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Welcome to BAMBI

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- Mel Habanananda



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

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

Mission Statement

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

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

For more information on CBFT, contact:

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

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Dear Members,

T

This month's magazine focuses on mental health and well-being for the entire family, addressing the challenges faced by parents and children alike. Over the past few years, the combination of parenthood and external events such as the pandemic and the recent earthquake in Bangkok has turned my journey as a parent into a wild and exhilarating roller coaster ride. It's fair to say that 2025 has already been filled with enough excitement, and it's only April! This underscores the importance of nurturing emotional resilience, managing stress, and promoting positive mental health habits.



Reflecting on my own experiences, navigating new motherhood in a foreign country during lockdown presented numerous challenges. Despite the difficulties, I found solace in familiar activities such as practicing yoga with my baby, enjoying morning hot chocolate instead of coffee, and virtually exploring interesting locations. Connecting with other moms through BAMBI's playgroups was instrumental in finding support, and today, I'm proud to be a volunteer with the organization.

In this issue, you'll discover valuable insights on mindfulness, family communication strategies, and more to foster a nurturing environment for healthy minds. Wishing you all an engaging and mindful month ahead!

Warm regards,

Frances Billones
Executive Board Member and BAMBI Website Coordinator





A

A thriving mind is the foundation for a thriving life, yet it's often overlooked in the rush of daily routine. As parents and caregivers, nurturing our own well-being is just as important as caring for our children's emotional and physical health, but how easy is it for us to keep forgetting this? The hard truth is that when we neglect our own well-being, we risk becoming poor role models for the little ones we're striving to give our best to.

This May, BAMBI Magazine dives into the vital world of mental health and well-being for families and presents insights on nurturing emotional resilience, managing stress, and fostering positive mental health habits. Here's a quick look at the articles we have:

"Nature Therapy" by Rachel Ofo, a refreshing reminder that a dose of sunshine, greenery, sand, and water can work wonders in revitalizing our spirits and easing the stresses of daily life.

"The Emotional Load of Parenthood" by Jeannie Kim, a look into the partnership she shares with her husband, and the steps they take to support each other with the emotional demands of raising children.

"When to Seek Help" by Claudia Gomes, a helpful guide to identifying the signs that can indicate whether you or a loved one might benefit from seeking professional help, and empathetic ways to broach the subject.

"Breaking the Cycle and Redefining Childhood Patterns" by Maheshika MacKenzie-Baker (Myshi) is a reflection on how embracing gentle parenting transformed her family life, fostering deeper connection, emotional well-being, and lasting happiness for both herself and her children.

"Three Keys to Calming an Angry Child" by Sonali Vongchusiri, a must-read for parents interested in teaching their little ones healthy ways to manage the red emotion, and thus keep power struggles to a minimum.

"Looking After Number One" by Joe Barker who reminds us that "no one is indispensable". In the midst of holding space for our childrens' emotions and needs, it is possible and okay to hand over the duties and set some time aside for oneself.

"How Co-sleeping Saved My Sanity" by Kelly Patten offers a candid look into her family's decision to embrace co-sleeping after struggling with conventional safe-sleep guidelines, and the health and well-being benefits reaped by them as a result.

"Small Wins for Big Growth" by Sheena Low explores how nurturing a growth mindset and resilience in children starts with recognizing and joyfully acknowledging their everyday achievements—not just the major milestones.

We also have a playful search and find exercise by Liz Ainsworth, aimed at getting little ones talking about emotions in Fun Corner; and in Readers' Corner, Kit Lang reviews "The Perks of Being a Wallflower" by Stephen Chbosky and "Beautifully Me" by Nabela Noor. The former is a poignant coming-of-age story that delves into identity, mental health, and the trials of adolescence, while the latter speaks about body positivity, and embracing one's unique identity from a young age.

We hope this month's content inspires you and your family to flourish. Let's all work towards building healthy minds and hearts.

Sanam Rahman
Editor



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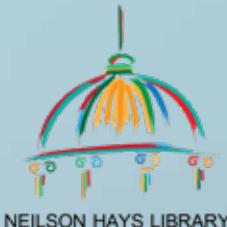
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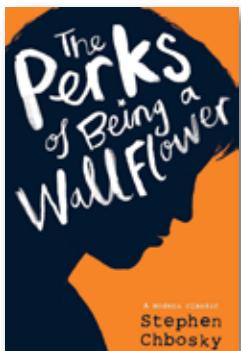
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THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER

By Stephen Chbosky

To truly understand a child, we must first understand their inner world. In "The Perks of Being a Wallflower" the complexities of adolescence are explored through the eyes of Charlie, a shy and introspective teenager. As he navigates high school, friendship, family, and mental health, the novel emphasizes the importance of recognizing the emotional struggles children face—often hidden beneath the surface.



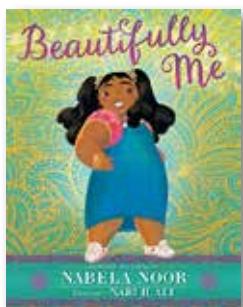
Charlie's quiet, introspective nature highlights the need for parents and caregivers to connect with their children, particularly during the turbulent teenage years. His emotional challenges are largely concealed, showing how even the most reserved children may be burdened by profound feelings. Through Charlie's journey, Chbosky stresses the importance of creating a safe space for children to express themselves without fear of judgment. Parents must listen deeply, looking beyond superficial conversations to understand their children's true emotions and offer unconditional support to make them feel heard and validated.

"The Perks of Being A Wallflower" was published by Simon & Schuster Ltd in 1999. Stephen Chbosky, an American film director, screenwriter, and author wrote and directed the 2012 film adaptation of the book. You can find a paperback copy in the non-fiction section of the Neilson Hays Library.

BEAUTIFULLY ME

Written by Nabela Noor and illustrated by Nabi H. Ali

"Beautifully Me" is an empowering memoir that explores themes of self-love, body positivity, and mental health. Through her journey, Nabela opens up about her struggles with body image, cultural expectations, and societal beauty standards. The book is a heartfelt reminder that true beauty lies in embracing one's authentic self, regardless of shape, size, or background.



Nabela's candid storytelling fosters a deep connection with readers, particularly those navigating similar challenges. Her experiences highlight how societal pressures can negatively impact mental health, but her message encourages readers to break free from these standards and practice self-acceptance. By sharing her journey, Nabela demonstrates how embracing imperfections and cultivating self-love can lead to stronger mental well-being.

"Beautifully Me" is not just about redefining beauty; it's about empowering readers to prioritize their mental health and well-being, teaching them to love themselves unconditionally.

"Beautifully Me" was published on September 14, 2021, by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. A copy of "Beautifully Me" can be found in the Children's Corner of the library.



These reviews have been prepared by Kit Lang (@mskitlang) for the 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. 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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NATURE THERAPY

Thailand is a beautiful country of soothing sands and calming countryside, but Rachel reminds us that we don't have to wait for a trip out of town to enjoy the many mental and physical benefits of spending time outside and in nature.



Sussex, UK



About the Author

Rachel Ofo moved from the US to Bangkok in 2016 and spent six and a half years there. She has a daughter, whom she loves dragging around on various adventures like hikes and fishing trips. In her free time, she enjoys reading, watching movies, and trying new restaurants. She also enjoys being out in nature.



Inyo National Forest, USA

A

As a child, I remember the excitement of jumping into the car and gearing up for an outdoor adventure with my family. We'd spend a few days camping in the mountains to see the stars and enjoy s'mores, some mornings hiking through forests, fighting bugs to reach beautiful waterfalls, or hours rocking back and forth on the ocean waiting for the next fish to bite. Although recreational activities like these weren't typical for my parents growing up, they did spend time outdoors playing with friends, working the family farms, and walking around their villages, so they understood the necessity of being outside. Although our "outdoor time" looked a little different from theirs, it still offered the same benefits. Being outside is healing. Being outside revitalizes. Being outside helps you be a better you.

Whether in a rural town, big city, or suburban neighborhood, there are always ways to step outside and reap the benefits nature has to offer. Throughout this article, you'll see the phrase "nature therapy". But what is it? Is it something you pay for? Something informal? Or something limited to your geographic location? We'll go over what it is, who can partake, how it boosts mental health, and practical ways to incorporate it into daily life.

WHAT IS NATURE THERAPY?

Nature therapy is also known as ecotherapy, green care, green exercise, green therapy, or horticulture therapy, and it's believed to help improve a person's mood (1, 2). It can include relaxing activities like painting with natural ingredients, gardening, or grounding, which I love because it's a practice that involves walking barefoot on—or lying on or simply running fingers through—grass, sand, or any other surface of the earth. Some opt for more adventurous outdoor activities like white-water rafting and wilderness survival. The point is to get outside, and the possibilities are endless. You can even hire professionals who specialize in aiding those who may need a bit of assistance using the outdoors to help their minds heal. What you do and how you do it is between you and your mother (nature).

I've seen instances of those who opt out of formal care, utilizing the outdoors to help boost mental health. According to the Natural Library of Medicine, the outdoors can positively impact health and well-being by stimulating all the senses (3). Think about a day spent in Lumpini Park. What do you see? What do you hear? How does the grass feel between your fingers and toes? Or the sun on your skin—hopefully it wasn't

during Thai summer. What can you smell? What does that pineapple you bought at the entrance taste like? Think about how your body felt being able to react to everything around you. Being outdoors, or in some form of green space has been linked to decreasing anxiety, depression symptoms, and stress levels, while increasing mental clarity (1). The best way to take advantage of this though, is finding what works for you.

The point of nature therapy is to promote mental wellness, not stress. So if the green environment being suggested isn't conducive to your personal growth, adjust. I don't always feel like packing gear and my child into a car. Sometimes I just want to take a few shoeless steps outside or sit out in the sun.

VITAMIN D

Studies show that "low vitamin D levels are associated with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety" (4). This means staying inside, away from sunlight can negatively affect your mental health because vitamin D, along with omega-3 fatty acids, can positively help the production and release of serotonin, which is responsible for the regulation of mood and emotions. Being outside is so important because approximately 80% of vitamin D comes from sunlight via your skin (4). Although



Luang Prabang, Laos

vitamin D deficiency can be caused by various factors, lack of sunlight shouldn't be one of them, especially in a country like Thailand which gets plenty of sunshine.

I can attest to this. Having spent seven years in Thailand where I would take my daughter out regularly, I'd get my daily dose of sunlight from waiting for a taxi on the road, looking for monitor lizards in a nearby khlong, or biking around Nong Bon Park. Then we moved back to the States, where every day we go straight from house to car to destination. I didn't realize anything was wrong until my hair started falling out. I took a blood test and was informed my vitamin D levels were dangerously low. Everything made sense. My regularly sour mood, my dull skin, and my incessant joint pain were likely due to the fact I was only getting a fraction of the vitamin D my body was used to. So now I make a conscious effort to get outside.

OUTSIDE IN BANGKOK

Bangkok has so many opportunities to enjoy nature, even if you don't really enjoy exerting yourself outside. There are plenty of beautiful parks to visit and relax in while your child plays. There are so many cute cafes with natural motifs that will allow you to be outdoors without the inconveniences of being outdoors, like bugs and direct sunlight. My daughter used to love this little coffee shop called "64 Coffee by Sukhum". Part of the shop was built right around a tree. It's so pretty and calming. For those who want to amp up the adventure with the little ones, I would suggest places like Get Growing Community Farm.

For those who like to be outside, but simply can't handle the heat, I've heard wonderful things about stargazing in Thailand's northern national parks. If you do find yourself heading out in the sun, be sure to check out Apps to Beat the Heat and

Sun Safety (5, 6). These will help you stay safe while out and about.

Even on my most miserable trips, I look back with fondness. From days where I felt I would freeze overnight in my tent to 12 hours of not getting a single nibble on my fishing line. The worst days I've had outdoors are still better than being stuck inside all day. I always felt alive, balanced, and in tune with myself. Let this serve as a reminder to get out, get some nature, and, if you need it, get some help. Find what works for you, your family, and your situation. We're surrounded by this beautiful Earth, full of beautiful things, so let's allow it to help us be happier people. We have this life, and we should take care to enjoy it with as much nature therapy as we need.

Photos courtesy of the author

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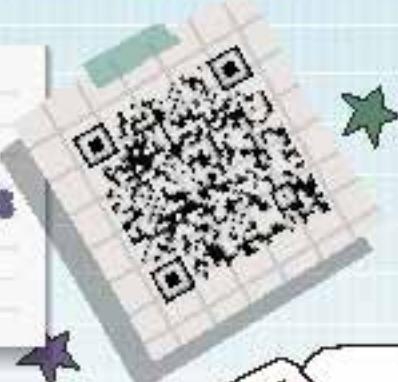


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HANDLING SEPARATION: THE BEST WAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Anna shares lessons from the Netflix movie, *Spellbound*, and advice on how parents can navigate separation while maintaining healthy relationships with their children.

Photo by Mike Marchetti from baseimage



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.



Photo by cottonbro studio from Pexels

M

Managing relationship struggles, separation, or divorce can be tricky with children. It may feel like hurting your children is inevitable. Though navigating this kind of situation can be difficult, some methods make the process smoother and healthier for your children.

I recently watched the movie "Spellbound" on Netflix which deals with this topic. I thought it would be a great watch for many families. To summarize: a mysterious and powerful spell has turned Princess Ellian's parents into monsters, and she has taken it upon herself to save them. She ventures with them into a magical forest to find a way to reverse the spell. Throughout the journey, her parents constantly argue, but she believes reversing the spell will make her family happy again, just as it used to be.

At the movie's climax, her parents reveal to Ellian that their relationship has been struggling for quite some time and things can't return to how they used to be. Their journey helps them realize that their conflict was the cause of their monstrous

transformation and that separation would be healthier. A dark cloud descends on Ellian at this revelation, threatening to turn her into a monster as well. She sings about how hurt she feels that her parents are giving up, asking what's going to happen to her, after everything she's endured, what's going to happen to her.

So how does Ellian come to accept her parent's separation? What do her parents do? The story seems bleak at this point, but it ends well. Before we get to that, let's look at a few lessons here that our counselors at NCS help unpack.

"Children need to know what's happening, don't tell them things are okay when it's not," counselor Dave highlights. Parents often hide their conflict with good intentions—they don't want to burden their children. However, this can end up causing them more pain in the long run. For most of the movie, Ellian is unaware of her parents' conflict. She knows they tend to argue, but thinks that everything is okay, which is why her parents' decision to separate becomes unbearably overwhelming

for her. Letting your child know what is happening can help minimize the shock. Counselor Rex adds, "It is best to tell your children of the decision with both parents present."

So how much should you tell them? Counselor Johanna advises giving them a general overview without going into too much detail. As seen with Ellian, children often think the conflict involves them and may try to improve the situation to get their parents back together. The more details they know, the higher the chance of them attempting to solve the conflicts. You can simply tell them that you are going through a difficult time while assuring them that this conflict is not about them and does not affect your love for them in any way.

Struggling couples may sometimes get caught up in their emotions towards their partner, which they then express to their children. All of our counselors would like to stress the importance of remaining respectful and not talking negatively about the other parent to your children. "Don't try to get the



Photo by Kampus Production from Pexels

children on your side just to hurt the other person," counselor Pam says, "This turns your child into a weapon within the conflict." Parents also sometimes use their children as messengers without realizing how harmful it is. Getting angry and saying things like "Go tell your mother/father that..." places the burden of the conflict upon the child's shoulders. They now carry the weight of going between the parents and trying to resolve the conflict for them. This can be very difficult for them to handle emotionally and could affect their relationship with either parent. It is ideal for the child to maintain a positive relationship with both parents if possible.

Children can develop certain responses to tension and conflict in the household. This can be in the form of lashing out, throwing tantrums, withdrawing, isolating themselves, or fighting with siblings—an unconscious method of distraction to get the parents to stop fighting. If unresolved, these responses could affect the child's development and emotional world as they grow into adulthood.

Counselor Rex recommends, "If you are unable to reconcile your differences, find a third (non-attached) person to mediate, such as a counselor or mediator, to avoid putting your children in the middle of the conflict." Though marriage counseling can help couples strengthen relationships, it can also help navigate separation in a healthier way for both you and your children.

One of the best things to do for your child while navigating a deteriorating relationship is to prioritize them. Tell them you love them, and that they will always be important to you regardless of whether or not you are together. Make it clear that this separation is due to your differences. Your decision to not be together doesn't mean you love them any less. Parents sometimes avoid divorce, hoping that keeping the family together will be better for their children. However, sometimes separation is simply the healthier option for everyone. As one of my favorite Taylor Swift songs goes, "Trying to stay for the kids, when keeping it how it is will only break

their hearts worse...you know when it's time to go."

You are both worthy of finding happiness, and a healthy separation process can help your child accept this while still feeling just as loved by both parents. This is how Ellian's parents help her accept the situation and relieve her of her burden. They acknowledge their mistakes in how they have handled the situation so far and reassure her that they will always love her and put her first regardless of their issues: "We forgot to calm your fears. We forgot to feel your pain. We forgot to notice you were under too much stress and strain. I don't know quite how, but we forgot that you come first, no matter what. We forgot to say how much we love you and that we always will."

It's easy to get caught up in all the emotions that may accompany a separation or divorce, but don't lose sight of the most important thing—your love for your children and their well-being.



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THE EMOTIONAL LOAD OF PARENTHOOD

Being a parent involves a lot of physical, mental, and emotional work. Jeannie shares how she and her husband maintain an equitable partnership to support each other with their parental responsibilities and how this has positively benefited their mental health.



Photo by Vlada Karpoovich from Pexels

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.



Parenthood is often described as a journey of love and fulfillment, but behind the sweet moments and milestones lies an often invisible weight—the emotional and mental load that comes with raising a child. While financial responsibilities are often clearly defined, the mental and emotional labor required to run a household and care for children is less tangible but equally significant. In many households, one parent tends to carry a disproportionate share of this unseen burden, leading to exhaustion, resentment, and even a decline in mental health. However, when responsibilities—both tangible and intangible—are shared equitably, parents can find a better sense of balance, leading to a more fulfilling and sustainable partnership.

In our experience as a family, my husband Ken and I have learned that equity in a relationship isn't necessarily about dividing everything 50/50—it's about supporting each other in ways that acknowledge our strengths, circumstances, and needs. Through intentional communication, proactive planning, and mutual understanding, we've created a dynamic that helps us navigate the challenges of parenthood by creating an equitable partnership while preserving our well-being.

RECOGNIZING NON-FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Ken and I do not make equal financial contributions to our partnership, but we still have an equitable partnership. When we moved to Bangkok, I put my acupuncture practice on hold, which was a difficult transition for me. While I never earned a large income, my practice was my passion, and the ability to contribute financially gave me a sense of independence. Before relocating, Ken and I had an open discussion about this shift, and he reassured me that my inability to work wouldn't cause a power imbalance in our relationship. This understanding has helped me feel valued, despite not bringing in an income, and has reinforced the point that a financial contribution isn't the only form of "work" in a household.



Photo by Anna Shvets from Pexels

QUARTERLY RELATIONSHIP CHECK-INS

As unromantic as it sounds, we hold quarterly check-ins where we discuss important, but often overlooked, aspects of our partnership—finances, productivity, happiness, and personal and family goals. These conversations help us stay aligned, set expectations, and ensure that both of us feel heard and supported. By explicitly stating what we need from each other, we create a space where our concerns are addressed before they turn into resentment.

BEING ATTUNED TO EACH OTHER'S NEEDS

Over time, Ken and I have learned to read each other's moods and energy levels, which has allowed us to step in and support each other when needed. If I'm feeling exhausted or overwhelmed, Ken takes Kai out for a couple of hours, giving me time to recharge. Likewise, when I notice Ken is mentally drained from work, I adjust my expectations and offer him space. Small, intentional actions like these help prevent burnout and maintain a sense of partnership.

ANTICIPATING STRESSFUL PERIODS

Another strategy that works well for us is giving each other a heads-up when we anticipate a stressful period. For instance, if Ken expects a particularly demanding few weeks

at work, he informs me in advance. This allows me to take on more of the household decision-making, such as meal planning and scheduling activities, to reduce his cognitive load. In return, he does the same for me when I have commitments that require extra focus.

USING NEUTRAL LANGUAGE FOR SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

Language plays a significant role in maintaining fairness in household tasks. Instead of asking, "Did you change Kai's diaper?"—which can sound accusatory—we phrase it as "Has Kai's diaper been changed?" This small shift in language eliminates blame and encourages shared responsibility, reinforcing the idea that parenting is a joint effort rather than a checklist of tasks to be assigned.

Parenthood is an ongoing learning process and so is building an equitable partnership. The goal isn't to split everything perfectly but to ensure that both partners feel valued, supported, and seen. By fostering open communication, proactively managing stress, and being mindful of each other's needs, we create a healthier, more balanced family life. While the emotional load of parenthood will always exist, sharing that load intentionally can make all the difference—not just for us as parents, but for the well-being of our entire family.

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WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Claudia celebrates how we've become more open to talking about mental health and shares her personal mental health journey, along with some tips for supporting others who may need professional help.

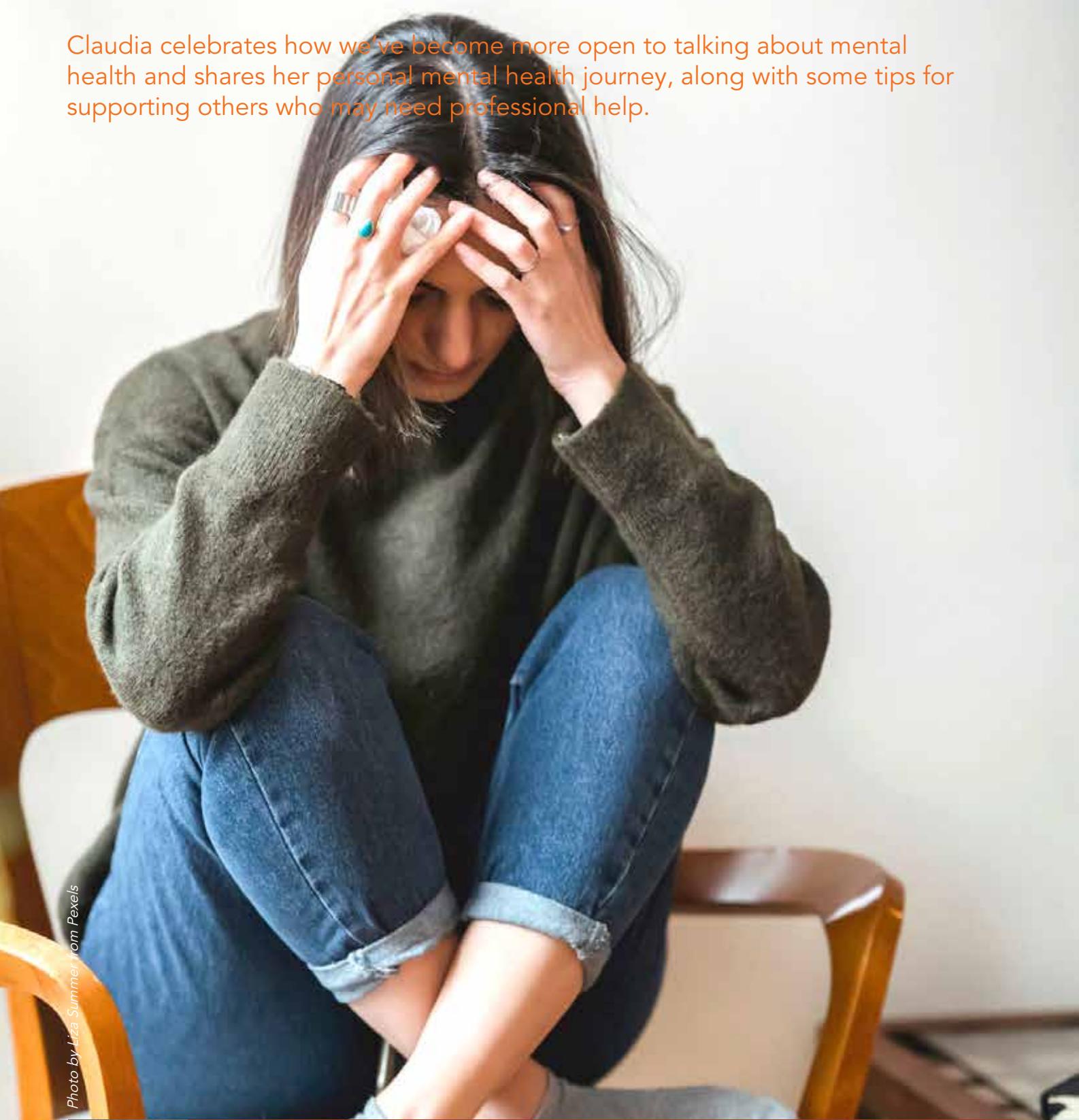


Photo by Liza Sumner from Pexels

About the Author



Claudia Gomes is an expert in emotional intelligence and intercultural awareness, and an ICF-certified Level 2 transformative coach. With 19 years of international experience in Spain and Thailand, Claudia is an expert in bridging cultures and fostering global collaboration. She has spent the last 15 years in Bangkok. contact@claudiagomes.coach; linkedin.com/in/claudiagomes-coach/

In a world that is increasingly normalizing conversations around therapy, counseling, and coaching, why do so many people still struggle to seek support when they need it?

In the past, I rarely heard anyone openly discuss the option of receiving professional help. Admitting to struggles such as depression, anxiety, or uncertainty about life was often met with judgment or shame. Some typical responses would be: "You can handle it alone," "You don't need this kind of help," "Give it time, it will get better," or "You're not depressed; it will pass." These dismissive phrases discouraged people from seeking support. Some of these ideas still float around society. However, from my perspective, I'm happy to see the general stigma around seeking help decreasing. People are becoming more open to talking to professionals.

When it comes to physical health, we don't hesitate to see a doctor. We trust that a trained professional is necessary for our healing. Yet, the same logic often doesn't apply to emotional struggles. Heartbreaks, repeated relationship failures, procrastination, perfectionism, chronic anxiety, burnout, or persistent sadness—these are often ignored or dismissed as things we should handle alone. We tell ourselves we don't need help and to just push through the pain.

But why is it acceptable to endure emotional suffering indefinitely? Why do we resist the idea that others can support us through our struggles? It's well-documented that emotional distress can manifest as physical illness. Our state of mind directly impacts our overall health.

RECOGNIZING WHEN SOMEONE NEEDS HELP

Sometimes, even recognizing that we need support is difficult. Cultural influences, family beliefs, misinformation, guilt, and shame can all be barriers. However, one of the hardest situations is realizing

that someone we love might need help. The good news is, when we do realize it, we can take action. But how often have you discovered that someone close to you was suffering without your knowledge?

Mental health issues can be invisible. People often hide their struggles, and we may overlook the signs because we don't recognize them or don't know how to address them. Below are some signs that someone close to you may need professional support. Recognizing these early can make a significant difference.

Emotional signs

- Frequent anger or irritability
- Avoiding conversations or social interactions
- Persistent grief
- Noticeable mood swings
- Chronic complaining without efforts to change behavior

Behavioral changes

- Avoiding social situations or new activities
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, food, or other coping mechanisms (for example, excessive TV watching or overworking)
- Increased aggression or risk-taking
- Becoming unusually quiet or withdrawn
- Heightened anxiety

Physical symptoms

- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Unexplained fatigue
- Physical symptoms that seem linked to emotional distress

Cognitive signs

- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Memory issues or confusion
- Struggles with learning, communication, or problem-solving
- Poor judgment or risky decision-making

Relational changes

- Difficulty navigating life transitions (marriage, divorce, parenthood, empty nest,

retirement, job changes)

- Financial struggles
- Workplace challenges (new leadership, restructuring, promotions, demotions, project failures, or successes)

HOW TO APPROACH THE CONVERSATION

People seek help when they feel they need it, not when you feel they need it, so approach this conversation with care and without judgment. People are often aware of their own struggles; they don't need reminders of their situation. They need understanding and support from someone who cares, without expectations of immediate change. Here are some dos and don'ts to help navigate these conversations.

What to say

- "I feel like you're going through a tough time. I'm here for you if you'd like to talk or if you need any kind of support."
- "I care about you and want the best for you. Let me know how I can help."
- "I'm going for a walk. Would you like to join me?"
- "I'm heading to [place]. Would you like to come along?"

What to avoid saying

- "Be strong."
- "Everything happens for a reason."
- "Don't worry, be happy."
- "I know exactly how you feel."
- "Other people have it worse."
- "You should just do [X] to fix it."

What not to do

- Minimize or dismiss their feelings
- Interrupt or rush them
- Offer unsolicited advice
- Compare their situation to others
- Criticize or judge them

Be mindful that their journey is their own. Your role is to support them, not control the outcome.

When to involve a professional

- If the signs persist for more than a few weeks
- If their struggles impact daily life, relationships, work, or

- responsibilities
- If you suspect safety concerns, such as self-harm or harm to others

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT PROFESSIONALS

Many people are unsure about which professional to seek. Here's a quick breakdown:

Psychiatrist: A medical doctor who can prescribe medication and provide therapy

Psychotherapist: A trained therapist who provides talk therapy

Psychoanalyst: A therapist specializing in deep unconscious exploration

Counselor: Provides guidance for specific challenges and shorter-term issues

Coach: Helps with personal and professional growth but doesn't treat mental health conditions

Other types of integrative therapies: Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) with somatic integration, coherence therapy, somatic experiencing (SE), energy psychology (EFT/Tapping), biofeedback and neurofeedback, hypnotherapy, expressive arts therapy, family constellations therapy, integrative nutrition and lifestyle counseling.

SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE AFTER THEY SEEK HELP

Your role in helping your loved one doesn't end once they begin seeing a professional. Your continued assistance will be pivotal in their success. A few things to remember:

Respect their process. It's their journey, and they need space to work through it.

Encourage consistency. Acknowledge their progress and remind them of how far they've come.



Photo by Polina Zimmerman from Pexels

Respect their boundaries.

Healing requires self-discovery and autonomy.

For children, parental support is essential. Follow professional guidance to navigate their process.

MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

When I sought my first therapist at 22 years old, I knew I needed help, but at the time, I had no support from family or friends. I went through the process alone, and today, I am profoundly grateful that I didn't give up. Over the years, I have explored different forms of therapy—psychotherapy, coaching, family constellations, women's circles, sound healing, and more. The resources for self-discovery and healing are limitless if you're open to the journey.

Seeking help can be intimidating because change is inevitable. We know, deep down, that talking to a professional will shift our lives, and that can be unsettling. But the most beautiful part is the butterfly effect. When one person heals, they unknowingly inspire those around them. Their emotional balance, resilience, and self-awareness ripple

outward, encouraging others to do the same, sometimes without realizing it.

As I mentioned, recognizing the signs and seeking support as early as possible are crucial. Trust your intuition. You can sense when something feels different about someone you love. Be courageous enough to start the conversation, even if you face resistance at first. Emotional walls may take time to come down.

Working with a professional isn't just for solving problems—it's also a form of prevention. Learning how to manage your emotions reduces suffering, improves relationships, and enhances daily life. And the best part? When you invest in yourself, everyone around you benefits as well.

Above all, remember: knowing yourself is the most profound act of self-love. Understanding the reasons behind what you do and identifying your beliefs and needs is what gives you true choice in life. Don't be afraid to explore your inner world. Your shadows often hold the key to your greatest light.



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BREAKING THE CYCLE AND REDEFINING CHILDHOOD PATTERNS

Once her carefully organized structures stopped working with her daughter, Maheshika learned to parent in a new way and is breaking cycles by embracing gentle parenting.



About the Author



Blending Sri Lankan and Scottish roots, Maheshika (Myshi) Mackenzie-Baker now lives in Thailand with two little kids of her own. Myshi has been an educator in Thailand for over 10 years and is currently a learning designer at VERSO International School. You can reach her at: maheshi.mackenzie@gmail.com; [LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/maheshika-mackenzie-baker-56564532](https://www.linkedin.com/in/maheshika-mackenzie-baker-56564532); X @ BakerMyshi.



I often think back to the first year of my firstborn and marvel at how simple parenting felt. My sole mission was to keep her alive, clean, and safe. As someone who thrives on structure and organization, I believed I was absolutely smashing it. I had schedules, pre-made baby food, and a pumping routine so precise it could rival a factory assembly line. And the best part? My baby never talked back. Parenting felt like a breeze.

Then, she began to talk. And walk. And have opinions. Things suddenly felt... complicated. My tried-and-true method of control started to falter. My once cooperative baby now had her own ideas, and if she didn't follow my rules, I took it personally. I saw her defiance as a reflection of my parenting. Threats like "No TV if you don't listen" became my go-to. After all, based on my previous experience as a teacher and someone raised with a solid foundation of rules and regulations, I thought this was how it was done.

Looking back, I'm not blaming my parents. They were doing their best with the tools they had, just as their parents had done before them. But all too soon, it became glaringly obvious that my approach wasn't working. My daughter began pulling away from me emotionally. She

favored her dad and cried when he wasn't around, and I felt an aching sense of disconnection.

THE BREAKING POINT

One day, I lost my temper and raised my voice at her. She was barely two years old, and her reaction shattered me. She cried, and I broke down too. This was the first time I had cried in front of her, and her tiny hands reached out to comfort me. In that raw moment, I apologized to her. I explained that I'd had a long day and wasn't angry at her but at the situation. Then we decided to have a "picnic" in the garden as a way of reconnecting, something she loved role-playing at the time. Over the years, this became our go-to whenever we needed to connect or reconnect. A photo from that day still hangs on my wall, a reminder of the day our journey shifted.

DISCOVERING MY PARENTING STYLE

Determined to rebuild our bond, I dove into research. I read about different parenting styles, including authoritarian, permissive, gentle, and authoritative parenting. It was clear that gentle parenting resonated deeply with me, not because it was the easiest path, but because it aligned with the kind of

relationship I wanted with my child.

Gentle parenting emphasizes respect, emotional regulation, and positive discipline. It's not about being permissive or avoiding boundaries but offering clear expectations while ensuring that the child feels heard and valued. By creating a "safe haven" that includes the four Ss—Safe, Seen, Soothed, and Secure—this approach fosters emotional resilience and promotes better behavior (1).

On the other hand, authoritative parenting—often considered the gold standard in research—balances warmth and structure. Like gentle parenting, it stresses the importance of setting clear rules but also allows for open communication. In contrast to authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting creates an environment of mutual respect and understanding. Research has shown that this style supports children's social competence and academic success (2).

BREAKING PATTERNS WITH SMALL CHANGES

Having learned from that first experience of being open with my daughter, one practical shift I made was openly communicating my needs. My daughter and I

spend long days together, from our morning commute to school to being in the same classroom to the evening ride home. As someone who gets overstimulated without breaks, I began calmly explaining when I needed a "brain break" to recharge. I made sure to reassure her that she hadn't done anything wrong. Initially, she didn't quite understand, but with consistency, it began to click.

Over time, she started using the same language. If I apologized for snapping after a tough day, she'd respond with a heartfelt "It's okay, Mommy." She even began helping me regulate. Once, frustrated by traffic, I muttered something under my breath, and she piped up, "Mummy, take deep breaths. We can't change the traffic, but look, the other side is worse. We're lucky!" Moments like these left me in awe.

REDEFINING BOUNDARIES AS A FOUNDATION

Research consistently shows that children feel secure when they understand boundaries. Gentle parenting doesn't mean there are no consequences—it means consequences are communicated calmly and respectfully. This is a critical area where gentle and authoritative parenting overlap. Both emphasize teaching children the importance of responsibility while acknowledging their feelings. When my daughter makes a mistake, I always remind her that she is loved.

One day, after repeating a mistake despite my earlier guidance, she retreated to her room in tears, whispering, "Why would anyone want a daughter who does this?" My heart broke. I sat with her and reassured her that mistakes are part of learning and don't define her worth. We reflected on the situation and ended our talk with tears, but this time, they were healing ones.

RECOGNIZING LIMITATIONS IN GENTLE PARENTING

Although gentle parenting has been successful in building a better relationship with my children, I have yet to find effective methods to help



my son when he is going through challenging behaviors. Research has shown that gentle parenting techniques can be less effective for more serious behavioral challenges, such as aggression or oppositional defiance (2). I'm still figuring out how to adapt and apply these principles to my son's needs. Perhaps it's a long game, and patience is the key. I'll tell you when I figure it out.

BREAKING GENERATIONAL CYCLES

As I embraced gentle parenting, I reflected on my own childhood. Guilt was a constant companion when I was young. I often felt responsible for things beyond my control. Determined to break that cycle, I make it a point to tell my kids that my hard days have nothing to do with them. They're not responsible for carrying the burden of my emotions.

Another realization was how much I'd relied on external validation growing up. I often felt the need to look, act, and be a certain way to

please others. It wasn't until my late 20s that I began to value internal validation. With my kids, I prioritize teaching them to love themselves as they are. I encourage them to find joy in their achievements and not seek approval from others.

When my daughter started noticing her appearance and worrying about others' opinions, I drilled into her the idea that beauty comes from within. Integrity and kindness matter far more than looks. I'd ask, "Do you like your drawing?" If she said yes, I'd reply, "That's all that matters." Slowly but surely, she's learning to trust her own judgment.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF CHANGE

In my opinion, parenting isn't just about raising children; it's about growing alongside them. The more I practiced gentle parenting, the more I noticed changes in myself. I became more patient, empathetic, and mindful.

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Location: The City School Thonglor



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me would have once sent me spiraling into self-doubt. But this time, I thought, "I am proud of who I am and what I do. If they're uncomfortable, that's on them." It took me decades to reach this level of self-assurance, but my seven-year-old already embodies it. She's unapologetically herself, and I couldn't be prouder.

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR BREAKING THE CYCLE

Some practical elements of gentle parenting that have worked for us include:

Modeling behavior: Children mirror what they see. Admitting and apologizing when you're wrong teaches them humility and accountability.

Validating emotions: Instead of dismissing feelings, acknowledge them. Saying, "I see you're upset," helps children feel heard.

Focusing on solutions: When mistakes happen, shift the conversation to "What can we learn from this?"

Encouraging independence: Allowing children to make choices fosters confidence and decision-making skills.

DOES THIS MEAN PARENTING IS A BREEZE NOW?

Absolutely not! Every few months, something new comes along that challenges us, and we have to think of new ways to handle it. Now, we have a three-year-old boy, and I'm learning fast that the techniques I used with my daughter don't always work with him. Plus, managing two children is a whole different ballgame—less time, less patience, and less energy.

But we persevere. My connection with my daughter inspires me every

day to keep at it and to keep doing my best. I hope that they'll one day do their best for their own children.

THE TAKEAWAY: A NEW PATH FORWARD

Parenting is an ever-evolving journey. The rules and methods that worked for one generation may not work for the next. Being open to growth and willing to adapt can build deeper connections with our children. As the saying goes, "We can't prepare the road for our children, but we can prepare our children for the road."

Gentle parenting has taught me that connection trumps control. It's not about being perfect but about being present. And every day, as I watch my daughter grow into a kind, confident, and self-assured person, I'm reminded that it's worth the effort.

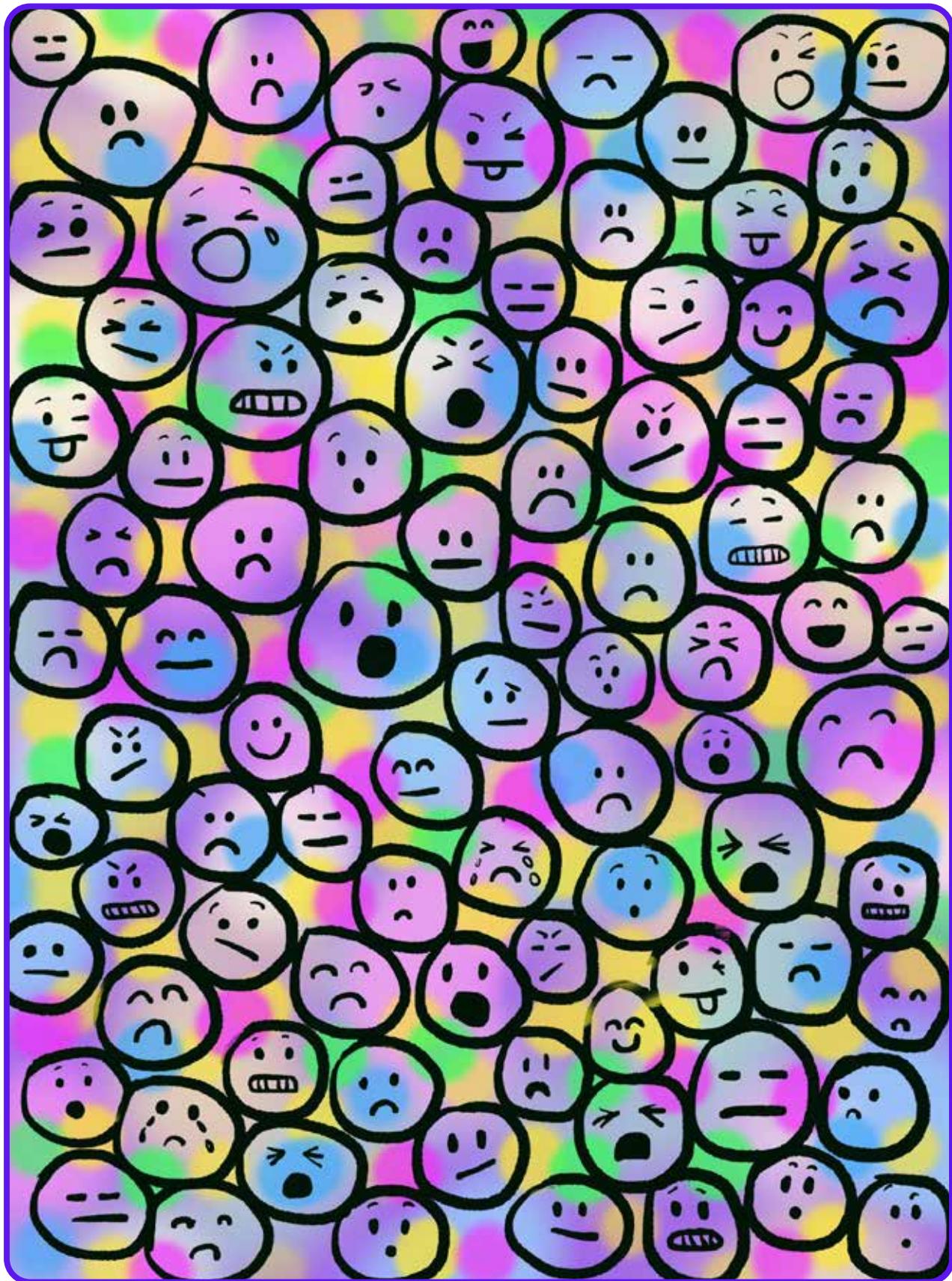
Photos courtesy of the author

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FIND THE FACES

Can you find the happy faces? How many of them can you count? What other emotions can you see?





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.

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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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THREE KEYS TO CALMING AN ANGRY CHILD

We are complex humans, with complex emotions, anger being one of them. Sonali shares three practical and simple steps to help us and our children when anger is driving their emotional responses.



Photo by Keira Burton from Pexels



About the Author

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

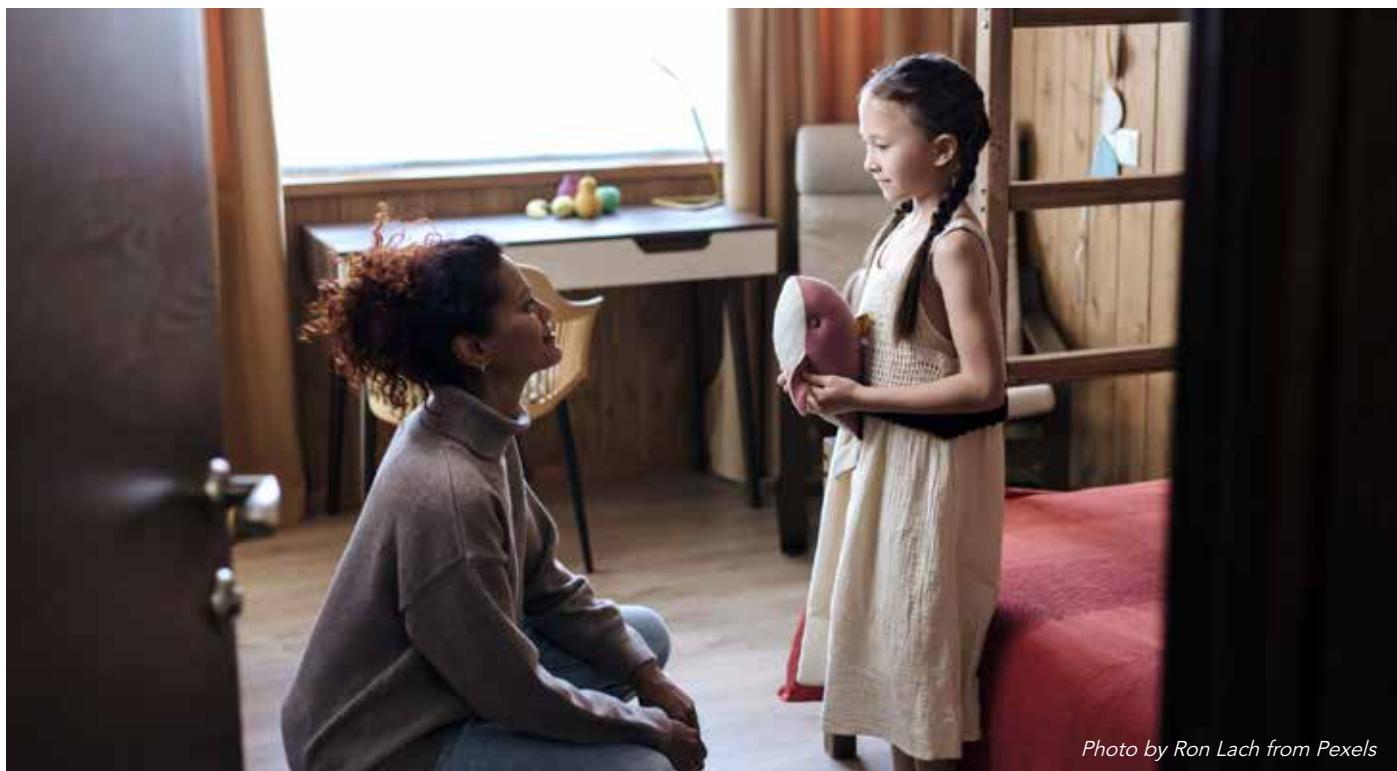


Photo by Ron Lach from Pexels

Have you ever watched your child erupt in anger and felt at a total loss for what to do or how to help? Maybe it just didn't make sense—they had a 10/10 explosion in response to something that seemed like a 1/10 to you.

Anger is a powerful emotion. Many of us weren't taught how to deal with anger—we learned to squash our anger, fearing that if we felt it, we might react in ways we'd later regret. So we try the same with our strong-willed kids. We tell them, "Don't make such a big deal out of it." But it doesn't make it better, and we soon find ourselves back in a similar situation.

Knowing we want something different for our kids, we try the well-intentioned parenting advice: "name it to tame it." We say, "It seems you are angry." Now you probably know as well as I do that naming emotions with a determined child usually backfires. Rather than dissipating anger, it usually ends up pouring gasoline on their anger fire. Whatever we try, we may find ourselves overwhelmed or frustrated by our child's behavior.

You've probably noticed that a lot of anger coping mechanisms for children don't work for your sensitive child. If your child loves making that calm-down glitter jar, yet they chuck it across the room when you hand it to them in a charged moment, know you are not alone. You simply have a deeply feeling kid.

And I'm right there with you, my friend. That's actually where my work started. My child was struggling with anger and aggression so severe that specialists told me they couldn't help. So what do you do when you've tried so many things that should work and they just don't?

Let's dive into the art of calming your angry child with three keys that are specifically formulated for strong-willed kids.

DEFUSE YOUR CHILD'S ANGER

First, a different perspective. Your child is throwing that glitter jar because their anger is trying to protect them. Think of the anger you're seeing as a mask, and what's actually underneath anger is a vulnerable fear. A glitter jar is a well-intentioned attempt to meet the anger, but it simply doesn't address the underlying fear, which is why it doesn't work. By speaking directly to the fear, we can meet the true need and defuse the protective part of anger.

Meet the Insta-Defuse. The Insta-Defuse acknowledges the fear and meets the need the fear is holding. Meet the fear, and the anger dissipates. By doing this, you create a restorative moment of calm. Here's an example of an Insta-Defuse that has been a game-changer in my home.

Scene: Your child is shutting down, running off, slamming doors, or they are screaming so much that nothing you say is getting through. I've discovered that often the first skill to go when dysregulated is the ability to process auditory information. So my solution is to go non-verbal. For younger children this may mean drawing a picture of what you want to express to your child. For teens, this may mean sending them a text message or writing a note on a piece of paper.

Parents have told me that they've been astonished to see their child literally stop mid-meltdown and turn

towards them. And the parents feel themselves exhale and their shoulders relax as they use the Insta-Defuse. That sensation tells them that the Insta-Defuse is supporting them as well as their child.

BREAKING ANGER PATTERNS

Not all experiences of anger are created equal. One-time anger is different from being stuck in a cycle of anger. If you're facing a meltdown every day before bed, or your child only calms down once you've snapped, then there is a pattern of anger.

Anger is an emotion. Hitting, yelling, and so on are dysregulated expressions of anger. To shift your child from reacting to anger, we need to create space. Space for our kids to realize they can feel a feeling and choose how they express it. Space for our kids to discover that it's OK to think about reacting negatively because they are angry, but then choose not to react negatively.

How do we do this? With a tool I call Wrap-It-Up, where we use positive feelings to wrap up the impulse to react negatively.

Mr. Rogers, an American children's television show host who transformed the way we think about children, had a famous song, "What Do You Do With the Mad That You Feel?" One of the lines of the song goes "It's great to be able to stop when you've planned a thing that's wrong." The idea is that the child has planned something that's wrong. This is wrapped up in something that feels great with "It's great to be able to stop..."

My daughter has been able to "wrap up" her impulses. I wrapped up her experience by telling her, "An important part of growing up is noticing when you want to yell and then choosing something different." Then, I gave her the words, "I have the impulse to..." and this allowed her to acknowledge what she wanted to do and then choose something different. She can say, "I have the impulse to yell," or "I want to snap back at my brother, so I am asking if I can finish my dinner in my room".

I am not asking her to have her anger go away. What I am teaching her to do is to honor her relationships with others while also honoring the need underneath her anger.

ANGER NEEDS IMPACT

Ever asked your kids to tidy up, and no one does it, then, despite your intentions, you yell and they clean up right away? You needed to impact your surroundings in some way and just didn't know how to do that in a different way. That happens to kids, too.

Anger is a powerful emotion. To be resolved, it needs a powerful balancing action. It needs impact. What often happens is our child has a powerful reaction, like yelling



Photo by Winnie Bruce from Studio South Korea

or hitting. It gets impact, but it's not regulated because someone gets hurt physically or emotionally, so it keeps our kids in the anger loop.

Here is a quick, supportive way to give your child impact: Write "this is hard" on a piece of paper, then tell your child to rip it up. It's not going to get rid of the emotion, but it will allow them to move some of the pent-up energy because they've had an impact on the paper by ripping it. Then you can say, "Ok, kiddo...what's really going on here?" to unlock what powerful impact they really need in that moment.

As you meet your child's anger, keep reminding yourself that this is a process. Take it one step at a time—pick one idea or one phrase from this article to try today when your child gets angry, and notice how both you and your child respond to it. Emotions, including anger, are as much a part of being human as having a nose, lungs, and a brain. We're supposed to have them, use them, and respond to them.



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LOOKING AFTER NUMBER ONE

In this month's Dad Dairies, Joe shares some strategies for being the best possible parent by caring for the most important person: himself.



Photo by Juan Sanchez from capturenow



About the Author

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



Photo by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels

D"Daddy, Daddy, Daddy"; my fists clench and my heart pounds as another Marty interrogation begins. Not unusually for a three-year-old, Marty is full of questions, questions that cannot be asked until, like a magic incantation to the spirit of knowledge, the infuriating phrase "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy" has been declaimed at least three times. Questions that will inevitably be repeated as soon as I've answered them. Questions that will beget more questions. Questions without end. Questions that are annoying, but not so annoying as to justify the combination of the despair and rage I'm feeling.

Following the arrival of Alice, the last few months have been pretty chock-full of intense Daddy-Marty time, and I'm starting to realize I've had enough. Obviously, I love Marty deeply, and I love playing with him, but I've had too much of a good thing, and I need some time to myself, some time for self-care. As tempting as it is to scream in frustration at the approach of another avalanche of questions, I take a few deep breaths and ask "Yes?" as calmly as I can. Then I make a mental vow to find more time for myself; it's either that or investing in an expensive new identity and running away somewhere my children will never find me.

AN EARLY START

It's a few weeks later, and I'm writing this at 4am, which is not a time I'd usually choose to be awake. However, after the excitement of trying to change a diaper in the dark without dropping Alice or smearing poop everywhere, followed by a thrilling game of "pop the bottle in the baby you can't see", I'm wide awake. Alice, meanwhile, is covered in milk, but hopefully not

poop, and has gone back to sleep. Whatever self-care I've done recently has worked, because today, rather than seeing this middle-of-the-night awakening as the disastrous prelude to another draining day of childcare, it almost seems like bonus time: an opportunity to catch up on things. Maybe I'll finally reply to my mom's letter, get started on that overdue BAMBI article, or simply enjoy some quality Netflix time. An hour or so later I even respond to Marty's unexpectedly early first cry of "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy" with an exuberant "Marty, Marty, Marty." Probably quite annoying for my wife who was trying to sleep, but better than howling with frustration or fleeing to a desert island under an assumed name.

Lack of sleep is undoubtedly a feature of parenthood, and I'm sure you're all very tired too. Some incredibly annoying people, I'm thinking mainly of my wife here, seem unaffected by broken nights, remaining just as productive and positive even after a lack of sleep. I'm not one of those people. Tiredness turns me into a foul-tempered monster of a father and husband, growling at my children as they unreasonably demand to be fed or have diapers changed or grunting at my wife when she wishes me a good morning. At such times, childcare seems like an unremitting chore, the aim simply to get through to another bedtime without crying or breaking any important things, like my children or marriage. So today's self-care is going to involve a nap. After a 4am start, everyone will have a better day if I nap.

AN EXERCISE IN WILLPOWER

Exercise is a vital part of my self-care. I'm always happier after a run, even if I tend to express that happiness

by lying on the couch and moaning about how much everything aches. Yet while I dream of long cycle tours or days spent running in the mountains, long-distance epics aren't really compatible with looking after small children, and to be honest, after a day of childcare, even a half-hour run in the park often requires more willpower and energy than I have. If knowing I'll feel much better for a little exercise or the thought of a question-free hour isn't enough to get me out of the door, I turn to that greatest of all motivational tools: bribery. The promise of chocolate is usually enough to get me moving. Willpower is good, but chocolate is even better.

EATING TO SURVIVE

Food plays a key role in my parenting: when Marty or Alice are cranky or annoying, I turn to food. First, I wolf down a slice of toast or a cookie or two. Then if they still seem cranky or annoying I consider feeding them. Amazing how often snack time makes everyone feel better. When Marty went through a spell of getting me up before 5am every day, only the thought of chocolate got me out of bed and down the stairs. As I made his morning milk, I'd start the day's chocolate bar. Throughout the day, whenever sleep deprivation started to rear its head, I'd head back to the fridge for another square or two. Not an ideal diet but it was what I needed to get through the day.

While I'm no longer eating a chocolate bar a day, tasty snacks are an essential part of my life. If I've got to do the same jigsaw 50 times with only the occasional

welcome relief of a dirty diaper to change, then I'm going to do it with a cup of tea and a plate of cookies. I hadn't realized children were going to be so bad for my waistline, but I've accepted gaining a few extra pounds is better than constantly shouting at Marty and Alice. Perhaps I'll finally cut the snacks when they go to school?

LETTING GO OF EGO

The phrase "no one is indispensable" was a crushing blow to my ego, but a much-needed message for my well-being. I'd been feeling guilty about leaving the house when there were children to look after, especially as Marty would scream every time I mentioned going out. Fortunately, I did venture out, and it turns out, Marty will play with his nanny, and Alice can indeed nap with other people. Now I just need to shake the vague feeling of guilt that I should be at home doing something useful whenever I go out, and I can really start to enjoy myself.

My weekly trip to the climbing wall sounds like exercise, but it's really about chatting with some other dads and getting their advice and reassurance that everyone finds parenting tough sometimes. That's where I picked up the gem about no one being indispensable, along with the assurance that this means I can definitely go climbing twice a week.

The only problem is, all my reasons for leaving the house are exercise-based, which is pretty exhausting. Perhaps some relaxing childcare is what I need to recover from all this self-care—anyone want to do a jigsaw puzzle?



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

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HOW CO-SLEEPING SAVED MY SANITY

Parenting rarely goes how we expected it to go. Although Kelly never planned to co-sleep with her children, she is so glad they had other ideas and is thankful for every extra minute she gets to spend in bed.



Photo by Mihicevli from Studio Turkey



About the Author

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



Photo by William Fortunato from Pexels

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Before I became a parent, I frequently imagined what it would be like to raise children. Of course, they would never use screens, and they'd sleep through the night in their own beds! But as it turns out, it's much easier to raise imaginary children. While pregnant with my first daughter, I read several baby books to help us prepare for every possible scenario. So we were ready to: put the baby down drowsy, but awake; follow an eat, play and sleep schedule; and adhere to age-specific wake windows. But parenthood is nothing if not a humbling experience, and we quickly learned that babies don't come with a manual for a reason.

My first baby was an easy sleeper—a unicorn you might say. Around six weeks, she started sleeping through the night in her crib. We would pat ourselves on the back and get a blissful night of uninterrupted sleep. Around nine months that all changed. Suddenly, she could sit up and move and started to form strong opinions about being alone in her crib. I found myself stumbling through the dark hour after hour to feed her and try to get her back down. Many mommy groups, baby books, and Instagram posts suggested sleep training as the obvious and only choice. Do we get a sleep consultant? Should we let her cry? Pat her till she sleeps?

When she turned one, we switched to a floor bed. She was still waking through the night, but now she crawled into our bed for cuddles. We quickly realized that this felt so right for us as a family. My husband and I love to snuggle, and we don't sleep alone, so why would I expect my baby to lie alone in the dark? It felt like a heavy weight being lifted off our shoulders when we found co-sleeping.

Fast forward eighteen months, and I was pregnant with our second baby. Our daughter still crawled into our bed at night but slept through the night once she arrived. I wondered how it would work when a crying baby suddenly joined the mix. As it turned out, I had nothing to worry about. Our second daughter is opposite in every single way to her sister, and from the start, struggled with sleep. Why sleep if you can have cuddles and milk all night long? Being a second-time mom is rewarding because I'm more confident in my decision-making. From the start, I realized that Baby #2 would be joining us in our, thankfully, very large bed. Her hourly wake-ups still left me bleary-eyed over coffee, but prioritizing my own sleep and well-being has helped me be a better mom for both of my kids.

Speaking to other moms, I've realized that most of us co-sleep or bed share at some point, and there is no shame in bringing your kids into bed when it maximizes quality sleep for the family. If you are considering co-sleeping, ensure that you are doing it safely. Babies should be on their backs on a firm mattress, free of blankets and pillows. I choose to wear a long-sleeved top that I can easily pull up for nursing and keep the blanket down around my knees. Long hair should be pulled back or braided, and everyone in the bed should be sober. The cuddle curl is considered the safest position for breastfeeding mothers to use when bed-sharing. This protective positioning prevents the baby from moving near a pillow, allows easy access for breastfeeding, and keeps the mother from rolling.

Sorting sleep routines with kids sometimes feels like rocket science. I realize that co-sleeping is not for everyone, but it has been life-changing for our family. I am eternally grateful for the precious extra minutes of sleep, as well as the extra cuddles with my family.

Co-sleeping may pose risks. Please consult your healthcare provider for personalized guidance on safe sleep practices.

SMALL WINS FOR BIG GROWTH

Raising children isn't just about the big milestones, it's about all the amazing things our children do every day. By celebrating those small daily wins, we can help our children be more confident and resilient.



Photo by RDNE Stock project from Pexels

About the Author



Sheena is a mother to three-year-old August, runs Super Fly Honey, a brand that makes technical activewear for pole dancers around the world, and dreams about writing children's books. After three years with a lot of yoga, deep friendships, purposeful retreats, and IFS therapy, she realizes that becoming a mother is actually a superpower.



Photo by Aflo Images from アプロ(Aflo)

T“The passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it’s not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset.” This powerful statement from renowned psychologist Carol Dweck underscores a fundamental principle in child development: the journey of learning and growth is as important, if not more so, than the outcome (1). Let’s delve into the profound significance of celebrating small wins in early childhood as a vital strategy for cultivating a growth mindset and fostering resilience in young learners.

CULTIVATING A GROWTH MINDSET

The way we praise children plays a crucial role in shaping their mindset. Carol Dweck’s research highlights the difference between a “fixed mindset,” where intelligence and abilities are seen as static, and a “growth mindset,” where these qualities are viewed as capable of development through dedication and hard work (1). She recommends praising in the following ways to build a growth mindset.

Praise effort over outcome: When we praise children for their effort and the processes they use, rather than just the final result, we teach them

that success comes from hard work and dedication. This encourages them to embrace challenges, persist through difficulties, and see failures as learning opportunities. However, praising innate talent (“You’re so smart!”) can inadvertently lead to a fixed mindset, where children may avoid challenges for fear of not appearing smart.

Specific and sincere praise:

Ensure your praise is genuine and specific, highlighting exactly what the child did well. This helps them understand what behaviors to repeat and reinforces a sense of accomplishment. Avoid generic praise or insincere compliments, which can be dismissed by the child.

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE

Resilience, the ability to bounce back from setbacks and adapt to challenges, is a vital skill for children and is a key part of a growth mindset. Celebrating small wins plays a significant role in building this crucial trait. When children experience small successes, it fosters a sense of competence and belief in their ability to overcome difficulties. However, building resilience requires more than just celebrating small victories.

Acknowledge and validate feelings:

When a child faces a setback, acknowledge their feelings without immediately trying to fix the problem. You could say, “I see you’re feeling frustrated that it didn’t work. It’s okay to feel that way.”

Focus on the process, not just the outcome:

Encourage children to reflect on their effort and the strategies they used, regardless of the final result by saying something like, “Even though it didn’t work out this time, you learned a lot about balancing the blocks.”

Reframe mistakes as learning opportunities:

Help children see mistakes as a natural part of learning and growth with statements like: “Oops! It fell. What can we learn from this to make it stronger next time?” or “Every time we make a mistake, we get a chance to learn something new.”

Encourage problem-solving:

Instead of immediately stepping in to help, guide children to find their own solutions, by asking them, “What else could you try?” or “What would happen if you changed this part?”

Celebrate effort and persistence:

Praise children for their willingness to keep trying, even when things are difficult. For example, "I'm so proud of you for not giving up, even when it was tough!"

Model resilience: Share your own experiences of facing challenges and how you overcame them. This shows children that setbacks are a normal part of life and that it's possible to bounce back.

SMALL WINS, BIG FUN

Celebrating small wins, tailored to the developmental stage of your child, can be seamlessly integrated into everyday activities. It's never too young to start. With babies, tummy time is a great opportunity to praise their efforts to lift their heads or roll. Then efforts to form words are always worth celebrating, as are their first tottering brick towers. As children get older it might be praising their efforts to dress themselves or even tie their own shoelaces. Not forgetting those opportunities to praise their amazing puzzling skills and LEGO-building achievements. When you look for chances to celebrate small wins, it turns out that our children are constantly achieving.

CELEBRATING SMALL WINS AROUND BANGKOK

Bangkok offers numerous child-friendly venues and activities that naturally lend themselves to celebrating small achievements—places where our children can challenge themselves physically and mentally. A few of our favorites are: the Children's Discovery Museum at Chatuchak, the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Alliance Française Bangkok, Bangkok's many parks, and the numerous cafes and companies offering children's activities throughout Bangkok.

THE POWER OF HUMOR

Incorporating humor into parenting can be a remarkably effective



Photo by August de Rijchelijn from Pexels

tool. A touch of lightheartedness can diffuse tense moments, foster cooperation, and make the process of learning and growing more enjoyable. When praising effort, try using silly voices or making funny faces. Playfully exaggerate a small accomplishment like, "You stacked the LEGO so high, they almost touched the ceiling!" Singing a silly song about trying hard or comically pretending to struggle with a task your child has just mastered can also bring smiles and laughter. However, it is crucial to avoid humor that is sarcastic, ridiculing, or could make a child feel like they are the target of the joke. The aim is to create shared moments of joy and connection.

EVERY LITTLE CHEER COUNTS

In the whirlwind of raising young children, it's easy to get caught up in pursuing big milestones. However, by consciously shifting our focus to acknowledge and celebrate the small, everyday victories, we unlock a powerful tool for nurturing confident, motivated, and resilient individuals. Every little cheer, every warm embrace, and every encouraging word reinforces the value of effort and the joy of growth. So, dear parents, let us be present, let us notice, and let us celebrate each little step our children take. For in these small wins lie the seeds of a bright and successful future.

References

1. Dweck, C.S., *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, New York, 2007.



PLAYGROUPS & ACTIVITIES

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



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