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HOW EXPAT LIFE REBUILDS YOU

Photo by Jana Capek

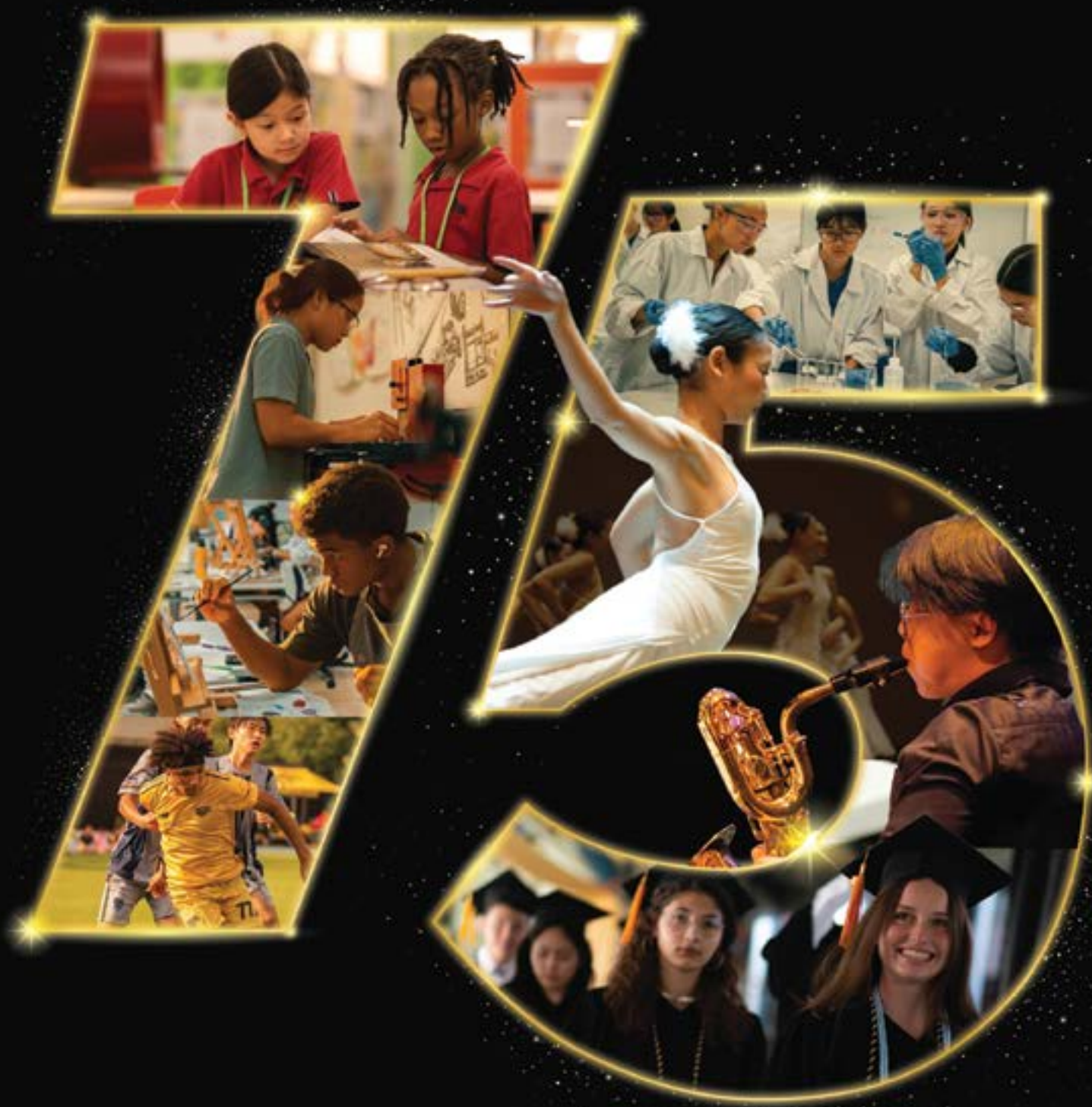
A project of Childbirth and Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand

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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.
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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

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in the magazine?*



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Since I was a little girl, creating things with my hands has been my sanctuary. Whether it was macramé, knitting, sewing, origami, paper-cutting, or baking; diving into crafts brought me deep focus and peace of mind. Before having children, it was purely a source of personal joy.

When my children arrived, life naturally shifted. At first, finding time to make anything felt impossible. Raising children in a foreign country brought its own unique challenges and moments of feeling overwhelmed. Yet, engaging in hands-on creativity—even in small ways—became a powerful source of strength that helped me navigate those unfamiliar waters.



As my children grew slightly older, I decided to pause my personal crafts so I wouldn't get too absorbed in them. Instead, I channeled that passion into creating things with and for my children, building crafts from recycled materials, making paper toys, and baking together. Through this, I discovered a whole new kind of magic: the radiant smiles on their faces, the surprise of their unexpected ideas, and the joy of watching them grow. When projects didn't go as planned, figuring things out together quietly built patience and resilience in both of us.

Now that my children are ten and five, they are more independent, and I have gradually regained time for myself. Together, we now decorate letters and handmade gifts for grandparents back home, as well as friends and teachers saying goodbye. Furthermore, the patience and adaptability I nurtured through arts and crafts have unexpectedly empowered my volunteer work with BAMBI, allowing me to stay determined and give back to our community.

Arts and crafts are far more than just making things: they are a journey of healing, growth, connection, and resilience. We hope this issue inspires you to find joy, confidence, and new possibilities through the simple power of creating with your own hands.

Warmly,

Takako Toyama
BAMBI Treasurer



JANA CAPEK
PHOTOGRAPHY





Dear Reader,

This month, we celebrate the simple joy of making things with our own hands. It might be a masterpiece, a slightly wonky paper crown, a painted cardboard box, or simply an afternoon filled with color, glue, and imagination. The result matters far less than the process and, for children especially, the sense of possibility that comes from creating something that did not exist before.

I discovered this in the most hands-on way possible during our first summer break with a full-of-energy toddler and absolutely no summer camp enrolment. Yes, this was intentional. And yes, somewhere around week six, after hundreds of questions along the lines of, “Mommy, what are we doing today?”, I began to rethink my life choices. But instead of admitting defeat, I doubled down on the craft supplies and powered through. By the end, we had enough expressive artwork to open a gallery, a suspicious amount of glitter behind the curtains, and a very happy and proud little artist. Needless to say, my heart couldn’t have been happier.

With a little help from tools and inspiration found online, and guided by my daughter’s love of painting and drawing, I began planning two or three thoughtfully considered craft sessions each week. The activities gave our days a rhythm and, more importantly, gave her the freedom to explore, experiment, and make something entirely her own. It reminded me of the value of community-based play, too. BAMBI playgroups such as Niko Niko incorporate creative activities like playdough crafts, while Little Pandas uses cutting and sticking to introduce children to counting and numbers. These simple yet thoughtfully structured activities allow children to come together to play, learn, experiment, and explore—while, most importantly, simply being children within a supportive community.

This month, we’re celebrating The Joys of Doing It Yourself. Inside, you’ll discover a wide range of inspiring stories that explore the importance of self-reliance through play, while celebrating the simple pleasure children find in making, creating, and accomplishing things on their own. From small, everyday moments to ideas that spark bigger possibilities, these pages celebrate curiosity, creativity, and the confidence that grows when children are given the freedom to do things for themselves.

When children make things themselves, they are doing much more than filling an afternoon. They are learning to make decisions, solve problems, and persist when something doesn’t quite work. They discover that a blank sheet of paper can become a story, a collection of cardboard boxes can become a house, and a handful of ordinary materials can become an entirely new world.

As parents, we are often tempted to make things easier, neater, and faster for our children. But sometimes the best thing we can do is step back and let them figure it out. Let the paint go outside the lines. Let the eggs and batter run wild. Let the finished product be imperfect.

This issue of BAMBI celebrates exactly that spirit: self-reliance, creativity, and the power of doing it yourself. From clever home hacks to kid-friendly crafts, we explore how making can nurture confidence, connection, and resilience—particularly when life asks us to adapt, improvise, and invent.

And perhaps there is a lesson for us grown-ups, too. In a world where so much can be ordered, streamed, downloaded or delivered, there is a special kind of joy in making something from scratch. It slows us down and brings us together, reminding us that we are capable of more than simply consuming what has already been created.

That, perhaps, is the real magic of DIY.

Kim Narrandes
BAMBI Editor



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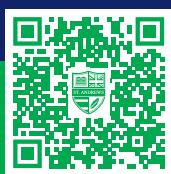
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THE BODY A GUIDE FOR OCCUPANTS

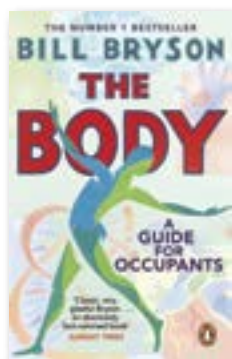
By Bill Bryson

Have you ever stopped to think about how extraordinary your body really is? In "The Body" Bill Bryson takes us on a fascinating, funny, and sometimes surprising journey through the bodies we live in every day.

From bones and brains to sleep, movement, nutrition, and aging, Bryson reminds us that our bodies are constantly working for us; usually without us giving them much thought or credit.

For this month's theme of body positivity and healthy habits, this book offers a refreshing perspective. Rather than focusing on how our bodies look, it encourages us to appreciate what they do. Understanding our bodies can help us approach movement, food, rest, and healthy choices from a place of care and respect. This is an entertaining read that might just leave you more amazed by, and grateful for the body you call home.

"The Body: A Guide for Occupants" by Bill Bryson was published in the United States by Doubleday in 2019. A copy can be found in the non-fiction section of Neilson Hays Library.



I LIKE MYSELF!

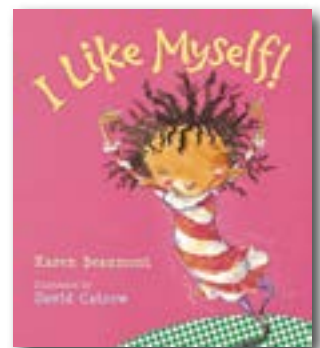
Written by Karen Beaumont,
illustrated by David Catrow

Karen Beaumont's "I Like Myself!" is a joyful and playful celebration of confidence, individuality, and being comfortable with who you are. Through energetic rhymes and David Catrow's wonderfully expressive illustrations, a spirited young girl shares all the reasons she likes herself—inside and out.

The story connects beautifully to our theme of body positivity and healthy habits by showing children that self-worth isn't determined by appearance or what others think. Instead, it encourages them to appreciate the qualities that make them unique and to approach themselves with kindness and confidence.

Funny, colorful, and full of personality, "I Like Myself!" is also a lovely way for families to begin conversations about self-esteem and positive body image. Its message is simple but important: our differences are worth celebrating, and learning to value ourselves is an important part of growing up.

"I Like Myself!" by Karen Beaumont, illustrated by David Catrow, was published in the United States by Harcourt in 2004. A copy can be found in the children's section of Neilson Hays Library.



About the Author

Prepared by Kit Lang, IG @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 clubs, and book sales. The library is located in a beautiful historic building with a garden and café on site: 195 Surawong Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand. Follow us on IG @neilson.hays.library and FB @NeilsonHaysLibrary.



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HOW EXPAT LIFE REBUILDS YOU

Self-reliance abroad isn't about doing everything alone. Claudia Gomes explains why resourcefulness, not independence, is what expat life actually builds.

Photo by Jacqueline Gonçalves from Pexels

About the Author

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



Photo by Sam Lion from Pexels

The washing machine stops working. You receive an official document in Thai. Your child comes home from school upset. Your visa requirements suddenly change. Your favorite food disappears from the supermarket.

Back at home, with any crisis small or big, you probably knew exactly who to call. But living abroad is different. Sometimes there isn't anyone to call. So you become the person who figures it out.

Being an expat doesn't simply teach us independence; it quietly transforms us into people who are far more resourceful than we ever imagined. It teaches us to be open to new ideas and to handle things differently.

Being resourceful isn't something we're born with. It's something we develop every time life asks us to solve another unfamiliar problem.

RESOURCEFULNESS BEGINS WHERE CERTAINTY ENDS

Moving abroad removes many of the automatic systems we used to rely on: we counted on family members who were nearby to support us when we needed them; we spoke

our own language; we knew where things were; we understood the culture we were living in; we had our established routines; and we knew where to find what we needed.

Suddenly, we need to learn everything again. Simple tasks become projects, such as opening a bank account, finding new doctors, dentists, hairdressers, aestheticians, understanding the immigration system and laws of the new country, renting a place to live, dealing with schools and teachers, buying furniture, and finding trustworthy services.

In the beginning, our brain responds to uncertainty with a stress response. However, with time, our brain begins to create new pathways, and confidence is built through the process. Every challenge solved becomes evidence that we can solve the next one.

THE UNEXPECTED SKILLS WE DEVELOP

Living abroad helps you strengthen different personal areas.

Problem-solving: When you are away from your support networks,

you stop waiting for help. You research. You compare. You ask questions. You try. You put yourself out there to find the best way to solve the situation at hand.

Emotional resilience: Things rarely go exactly as planned, and when you arrive in a new country, you quickly realize this. Flight and packing delays. Paperwork that needs another adjustment or signature. Translations. Culture shock. Starting new friendships. Finding a good hospital in a hurry. You learn that disappointment isn't the end. It's simply another adjustment. You learn to trust your gut.

Adaptability: Plans constantly change. Instead of resisting change, you become flexible. You become comfortable saying, "I don't know yet." You understand that your old ways don't always fit into the new country, so you adjust to the new environment. You become more open-minded as you realize you are constantly learning new things.

Creativity: Without familiar resources, you find new solutions. Sometimes they work even better. Finding a nanny, helper, driver, or other support staff is not an easy

task. You start asking colleagues, friends, support groups, communities for recommendations, and at times even start searching websites. There is always someone with good information for what you need.

Decision-making: You can't always consult someone back at home. Life happens, and you eventually have to learn to trust yourself. For some, this is not complicated because they are already used to making decisions independently, but for others, it is a completely new experience. Concentrate on making one decision at a time and it will feel less overwhelming.

SELF-RELIANCE ISN'T ABOUT DOING EVERYTHING ALONE

Many expats believe being independent means never asking for help. But that's not the same as being resourceful. Resourcefulness includes knowing when you need to ask for help, whom to ask, and how to build a community in your new life. We can find connections through social media groups, school communities, our neighborhood, and local or international friends.

Living abroad is about reconnecting with yourself. It is a way to understand who you are in a new country, how you deal with problems, how you find your own way, and who you become through that process.



Photo by Gustavo Fring from Pexels

True self-reliance means saying: "I know I can figure this out." It does not mean thinking: "I must do everything myself." That's an important emotional distinction.

THE CONFIDENCE NOBODY NOTICES

Often, we don't realize how much we've grown. Think back to your first months abroad. Could you navigate the city? Handle immigration? Solve emergencies? Build friendships? Order food the way you wanted it cooked or even know what you wanted to eat? Now compare that to what you can do today. That is how much you've grown.

The person who first arrived isn't the same person who is reading this article. Growth happened quietly. Almost invisibly. It happened day by day, as you did what needed to be done. It was a personal development that only you can truly see and feel.

REBUILDING YOURSELF

The greatest DIY project isn't fixing furniture. It's rebuilding yourself. Living abroad teaches us that confidence doesn't arrive before action. It grows because of action.

Every unfamiliar conversation. Every mistake. Every challenge. Every solution. Every time you think: "I've never done this before", and then do it anyway.

One day, you'll look back and realize that the most valuable thing you built while living abroad wasn't a home, a career, or a new life in another country. It was the quiet confidence that comes from knowing that, whatever happens next, you'll find a way.

The new country didn't change you. You changed because of the new country.



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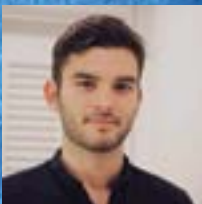
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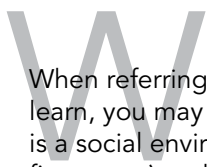
DADDEE RUN CLUB

A 5am training run for the dads, a Saturday stroller jog for the kids. Meet Daddee Run Club, a running group that's giving Bangkok moms their Saturday mornings back.



About the Author

Luis is a data analyst, community architect, and father who has been based in Bangkok for over ten years. He is the co-founder of Daddee Run Club, a Bangkok-based community for active dads. You can learn more on IG @daddeerunclub



When referring to the spaces in which we live and learn, you may often hear about the third space which is a social environment separate from the home (the first space) and the workplace (the second space). Urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined the term for informal, accessible places where people gather and build community without pressure. Bangkok is not short of places to meet people. There are running clubs, playgroups, parks, cafés, and an ever-growing collection of niche meetups from book clubs to coffee raves.

Visit Benjakitti early enough and you will probably see packs of runners with coordinated outfits and matching aesthetics. Different clubs have developed their own identities: some focus on relaxed runs and socializing, while others offer hardcore structured training. But if you're a dad who wants to stay fit while being an equal parent, you quickly realize that those meetup schedules just don't line up well with school drop-offs, dinner, and family time.

While chatting one day, my now co-founder, Ken Tabuki and I realized that there had to be more dads like us in Bangkok: those who want to train for their next race; spend time outdoors with their kids; and, most importantly, give mom some free time back. We just lacked an obvious third space to find each other. Inspired by the success of the US-based Daddy Stroller Social Club, we started a group chat with another dad friend, and the three of us met at Benjasiri Park for a stroller jog.

The sight of three dads out alone with their kids slowly attracted more "stray dads" to our group—this came dangerously close to becoming the official club name. One day, five of us gathered near the playground, which apparently activated daddy spidey senses, because another five dads appeared out of nowhere. I asked each of them if they wanted to join our "group" and started working on the club's social media branding and vision that week. I even spent over US\$100 on Instagram ads aimed at fitness-minded dads in Bangkok. Yes, I literally paid Meta to find me new friends.



Over the past year, Ken and I have kept tweaking the schedule until it worked for family life. Our "dad hour" runs now happen every Thursday and Sunday from 5am to 7am: proper training while the household is asleep. On Saturdays, we meet at Benjasiri Park from 8:30am to 11am for a stroller jog, outdoor playgroup, and coffee afterwards. Basically, either the baby is sleeping, or we're taking the baby.

Today, Daddee Run Club has more than 1,000 Instagram followers, almost 100 members in our WhatsApp group, and about 20 regulars. We are not trying to become Bangkok's biggest running club or playgroup. We care more about the impact on individual families than growth metrics. One dad who had never gone out alone with his child now joins our stroller runs regularly. Another returned to training and made major progress in his 10K time. The most common thing we hear on our runs is, "I would have stopped way earlier if I came here to run alone."

And what do the moms do while we are out on Saturday mornings? My wife likes to read, take a Pilates class, meet her friends for brunch, shop alone in peace, or just do absolutely nothing and sleep in. That's the whole point.

Moms sometimes try to send their husbands to us. Unfortunately, that rarely works. But when a dad hears about our group and thinks, "yes, that makes sense," he usually fits right in. New members may come from different countries, professions, and life experiences, but everyone knows why we are there: to look after our health, spend meaningful time with our kids, and help one another become more confident fathers.

So, if you or a loved one have the urge to meet other dads, try a fitness challenge, give mom some solo time, or perhaps have some solo time with your child, consider this your formal invitation to meet with other "stray dads" at Daddee Run Club.

Photos courtesy of the author



PALM POTTERY STUDIO

Palm Pottery Studio is a lovely oasis in the heart of Bangkok. This beautiful pottery studio, run by the wonderful Sinee, offers a welcoming and creative space for all ages and skill levels. Visitors can choose from a range of pottery experiences, including hand-building, wheel-throwing, and bisque painting classes.

The studio offers both private and group classes at your preferred times, as well as featuring a range of diverse workshops. As you enter the space, there is a lovely, homely studio looking over serene gardens in a quiet corner of the bustling city. The atmosphere instantly makes me feel calmer and more relaxed. Since my daughter, Amelie, turned three we have visited a number of times. We have tried several different sessions and my daughter absolutely loves using the pottery wheel. She frequently says "I'm really good at pottery," and, judging by the pieces she's created, she is absolutely correct!

During our different visits, Amelie has had instructions from Sinee and another teacher, Jane, who are both patient, calm, and understanding. Many other pottery studios in the city will not allow younger children to use the wheel, but at Palm Pottery Studio, they embrace little ones and their love of exploring the pottery wheel. Amelie has created a number of gorgeous pieces including bowls, plates and cups. Each time the teachers have followed her lead, and listened to her ideas and feedback with respect.

While Amelie has been busy creating, I have been able to make my own pieces. It has been such a special experience to be able to create together, carve out this time to be together, and also embrace our creative



journeys. My mother has even joined us for some classes. The three-generation pottery trips have become a highlight of my mother's visits to see us in Thailand. I would highly recommend joining a class at Palm Pottery Studio, either as a family outing or as an opportunity to have a bit of parental me-time!

For booking sessions, the studio is always really responsive to messages through Instagram or LINE. They will message you when your pieces have been fired and delivery can easily be arranged by Grab. There is convenient parking at the studio. I am really looking forward to visiting again with my daughter, and I would also love to carve out some me-time and have a grown-up visit as well!

Photos courtesy of the author



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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MAKING

From a Cinderella-loving floor-cleaner to a “Candy Planet” painter, Anna explores why children's messy, hands-on creativity beats a straight-A report card for building real confidence.

Photo by Ketut Subiyanto from Pexels



About the Author

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



Photo by Tahir Xalfaqulyev from Pexels

As the mainstream education system focuses more and more on academics, and technology becomes the main source of entertainment, we hear many stories about how young children no longer get to use their hands creatively. Though an iPad is convenient and academics is important, plenty of research shows that hands-on creativity is highly beneficial for children's development and mental health.

WHAT COUNTS AS HANDS-ON CREATIVITY?

First, let's define "hands-on creativity". New Counseling Service (NCS) Counselor Pam explains, "Hands-on creativity means any activity where children get to use either their small or big muscle groups while doing something creative. Creativity isn't just limited to handicrafts and art: it can be playing with toys; creating imaginary scenarios; finding creative solutions; or even using your imagination while doing other activities, including chores." She shares that her daughter loved cleaning the floor while pretending to be Cinderella, which is both hands-on and creative, with the added benefit of learning to help out. So how do these activities help lower stress and increase confidence?

HOW CREATING THINGS CALMS THE BRAIN

Stress in children often shows up as the body goes into high alert mode. Cortisol levels rise, and the mind gets stuck in a loop of worry or overstimulation. NCS Affiliate Counselor Sami shares that hands-on creative activities can interrupt that loop: "When a child is absorbed in drawing or building something, they step out of the self-monitoring part of the brain and into flow, a state that requires focused attention on a clear, achievable goal. When actions become predictable, such as stringing beads or kneading dough, that repetitive movement has a calming effect on the autonomic nervous system. Studies using brain imaging have found that art-making reduces activity in the amygdala, the brain's alarm system, while activating reward and pleasure pathways."

Additionally, activities such as drawing, painting, or building allow kids to express emotions that they may not yet have the vocabulary to communicate. In this way, these activities serve as a nonverbal method of emotional release and self-expression. Counselor Pam elaborates, "Using their hands to

express something externally is like being able to physically push out pent-up or heavy emotions from their minds."

FROM MISTAKE TO MASTERPIECE

In addition to reducing stress, hands-on creative activities can also boost children's confidence by creating a sense of agency and accomplishment. Counselor Sami explains, "A finished drawing or a completed craft is tangible evidence a child can point to and say 'I made that!' It offers ownership and autonomy, while normalizing making mistakes and adjusting." She shared the following example: "I once had a student who accidentally painted the grass pink in a workshop and panicked, convinced she'd ruined it. I asked her to give the painting a title before she decided it was ruined. She thought for a second and said 'Candy Planet'. Once it had a name, it stopped being a mistake and became a concept. That moment is a good example of what this kind of confidence-building actually looks like in practice. It's not about the finished piece being technically correct; it's about a child discovering in real time that a mistake doesn't have to derail them."



Photo by Yan Krukau from Pexels

WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

The biggest gains from hands-on creativity tend to show up between the ages of 6 and 12, when both stress regulation skills and core confidence are actively forming and are highly responsive to this kind of input. Nevertheless, such activities can still have healthy benefits for children (and adults) of all ages, though different activities can be more meaningful for different age groups. Younger children tend to get more out of easier sensory-based activities as they are just learning to use their motor skills. On the other hand, older children may feel a higher sense of accomplishment from more complex activities.

IDEAS TO GET STARTED

Here are some creative hands-on activities that can be great for young children:

- Making your own playdough
- Doing Origami
- Planting seeds or gardening
- Making a nature mandala
- Drawing in the sand
- Painting or drawing
- Clay modeling
- Stitching, knitting, crocheting or sewing
- Making a shaker by filling a container with rice or beans and decorating the outside
- Making an edible collage from fruit, cereal, or crackers before eating it
- Raising pets with the help of parents

- Taking drama classes

WHEN CREATIVITY FEELS LIKE PRESSURE

But what about children who dislike these activities? Sometimes children associate hands-on creativity more with pressure than relaxation, especially if they've had experiences where their work was compared or corrected (as was my experience). But art isn't objective; the point isn't to make something that is deemed nice by other people, but to experiment and express emotions and ideas through your body. Once you learn to let yourself use your hands and be creative without judgment, art can go from being a stressor to a de-stressor.

Counselor Sami thinks, "A lot of this comes down to a learned idea that art has to be aesthetically pleasing to count, and that you need that outcome to justify doing it in the first place," and that, "For people who find crafts stressful, hands-on creativity is often even more valuable once that pressure is removed, because the skill they're actually practicing isn't artistic ability; it's tolerating imperfection and staying engaged with something outside their comfort zone."

EXERCISING CREATIVITY BY IGNORING PERFECTION

When I changed from a mainstream school to a Steiner school, which puts heavy focus on hands-on arts and crafts, I initially found

hands-on activities stressful. I was surrounded by kids who could easily have had their art displayed in a gallery. At the time, I felt like being around them knocked down my confidence more than it built it. Though many of my friends were skilled, that wasn't actually the point of the curriculum. The teachers weren't trying to create artists, they were teaching us to exercise our creativity through our hands because they believed it was good for our development. Once I was able to overcome this mental block (which took time), art became relaxing for me, and even if my work was far from being conventionally nice, I found that I no longer cared. If I had fun or felt relaxed making it, that was all that mattered. I also found that this change gave me the confidence to try all kinds of new things without shrinking away as I used to, just as Sami described.

Steiner education follows a simple principle on children's development that I think fits perfectly into this conversation: hand (willing), head (thinking), heart (feeling). Hands are the most important in early childhood, followed by heart in late elementary and middle school, and head in high school. In life, most things will involve some combination of the three, and having the opportunity to exercise each at an age when they will benefit from it the most can help children build the confidence and emotional regulation skills that empower them for years to come.



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A FAMILY OF GARDEN CREATURES: HALLOWEEN COSTUME DIY

One mushroom hat, six meters of cotton, and a family tradition in the making. Maria on why she wants to keep creating her kids' Halloween costumes by hand.



Photo courtesy of the author



About the Author

Maria Kalita, a Ukrainian mother of three, founded Bangkok's Soap Opera in 2016. What began as a kitchen startup has grown into an FDA-approved manufacturing facility and six stores across Thailand. A passionate advocate for sustainability, Maria transforms used restaurant cooking oil into soap and donates 100 kg of soap each month to local communities. Beyond her work, she finds joy in homemaking, fermenting, baking, and art.



Photo courtesy of the author

For the past five years, dressing up has been a little family tradition for us. We love joining community events, and Halloween has become one of those special occasions where we can get creative, have fun, and make memories as a family.

Before our youngest daughter, Tamara, was born, I was already thinking about what her first Halloween costume might look like. By the time she had turned one and was still finding her confidence on two feet, I knew I wanted something cute and practical—something that would still look lovely even if I ended up carrying her for most of the event.

Our family leans toward a crafty retro look, so when I came across a garden-inspired theme online, I thought, “I can make that.”

With three children and a full-time job, finding time for crafting isn’t straightforward. So I started work on my mushroom hat in August, fitting it in whenever I could. It was a labor of love. I used around six meters of cotton to create it, and while the hat came out beautifully, it was also surprisingly heavy.

Once the hat was taking shape, I started thinking about who might live in our little family garden. A mushroom clearly needed a garden creature of its own, and I settled on a snail for Tamara.

The snail backpack was actually the easiest part to make, but I had to be

careful with the weight. With a newly walking one-year-old, the last thing I wanted was to give her a backpack that was more impressive than practical. The final version was light enough for her to carry, and with me beside her in the mushroom hat, she made the sweetest garden creature.

For our older boys, Nikita and Kosta, I wanted to keep things simple and, wherever possible, use what we already owned. DIY doesn’t always have to mean starting from scratch, and I loved the challenge of making costumes out of things already in the house.

That’s how the idea of garden gnomes came about. I found some fun T-shirts with mushroom designs, paired them with pants from their closets, and suddenly my boys became the cutest little garden gnomes. To complete their costumes, I turned simple red umbrellas into oversized mushrooms with a few paper stickers. They were easy to make, added a playful touch, and, best of all, meant we didn’t end up with a closet full of single-use Halloween props.

Looking back, I think that is what I love most about making our family costumes. It’s not really about creating something perfect. It’s about the process: the ideas that evolve along the way; the late-night crafting; the things that don’t quite work the first time; and the small compromises you make when a costume needs to survive an actual

toddler. And, of course, there is something incredibly special about seeing your children wear something you made yourself.

Our little garden family may have started with a mushroom, a snail, and a couple of gnomes, but it has become another chapter in our family tradition. A tradition I’m sure we’ll be adding to for many Halloweens to come.

Our garden creatures made their debut at Trunk and Treat, an event we look forward to each October. Instead of decorating houses, families decorate their car trunks and then gather in a parking lot where the children can visit the different cars, play games, and collect treats. What I appreciate most is the opportunity it gives children in a city as busy as Bangkok to enjoy Halloween among families who already know one another.

This year, we are taking our Halloween inspiration from Tove Jansson’s Moomin stories. I plan to be Moominmama, while the children are deciding between Moomintroll, Snorkmaiden, Snufkin, and Sniff. We also plan to turn our car into the Moomin house. I’m looking forward to slowly putting the costumes together. For me, these are the details that make Halloween memorable—not the finished costumes or decorations, but the anticipation, the creativity, and the time spent making them together as a family.

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SIMPLE WAYS TO PLAY AND CONNECT TOGETHER

Certified parent educator, Laura, shares easy, screen-free activities: forts, card games, puzzles, and more that teach our children patience and collaboration.

Photo by Paolo Resteghini on Unsplash



About the Author

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



Photo by Yan Krukau from Pexels

Look around in a café or on the beach, and you'll see families glued to their devices. Parents on their phones, children on their iPads, and often only the grandparents (but not always!) are perhaps enjoying the view or having a chat. Yes, of course we might need to tend to a work email, or our child may be having their permitted screen time for the week, but one of the real issues of "each to their own screen" is the socialization we miss out on.

Humans are social beings. We learn, socialize, and empathize through social interactions: it is part of our fundamental neural wiring. Socializing involves working together, playing together, and even simple body language and communication patterns including eye contact. As parents, it's not only in our best interest, but also our duty as guides to support our children's socialization, starting in the home.

WHY PLAY MATTERS

Play is not only an amazing way to connect with our children, but

it's also a proven way to learn, including new information and soft skills such as coordination, patience, and teamwork. As Dr. Karyn Purvis said, "Scientists have discovered that it takes approximately 400 repetitions to create a new synapse in the brain, unless it is done in play, in which case it only takes 10 to 20 repetitions." So, if you're trying to teach your child about teamwork and collaboration, put the encyclopedia away, because it's all about practice. And practice happens through play.

LET THEM LEAD

Play England defines play as "what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons." Talk about taking off the pressure: play really is quite simple and yet so impactful. To make playing with your children easier, allow them to guide the way. Practice being present. Put all devices away—out of reach and even out of sight. Sit back and relax. Ask your child what they would like

to play and wait patiently while they think it over. They'll probably be overjoyed at your availability and presence. When your child decides, go with it and let them call the shots, as long as it's safe and within your family's boundaries. By doing this, you're modeling collaboration. Bonus: our children don't always get to lead on the playground or at school. So when you model that it's okay to also follow, and that following is just as fun, then this is a lesson they can take with them.

ACTIVITIES TO PLAY TOGETHER

One fun, easy, and free activity is building forts in the house. This is a great way to build gross motor skills, strengthen collaboration, and practice trial and error. Will the pillow stay? Will the sheet balance? It is also a great way to pass time when it's pouring with rain or the air quality is bad and you're stuck playing indoors. For building a fort, you can use pillows, chairs, sheets, and blankets to create all sorts of structures. Let your child lead. Try to stay quiet and listen for



Photo by Bill Branson

directions such as “pass me that pillow, Dad,” or, “move that chair here, Mom.” Offer tips to show your engagement, “How about we add a window here for kitty to come through?!” but provide them sparingly so you don’t take over as lead architect of the fort.

Board games and card games are also fun ways to sit closely together and enjoy an activity. UNO is an easy-to-find, fun, and simple card game loved by all. For children

aged eight and above, The Game of Life is an excellent board game for discussing life decisions, looking at the bigger picture, and learning about the impact of choices and also of circumstances. As these games have winners and losers, they provide a great opportunity to practice our resilience. Lots of children don’t like to lose, especially from age four to seven, and that’s okay. They can have their emotions and try again. You can talk about how you used to be frustrated when

you lost games at their age too. Try not to always let them win, otherwise this can backfire when it comes to building confidence.

Puzzles are great for all ages, but you will want to make sure the size of puzzle you choose is age-appropriate so your child isn’t left frustrated when they can’t finish the 1,000-piece puzzle in one sitting. Younger children may want to finish quickly, so it’s better to choose a very small one for toddlers and a 60- to 100-piece puzzle for small children. We want to teach patience, but we also want to enjoy the moment of connection with our child. Ultimately, we all learn patience while puzzling!

Remember, as parents we have so much to teach our children, whether it’s soft skills, stories to pass on, or lessons to share. Doing this through play not only makes it easier for our children to learn, but also builds our connection and attachment with our children. So, make space for creativity, embrace the fun, and block out time in your calendar for play!



Photo by Anastasia Shuraeva from Pexels

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MINI GARDEN MAGIC

You don't need a backyard to grow something worth sharing. Kelly's balcony garden is a lesson in patience, presence, and finding green in a concrete city.



Photo by Stefano Oppo from Corelens



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, listening to true crime podcasts, and watching Disney princess movies.



Photo by Odua Images

I've recently heard the joke that middle-aged millennials (hello 40!) all take up one of a few hobbies: baking sourdough from scratch; birdwatching; or gardening. I'm a terrible baker, and I'm not sure the pigeons that try to encroach on my balcony really count, so that leaves me firmly in the plant mom camp.

When I was growing up, my mother was an avid gardener. Lush flower beds filled our yard, and a large garden plot flourished throughout the summer producing endless juicy tomatoes and crisp cucumbers. These days, she's taken to more exotic plants and enjoys cultivating weird varieties of orchids and bromeliads. While I may not have her green thumb (yet), her love of plants, flowers, and gardening has passed down to me, and so in turn, I'm trying to pass it on to my daughters.

On a recent visit to Bangkok, my mother set about teaching me all there is to know about raising my hibiscus plant. Lots of sunshine, keep it well hydrated, and was I really going to keep it in that dreadful pot? Solid advice for plants and humans alike. What else could my daughters learn from our balcony

garden? Indigenous author and botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer writes about gratitude and reciprocity in the natural world in her book "The Serviceberry". She theorizes that society would be better served by abandoning economic models of scarcity and competition in favor of a gift economy, in which sharing abundance is the norm. Flowers and plants and fruit are meant to be shared among friends and neighbors.

And while I don't have bushes overflowing with ripe, juicy berries to share with friends and neighbors, I can still try to instill Kimmerer's ideas of gratitude within the natural world. I've come to find pleasure in caring for our plants, and my girls also love to help water them. Our plants give us small gifts—watching a new leaf slowly unfurl fills me with joy when seen through my daughters' eyes. We reciprocate by pulling away dead leaves (my two-year-old takes to this a bit too enthusiastically), adjusting their sunlight, and in the words of my five-year-old, "keeping them near their friends."

Without fail, after the summer holidays, we return to Bangkok lamenting the lack of green spaces

that felt abundant back home. Bangkok feels like a concrete jungle, overflowing with condos and motorbikes rather than community gardens and green play spaces.

A recent walk down our fairly quiet, nondescript soi reminded me of how gratitude leads to abundance. Do I wish we had a sustainable, well-designed green playground on our street? Of course, who wouldn't? But that mindset leads to the commoditization of daily life and a nagging feeling of insufficiency. I shifted my focus away from what's lacking, and instead looked at the blooming trees and wandering vines that line our street.

A whole plot of banana trees? Check. Heavy purple bougainvillea dripping over a long line of fiery red ixora? Check. The sticky, sweet scent of white jasmine? Check.

Getting out of my own head and taking a moment to appreciate natural beauty in all its forms requires patience with myself and my city. A slowed down reminder that, as Kimmerer writes, "all flourishing is mutual."

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COLOR INSIDE THE LINES: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CREATIVITY AND DISCIPLINE

Art educator, Kit, argues that discipline and creativity aren't opposites, instead they are the essential ingredients of artistic development. One allows us to build the skills we need, while the other lets us decide what to do with them.

Photo by Eren Li from Pexels



About the Author

Prepared by Kit Lang (@mskitlang) for Neilson Hays Library, Thailand's premier English-language library. The library is located in a beautiful historic building with a garden and cafe on site: 195 Surawong Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand. Follow us on Instagram and Facebook.



Photo by Vlada Karpovich

“Coloring outside the lines” has become a hallmark phrase for creativity; generating new ideas, breaking conventions, and being free in our thinking. However, as an art educator for more than 15 years, I would argue that coloring inside the lines is a good thing.

Creativity and discipline are not the same, but both are essential to artistic development. There is a common misconception that artistic talent is inherent: either you have it or you don’t. In reality, artistic skills develop much like those of an athlete, musician, or mathematician: through instruction, practice, repetition, and application.

For young children, coloring inside the lines is one way to develop many foundational skills. It helps refine fine motor control, teaches children how much pressure to apply to a medium, and builds spatial awareness and hand-eye

coordination. These aren’t limitations on creativity; they are tools that can eventually give children greater freedom to express their creativity.

Even a simple coloring page can offer opportunities for both discipline and creative decision-making. Children can explore positive and negative space, decide what to color and what to leave untouched, experiment with pressure to create tone and value, and make choices about color, texture, and pattern. The physical lines may establish boundaries, but what happens within those boundaries can still be wonderfully individual.

And once children have developed greater control of their tools? Then let them color outside the lines.

The goal isn’t to teach children that good art means staying within prescribed boundaries. It’s to

help them develop the skills and confidence to decide when those boundaries are useful and when they’re ready to break them.

So encourage children to color inside the lines. Help them build fine motor skills through patience, practice, and discipline. Then give them opportunities to explore, experiment, play, and create.

Discipline builds the skills. Creativity gives children the freedom to decide what to do with them.

Here I am!



HALLOWEEN COLORING



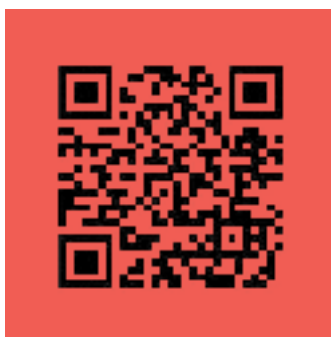
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PLAYGROUPS & ACTIVITIES

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PLAYGROUPS

Name	Location
Wonderkids	Wonder Woods Kids Café & Co-Learning Space
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Kiddieville	Playville
Little Steps	Future Steps International School Bangkok
Little Panda	Nancy Language School
Little Treehouse	Little Treehouse Nursery
Saturday Nana	Storytime Preschool Bangkok
Little Tots	Tiny Tots International Learning Centre
Niko Niko	The Prestige 49 (Sukhumvit Soi 49)
Kira Kira	KiraKira kids international kindergarten school
Little Gaia new!	Little Gaia, One Bangkok Mall (5th floor)



ACTIVITIES

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

SIGN UP TODAY!

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



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SPOOKTACULAR LITTLE STARS

With Halloween just around the corner, the little ones are already dreaming up their spookiest, silliest, and most creative looks, from tiny superheroes and storybook characters to classic witches, ghosts, and monsters. This year's costume inspiration is all about letting kids' imaginations take center stage. Take a look at these adorable costumes that are sure to make this year's celebration extra memorable.



Alma Meyuhas Mandel as a skeleton in a pre-loved outfit



William Indy Barnard dressed up as Stick Man by Julia Donaldson



Ashman Poole dressed as Chase from Paw Patrol



Aarav Kejriwal dressed as Mario from Mario Bros



Maya Schneider as Spider Girl



Ben Briët trick or treating as a skeleton

HAVE AN OLD COSTUME TO GIVEAWAY?

In the spirit of recycling, upcycling, repurposing, and reusing, BAMBI is creating a space for our community to give pre-loved Halloween costumes a second life!

We will host one dedicated sales post on the BAMBI Facebook page where followers can comment with a photo of their child's costume and include the asking price—or offer it for free to another family in the community.

If someone is interested in a costume, they can contact the seller directly via private message to arrange the purchase or exchange.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

- 1. Follow the BAMBI Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/BAMBIBangkok/>
- 2. Look for our dedicated Halloween Costume post** — there will be one official post for listings.
- 3. Want to sell or give away a costume?** Comment directly on the post with:
 - o A clear photo of the costume
 - o Your asking price, or write 'FREE' if you'd like to give it away
 - o The size and any other helpful details, such as condition
- 4. Interested in a costume?** Send the person who posted it a private message directly to discuss the details and arrange the purchase or exchange.
- 5. Give it a second life!** Once your little one has outgrown the costume, consider passing it along to another family.

Annabel Balmforth and Emi Lista as Elsa and Princess Peach



Mojo Patiharn Sriwatthanah as Mike Wazowski from Monster Inc



Disclaimer: BAMBI is simply providing a space for our community to connect. We are not involved in or responsible for any sales, payments, exchanges, deliveries, or other arrangements between buyers and sellers. Please communicate directly with one another and use your best judgment. BAMBI is providing this post solely as a community platform to connect families. BAMBI does not participate in, manage, or take responsibility for any transactions, payments, exchanges, deliveries, or other arrangements between buyers and sellers. All dealings are made directly between the individuals involved and at their own discretion and responsibility.

MEET SAEKO OMURA

Saeko misses the changing seasons and fireworks festivals of her native country, Japan. These days, she's exploring new Thai coffee flavors one café at a time, while giving back to the community as a BAMBI assistant treasurer.

**Q: Where are you from and what's your nationality?
Can you tell us about your life back home?**

I was born and raised in Tokyo, Japan. Although Tokyo is one of the biggest cities in the world, I grew up in a neighborhood between two large rivers. Every summer, we enjoyed watching beautiful firework festivals along the rivers. It was one of my favorite childhood traditions, and I always looked forward to it. Now I'm happy that I can enjoy the same tradition with my own children whenever we visit Japan in the summer. It reminds me that some of the best memories are the simple moments we share with our families

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

My family moved to Bangkok in 2022 because of my husband's work. Although we had lived abroad before, moving to Thailand was the start of a new chapter for our family.

What I miss the most about Japan is the changing seasons, especially autumn. I love feeling the cool air as the weather slowly gets colder. When Bangkok has a rare



cool morning, I open all the windows and enjoy the fresh air with my children. We always get excited and say, "It's so cold!" We even travel to places like Khao Yai during the New Year holidays just to enjoy the cooler weather. Living in Thailand has made me appreciate the beauty of Japan's four seasons even more. Sometimes I miss the colorful autumn leaves, warm drinks on chilly mornings, and the small seasonal changes that I hardly noticed before moving abroad.

Q: What do you love most about Thailand?

One of the things I love most about Thailand is its café culture. There are cafés everywhere, and each one has its own unique style and atmosphere.

I also enjoy trying Thai coffee. It's different from Japanese coffee, and it's always fun to discover new flavors. One thing that surprised me when I came to Thailand was that almost every café had Orange Americano and Tonic Americano on the menu. I'd never seen anything like them before, but now they've become two of my favorite drinks.

I love how creative Thai cafés are, and I never get tired of exploring them. Visiting cafés has become one of my favorite hobbies in Bangkok because each visit feels like discovering a new hidden gem.





Whenever I have some free time, you'll probably find me at a café enjoying a good cup of coffee while doing some work for BAMBI.

Q: Which parts of Thailand have you traveled to, and which did you enjoy the most?

I have traveled to many places in Thailand with my family, including the beach and the mountains. We like to have unique experiences when we travel. For example, we sometimes visit the mountains during the cooler season just to enjoy the cold air.

All the places we've visited have been wonderful, but my favorite experience was a kayaking tour in Krabi. We kayaked into a dark cave, which was thrilling, and I was amazed by the beautiful scenery created by nature.

Krabi is also known for being one of the filming locations for Jurassic World: Rebirth, so we had fun imagining Pteranodons flying across the sky as we kayaked along the river. The dark cave was a little scary but incredibly beautiful, and it became one of my favorite travel memories in Thailand.

Q: How did you find out about BAMBI?

A friend introduced me to BAMBI. Around the same time that my younger child started daycare, she told me that BAMBI was looking for an assistant treasurer.

I finally had some time for myself and wanted to do something useful. It seemed like a great opportunity

to fill my free time meaningfully while supporting the community, so I decided to give it a try.

I'm happy to have found a role where I can use my skills while supporting the BAMBI community. Through this role, I've also had the opportunity to meet wonderful people and learn more about the international community here in Bangkok. It's rewarding to know that even behind-the-scenes work can help support other families.

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

Everyone has their own way of enjoying BAMBI. You might join a playgroup to spend quality time with your child, volunteer to make good use of your skills, or simply enjoy weekend events. There's no right or wrong way to be part of the community.

You don't have to join everything. Just take the first step. It's completely normal to feel a little nervous when joining a new community. I felt the same way at first, but I'm really glad that I decided to get involved.

Since most of us are living outside our home countries, I hope you'll feel comfortable joining an international community like BAMBI. I hope you'll find new friends, new experiences, and a place where you feel at home.

And to all the Japanese moms, don't be afraid to speak English! Just give it a try and enjoy your life in Bangkok!

Photos courtesy of the author

TEN BANGKOK OUTINGS MY BOYS NEVER GET TIRED OF

Looking for a fun outing with kids in Bangkok? Hilda Anita, BAMBI's playgroup coordinator and a Bangkok playground reviewer, shares the ten places her boys ask to visit again and again

Photo by Jana Capek



About the Author

Hilda Anita is a BAMBI playgroup coordinator and Bangkok-based content creator who shares reviews of playgrounds, family attractions, and kid-friendly spaces around the city. Follow her on Instagram: @hildaanita

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When people ask me what I love most about Bangkok, my answer is always the same: the family-friendly spaces this city offers.

Many of you know me as the playgroup coordinator at BAMBI but I'm also a content creator on Instagram who shares reviews of playgrounds and kid-friendly spaces around Bangkok. As a mother of two energetic boys, six and four years old, I've spent years searching for places where children can play, explore, and simply be kids.

I started sharing content because I found it surprisingly difficult to discover new family-friendly venues. Most recommendations travel by word of mouth. I thought it would help to create a space where families, especially those new to Bangkok, could easily find inspiration for their next outing.

Over the years we've visited countless places, but these are the ten destinations my boys happily return to again and again.

1. HarborLand

A Bangkok family favorite for good reason. Harborland runs huge indoor playgrounds in many of the city's major shopping malls, suitable for babies, children, and even adventurous parents like me. My boys could easily spend an entire day here.

2. YoYo Land

Inside Seacon Square, this indoor amusement park suits younger children. With more than 50 rides, games, and attractions under one roof, it's a fun alternative to outdoor theme parks, especially during Bangkok's hot season.

3. BAMBI playgroups

BAMBI playgroups have helped both my children and me build lasting friendships. With a variety of playgroup styles, English-speaking environments, and locations across the city, they offer a welcoming community for families of all backgrounds. Check the BAMBI calendar for details!

4. Wonder Woods Kids Café & Learning Space

Known in our family as "the mushroom playground" because of its giant indoor mushroom, Wonder Woods combines imaginative play, sensory activities, workshops, and excellent food. The space changes as the seasons change through the year, so every visit feels new and exciting.

5. Science Centre for Education (Planetarium, Ekkamai)

Recently updated with an engaging play area, this Ekkamai landmark pairs hands-on science activities with interactive exhibits and a planetarium. It's a wonderful place for curious young minds to explore and learn.



Photo courtesy of the author

6. Mega Bangna

More than just a shopping mall, Mega Bangna is designed with families in mind. Free play areas, countless dining options, one of Bangkok's largest HarborLand branches, and IKEA's supervised children's play area make it an easy choice for a full day out.

7. Gateway Ekkamai

Right next to Ekkamai BTS station, Gateway Ekkamai offers Kidzooona, HarborLand, WOW Park, and a wide variety of family-friendly restaurants. It's one of our top picks for a relaxed weekend outing.

8. Get Growing Community Farm

For adventurous families, this is one of Bangkok's most exciting experiences. Think mud, obstacle courses, climbing challenges, and outdoor exploration. Be prepared to get dirty, but that's half the fun!

9. Rot Fai Park

Cycling is one of our favorite family activities, and this park makes it easy with affordable bike rentals for all ages. You can enjoy the outdoors without hauling your own bicycles across town.

10. Benjakitti Park

One of Bangkok's most beautiful green spaces, Benjakitti offers playgrounds, cycling paths, sports facilities, and plenty of room to run around. Bring a picnic and stay for the afternoon.

Of course, this list could easily be much longer! Bangkok keeps surprising us with new places to discover. If you have some exciting family favorites please share them. I love hearing about hidden gems from other families in our wonderful BAMBI community.

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 as well as on our website. You are welcome to contact vicechairwoman@bambiweb.org with inquiries.

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