond in a way that shapes our family story.

While we all have different family situations, many of us understand what it's like to live in the silent spaces between identities. We're part of our family of origin, yet we may live thousands of miles away. We live in Thailand, yet may not speak Thai. Though we have different experiences, we all understand the experience of longing for a community or "box" to belong to, yet consistently finding ourselves not fitting neatly into any boxes.

Here are three tools that have been essential in my home. I hope that they may support you in bringing voices to those spaces in-between in your family's quest for belonging.

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: NAME WHAT'S REAL

When people ask hard or awkward questions, it can be tempting to brush it off, pretend it didn't happen, or minimize it for our kids. But kids notice. They know when something is uncomfortable. And when we don't name it, they may decide that it's too shameful to talk about.

Acknowledgement is a process. It's not perfect.

Acknowledgement doesn't have to be heavy. One night, a taxi driver asked, as is often the case, "Your daughter? Why not same?" We were getting out of the taxi, so I paid

and ignored his question at first. But then it hit me that my daughter was watching my response and my response was sending her messages about her own OK-ness. So, I turned to her and lightly said, “Did you hear what he asked me?” She said, “Yeah, he asked why your hair is white and mine is brown.” I lightly responded, “Yeah, he was confused. We didn’t make sense in his head. Isn’t that funny?”

An easy way to speak when we feel uncomfortable is to say just that—well, this is awkward. When I meet someone for the first time, at some point in the conversation, I’ll say, “This is awkward. I won’t recognize you because I’m legally blind. So, if you see me, please would you say, “Hi Sonali. It’s Emily”. That way I can enjoy our conversation instead of guessing who you are.”

By naming it out loud, I am showing my kids that difference isn’t something to hide—it’s something we can hold with honesty. Acknowledgement creates safety. It says, “this is real, and we can talk about it.”

2. HUMOR: LIGHTENING THE LOAD

Acknowledgement and humor often go hand in hand in our family. Laughing about hard things creates space—space for us to breathe, space to be real, space for our connection to deepen.

Once, after being asked multiple times in one day about why I was white or blind, my teenage son leaned over and gave me a wink. “Mom, your high score for being asked why you’re white today is four. Congratulations. You’ve leveled up!” We both had tears in our eyes from laughing.

Humor also helps my kids self-advocate. When my daughter needed to tell her teacher that noise was overwhelming, she froze. The evening before she was confident,



but the next day in front of her teacher, she grew quiet and didn’t want to speak. I leaned down and whispered, “Repeat after me: sometimes it gets loud in my toes.” She turned to me and laughed, “No!” And then smiled and said to her teacher, “Sometimes it gets loud in my ears.”

Our kids learning to speak their differences and name their needs can be light and fun. And that makes it enjoyable as well.

3. AN ONGOING CONVERSATION: BUILDING BELONGING OVER TIME

The third tool is remembering that identity is not a one-time conversation. It’s a process.

As my children grow, the questions they receive and the way they experience them will keep changing. What hurts at age seven might just roll off their shoulders at age 12, and vice versa.

That means my job isn’t to give them a single script or a one-time family meeting about difference. It’s important to keep the conversation open. To check in with them. To ask, “How did that feel? What do you wish you had

said? What do you want to try next time?”

Belonging isn’t built in a moment. It’s built through small moments, all those small conversations, quick-witted one-liners, and acknowledgments.

By modeling that ongoing process for my kids, I’m showing them that identity is a journey. We aren’t meant to have it all figured out to belong. And we can grow and change and evolve in the process.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

When I think about the kind of family I want to raise, it’s not one that blends in perfectly. It’s one that knows how to stand strong in who they are, with confidence. I want my family to be able to connect both in ways where we are the same as others, and through acknowledgement and humor about how we are different.

So when the questions come, because they will, we won’t shrivel up or shrink. We’ll acknowledge what’s real. We’ll laugh when we can. We’ll keep talking it through. And together, we’ll keep building a sense of family that is strong, sturdy, and loving so that it can hold it all.



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RAISING CHILDREN WHO DON'T FIT THE MOLD

This month Anna discusses how children from non-conventional families may feel isolated or misunderstood and suggests ways to nurture their uniqueness in a world obsessed with conformity.

Photo by Nadin Sh 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. ncsbkk.com/ncs/

A sense of belonging is something that children from non-conventional families often struggle with. To look around and see that your family is completely different from other people's, especially if this is constantly pointed out as something negative or "weird", can cause them to feel "different" or left out. These feelings can lead to negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, or shame. In a world obsessed with conformity, it is important that we help these children nurture their uniqueness and develop a sense of belonging regardless of their differences.

When a child is struggling with the pressure to conform, there are often certain signs that parents or adults can pick up on. NCS counseling intern Bunyanut, who works closely with children, says, "Look for signs like avoiding conversations about their family, withdrawing from friends, feeling nervous before school, or frequent complaints of stomachaches or headaches." Changes in behavior such as acting out, throwing tantrums, becoming unusually quiet or withdrawn, trying very hard to fit in, or suddenly becoming extremely compliant can also be clues. Every child reacts differently, so knowing your child and being able to tell when something is unusual can help you determine when there is a problem.

Feelings like this often stem from assumptions, intrusive questions, or stigma about the child's family, whether with the intention to harm or merely out of curiosity and ignorance. If a teacher, schoolmate, relative, or someone else says something that makes the child self-conscious about their family, it is important to gently educate them about inclusive language, acceptance, and the harm that thoughtless words can cause. However, although we can try to reduce stigma, we can't always change other people. Therefore, it is extremely important to help your child build resilience



Photo by Dziana Hasanbekava from Pexels

and confidence in their identity.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Helping children build strong self-esteem is generally extremely helpful. NCS founder and counselor Johanna recommends helping them practice answering upsetting questions with polite but empowering language and sharing what they love about their family. For example, "There's nothing wrong with that, it's OK to be different" or "In our family, I live with my grandparents, and that's special to me". This can boost their confidence and prepare them for challenging encounters. Finally, remind them that their boundaries matter and that they do not have to answer something that feels too personal or makes them uncomfortable. For some children, saying no can feel scary, but practicing polite but firm answers such as "I'm sorry, I don't want to answer that" can help. It's likely to still feel uncomfortable for them at first, but the more they practice the more it will boost their confidence and self-esteem.

TAKING PRIDE IN YOUR FAMILY

Parents can play a huge role in helping children embrace their family structure and feel proud of their uniqueness. Bunyanut explains, "Children take cues from the adults around them. When parents speak confidently and positively about their family, kids learn to feel proud too. Share your family story in simple, reassuring language, create small family rituals to build a sense of belonging, and seek out books or shows that reflect different family forms so your child sees themselves represented."

Johanna stresses the importance of not hiding or pretending that the differences aren't there: they are, and that's completely OK—different is not bad. Hiding or pretending there are no differences inadvertently teaches the child that there is something to be ashamed of. Have open conversations surrounding these differences, and allow them to reflect on both the things they love and the struggles that come with their family structure. Remind them that all families have

their issues, even conventional ones. Respond to their questions with warmth and honesty to help them feel secure.

TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS

Our counselors shared some counseling/communication techniques that are effective in helping children from non-conventional families manage stress or anxiety related to feeling different or isolated:

- Children sometimes struggle to understand what they're feeling. Helping them identify and name their emotions can be an empowering first step in processing those feelings. For example, "I feel left out", "I feel worried", or "I feel different from everyone else".
- Highlight their strengths and good qualities to boost their self-esteem and build self-acceptance. This can help decrease stress and anxiety.
- Techniques from cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and narrative therapy can support children in reframing negative thoughts and building a positive story about who they are. For example, identifying, challenging, and reframing negative beliefs; re-authoring the narrative; and so on. Asking questions can help them discover their fears and perceptions. A counselor/therapist will have the appropriate tools to apply these techniques safely and effectively.
- Psycho-education about different types of family structures can ease their feelings of isolation and not belonging.

SUPPORT FROM OTHERS

Schools, extracurricular programs, and community spaces can also play a huge role in supporting children from non-conventional families. Here are some ways that these spaces can



Photo by Luis Negron from Pexels

support children and help them feel that they belong:

- Use inclusive language: this means using wording that does not exclude any child's family. For example, if someone in the class doesn't have a mom, you might say "parents" instead of "mother" when addressing the whole class. Of course, inclusive language must be accompanied by inclusive actions—no one should ever be discriminated against or made to feel excluded.
- Assign books, activities, and projects that represent many types of families and help children feel seen.
- Organize events that represent and celebrate different kinds of families, for example, International Day.

- Hold bias and stigma awareness training for staff members.

To conclude, a variety of factors can influence how a child feels about coming from a non-conventional family, whether it is their caregiver's attitude towards it, or their school/community environment. It is important to help your child feel heard and to help them build pride in their family. Choosing a school environment that welcomes all children equally can also be very impactful. This doesn't mean that they won't face stigma, and it is important to prepare them for that, but growing up in a healthy, inclusive environment can greatly strengthen their self-esteem and resilience. As Bunyanut says, "When schools create a welcoming environment, children thrive—because they know their family belongs."



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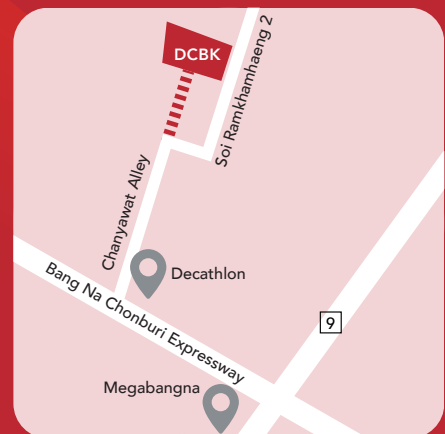
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MEET KIM NARRANDES

Kim contrasts the rewards and gentler pace of her life as a mother with the challenges and adventures of her jet-setting youth and corporate career. She describes the many joys of living in Thailand and tells us why we should all visit Cape Town!

WHERE ARE YOU FROM AND WHAT'S YOUR NATIONALITY? CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR LIFE BACK HOME?

Born and raised in the heart of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, I was fortunate to grow up surrounded by some of the province's most iconic landscapes—from the rolling hills of the Valley of a Thousand Hills and the artisan charm of the Midlands Meander, to the beautiful and mysterious Howick Falls, which is said to have its own mythical creature like the Loch Ness Monster. These places weren't just scenic backdrops; they were the playgrounds of my youth and the roots of my lifelong love of adventure and travel. My childhood was filled with memories of catching fireflies alongside my cousins, fearless tumbles in the big warm waves of the Indian Ocean, and big family Sunday braais—better known as BBQs.

CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR CAREER AND WORK? AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR SPOUSE?

Over the past decade, I've built a dynamic career in Dubai, working across communications, events, business strategy, and leadership. Some of my most memorable roles include serving as Head of Marketing and Communications for the launch of Atlantis The Royal, and collaborating with the Saudi Tourism Authority on initiatives in the cruising sector. While my professional journey has been fast-paced and creatively fulfilling, my husband has taken a different path, dedicating his work to solar power and alternative energy, with a focus on building a more sustainable future for our planet.

PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

I am a fifth generation South African Indian—my family immigrated over 150 years ago from India to South Africa where the majority of my immediate and extended family reside. Growing up as a millennial in a once suppressed country and experiencing independence in my youth when Nelson Mandela was freed has defined me as an adult. I am the first in my



immediate family to hold an MBA, and I've moved internationally and traveled to over 20 countries. This is testament to the sacrifice and perseverance of my parents.

I met my husband Tommy, who is a German, in Dubai and we bonded over our love of travel, as well as his great cooking! We spent the better part of our youth enjoying the fast pace of the United Arab Emirates and jet-setting around the world to exotic locations before deciding to move to Bangkok in 2023, where we welcomed our daughter Maya into the world. As a family of three, plus two rescued cats, we have embraced living in Thailand.



WHEN DID YOU COME TO THAILAND? WHAT DO YOU MISS THE MOST ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY?

Before moving to Thailand in 2023, I had visited the country many times, always drawn back by its peaceful charm and the effortless blend of laid-back living with world-class hospitality. It's the kind of place where unwinding comes naturally—no fuss, just warm smiles, fragrant street food, and landscapes that gently slow you down.

Still, like anyone living far from home, there are things I deeply miss—the comforting familiarity of South African stores where I instinctively recognize every brand, the bold, unmistakable flavors of local dishes like a Bunny Chow—not made with actual bunnies—and nostalgic desserts like creamy milk tart. I miss the rhythm of casual conversations peppered with local slang that only truly make sense when you've grown up with it.

And then, of course, there's Cape Town—a place so naturally breathtaking it almost feels surreal. The city has a way of wrapping itself around you, with its dramatic coastline, sprawling vineyards, and that ever-watchful presence of Table Mountain standing proud above it all. Whether it's seeing great white sharks on the shores of Seal Island, a drive through Constantia's wine routes, or a seafood platter with homegrown flavors made for the Gods, Cape Town lingers in the heart long after you leave and is my first recommendation for anyone wanting to visit my home country.

CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR ROUTINE HERE IN BANGKOK?

Since arriving in Bangkok and welcoming our daughter not long after, life has shifted dramatically from the fast-paced, corporate rhythm I once knew—days filled with meetings and nights buzzing with events—to a very different, and possibly even more demanding, routine of playdates by day and the nightly challenge of getting my toddler into PJs a tougher negotiation than any I faced in business!

Jokes aside, the move to Bangkok has given me the opportunity to find a healthier balance between family life and professional purpose. I've been intentional about pivoting my career in a way that feels more meaningful, using my experience in communications and strategy to give back. I volunteer with several organisations such as the Mechai Foundation and Jungle Aid, lending my time and skills to causes that truly matter. It's been a humbling and rewarding shift, allowing me to contribute to the community while continuing to grow both personally and professionally.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THAILAND? WHICH PARTS OF THAILAND HAVE YOU TRAVELED TO, AND WHICH DID YOU ENJOY THE MOST?

I simply love a beautiful sunset. One place in particular, The Jungle Club in Koh Samui, left me speechless. Watching the sky melt into hues of orange and pink

over the shoreline was so moving, I genuinely had to reach for tissues.

I've had the chance to explore several of Thailand's beautiful islands and coastal escapes—from the laid-back shores of Hua Hin and the buzz of Pattaya, to the lush beauty of Koh Phangan, Koh Samet, and Phuket, and the dramatic limestone cliffs of Krabi. Each destination has its own unique charm. Traveling to these places before having kids meant spontaneous adventures and late-night beach strolls. Now, our holidays are more child-friendly, filled with sandcastle building and early mornings, and enjoyed at a slower pace.

Currently, one of my favorite places, just a few train stations from central Bangkok, is The Ancient City. I love its vast open spaces, where historical temples and carefully crafted replica villages bring the charm of olden times to life. It's a peaceful escape that feels like stepping back in time, right on the outskirts of the bustling city.

WHAT WERE YOUR MAIN CHALLENGES WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED IN THAILAND?

I arrived in Bangkok seven months pregnant, suddenly immersed in the whirlwind of everything new parents need to prepare before a baby's arrival. Those first few weeks were overwhelming—from finding a suitable doctor to figuring out something as simple as where to buy groceries, every small task felt like a big challenge in unfamiliar surroundings.

Thankfully, I came across the Thailand Babies Facebook group, which became an incredible source of support during that time. Through it, I joined a birth-month WhatsApp group and connected with a group of amazing women who were going through the exact same journey. Over time, those virtual chats turned into real friendships, and I feel truly lucky to now call these incredible women my friends.

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT BAMBI?

I first heard about BAMBI through a friend I met at a baby class, and at the time, I had no idea just how incredible this community was. I was amazed to discover the wide range of thoughtfully curated playgroups spread across the city, each offering a warm, welcoming space for both parents and little ones. On top of that, the member perks—from generous discounts at family-friendly hotels to savings at great restaurants—were such a pleasant surprise. It's more than just a group; it's a supportive, well-connected community that makes parenting in Bangkok feel a little easier and a lot more enjoyable.



ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS YOU CAN GIVE TO BAMBI'S NEW MEMBERS HERE IN BANGKOK?

Don't be afraid to put yourself out there: join, connect, ask questions, and reach out for advice, support, or even just a listening ear. Entering the world of parenthood can feel overwhelming, especially at the beginning, but the beauty of becoming a parent in today's world is that you don't have to go through it alone. Unlike generations before us, we have access to incredible communities, both online and in person, that are filled with people experiencing the same joys and challenges.

Whether it's a local parenting group, a WhatsApp chat of moms and dads with similar-aged children, or a friendly face at a baby class, having a support network can make all the difference. It helps you stay grounded, keeps your mental and emotional well-being in check, and gives you the reassurance that you're doing just fine, even on the tough days.

Finding your tribe—your people—not only brings comfort and connection, but also makes the parenting journey more mindful, fulfilling, and joyful for both you and your child. So don't hesitate to reach out. Sometimes, a simple message or conversation can lead to lasting friendships and a deeper sense of community in this new chapter of life.

Photos courtesy of the author.

Here I am!

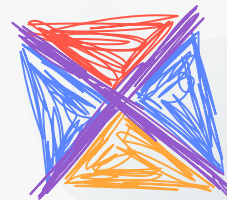
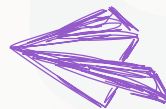




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For children aged 1.5–3 years | Parent and Toddler Room

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Bright Tumblers

Friday, 08:00-09:00

For children aged 1.5–3 years | Prep MPH

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AN AUTUMN PUMPKIN EXTRAVAGANZA!

While it can be hard to feel autumnal in Thailand, November is associated in many a northern-hemisphere mind with preparing for winter. And what better cosy comfort food is there than pumpkins—which, thankfully, are easy to get in this tropical country.

DIY PIZZA 'MARGHERITA' WITH A PUMPKIN TWIST

Words and Photos by Nikol Smith

My daughter and her friend call all pizzas 'margherita', and we have picked up the habit as well. I always have some pizza dough in the freezer. It takes only a few minutes to defrost in this climate, and it is so much fun! We recently tried a fabulous topping combination: a pumpkin base with feta.

Ingredients

For the pizza dough you will need:

- 2 cups of strong bread flour
- 2 cups of semolina flour
- A good splash of olive oil
- Around 1 Tbsp salt (I actually only use 1 tsp when cooking with kids)
- A packet of dried yeast (7g, but check the packaging)
- 1.5 cups of water
- A spoonful of sugar or honey

Instructions

Preheat your oven and the baking tray to the highest temperature—Mine is 250°C and fan-forced. If you don't have a fan-forced oven heat only the bottom element.

If you have a stand mixer, attach the dough hook, add the flour and salt and mix well. Dissolve the sugar and yeast in some water and add it to the flour. Keep adding water until you get firm dough and mix for a few minutes until the dough becomes stretchy. Then divide it into portions: I use about 120-140g of dough per pizza.

Roll out your dough balls thinly on a floured surface. I like to put them on baking paper and then top them with tomato sauce, cream sauce or pumpkin sauce with various toppings—don't overdo the sauces. Leave to rest and rise for a few minutes. Bake for a few minutes—usually they only take 5 minutes.



For the pumpkin sauce

Peel the pumpkin, cube it, and then steam it for about 15 minutes. Mash it with some water and let it cool a little before spreading it on the pizzas. Children will love doing this! You could also add some blended tomatoes with a touch of garlic and chillies to make it more interesting.

We kept the additional toppings simple with some feta cheese, sliced black olives and some sweet basil. Enjoy!



GINGERBREAD PUMPKIN MUFFINS

Words and Photos by Jessica Vechbanyongratana

It's fall! The—slightly—cooler weather brought by the monsoon rains puts me in the mood for the flavors of autumn. I especially get nostalgic for pumpkin pie, apple crisp, and mulled apple cider—anything utilizing late-fall produce with heaps of cinnamon, really.

While apples aren't waiting to be eaten straight from the tree in Bangkok, we are blessed with a wonderful variety of Thai pumpkin that is perfect for fall baking and cooking. The fruit is quite ugly and gnarly on the outside, but is surprisingly easy to cut and peel.

To make the pumpkin puree, skin a large chunk of pumpkin, cut it into 2-inch chunks, and simmer the pumpkin until it is soft—about 6 to 8 minutes. After draining and cooling the pumpkin, use a food processor or blender to puree the pumpkin until smooth. You can easily freeze any leftovers for future use in breads, soups, or even baby food.

This recipe for gingerbread pumpkin muffins is perfect during the transition from late fall into the winter season. Enjoy these muffins with a little cream cheese or even a dollop of whipped cream cozied up to the...air conditioner.

This recipe was inspired by Sally's Baking Addiction's Pumpkin Cheesecake Muffins <http://sallysbakingaddiction.com/2013/10/24/pumpkin-cheesecake-muffins/>



Makes 12 muffins

Ingredients

- 1 and 3/4 cups (220g) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 and 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter (room temperature)
- 2/3 cup (133g) brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup (227g) pumpkin puree
- 1/3 cup (80g) plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 218°C. Line a 12-muffin pan with muffin liners.
2. Combine the dry ingredients (flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and spices) in a bowl and mix well.
3. Combine the butter and sugar in a second bowl. Using a handheld mixer or a stand mixer, beat the butter and sugar together for a few minutes until fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time and mix well after each addition. Add the pumpkin, yogurt, and vanilla and mix until combined.
4. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and mix until all the flour is incorporated. Divide evenly into the muffin pan.
5. Bake for 5 minutes at 218°C. Lower temperature to 180°C and continue baking for another 12-15 minutes.



These recipes were first published in the BAMBI Magazine, November 2017 issue.



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 new!	The Tiny Seeds International Pre-School
Kiddiezilla	Market Place Nanglinche (3rd Floor)
Kiddieville	Playville
Little Steps new!	Future Steps International School Bangkok
Little Panda	Nancy Language School
Little Treehouse	Little Treehouse Nursery
Saturday Nana	Storytime Preschool Bangkok
Yenakart	Noddy by Elizabeth International Playgroup
Little Tots new!	Tiny Tots International Learning Centre



ACTIVITIES

Name	Location
Toddler Music	Skyview Hotel Bangkok Sukhumvit24
Football	Noah Futsal
Little Athletes new!	Noah Futsal



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THE POWER AND PARADOX OF MULTI-GENERATIONAL HOMES

Deshna reflects on the multi-generational homes she knows, and celebrates the sense of love, tradition, and belonging that her daughter enjoys when her grandparents visit.

Photo by Aflo Images from アフロ (Aflo)

About the Author



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



Photo by August de Richelieu from Pexels

The other night, my three-year-old daughter Avira asked, “Mumma, when is Nani coming?” Her eyes sparkled at the thought of her grandmother’s visit. For her, those few weeks every year when grandparents come over feel like festivals—filled with laughter, stories, and endless pampering.

That simple question reminded me of how much children crave connections that stretch across generations. It also made me think of the homes I grew up seeing—where three generations lived together, where grandparents weren’t “visitors” but part of everyday life. In many parts of the world, multi-generational living is still the norm. For others, like us, it has become a distant dream.

THE GIFTS OF MULTI-GENERATIONAL HOMES

A built-in support system

One of the greatest blessings of extended families is the support they bring. Parenthood can be overwhelming—between work, house chores, and the unpredictable energy of toddlers, you often feel stretched too thin. In a multi-generational home, the load is shared.

I remember when Avira had a high fever. Both my husband and I were anxious, juggling medicines and sleepless nights. In that moment, I longed for my mother’s presence. She has that steady confidence that makes you feel everything will be OK. Whenever she visits, that’s exactly what she brings into our home—a calm that allows me to breathe easier.

Emotional security for children

For children, grandparents offer something unique. Their love isn’t hurried or distracted: it’s patient, unconditional, and grounding.

When Avira’s Nani and Dadi come, she clings to them, follows their every step, and begs for stories of “when Mumma was small”. She laughs at their lullabies, imitates their habits, and absorbs traditions without even realizing it. Those moments shape her more than I sometimes can in the rush of daily life.

Lessons that last a lifetime

Extended families are also classrooms of life skills. Children watch how generations care for one another. They see parents respecting elders, elders guiding children, and

everyone adjusting to each other’s needs. Without lectures, they learn empathy, patience, and respect. I’ve seen Avira insist on carrying her grandmother’s glasses or fetching her water. To an adult, it may seem small. But for her, it’s her way of caring, of being responsible. These are seeds of compassion being planted early—seeds that quietly grow in the soil of daily family life.

THE CHALLENGES NO ONE TALKS ABOUT

Of course, multi-generational living isn’t always easy.

Different generations, different views

Parenting styles can clash. One person might believe in discipline; another may say, “Let her be, she’s just a child.” Food, routines, even screen time can become points of disagreement. I’ve watched friends struggle to find balance in such setups. It can feel like walking a tightrope—grateful for the support yet drained by constant negotiations.

Privacy takes a back seat

There is also the reality of space. Young couples often find themselves without privacy or independence



Photo by Aris Leoven from Baseimage

to build their own traditions. Every decision—from what’s cooked in the kitchen to how late the lights stay on—becomes a shared affair.

Dependence can creep in

Sometimes the support system tips into dependence. Parents might lean too heavily on grandparents for childcare, or elders might expect constant attention from the younger ones. Without balance, what begins as harmony can feel overwhelming.

LIVING AWAY FROM HOME

For families like ours, the reality is different. We don’t live with grandparents. We live far away in Bangkok, while they are in India. This means we miss out on the daily presence, the wisdom, and the shared responsibilities that multi-generational homes bring. But it also means when they do visit, the moments are treasured.

When Avira sees her Nani or Dadi after months apart, she runs into their arms as if no time has passed.

The house is filled with laughter, old stories, and new memories. For her, their presence is nothing less than magic.

And when they leave, there’s a silence that takes days to get used to. But Avira holds on to them in her own way—retelling their stories in her play, singing the songs they taught her, sometimes even correcting me with, “No Mumma, Nani says it like this.”

Their absence makes their bond even stronger. It may not be the constant embrace of a multi-generational home, but it is a bond woven with longing, joy, and memory.

WALKING THE MIDDLE PATH

So, is living in extended families always ideal? Maybe not. It brings undeniable love and support, but also clashes, compromises, and blurred boundaries.

And yet, what strikes me is this: whether we live under one roof or

across continents, family finds its way. Some thrive in bustling homes where three or four generations sit down to dinner every night. Others, like ours, create smaller homes, enriched by visits that feel like festivals.

A WARM REFLECTION

When I watch Avira curled up in her grandmother’s lap, I realize it doesn’t matter how often we are together. What matters is the love she feels at that moment. It’s enough to teach her she belongs to something bigger than herself.

Family, after all, is not about structure, it’s about connection. It’s not about how close we live, but how deeply we love. And whether it’s the daily warmth of a shared roof or the once-a-year magic of a reunion, the truth remains: love travels across generations, across distances, across time. That is the true power of family.

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JETLAG WITH JOY

It might be November, but Joe is still talking about his summer holidays! This time he regales us with surprisingly positive tales of jetlag at both ends of his family adventures back home.

Photo by Gustavo Firing Apin-Pexels



About the Author

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



Finally, we'd landed, shuffled through immigration, and were in a taxi bound for home. I breathed a great sigh of relief: we'd survived what had seemed an impossibly long journey and the worst was now behind us. The more experienced parental travelers among you will be shaking your heads sadly at this naivety and thinking, *What a fool—he's forgotten the jetlag! He has days of random sleep patterns, unexpected tantrums, and naps that either don't happen, or never end, to come.* And you are right; I have all those hurdles to jump. But despite these horrible-sounding challenges, I love jetlag. There are undoubtedly tough moments, but I find the benefits to be more than ample compensation.

This uncharacteristic positivity may be because of the excitement of being home: one of the advantages of being an expat is that at both ends of a journey it feels like you're going home. This is especially true after a long stay when there are always irritations you are happy to leave behind, and things you are starting to miss from your other home.

JOY IN THE MORNING

It has taken me a while to learn to love all jetlag, but I've always loved flying to the UK from Thailand. Giddy with joy at being back in my

childhood home, I spend a couple of days going to bed at 8pm and leaping out of bed at 4am filled with boundless energy and enthusiasm. By the time the local inhabitants—my parents and such siblings as are around—get up, I've walked their dogs, emptied the dishwasher, done the laundry, mended our bikes, and, full of a sense of productivity and usefulness, I am ready to join them in a second breakfast where, while they are still rubbing the sleep from their eyes, I overwhelm them with my exuberant plans for the day. Thankfully, for the peace of mind of the permanent residents, this unnatural state of affairs cannot last long and by day two or three, I'm back on UK time and my usual unhelpful, sluggish, and, above all, quiet self in the mornings.

My relish for these early mornings has only increased with the addition of children. First Marty, and now Alice, have shown a fine appreciation for misty, early morning walks. Having fed them their milk and me my tea, we take the dogs out to enjoy the sunrise. It's cold and crisp and beautiful, and it's hard to know whether it's the dogs or children that are having a better time. Either way, their joy only increases when Grandfather comes out to throw a ball for them, and I sneak inside for another cup of tea. Having the children fed, dressed, and exercised shortly after 4am gives everyone

the impression that I'm a competent and caring husband and father, which simply adds to my insufferably self-satisfied air over that delicious second breakfast.

THE BUBBLE POPS

This year, through no fault of jetlag, it all went wrong. Halfway through the flight, Marty's nose started running. Little did we know it, but this was a bad thing. When we came into land he complained that his ears hurt; not unusual when you land, we said, and thought no more about it. Turns out this was also a bad thing. For the next few days he had horrible earaches whenever he lay down. Apparently this can happen if young children fly with runny noses. It was terrible. We'd put Marty in bed propped up on cushions, but at some stage in the night he'd snuggle down into his bed, and then it was just a matter of time before he woke up screaming with discomfort. Snatched from our sleep, I would prod my wife until she took Marty downstairs to press warm cloths to his ears while the pain abated and he slowly dozed off. Naturally, at the precise moment at which they got back to bed, Alice would decide that it was now morning, and that I'd better come and help her walk the dogs.

Fortunately, this only lasted a few days until Marty's ears popped back



to normal, but it really took the edge off our magical early mornings. It was still lovely having the sunrises to ourselves, but I would have enjoyed watching Alice and the dogs play on the lawn so much more if I'd had just a little more sleep.

NIGHTWORK

It's been harder to learn to love jetlag in Thailand, although the discovery of melatonin pills helped a lot. With the certainty that the pills will eventually get me back on a sensible sleep schedule, I can embrace the productivity advantages of midnight sleeplessness. Wide awake when all the world is sleeping, I use this time to catch up on my emails, reading, and, most importantly, Netflix.

VIVE LA RÉVOLUTION

My wife has always imposed a, frankly draconian, ban on napping and early bedtimes after flights, believing, in the face of all the evidence, that what works for her in overcoming jetlag will also work for me. However, even the most dictatorial of spouses are powerless in the face of young children's sleep schedules. Last year after a sleepless

flight, I was cruelly kept up until 9pm, only to be reawakened an hour later by Marty, whose body clock totally disregarded my wife's commands and insisted that we needed at least four more hours of play before we could consider turning in for the night. I do not wish to dwell upon those nightmare hours of play, suffice it to say that befuddled by drowsiness, I did not relish this extra time with my beloved son.

Even the meekest worm will eventually turn, and the next day I rose up and demanded unlimited nap and bedtime rights.

Unlike less lovable dictators, my wife knows when to change her mind and learn from past mistakes. So this year napping was in, and there would be no attempt to sort out my body clock until the children had sorted out theirs. I napped in the car back from the airport and again as soon as we got home, then I went to bed at the same time as Alice. This meant that I was refreshed and raring to play when Alice decided that she'd been napping not settling down for the night. When Mummy and Marty headed to bed, Alice and I enjoyed a second dinner, baked

some bread, chased each other round the kitchen, wrote thank you letters, and rediscovered favorite toys we'd not seen in two months. A spurt of productivity and fun that was all the better for being done when the rest of the world was asleep. Fast forward to the wee small hours, and as Alice and I started to yawn, Mummy and Marty were just waking up, ready to pop down for a belated midnight snack. We passed each other on the stairs and perfect harmony prevailed.

Having survived that first challenging night back, we soon settled into a routine. While Alice and I went to bed early and then got up and played in the middle of the night, Mummy and Marty would stay up playing till 11pm and then get a sensible night's sleep.

A week later and our sleep is back to normal. Alice and I throwing balls and giggling together while the city sleeps is now just an enchanting memory, but I'm already looking forward to doing it all again next year.

Photos courtesy of the author



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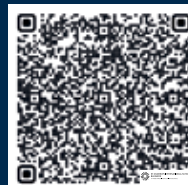
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FINDING SUPPORT WITH FERTILITY TREATMENT

Getting pregnant wasn't easy for Kelly and her husband, but finding a great support network made it easier to find the right treatment and talk about the challenges they faced.

Photo by Connor McManus from Pexels



About the Author

Kelly is mom to Freya and Daisy and recently went back to work as an early years teacher. She previously worked as a primary educator and literacy specialist. Kelly loves reading fiction books, listening to true crime podcasts, and watching Disney princess movies.

If your 20s were anything like mine, you were actively trying to prevent pregnancy. As I entered my 30s, notions of pregnancy and fertility began to cross my mind. Should I freeze my eggs? Stop taking birth control pills? Popular culture would have you believe that having sex equates to pregnancy. But alas, it's slightly more complicated. My husband and I began trying to conceive, and like most oblivious newlywed couples, we expected to get pregnant within the first month or two. Many months passed, and I was still not pregnant. I took my temperature each morning to measure my basal body temperature, peed on countless sticks to track ovulation, and even bought special lube that supposedly helped the sperm move along to meet the egg. The spontaneous, intimate nature of sex had all but disappeared as I obsessed over timing.

Fast forward a year and still no positive pregnancy tests. At the time I had three pregnant coworkers and was in tears everyday. I made an appointment to see a fertility specialist at one of the well-known hospitals along Sukhumvit. Taking that step gave me hope, until I met the doctor and had one of the worst appointments of my life. The doctor spoke only to my husband and barely looked at me. His bedside manner was nonexistent, and he ignored my concerns that I wasn't ovulating. After that appointment, both my husband and I felt we had hit a new low. I couldn't imagine starting fertility treatments with a doctor who didn't see or hear me.

A friend at the time quietly mentioned an IVF Support Group specific to Bangkok. I reached out to one of the founders of the group, Sheena Flannery, and explained my situation. She warmly welcomed me to one of the most supportive groups on Facebook. Through the group we found a kind and detail-oriented fertility doctor, and ultimately ended up with our two lovely daughters.

Infertility is often referred to as the worst club with the best members. There's no way to put into words how painful the experience can feel for couples. Finding a support group is an essential part of the journey. I recently spoke to Nina, who mentioned that talking about her experience with others helped her to feel less alone. She shared, "It can feel like everyone around you is getting pregnant or staying pregnant so easily, but often that's not true. Being open about your experience with friends can help you deal with pain and grief." I also spoke with David, who shared that as a man he often feels forgotten in fertility conversations. He mentioned that men tend to be much less open about going through the IVF process, but he found it helpful to speak with others beyond his partner.

Fertility-focused support groups abound on social media, and the Bangkok specific one provides excellent advice on finding clinics and doctors. Alyssa shared with



Photo by Tima Miroshnichenko from Pexels

me that initially she felt lost when looking for a doctor in a foreign country. The best advice she was given was not to settle on a clinic or doctor. Visiting multiple clinics allowed her to find the doctor and environment that felt most comfortable for her and her husband. Working with a private clinic also allowed her to avoid the pain of visiting the women's health center at the hospital, where she frequently saw pregnant women.

Being a part of a support group ensures that there are others who understand the very unique sense of dread and hope that comes during the two-week wait after a treatment. I spoke with a close friend, Laura, who shared that she found the time between an embryo transfer and pregnancy test unbearable. Support groups gave her ways to ease the wait and stay distracted.

The World Health Organization estimates that 1 in 6 adults will experience infertility. Perhaps you've already lived it or maybe you know someone going through IVF. Infertility does not have to be endured in isolation. Supportive communities like the one here in Bangkok provide a safe space for individuals to connect, find comfort, and realize that they are never alone. If you would like support in your fertility journey please reach out to the IVF Bangkok Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/ivfinbangkok>

All names have been changed to protect privacy.

BOOKS TO INSPIRE

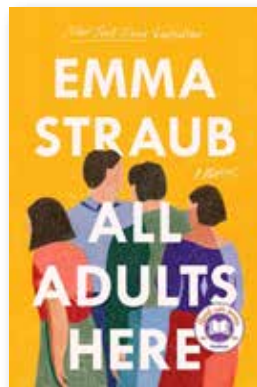
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ALL ADULTS HERE

By Emma Straub

Emma Straub's "All Adults Here" is a warm and witty novel about family in all its non-traditional forms. When matriarch Astrid Strick witnesses a tragic accident, she begins re-examining her past choices, her relationships with her three adult children, and the kind of legacy she wants to leave.



Through Astrid's late-in-life same-sex relationship, her children's struggles as parents, and her granddaughter's search for belonging, Straub highlights blended families, LGBTQ+ love, intergenerational bonds, and the challenges of breaking from tradition.

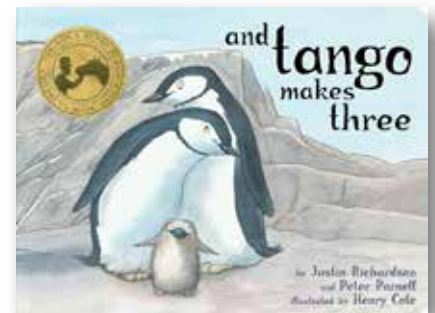
The Strick family is far from perfect—messy, flawed, and often at odds—but their story reminds us that love and resilience aren't found in following rules but in forgiveness and authenticity.

"All Adults Here" is a heartfelt, funny, and timely celebration of the many ways families grow, fracture, and come together again.

Named a *New York Times* bestseller, "All Adults Here" by Emma Straub was published in 2020 by Riverhead Books. A copy is available in the Neilson Hays Library's nonfiction section.

AND TANGO MAKES THREE

Written by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell; illustrated by Henry Cole



"And Tango Makes Three" is a beautiful, heartwarming story that redefines what it means to be a family. Based on a true story from the Central Park Zoo, the book follows Roy and Silo, two male penguins who long to nurture a chick of their own. With the help of a caring zookeeper, they are given an egg, and soon baby Tango completes their family.

The story is tenderly told and paired with charming illustrations, making it approachable for young readers while carrying a powerful message: love, care, and commitment are what truly make a family. It challenges traditional definitions and shows children that families can take many shapes, all equally valid and beautiful.

This book is a perfect way to spark conversations about inclusivity, compassion, and the many forms family can take.

"And Tango Makes Three" was first published in 2005 by Simon & Schuster. It is available in the children's section of Neilson Hays Library.

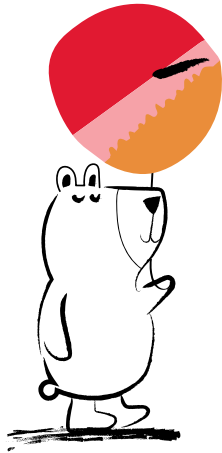


Prepared by Kit Lang @mskitlang for Neilson Hays Library, Thailand's premier English-language library. The Children's Program offers Saturday Story Time, a cozy Children's Corner, and special holiday events. Adult programs include concerts, art exhibitions, book club, and book sales. The library is located 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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BEYOND WORDS: NURTURING THE UNSPOKEN LANGUAGE OF CHILDHOOD

How we say something or act is often as important as what we say, and interpreting this unspoken language is a vital skill for children to learn. Ally explains why this is such an essential skill and suggests ways to help children develop it.

Photo by Thomas Ronveaux from Pexels



About the Author

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

"I understand you."

These are words parents convey without speaking—through eye contact, gestures, tone, and touch. When a baby locks eyes with a parent and lets out a delighted squeal, something extraordinary is happening. That moment isn't just cute—it's communication. Long before children can speak their first words, they are speaking in their own language—a language of movement, expression, and feeling.

This is the world of non-verbal communication, and it's as vital to a child's growth as spoken language.

THE FIRST LANGUAGE OF CHILDHOOD

Before words arrive, children rely on a rich system of signals to express themselves: facial expressions, body movements, eye contact, tone of voice, and touch. These are their first words.

A raised eyebrow, a pointed finger, a smile, or a frown—each of these carries meaning. These are not random acts. They are expressions of need, curiosity, joy, frustration, or wonder. Parents and family members who tune in to these cues give children something priceless: the ability to express themselves and connect with the world around them.

Non-verbal communication shapes much more than conversations. It's the foundation of empathy, self-confidence, relationship building, and even problem-solving. Children who understand tone and expression learn to navigate the world with sensitivity. A toddler who notices that their teacher's softened voice means reassurance will respond differently from a child who misses such cues.

WHY NON-VERBAL SKILLS MATTER

These early non-verbal cues lay the groundwork for future skills. Eye contact fosters trust. Gestures support language development. Tone helps children interpret emotions. Together, they create a rich language children carry for life.



Photo by Crystal Sing from corelens

Research shows that children who can use gestures and body language effectively often perform better in tasks involving abstract thinking and problem-solving. Non-verbal cues also help children build relationships. They learn not only what is being said but how it is being said—and what is not being said at all.

Consider empathy. This is built on the ability to sense and respond to another's feelings. That skill grows in the earliest years through non-verbal communication. A child who can recognize frustration in a friend's expression or joy in a parent's smile is practicing empathy long before they can describe it.

HOW TO NURTURE UNSPOKEN LANGUAGE

You don't need a classroom or expensive tools to support non-verbal communication. What children need most is presence, attention, and playful connection.

Here are some simple ways parents can nurture these skills:

Mirror moments: When your child smiles, smile back. When they make a surprised face, mimic it. These playful exchanges help children recognize and name emotions, and teach them how body language carries meaning.

Story conversations: Storytime offers more than words. Pause to

ask, "How do you think they feel?" or "Why do you think they moved that way?" This invites children to link feelings with gestures, expressions, and tone.

Play and pretend: Role-play with puppets, dolls, or dress-up clothes allows children to experiment with gestures, expressions, and tone in a safe, playful environment. It's not just play—it's a laboratory for communication.

Sing together: Songs teach rhythm, pitch, and tone—the building blocks of prosody, the "music" of speech. Singing together helps children develop sensitivity to the sound of language beyond words.

Model connection: Children learn more from what we do than what we say. When parents use open body language, make eye contact, or quietly narrate their own feelings—"I'm folding my arms because I feel chilly"—they give children a living example of how to communicate beyond words.

A lasting foundation: Non-verbal communication isn't something to add after speech develops—it's the first language of childhood. Eye contact leads to pointing. Pointing grows into expressive storytelling. These early exchanges form the groundwork for empathy, cooperation, and lifelong communication.

Every child develops at their own pace. Differences in non-verbal development are normal. But if a child consistently avoids eye contact, rarely gestures, or shows little variation in tone or expression as they grow, it's worth checking in with a trusted professional. Early attention can make a profound difference.

THE POWER OF CONNECTION

At its heart, teaching non-verbal communication isn't about perfection—it's about presence. It's about those quiet, shared moments between parent and child when connection happens without words.

When you respond to your child's giggle with a smile, when you slow your voice to match theirs, when you mirror a surprised face—you are saying, without speaking: "I see you. I hear you. I understand you."

And children hear it. They feel it. And they learn it.

Because communication is not just about the words we speak. It's about the way we listen, the way we look, the way we hold space for another person. It's about teaching children that they don't have to speak to be heard—that their whole being matters.

That's the most profound lesson we can give them.

QUICK TIPS FOR EVERYDAY CONNECTION

Eye contact: Meet your child's gaze before speaking—it signals attention and care.

Touch: A gentle hand on the shoulder, a hug, or holding hands can communicate comfort and safety without a single word.

Exaggerate expressions: When reading a story, exaggerate facial expressions and gestures to make the emotions clear.

Pause: Give space for your child to respond—silence can be as communicative as speech.

Narrate feelings: Label your own emotions so children learn vocabulary and awareness together: "I'm smiling because I'm happy to see you".



Photo by Bongbabyhousevn from Pixabay

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

"The Whole-Brain Child" by Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson: A parenting classic explaining brain development and how parents can nurture emotional understanding through both words and non-verbal cues.

"How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk" by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish: Practical strategies for everyday parenting, focusing on how tone, body language, and facial expression influence children's responses.

"Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child" by John Gottman: Guidance for helping children recognize and express feelings, combining verbal and non-verbal approaches to build empathy and emotional literacy.

"It's Not What You Say: How Children Learn from Non-Verbal Communication" by David Lambert: An exploration of how gestures, facial expressions, and tone shape a child's communication and relationships.

"Child Development: An Illustrated Guide" by Carolyn Meggitt: A clear, accessible reference outlining developmental milestones, including non-verbal behaviours, from birth to adolescence.



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BANGKOK SUPPORT GROUPS

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

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

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Processing time for membership applications: 6-10 days. We recommend submitting your application at least one week before attending a BAMBI event. If your membership is not active, you will need to pay the non-member ticket price for the event.

BAMBI: THE TEAM

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

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The views expressed in the articles in this magazine are not necessarily those of BAMBI committee members and we assume no responsibility for them or their effects.

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