

BAMBI

SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN BANGKOK SINCE 1982

THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF LOVE

FROM COOING
TO CONVERSATION

RECIPE:
LOVE IS IN THE AIR
(FRYER)



Cover photo by Jana Capek

A project of Childbirth and Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand

FEBRUARY 2024



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- Mel Habanananda



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

We offer prenatal and postnatal support, regular playgroups, fundraising for charities and more. If you wish to join, come to our New Members' Coffee Morning or any other regular BAMBI activities. To volunteer or serve on the committee, email vicechairwoman@bambiweb.org or visit bambiweb.org.

BAMBI is a project of the Childbirth & Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand (CBFT).

Mission Statement

The CBFT is a non-profit networking and resource center dedicated to ensuring the best possible start in life for our babies. We believe that this can best be achieved through:

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

For more information on CBFT, contact:

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Thai speaking, Mobile: 081-776-9391;

info@cbfthai.org or

sobsamai@yahoo.com. Or

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

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Chiaki Takegawa

Dear BAMBI members,

I hope everyone has settled down from the winter break and is back to a normal routine. Welcome to the February issue and the month of celebrating love!

Celebrating love involves recognizing, appreciating, and expressing the positive emotions and connections we share with others. Relationships with friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers provide us with love, comfort, and security.

Being Asian and growing up in a typical traditional Japanese family, my parents were not affectionate and did not express love, which meant I struggled to feel that they loved me. However, as I've grown up I've realized no one loves me like my parents do. Different cultures have distinct ways of expressing love, and individual families within those cultures may also have differences in their practices, such as cooking traditional meals, helping with homework, or providing practical support for their children. My parents were focused on creating a stable and secure environment for the family—that was the way they expressed their love to us.

I have a busy everyday life with children, but I have realized that I still have to take care of myself and my body. Since becoming a mom, my priorities have shifted significantly. Becoming a parent inevitably meant every aspect of my life changed. I started not enjoying my life because all day long I was taking care of my children, and neglecting myself. This is something many parents end up doing, as our lives have suddenly changed so much, and the children we love so much can feel overwhelming.

One day I was sitting on the couch and started thinking: If I do not love myself, how can I love someone else? I want to be a good example for my children, and I want to be a happy wife for my husband. Generally, I want to be a happy person! I realized loving myself can have numerous positive effects on various aspects of my life, and on the other people in my life. I am constantly forgetting to take care of myself, but this year I want to focus on improving my mental health, increasing resilience, and maintaining healthy relationships with people around me. By remembering to love myself and take care of myself, I will also be able to show more love to those I love.

To finish, I want to say thank you to all the BAMBI committee members, volunteers, and members who have been supporting me. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who I have worked with. I've learned so much from you and I hope I have given you enough of the support you needed. Remember to love yourselves as well as others this Valentine's day.

Chiaki
BAMBI executive board



Sanam Raisa Rahman

Recently my five-year-old said to me, “Mama, I saw a building where they had a picture of some people ballroom dancing. I want you and Baba to go there and dance. Apun (big sister) and I can stay with Meera aunty (our helper), and you both can just dance. OK?” When informed by her sister that the building was not a place for dancing, just a hotel, she replied, “OK. So you can just have a nice dinner then. It doesn’t matter if it’s dancing or dinner. I just want you to be happy.”

After 11 years of marriage and two kids, love is not what it used to be. Spontaneity has bitten the dust, and planning date nights often feels more like work than fun—arranging sitters, sorting the kids’ dinner, managing their expectations for easier goodbyes, and more. And yet, when your five-year-old says something like that, you can’t help but realize that love always finds a way. It comes in many forms, in many ways, sometimes requiring work, other

times just falling into place on its own, and this time it came in the form of my daughter’s kindness and consideration for our happiness.

This month, keeping the many faces and phases of love in mind, we look at love between partners, parents and children, self-love, and even love for all our favorite things.

First up we have “The Kaleidoscope of Love” by Ha Trinh, where she shares her family’s journey of love language discovery. Next we have “Love in the Time of Children” by Joe Barker, where he explains how he and his wife have expressed love through simple gestures and considerations since their child came into the mix. If you’re in search of ways to do this, taking care of dinner is one. Check out “Love is in the Air (Fryer)” by Anelia Van Zyl for an easy but delectable chicken and mashed potato recipe for two.

But who says that a nice dinner can’t be made just for yourself? At BAMBI, we’re big proponents of self-love and believe that it not only starts with looking after ourselves and our emotions so that we can let love and balance into our lives, as emphasized in Jeannie Kim’s “Embracing Harmony: Emotions, Well-being, and Love in TCM”, but also by appreciating the many people and things that bring us joy and give us reasons to smile.

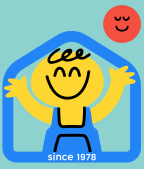
“The Things We Love” feature shows some of the things our kids feel lucky to have in their lives, while this month’s Fun Corner encourages kids to reflect on and take pride in the things they love about themselves. Sara Chow’s “Parental Escape: Me-Time Workshops by BAMBI” gives you an idea of the many activities BAMBI offers for parents who are looking for fun ways to take care of their physical and mental well-being.

And going back to letting love into our lives, sometimes life requires us to give love a second chance, which can seem daunting at first. Such was single mom Coco May’s experience. Her article “Finding Love as a Single Mom” is a story filled with hope, courage, and reassurance that love comes to those who believe in it. Which brings us to Reader’s corner where “Worm Loves Worm” is a lovely introduction to non-traditional family structures, while “Neilson Hays Library: Commemorative History” tells the romantic story of a building built as a monument to love.

Finally, in other content we have “From Cooing to Conversation: An Interview with a Speech–Language Pathologist” by Kelly Patten, which gives us some ideas on how to help our children develop their communication skills in the early stages of life.

We think this month’s content will be the perfect companion to your morning cup of tea and will inspire you to keep your faith in love through life’s ups and downs. On behalf of the magazine team, Happy Valentine’s Day and have a blessed February!

Sanam
Editor



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Peerada Chaiputhi
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY FROM BAMBI!

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Aoi Umehara
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August Low
Chalisa Charlotte White
Freja Sall
Izabel Kalah Jegillos
Linus Wilhelmi

Mateo Yuste
Mia Nakazawa
Nils Kronholm
Perrynchisa Anekjamnongporn
Riri Okamoto
Sebastian Oxland
Seoyoon Bang



OUR COVER KID



NAME

Beatrice

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

Italy

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THAILAND?

Since I was born in Bangkok, almost three years ago.

FAVORITE PLACE TO GO AS A FAMILY IN THAILAND?

Hua Hin

WHAT'S ON YOUR THAI BUCKET LIST?

I Love Phants Lodge and Koh Kut

WHAT DOES BAMBI MEAN TO YOU?

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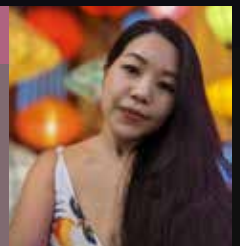
THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF LOVE

Ha Trinh takes us on a journey of love as she shows us how she and her husband learned each other's love languages, which they are now teaching their daughter.



About the Author

Ha Trinh is an enthusiastic international educator who has lived abroad for over ten years in Vietnam, Mozambique, Laos, and now Thailand.



Phase #1: Define love again—learn and adapt

Getting married is like diving into the delightful world of human connections. We learn and adapt to each other's unique ways of thinking and communicating, weaving a vibrant tapestry of love and understanding. In the dance of East meets West where I, Hanoian-Vietnamese, unite with my Midwest-American husband, we daily celebrate the charming diversity of passive, assertive, and occasionally aggressive styles.

Picture this: I, raised with the notion that expressing desires upfront is crucial, clashed with my husband, accustomed to a softer, more reasoned approach. Initially, our communication styles collided, leading to impatience on my end and a perception of rudeness on his.

Another hurdle in our heartwarming family sitcom emerged with the discovery of love languages. Some might say discovering your family's love language is like unlocking a treasure chest of affectionate expressions. To reach this sweet spot, we delved into our childhoods, uncovering "aha!" moments. I loved having quality time and genuine acts of service. Just like how my parents gave me space and time to be alone and creative in my room or to hang with friends, but each night one of them would also bring me some cut fruit or a glass of orange juice. In contrast, my husband was showered with a lot of encouraging compliments and affirmations. So when we tended to give what we liked, he would feel like I was either clingy or cold, while I let most of his nice words go in one ear and out the other because I didn't value words. Only when we understood each other's love languages did we realize what we were saying.

Now, let's navigate the whimsical world of problem-solving, where "he said, she said" takes center stage. Imagine a comedy of errors with men favoring practical solutions and women weaving tales of emotion. As we journeyed through adventures across continents



during our ten years of marriage, we learned the importance of compromise and considering diverse perspectives. During discussions, we envisioned our parents beside us, understanding that differences in human nature are apparent; to not forget that we all come from different backgrounds, upbringings, and that we have different approaches to love. Our goals shifted from winning to reaching common ground and strengthening our connection.

Through trial and error, we became more mature and understanding towards each other and ourselves. Accepting that we carry so much

more than our bodies and personalities helped us see the bigger picture. In a way we feel connected to our roots and appreciate that we can contribute so many perspectives to any topic.

Phase #2: Love through hardship—a kid in the mix

The arrival of our child marked an enchanting evolution in our lives and in our communication. Witnessing her mastery of both our communication styles brought creative solutions to the forefront. Drawing on six years of shared experiences before her arrival, we aligned our parenting tendencies.



In caring for our girl, I provided abundant cuddling and daily massages, while he engaged in playful games and acts of service. Despite diverse expressions of love, we agreed on using gentle and honest language when communicating with her. Our commitment was for our child to always feel appreciated and loved, irrespective of her emotions.

So when our kid feels overwhelmed, we help her articulate her emotions and feelings, followed by a warm, tight hug to release tense muscles, catering to her preference for physical touch. We sit on the floor, rocking back and forth until she feels ready to express herself. The process, taking about ten seconds, allows her to have a good cry. Once calm, she can explain to us what happened inside and what she thinks she could do differently next time.

We take turns applying these steps, acknowledging and admitting mistakes when necessary. Clear and fair communication remains our guiding principle, recognizing that no one is perfect, but continuous improvement comes through active listening.

Phase #3: Love means letting go

Here are the personal steps we take to achieve balance in showing love while maintaining personal space.

Firstly, we practice mindfulness at home. We model, for our little one, the art of recognizing and respecting personal space. We teach her that it's OK to give each other room when we're tired, sick, or engrossed in our own world. I use an app on my phone that will make a bell sound every 15 minutes. When we hear it, we all pause (even if we are eating) and take three deep breaths. It's a routine, and it's building up a habit of waiting and keeping in touch with ourselves. The need to move, talk, ask, and do has to be put on pause for those breaths. It's powerful, and it's teachable.

Secondly, as a family that seeks to nurture their connection amid the hustle of life, we need dates. These



aren't just reserved for romantic outings but also for mini-adventures with our child. Whether it's a father-daughter date or a girls' date, we appreciate the fact that we can have little secrets with our little one and bond in different ways. She knows that she can be active and playful with her dad, while she can look for a girly side with me whenever she needs it. We have routines on the weekends, which helps her know that we both intentionally want to spend time with her. Saturday mornings she will let us both sleep in to recharge. During the day we all do our own thing or have girls' time in the afternoon. On Sundays, she will be up with my husband, having breakfast and relaxing together, or going out for their date. If we all want to explore a new place, then it's a family date. On the other hand, our child encourages us to enjoy our moments away and together, emphasizing family unity.

Evident to us, including our now five-year-old, is that each of us has distinct needs and ways of receiving love. Embarking on the

delicate dance of showing love while maintaining personal space is like orchestrating a beautiful melody of connection and independence in the symphony of family life. Achieving balance feels wonderful and sounds harmonious.

Lastly, self-care emerges as the superhero in this tale of balancing love and personal space. Banish the guilt that may arise when you yearn for alone time. It's essential to recharge your batteries for the collective well-being of the family. Well, in my home, we often say "my mom just sleeps" because I need a lot of sleep to recover. I'm confident in showing my daughter that her mom can choose to prioritize her physical and mental health as a way to maintain her best self. We recognize our own signals when solitude beckons. Be it a warm bath, a good book (for her), a quiet walk, or simply unwinding in our favorite corner (for him), solitude is the key to balancing a healthy equilibrium.

Photos courtesy of the author and Canva.

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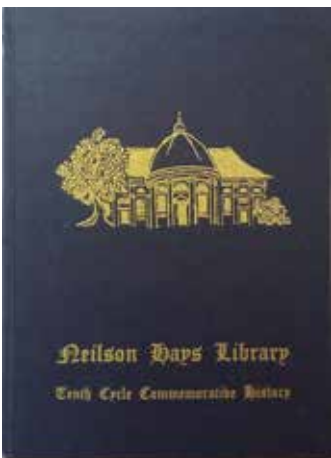
WORM LOVES WORM

by J.J. Austrian and Mike Curato

"Worm Loves Worm" is a sweet story that gently breaks the ice on LGBTQ+ love and challenges gender norms. The story starts as two worms fall in love and are determined to spend a lifetime together with the help and acceptance of their dear friends. The book is enjoyable for adults and can serve as a conversation starter for families to discuss what happens at weddings, the universality of love, and breaking traditional barriers.

This whimsical and comical book is author J.J. Austrian's debut title. Illustrator Mike Curato is most well-known as the author and illustrator of his award-winning graphic novel "Flamer" and whimsical "Little Elliot" picture books. Together Curato and Austrian combine clever dialogue and adorable illustrations to convey the timeless message that "all you need is love".

Published by Balzer + Bray, an imprint of Harper Collins, in January 2016. A hardcover copy can be found in the Children's Corner of the library.



NEILSON HAYS LIBRARY: COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY

Did you know that Bangkok has its very own Taj Mahal? Well, not exactly, but that is one of the Neilson Hays Library's endearing nicknames, as it was built as a monument of love over 100 years ago. American expat Dr. Thomas Heyward Hays, Chief of the Thai Royal Navy Hospital, built the library to honor his late wife, Danish American expat, Jennie Neilson Hays, who served as president of the library board.

"Neilson Hays Library: Commemorative History" is a guide to the library's past and offers a fascinating glimpse into the roots of expat life in Bangkok. The library's permanent building was designed in 1920 by Italian architect Mario Tamagno and completed in 1922. The Bangkok Women's Library Association was founded by 13 American and British women in 1869. The book celebrates their love of books, cultural conversations, and daily life as Bangkok's first expats, as well as one of the city's most enduring romantic tales.

Published by White Lotus Books in January 1989. A leatherbound copy can be found in the historic archives housed in the library's rotunda.

Prepared by Angela Chen, a Neilson Hays Library Board Member and the Children's Program Chair. The Neilson Hays Library is 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. 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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LOVE IN THE TIME OF CHILDREN

Love isn't always roses and chocolates. Joe explains that rising with the roosters or mastering the art of poo-etry prove to be the unsung heroes of true love!



About the Author

Having enjoyed taking his son to BAMBI playgroups over the past months, Joe is excited to volunteer with BAMBI. He and his wife moved to Thailand from the UK in 2018. In 2021 they were delighted to be joined by their son, Martin. They love exploring Thailand as a family, especially anywhere with a playground or sand.





It's February, which means it's time to think about love. Now, regular readers of this column will not be surprised to learn that Valentine's Day is largely uncelebrated in our house. Remembering Christmas and birthday gifts is a sufficient test of our generosity and imagination. Of course, we justify our disregard of this popular day by dismissing it as unnecessary and pretending that we show our love in other kind and thoughtful ways throughout the year. When we were younger, childless, and less exhausted, we might have shown our love with flowers, chocolates, romantic weekends away, and, hard though it is to believe now, sex. Now as exhausted parents, love is shown in very different ways.

Say it with sleep, not flowers

Surely the greatest gift one parent can give another is sleep. Exhaustion



is a state of being; at the moment, Martin is always up too early, and when he doesn't also decide to get up in the middle of the night, an existential crisis or weak bladder will ensure that we enjoy a broken night of sleep anyway. Presumably, this is nature's way of reminding us that raising a child is a young person's game.

Piercing cries wrench me from my sleep and seem to stab me with acute physical pain. While my body throbs with exhaustion, I, in total disorientation (it could be 11pm, 1am, or 5am), flail for my glasses and try to remember how to use them. Nothing inspires greater feelings of love and tenderness than when, in these testing moments, my wife says "I'll go". I may express my undying devotion in grunts and a pig-like snore, but it's no less sincere for that.

On the rare occasions when I, rather than my wife, get up, the fierce glow of pride I feel at my nobility almost makes up for the lack of sleep. Yes, it's midnight and I've been lying on a hard wooden floor for 30 minutes barely breathing for fear of stopping Marty from drifting back to sleep, but what a heroic gesture it was to allow my wife to remain abed. In times of yore, statues would've been erected and heroic poetry

written for such deeds. My mind drifts as I imagine the prizes for such greatness, then I hear a soft snore and slink thankfully back to my bed.

Let sleeping partners lie in

In the distant days of pre-baby bliss, I would frequently be woken by an alarm clock. The horrible ring of a bell or the dulcet tones of the radio frequently proved equally unappealing inducements to embrace a new day. I would fumble for the snooze button and drift back to sleep. Sadly, the benevolent designer of babies did not see fit to equip them with snooze buttons. Thus, while we are saving a tidy sum on alarm clock batteries, we are losing out on those delightful "just five more minutes" of sleep that could last a whole morning. Oh, happy, happy days. Of course, staggering downstairs, sleep-deprived and holding a baby screaming for milk, has its own hidden joys, possibly a little too well hidden at times, but I'm sure I will look back on these moments fondly one day.

When a howling, hungry child has ripped us from our sleep, I find that a simple "you stay in bed" is sure to be gratefully received, and rightly interpreted as a truer demonstration of love than roses or



chocolates could ever be. Perhaps the statues will be a little smaller and the poetry a tad less epic, but there is still a simple, loving nobility to such actions. So if you're searching for that perfect Valentine's gift, do consider simply leaving your loved one in bed while you and the children get up and play.

Netflix or bedtime

Bathtime and bedtime with Marty are both lovely. While bathing Marty gets him a teeny-weeny bit cleaner, the bathroom floor gets thoroughly soaked as water is poured with many a joyous giggle through funnels and teapots repurposed as bath toys. A cute and endearing experience, followed by bedtime stories. Marty loves his books and as we cuddle up in his bed, he is at his most adorable. Despite an extremely generous five-book limit, we struggle to resist when he asks for one more story. We already have so many old favorites which vie with the newest arrivals from the library for the top spot on his most-popular list. Finally though, we have to stop, and after just one more "big hug", we leave him to sleep.

A heartwarming and delightful job, and yet as 7:30pm approaches, both

my wife and I are silently hoping that the other will volunteer to do bedtime. It's been another long day, followed by an exhausting evening playing with Marty. All we want to do now is curl up on the sofa with a good book, or better, Netflix, for an hour or so before bed. Yet one of us has to do bedtime. What better gift for a partner than offering to do bedtime so that they can enjoy a favorite show? It might not sound as romantic as those pre-child movie nights, but it is sure to inspire just as tender feelings!

Poo-etry from the heart

Say what you will about children, but they do give you an unparalleled opportunity to become intimately involved with any number of bodily fluids. Not a pleasant job, but babies make it clear pretty quickly that somebody needs to do it, and that somebody is probably you!

Another stinky nappy means that both Marty and his reusable nappy need washing. The joys of toilet training mean that there may also be a potty and a large area of floor that need cleaning as well. Oh no! He's trodden in it. Where is this all coming from? How has he got it in his hair? Catching Marty before

everything is coated in poo is not a one-person job, but once the mucky monkey has been restrained, it's time for another grand romantic gesture.

Cleaning the offending child, the contaminated floor, and everything else they have come into contact with rivals anything that Hercules had to contend with; offering to take on this thirteenth labor can only make you look heroic in your loved ones' eyes. I've come to believe that I'm never as beautiful to my wife as when I'm covered in poo that she hasn't had to be involved with. So if you're still struggling for that perfect gift, invest in some rubber gloves, a biohazard suit, and prepare to tackle the poo monster!

There are so many ways we can show our love for our partners in child raising. They may not be the usually expensive things traditionally associated with Valentine's Day, nor typically seen as romantic, but they are sure to be appreciated. So while our ideas of love and romance are very different to before children, there are still things we can do to show that love all year round.

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LOVE IS IN THE AIR (FRYER)



For many of us, eating together is an important way to connect with those we love. This simple but delicious meal is the perfect excuse for some quality time together this Valentine’s Day.

Valentine’s Day is a time when love is in the air, and nothing brings people closer like the magic of food. Food isn’t just about eating—it’s a way to share feelings and create special moments together. Imagine the flavors in a dish as a way to express love, just how two people share affectionate glances and smiles. Whether it’s savoring a delicious meal or laughing together while enjoying good food, it all weaves into a beautiful story of love and togetherness. Every bite becomes a way to show care and warmth, connecting hearts in a unique way. Valentine’s Day is the perfect moment to celebrate both love and the joy that food brings into our lives. This easy air fryer meal guarantees love at first bite.

Happy Valentine’s Day, now and every day!

TENDER CHICKEN BREAST WITH SILKY POTATO MASH AND STEAMED BEANS

Ingredients

- 2 medium potatoes
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon ginger powder
- 2 chicken breasts (with or without skin)
- olive oil
- 30 ml cream or full cream milk
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 garlic clove, roughly chopped
- Yard-long beans (or any other green beans you can find)
- Salt and pepper
- Fresh basil leaves to garnish

Equipment

- Air fryer
- Steamer basket and pot or electric steamer
- High-speed blender
- Tablespoon
- Teaspoon
- Knife
- Small bowl



Instructions

1. Place the potatoes in a pot and cover with cold water. Add a pinch of salt to enhance the flavor and bring the water to the boil over a high heat.
2. Once the water reaches a rolling boil, reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the potatoes are tender. They should be easily pierced with a fork without falling apart. While the potatoes are boiling, you can start on the chicken.
3. Add the spices to a small bowl and mix.
4. Coat the chicken breasts with olive oil, then rub a generous amount of the spice blend into each one. Make sure to do this on both sides of each breast.
5. Place the chicken breasts in the air fryer and set to 160°C for 20–25 minutes. Flip the breasts halfway through.
6. Once the potatoes are cooked, remove them from the pot and cut into chunks.
7. Add the potato to the blender with the milk or cream, butter, and chopped garlic. Blend on high speed until creamy. It should have a smooth and velvety consistency.
8. Over to the beans. Rinse, trim the ends, and cut them into smaller pieces.
9. Bring water to the boil in a pot or the base of an electric steamer. Once the water is boiling, place the long beans in the steamer basket and cover with a lid to trap the steam.
10. Steam the beans for 5–7 minutes. They are ready when they are bright green and tender, with a slight crunch.
11. Drizzle olive oil over the steamed beans and sprinkle with salt and pepper.
12. Plating: first, add the silky potato mash and flatten it so it forms a “bed” for the chicken breasts to rest on. Place the chicken breasts on the mash, and lay the long beans next to the chicken breasts whichever way you prefer. Finally, add a little freshness to the meal by placing fresh basil leaves on top of the chicken.

Bon Appetit!

Photos courtesy of the author; title image from Canva.

About the Author

Anelia is a performing artist from South Africa. She has been living and working as a teacher in Thailand for nine years. She also writes educational children’s books, makes music, and loves to spend time in the kitchen. Follow her adventures on IG @aneliavz.





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FROM COOING TO CONVERSATION: AN INTERVIEW WITH A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

Kelly sits down with speech-language pathologist, Halie, to learn more about what to expect when our little ones learn to communicate and how we can support their language development.



About the Author

Kelly is currently a stay-at-home mom who has lived in Bangkok for over seven years. She previously worked as a primary educator and literacy specialist. Kelly loves reading fiction books, listening to podcasts, and exploring Thailand with her family.





If your family are big Bluey fans like mine, you are probably familiar with the episode “Baby Race”. In the episode, Chilli, the mom in the family of four, reminisces about wanting her daughter Bluey to be the first baby to start walking. She eventually reminds Bluey to “run her own race” and not compare herself to others.

As the parent of a toddler, it’s so easy to relate to the milestone race, especially with your first child. You go to playgroup and can’t help but watch other kids roll, crawl, walk, or chatter away in full sentences. Last year I took my daughter to music class each week, and every week I watched a little boy her exact age hold full conversations with the teacher, his nanny, and other toddlers. My daughter would happily shout “Bubbles! Ball! Book!”, but wasn’t close to approaching his level of dialogue. As it turns out, I didn’t need to compare—my daughter was running her own race.

Language development is a complex and often confusing topic, so I chose to sit down and chat with my good friend, Halie Peveto, an experienced speech-language pathologist (SLP). Halie has ten years of experience working as an SLP to support children’s language development. She has worked in the United States, Germany, and Thailand, and is currently based in Shanghai.

What communication and language milestones should parents be aware of at different stages of development?

Birth to one year: A lot happens in a child’s first year of life. Throughout the first year, your child will most likely engage in vocal play by cooing, babbling, and making or imitating sounds. Around one year of age, you might start to hear a few words such as “mama,” “dada,” or “hi.”

One to two years old: As your child gets older, you should see their language grow. By two years old, most children understand and use around 50 or more words. Some of the first English sounds children use are the p/b, m/w, and h sounds.

Two to three years old: By this time, your child is most likely putting words together to form phrases and short sentences. They’ll be able to answer basic questions such as “what” and “where”. Remember, pointing to items still counts as being able to answer questions.

Three to four years old: This is such a fun age because by now your child should be able to tell you a story and comment about their day. They will be using a variety of words and concepts such as prepositions, comparisons, and sizes.



Four to five years old: By age five, your child's sentences will likely be longer and more grammatically correct. They can follow directions to play games and will be able to make connections about themselves and things in their environment.

What's the difference between expressive and receptive language?

Receptive language is typically explained as the language we understand. Expressive language is often defined as the language we use to express ourselves and communicate. We express ourselves through various ways such as facial expressions, using words, pointing, using gestures, and signing.

Should I be concerned if my child uses word approximations, such as "wawa" for water or "ca" for car?

It depends on the age of your child. For example, these word approximations are typically observed from age one to two. However, I have encountered many children still using word approximations at age three who did not qualify for speech and language services. It would be atypical for a five-year-old to still be verbally communicating through word approximations only. Once a child reaches age three, it is anticipated that their intelligibility will increase to around 75%.

What should I do if I'm concerned about my child's language development?

Some common concerns parents have are

- my child is not speaking,
- my child is only using a few words,
- my child does not seem to understand what I say to them, and
- my child is not able to express themselves when they feel angry or frustrated.

If you are concerned about your child's language development, I would recommend contacting a speech-language pathologist.

Early intervention is important, so if you are in a position to get your child support at a young age, I would recommend it. During an evaluation, caregivers might be surprised that the SLP is not as concerned as they are. If your child qualifies for language delay, the SLP should provide models and strategies you can use at home to promote language development.

As parents we are the most important source for our children's language development. On the next page are some of the best, and most fun, things you can do with your children to support their natural process of language development.



Things parents can do to support language development

Model language	Talk to your child even at a young age. Narrate what you are doing, respond to their vocalizations, and interact with them. Modeling language is powerful.
Sing songs	Children learn language through multiple exposures and repetitions. Most songs are very repetitive and have fun melodies and intonations which help keep a child's attention.
Read	Reading is essential! I cannot stress this enough. Reading together allows you to bond with your child and explore new vocabulary through books. Reading can create so many opportunities for language. You can ask your child to point to items, label pictures, describe what people are doing, make predictions about what may happen on the next page, or talk about facial expressions and emotions.
Give choices	I like to give children choices in activities. This can give them some ownership but also allows you to maintain some control. Giving choices is important if your child is still learning vocabulary and does not know the names of items. You could potentially avoid a moment of frustration by asking, "Do you want milk or water?" as opposed to asking, "What do you want to drink?"
Expand	Expand on the language that your child is using. For example, if your child says "bubble" you can expand and say, "bubbles go up" or "pop the bubble."
Play	Play with your child at their level. It's important to be face-to-face with a child so they can hear you and see your mouth and facial expressions. Play is a powerful tool as it creates so many opportunities for language modeling and building. I recommend cycling through toys as opposed to having all the toys out at one time.

As I write this, my two-week-old daughter is sleeping in my lap. Together, our family is beginning a new journey into the land of growth and development milestones. I've already tried to convince my husband she is smiling at us! While I am sure that I will have moments of doubt, I hope that this time I remember from the start that we are all running our own race and that my daughter's achievements are cause for celebration and joy.

Photos from Canva.



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

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

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Location: The Purple Elephant 49

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The Purple Elephant 49 is located on Sukhumvit Soi 49/13, a serene residential area in Phrom Phong, featuring a blissful bamboo forest that embodies calm and tranquillity. Children engage in learning through three languages: English, Mandarin, and Thai.



reserve your visit

For more information, please contact thepurpleelephant@elc.ac.th



PARENTAL ESCAPE: ME-TIME WORKSHOPS BY BAMBI

Parenthood can feel like a whirlwind, and when you add to it life as a busy expat in Bangkok, we can all too often find ourselves neglecting to take care of the most important member of the family—us! Luckily, BAMBI has thoughtfully crafted Me-Time workshops to support busy parents like you and offer opportunities for much-needed self-care.



About the Author

Sara is a Cantonese (Hong Kong) - Thai mixed Mommy who has lived in Bangkok for 30 years. She speaks Cantonese, Mandarin, Thai and English fluently, and has been BAMBI's Chinese coordinator since May 2018. She took on the role of Playgroup coordinator and joined the BAMBI executive board in 2021.





During the challenging COVID-19 pandemic, BAMBI was forced to shut down all our activities, including our Me-Time workshops. We were delighted to bring back this popular parent-only offering toward the end of last year with some fun and inspiring sessions.

In October, we held a dot painting workshop hosted by artist Amy Diener. Creating art is Amy's way of expressing her journey through life. Painting is her positive outlet, and her art reflects her life and the world around us. She creates detailed dot paintings of mandalas, animals, trees, flowers, portraits, and figures. This workshop was a rejuvenating experience where we were able to take a break from parenting duties and indulge in a calming and creative activity. All the attendees got to relax, unwind, and express their artistic side.



We had a change of pace in December with our Zumba workshop led by teacher Bambi Lerat. Bambi is a Zumba® Education Specialist (ZES™) and has been dancing since the age of four. She brings party vibes to every single class she teaches, and she connects to every song through musicality and emotion, so that everyone can feel connected in the same way.

Bambi says, "Dance is a universal language—we all understand each other through the art of motion through music. It's a safe space for everyone to feel like they belong". All the attendees had so much fun while getting a good workout!

This year we're planning workshops that cover various interests such as drawing, painting, creative writing, and other fun experiences and hobbies. No prior skills are needed—just a willingness to retreat from the daily hustle and take a few hours away from your parental responsibilities to get creative and unwind with a community of like-minded peers.

Check our website calendar for up-to-date information on our upcoming Me-Time sessions. We hope you'll join us!

Photos by BAMBI photo team.





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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THE THINGS WE LOVE

Practicing gratitude is a great way to boost self-love, and it's so simple, even the youngest members of the family can join in.

We interviewed some of our little ones to find out what they love and are grateful for. Here's what they said!

MARTY



Diggers

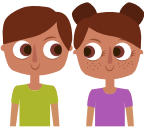


Combine harvesters



Bulldozers


KIAAN



Playing with my elder sister, Kiara



Wearing Papa's shoes



Eating pancakes

KIARA



Coloring




Riding my mini scooter




Playing with my dolls


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My friends



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Chocolate

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26, Soi Thonglor 25, Sukhumvit 55 rd., Klongton-nua, Wattana, Bkk 10110

EMBRACING HARMONY: EMOTIONS, WELL-BEING, AND LOVE IN TCM

Jeannie looks at love from the perspective of Traditional Chinese Medicine and provides some tips on how to nurture our bodies and minds to let love flow.

About the Author

Jeannie is currently pursuing an honors degree in psychology with a focus on clinical applications. Prior to this, she was an acupuncturist specializing in fertility, stress management, and pain relief in Sydney for 12 years. With her unique blend of Eastern and Western therapeutic approaches and maternal perspective, as feature writer, Jeannie promises a valuable contribution to BAMBI magazine.



Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) dates back more than 2000 years, long before the development of psychology and mental health. Ancient TCM practitioners believed in a holistic approach to health, encompassing both physical and spiritual well-being. They observed a powerful link between emotional and physical health, noting that imbalances in one could harm the other.

According to TCM, five main organs govern five central emotions. These paired emotions and organs are

- joy and heart;
- worry and spleen;
- sadness and lungs;
- anger and liver; and
- fear and kidneys.

When suppressed or experienced in excess, these emotions become pathological emotions—emotions that can cause abnormal health. If we were to translate TCM’s emotions into modern psychological terms, joy would be similar to mania, worry to anxiety, sadness to depression, and fear to phobias.

But what about love? Where does the experience of love fit into the concepts inherent in TCM?

In TCM, emotions are all about balance and harmony. In simple terms, any experience that is not balanced, whether excessive or



deficient, can lead to emotional and physical symptoms. For example, a person struggling with depression struggles to feel an emotional connection with others, and they may also experience stomach aches and headaches (1). However, if someone is in complete harmony

with their emotional health, they can freely express and receive unconditional love.

Guided by this principle, here are three tips on how to maintain your emotional balance and allow love to flourish in your life.

1. Be curious about your emotions

Lacking awareness of or deliberately ignoring your emotions can harm your emotional health. When one is unaware of one’s emotions, they can slowly fester over time and eventually lead to burnout when faced with a traumatic situation. Similarly, brooding over an emotion can lead to unhealthy habits, such as rumination and worst-case-scenario thinking. So the next time you experience something unusual in your body, take a moment to pause and use your curiosity to identify and understand what you are feeling and why. There is no need to try to change how you feel,



but acknowledging and accepting your emotions can help you to be an emotionally healthy individual. This approach can also be helpful when dealing with children.

2. Be compassionate toward yourself

During my years in practice as a TCM specialist, I found that many of my clients were compassionate towards others but were often their own harshest critics. These clients tended to be highly critical of themselves, including their school or work performance, mistakes they made, or even small decisions. I frequently observed this across various cultures and occupations. People's inability to forgive and love themselves made it challenging for them to accept gratitude or recognition from peers, colleagues, or even parents.

Tools for practicing self-compassion

One effective way to practice self-compassion is treating yourself with the same kindness and understanding you would offer to a friend (2). A great way to give self-kindness is to write a letter to yourself. You can write about your mistakes but offer words of reassurance and encouragement, rather than criticism or judgment.

Another powerful way to give self-kindness is using positive affirmations. Here are a few examples.

- "I forgive myself for making mistakes. Everyone stumbles, and I can learn and grow from this." This affirmation normalizes missteps and offers self-compassion instead of self-blame. It frees you from guilt and empowers you to keep moving forward.



- "I treat myself with the same kindness and understanding I would offer a dear friend." This affirmation encourages you to cultivate the same gentle empathy for yourself as you would readily offer others. It shifts your perspective to one of support and encouragement.
- "I am worthy of love and kindness, even when I feel imperfect." This affirmation, the most powerful one, gently reminds you that your intrinsic worth isn't tied to achievements or flaws. It fosters self-love and acceptance, even on challenging days.

3. Use mindfulness to live in the present

It can be tempting to dwell on the past, whether it be past mistakes or fond memories. Similarly, obsessing over potential future events can also be hard to ignore.

Focusing on either the past or the future can interfere with our ability to truly live in the present moment. Mindfulness meditation is a popular and effective way to help us remain

engaged in the present. In fact, mindfulness meditation is so popular that there are countless online-based techniques available, making it convenient and easy to practice daily. According to a systematic review, even mindfulness meditation apps, like Calm, are effective tools for reducing stress and promoting presence in the current moment (3). Additionally, this systematic review found that practicing five to ten minutes of daily mindfulness meditation for just five weeks had a therapeutic effect.

By being aware, compassionate, and mindful of our emotions, we can create a healthy and balanced emotional state that allows love to flourish. It is important to remember that we are all human and emotions are a natural part of our existence. Instead of suppressing or ignoring them, we should embrace and learn from them. This not only benefits our emotional health but also has a positive impact on our physical well-being. So, don't be afraid to dive deep into your emotions and strive for balance in all areas of your life.

Photos from Canva.

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BAMBI PLAYGROUPS & ACTIVITIES

BAMBI holds regular playgroups and activities around town, open to both BAMBI members and non-members. BAMBI playgroups are characterized by free play and the use of venues' toys and playgrounds. BAMBI Activities provide a wide range of activities for children aged one to six years old to develop their athletic, creative and cognitive skills.



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**BRITISH CLUB
PLAYGROUP**



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PLAYGROUP**



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KUNG FU

SCAN NOW

To find out more about all of our playgroups and activities, scan the QR code to visit our website. We also have a non-BAMBI playgroup listing. We look forward to seeing you soon at one of our events.



BAMBI PLAYGROUPS



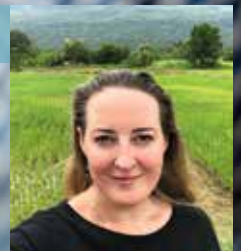
**NON-BAMBI
PLAYGROUPS**

FINDING LOVE AS A SINGLE MOM

Managing life as a single, working mom doesn't leave time for much else. Coco May tells us how a wink motivated her toward finding new love.

About the Author

Coco May is an Aussie expat in Thailand. She juggles being a single mum with a demanding career. She has learned to never say no to a good kid's club and is not afraid to call Mama noodles "dinner".



After a long day of meetings, I was sitting at Changi Airport waiting for my flight back to Bangkok. I had been away from my kids for two nights and had just finished my goodnight FaceTime with them. They were giggly excited that mommy was coming home and would be there when they woke up.

I stared into space thinking about all the things I needed to do when I got home, writing a to-do list in my mind. A young family sat in front of me with two exhausted-looking parents trying to wrangle a little boy who just wanted them to pull his Trunki, and an older girl who was sulking because her iPad battery was about to die. The man was in a suit and had clearly either just finished work or had been to Singapore on business. The woman, with a soft North American accent and long flowy dress, was negotiating with both the toddler and girl, trying to avoid World War III. The dad picked up the little boy, and with his other hand, reached into his satchel and tossed the girl a power bank. Both kids' faces lit up and the mother's face melted in relief. I smiled as I watched them. He turned to his wife and gave a cheeky wink.

Such a simple gesture but it was so powerful.

His wink said "we got this, babe" and "you can thank me later" all in one. It was flirtatious yet supportive, and it gave me goosebumps.

On the flight home, I thought a lot about that wink. You see, I've been officially single for just over a year. For five years before that, I was in an unhappy marriage. There had been no winks sent in my direction for a very long time. Certainly not the flirty kind.

I didn't realize how much I missed it.

My life is full of love now. I am told every single day that I am beautiful by my sweet three-year-old son.

Affection is abundant and every day I get more than my fix of kisses and cuddles. I feel loved and I give love. I am not, however, in love.



How do I even find the time to meet someone between work, school activities, and being a full-time parent? I'm not sure I even have the energy for it.

Then I remember the wink.

The goosebumps.

I feel motivated to find the time and energy to meet new people. I remind myself that if I want to be on the receiving end of a flirty wink, I must get off my sofa.

I go on a date set up through an online app, but it goes nowhere. Life gets busy, the memory of the wink starts to fade, and the fire that was sparked is now more like some smoldering ash. What I crave is the idea of a soulmate, a partner in crime, a crush. It's the wink. I want the flirty wink from my best friend. I'm just not sure he's hanging out online, waiting to meet a 40-year-old single mom. One thing's for sure—he isn't hanging out on my sofa.

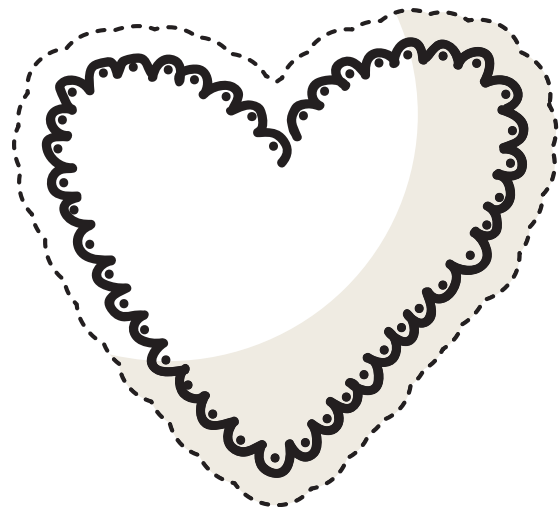
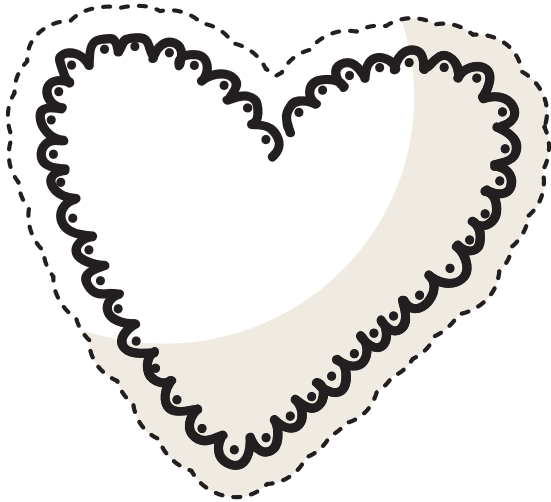
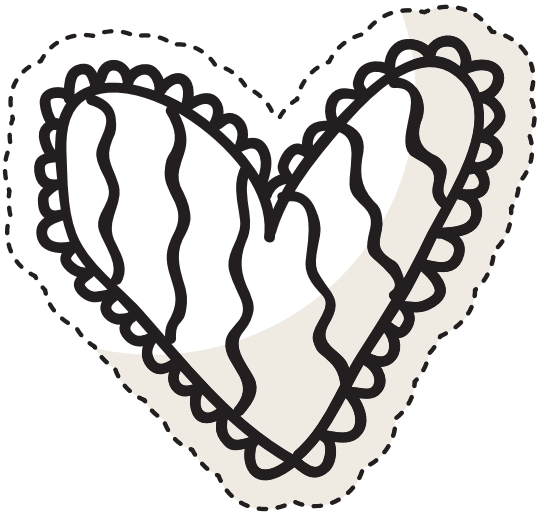
I reactivated the app about two weeks ago. Not much has changed. But occasionally, a man steps up and sparks of potential fly again.

One man grabs my attention and we spend a few days having intense debates via Line. He is divorced, with a young daughter of his own. So far, we are one dinner in, but a dinner that lasted four hours as we discussed everything from commodities trading to parenting tips. I am sure we have the foundations of a great friendship. Whether there is goosebump potential remains to be seen. A second date is locked in so that's a start. The fire has been stoked, and I am excited about the idea that I may one day find my wink.

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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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