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**LANGUAGE AND
IDENTITY**

**WHAT WORDS
CAN MEAN**



**DECODING YOUR CHILD'S
LOVE LANGUAGE**

FEBRUARY 2025

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- Mel Habanananda



We are a group offering support and companionship to families 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.

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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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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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SCAN TO APPLY



Dear BAMBI families,

February, the month of love, invites us to reflect on the many ways we express affection and connection in our lives.

For families, love is often communicated not just through grand gestures but also in simple moments: words of encouragement, bedtime stories, or a heartfelt "I love you". This month's theme, "Languages of love and life", explores the powerful role language plays in shaping these expressions of love and how it defines our family dynamics.

As an Indonesian-born Chinese woman married to a Japanese-Taiwanese man and living in the multicultural city of Bangkok, I've come to appreciate how language serves as both a bridge and challenge in our family. With multiple cultures and languages under one roof, every word carries meanings beyond its surface, intertwining traditions, emotions, and values into our daily lives.

Raising our children in a multicultural and multilingual environment has deepened my understanding of how language impacts identity and connection. Whether it's finding the right words to teach our little ones about their heritage or helping them navigate the complexities of growing up as third-culture kids, language has been both our greatest tool and a reminder of the delicate balance we strive to maintain.

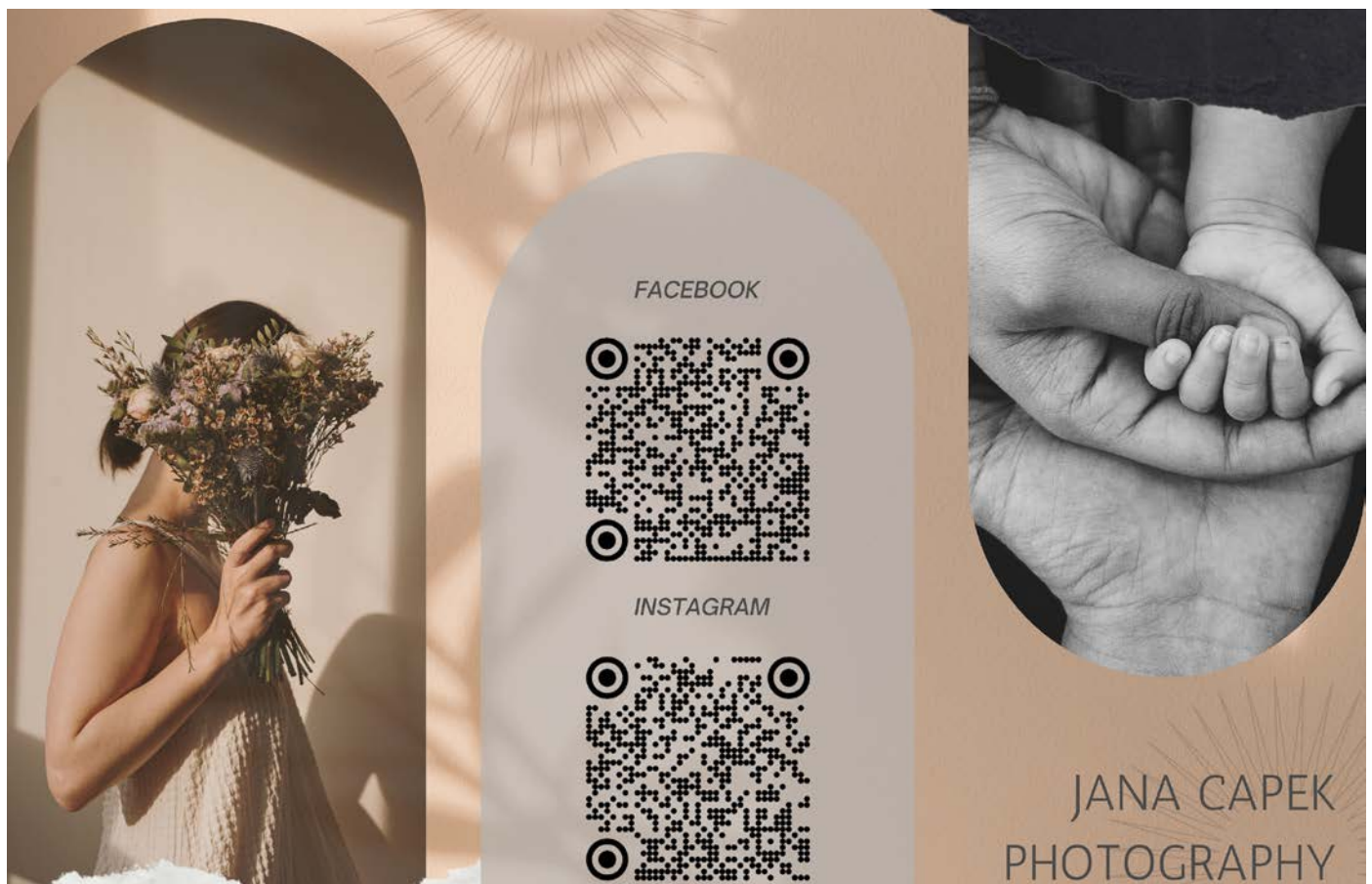
Language shapes how we think, love, and grow. It's the medium through which we share our dreams and comfort one another in difficult moments.

As we honor love this month, let's remember that love, in any language, is universal and unifying. Whether spoken in a first language, learned in a second, or expressed through actions and gestures, love transcends words and bridges hearts.

Thank you for being part of this incredible BAMBI community. Together, we celebrate our diversity, support one another, and remind ourselves that no matter the languages we use, love remains at the heart of everything we do.

Warm regards,

Hilda Anita
BAMBI Playgroups Coordinator





After the birth of our first child, my husband and I decided we'd only speak to her in our native tongue, Bangla. We reasoned that with us living the expat life, she'd pick up English in school, but if she couldn't speak in Bangla, she might feel culturally isolated among family and Bangladeshi friends. Bangla would be her first language, and that was that.

Over time, her speech and communication skills developed rapidly, and whenever someone expressed awe at her language skills—"Wow! Her speech is very clear for a one-year old!", "She knows so many words already!"—it seemed we'd made the right call. That she'd also taken to English like a fish to water once she started school was the cherry on top. A solid parenting win, right? Who knows.

She turns nine tomorrow, and writing this letter has made me finally accept that despite our best efforts, her first language is English; not Bangla. To add salt to my wounds, my younger daughter's Bangla speaking skills are at best a fascinating concoction of "Banglish". And let's not even get started on their written and reading skills.

While they both understand Bangla, they feel most comfortable expressing themselves in English. What does this mean for the way they think and view the world? Will Bangla be a distant memory in their lives at some point? I try not to dwell on these things too much, especially since, as they grow older, understanding non-verbal communication may become an even more crucial skill. It will help them connect with others on a deeper level, beyond spoken words—whether in Bangla, English, or whatever foreign language they learn at school.

This February, BAMBI Magazine explores the powerful role of language in our lives. From how language shapes thoughts and personality, to the unique challenges third-culture kids face, our issue dives into the ways language connects, defines, and sometimes complicates our expressions of identity and love.

First up, Kit Lang brings you reviews of two captivating books: "The 5 Love Languages: Singles Edition" and "How Do Dinosaurs Say I Love You?". The former is a must-read for anyone looking to explore how the principles of love languages can enrich all types of relationships—romantic or not—as they grow and evolve. The latter is a heartwarming guide for young readers, showcasing the many wonderful ways love can be expressed and understood, all wrapped up in a delightful and engaging narrative.

In "Language and Identity: How Bilingualism Affects Self-expression in Kids and Teens", Anatta Zarchi explains how we can help our multilingual kids feel confident about expressing themselves. In "Empathy Through Language: How Teaching Multiple Languages Cultivates Understanding", Claudia Gomes presents multilingualism as an invaluable tool that promotes personal growth by enhancing children's abilities to connect with others.

In "What Words Can Mean", Kelly Patten thoughtfully reminds us of the power of words and how they can convey far more than their surface meaning, and in "Decoding Your Child's Love Language", Sonali Vongchusiri shares the secrets behind building quick but long-lasting feelings of connection between parents and children.

The essence of all four articles is beautifully reflected in the responses shared by our cover models in their interviews. Turn to page 22 to see how the languages they speak, hear and learn have shaped their world view and thoughts. Their answers will surely leave you and your little ones amused, and they may also enjoy the sign language and drawing activities designed by Anelia Van Zyl in Fun Corner.

In non-thematic content we have regular columnist Joe Barker's "A Cunning Plan", "Is It Worth the Risk?" by Sarah Russell, "Food Intolerances vs Food Allergies" by Keren Granit and "Living With Allergies" by Chrissy O'Brien.

Joe's witty piece explores parenting during a family holiday, balancing fantasy with chaotic reality. Sarah argues that risky play is crucial for children as it helps them develop confidence, assess risks, and fosters physical and emotional growth. Keren teaches readers how to differentiate between food allergies and intolerances to effectively manage them, while Chrissy shares how constant vigilance and inclusive practices in public spaces are the key to navigating life with a child who has a food allergy.

This month, let's take a moment to celebrate the beauty of language in our lives, and what an exciting experience it is to be exposed to a variety of them every day. On behalf of the magazine team I wish you all a happy and healthy February!

Sanam Rahman
Editor



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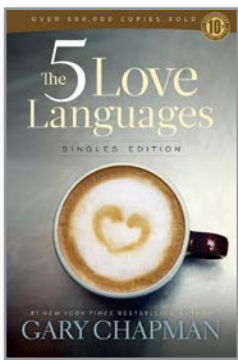
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THE 5 LOVE LANGUAGES: SINGLES EDITION *By Dr Gary Chapman*

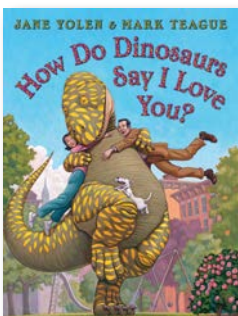


For Valentine's Day, give the gift of love through one of the five love languages. In "The 5 Love Languages: Singles Edition", Dr Gary Chapman's classic exploration of the five love languages—Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, and Physical Touch—finds a new lens through which to consider love and relationships. This version, tailored specifically for singles, addresses how individuals can apply the principles of love languages not only in romantic relationships but also in friendships, family dynamics, and even self-love.

In many family systems, the love languages of parents, children, and extended family members can significantly influence how family members feel understood, supported, and connected to one another. The book's true brilliance lies in how it uncovers the nuanced and evolving nature of love languages, as individuals age and enter different stages of life. This February, explore how you express and receive love, and recognize that these patterns also shape the way your children and family experience and feel love.

"The 5 Love Languages: Singles Edition" by Dr Gary Chapman was published by Moody Publishers in April 2009. A paperback copy can be found in the non-fiction section of the Neilson Hays Library.

HOW DO DINOSAURS SAY I LOVE YOU? *By Jane Yolen and Mark Teague*



In "How Do Dinosaurs Say I Love You?", Jane Yolen and Mark Teague have crafted a charming, playful picture book that teaches young readers about love and affection through the antics of lovable dinosaurs. Though at first glance this may seem like a simple book for children, upon closer examination, it reveals underlying themes that align perfectly with Gary Chapman's concept of the five love languages. Yolen and Teague provide a subtle yet effective foundation for discussing how love can be expressed in different ways, both within families and between friends.

The book focuses on a young dinosaur who may not always display love in the most conventional ways but ultimately shows affection through a variety of actions. In this context, "How Do Dinosaurs Say I Love You?" becomes a gentle primer on how children—and parents—can begin to understand and appreciate different expressions of love, whether through kind words, helpful actions, thoughtful gifts, quality time, or affectionate touch. This story is an excellent introduction to the idea that there is no one "right" way to show affection, as love can be communicated through different actions, words, and behaviors.

"How Do Dinosaurs Say I Love You?" by Jane Yolen and Mark Teague, and published by HarperCollins in 2010, can be found in the Children's Corner of the library, as can "How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night?" and "How Do Dinosaurs Go To School?".

Prepared by Kit Lang for Neilson Hays Library.

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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LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY: HOW BILINGUALISM AFFECTS SELF-EXPRESSION IN KIDS AND TEENS

Anna gives her personal experience of growing up as a multilingual child, and shares plenty of tips on how we can support our own multilingual children.

Photo by Juan Sanchez from capturenow



About the Author

Anna works for New Counseling Service (NCS), the first and only licensed mental health center in the heart of Bangkok. 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.

Contact: info@ncsbkk.com; Phone: +66-2-114-7556; ncsbkk.com; FB/IG: @ncsbkk.



Photo by Kampus Production from Pexels

Growing up multilingual is a unique experience for every child. One person's multilingual experience in no way reflects the experience of another. Some may feel equally comfortable in all their languages, others might have one they strongly prefer, while some might feel comfortable using different languages in different contexts, or in different modes of expression, for example, writing vs speaking. There are different types of multilinguals, including simultaneous, meaning that two or more languages were learned at the same time; and sequential, meaning that the person started with one language before learning another. Multilinguals also have different degrees of balance between their languages.

MY MULTILINGUAL BALANCE

As a multilingual child I was most comfortable verbally expressing myself in English, followed by Thai. With writing, I was most comfortable in English, followed by Chinese. At around the age of 12, I moved from an international school to a Thai Steiner school, and after a few years there my multilingualism began to change. I became almost equally comfortable speaking in English and Thai, although if I got very emotional while speaking Thai, I would often abruptly switch to English without realizing.

Then some Thai began to creep into my journal, which until the age of 17 had been exclusively in English. I seemed to choose which language to express myself in based on context. When I expressed my feelings about my friends or my school day, a lot of it was in Thai—the language I used in that environment. While most other things outside my feelings and experiences at school were in English.

MULTILINGUAL SELF-EXPRESSION

In short, multilingualism can manifest itself in complex methods of self-expression that parents might find confusing. Each child's experience with this depends on a variety of factors: their first language(s); the age at which they learned their other language(s); media; and whether they are most often in a dual language environment, single language environment, or a dense code-switching environment—alternating between two or more languages.

Additionally, a child's experience with languages and self-expression is not static, as my experience shows. Changes to any of these factors could also change the way multilingualism manifests in self-expression. So for those worried that

your child is forgetting a language, know that there is a way for them to regain it!

BRIDGING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

The insight given above might sound complicated; some multilingual children might not even be aware of these unconscious preferences. It might, however, be more noticeable for you as a parent, especially if you don't have the same language preferences or don't speak the same languages as your child. Different languages have different nuances: even if you express the same thing in two languages, it still might not feel right. And of course, some words only exist in some languages, so that there is no direct translation for you to express yourself in the way you want. Because of this, it can sometimes be difficult to effectively communicate or express yourself within multilingual families.

NCS counselor Savinee shares, "There are some families where the parent mainly speaks one language while the child mainly speaks another. In cases like this, making an effort to communicate in both languages is very important, even if it means using incorrect grammar or pronunciation." Speaking a language you're not fluent in can definitely be a challenge, but there's nothing



Photo by RDNE Stock project from Pexels

to be scared of; it's OK to not know a language well or perfectly. Just trying means you are already making progress in understanding each other on a deeper level, and any communication is better than no communication at all. Plus, practice will help you improve! Communication is foundational to building strong and healthy relationships; therefore, I encourage you to express yourself and to make an effort to understand your child to the best of your ability despite any language barriers.

NURTURING CONFIDENCE

NCS counselor Pam shared an interesting observation from her experience as a teacher and school counselor: "Monolingual children are sometimes more confident in language use than bilingual children." Because multilingual children are constantly code-switching, they might not feel completely confident in either language as they have to split their brain between both. This is an experience that both Savinee and I can relate to, especially as children and teens. That's the thing about growing up—the longer you use something, the more confident you become in it. Ultimately, confidence can depend on a variety of factors, including type of bilingualism,

balance, personality, environment, and other individual experiences. Therefore, we recommend avoiding generalizations and looking at this on a case-by-case basis. Even siblings with nearly identical experiences can differ in confidence levels. This is where nurturing confidence comes in.

Self-expression creeps into many aspects of life: the way you present a project or essay for school, a proposal for work, how you communicate with people, how you regulate your emotions, and more. This is why nurturing self-confidence is extremely important. Though I still consider English to be the language I'm most comfortable in, I'm now also confident in Thai—a skill I value highly. Knowing a lot of languages is great, but being confident in using them makes a world of difference. Here are some tips for building confidence in language use:

Complete immersion: Being completely immersed in a language for several hours a day for a long period of time can help your child gain confidence in that language. I was extremely unconfident in my Thai when I first started at my Thai school, but being immersed in it helped build my confidence over time.

Early exposure: The younger we are, the easier it is to completely pick up and absorb languages. The more a language is used from an early age, the more likely we will be confident in it.

Fake it till you make it: Go ahead and encourage your child to express themselves in a language, even if they aren't confident in it. Practice builds confidence, while fear holds us back, so sometimes we just have to go ahead and do it until we actually become confident in it.

Avoid shame: Don't shame children for not being fluent in their mother tongue. As NCS's creative director Athalie shares, "I know a lot of TCKs who are shamed by their relatives for this, and it has hugely affected their confidence in that language over the years." Knowing a language is great, even if you're not completely fluent in it. So be sure to encourage your children no matter what anyone else says.

Language permeates almost every aspect of our lives, and multilingualism can be complex and multifaceted. Everyone has a different experience with language, but what matters most is that we try to communicate and are confident in what we have to say.

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WHAT WORDS CAN MEAN

It can be all too easy to speak without thinking, but our words can mean so much more than we intend them to. Kelly explores the idea of loaded language and why using the right words matters.

Photo by Mutecevil 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 studiroman

Recently my daughter has been going through her “Why?” stage. Why do I have to wear shoes? Why is it so hot? Why does Daddy look like Santa? Some questions make me sigh; others have us turning to books and Google, and I can’t help but laugh at the brutal comedic timing of a three-year-old. But a recent question gave me pause, and had me considering the implications of a casual, quick response. While I was applying my mascara, the little voice bouncing beside me chirped, “Mommy, why do you put on makeup?” To cover up my imperfections, lighten my dark circles, darken my eyebrows—you know, to look “pretty”. But is this the message I want to convey to my daughters? *Mommy isn’t pretty so she wears makeup* feels like a loaded phrase our generation heard growing up in the eighties and nineties.

Loaded language is a rhetorical device wherein words or phrases evoke an emotional response beyond the literal definition. Loaded language is frequently used as a persuasive tactic and is often utilized by advertisers, political campaigns, and social media influencers. Of course, everyone will choose

expressive language to communicate feelings from time to time. Why say the coffee is bad when you can call it atrocious? But one only needs to look as far as the minefield—that’s a loaded term—of parenting advice on social media to see the effects. Both sleep training and co-sleeping will elicit strong emotional responses. You let your child cry? Your child still sleeps in your bed? Regardless of where you fall, these terms often prove divisive and unhelpful. We’ve all had rough nights as parents, and the last thing we need is to take a judgmental stance against other tired parents.

Perhaps you too had a geriatric pregnancy? Maybe an incompetent cervix, hostile uterus, or failure to progress in labor? Medical terminology often seems stacked against women. Failure. Incompetent. Hostile. My body can’t do this. Maybe I’m too old? Simple linguistic phrases can create powerful feelings of self-doubt. Sprinkle in some raging hormones, and it’s no surprise when women feel rage and anxiety postpartum. Changing medical terminology isn’t an easy fix, but we are in control of our response to it. Recognizing the loaded language and identifying

the emotions it evokes can help you separate your body and identity as a mother from unpleasant terms.

Parents and children alike can be affected by loaded, emotive language. And while it’s easy to see the negative emotions that language can elicit, the opposite is also true. Using authentic and specific language to praise children for effort and achievement has a positive effect on their well-being. So leave the phrase “good job” at the door and try out some positive emotive language. *I’m so proud you shared your snack with your sister! It was a great idea to put that block in your tower!* Taking a moment to choose sincere, thoughtful praise makes it all the more powerful!

Words have power. The language we speak, read, and think every day can impact our moods, perspectives, and so much more. Now when my daughter and I discuss makeup, we use the word “fancy”. *Mommy is feeling fancy today so I’m putting my lipstick on.* Is it the perfect choice? Probably not, but “perfect” is a loaded word in itself, so I’ll take it.

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.



**BAMBI
PLAYGROUPS**

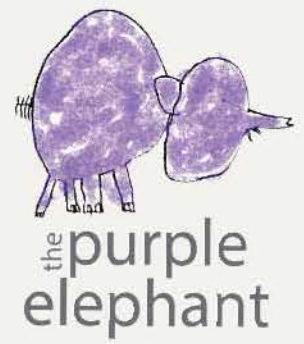
SCAN NOW

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.



**NON-BAMBI
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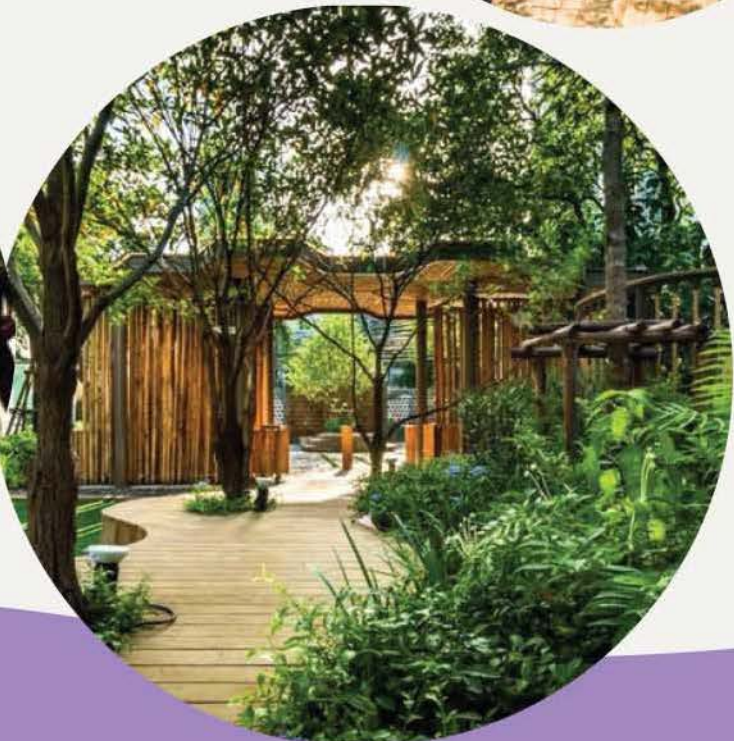
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Book visit



IS IT WORTH THE RISK?

Risky play challenges the boundaries of comfort but offers children vital opportunities for growth. Pediatric occupational therapist Sarah Russell guides us through the benefits, risks, and practical ways to embrace this transformative form of play.



About the Author

Sarah Russell is an Australian-trained pediatric occupational therapist with almost 20 years of experience. She has worked in diverse settings including tertiary hospitals, private practices, and schools across Australia, Singapore, and Thailand. She is passionate about respecting and protecting childhood through play. To contact Sarah, please email stamburrini@gmail.com.

I often spend time (holding my breath and crossing my fingers) watching my two young boys climb trees, jump from heights, and race around on their bikes and scooters, rolling down ramps and curbs at top speeds. Many times, when their play has felt challenging and uncomfortable, I've had to remind myself that play is crucial for children's well-being. In fact, not only is play fun for children, it is beneficial to their physical, mental, and social development and well-being (1).

Since having my second child, who's even more physical and active than my first—with a streak of thrill-seeking, my need to embrace play categorized as "risky play" has evolved into a passion, both personally and professionally. I've leaned into the idea that there's an abundance of learning opportunities for children within risky play: physical activity, social opportunities, recognition of strengths and capacity, opportunity for energetic / emotional output, development of motor skills, teamwork, awareness of their body, creativity, and sensory exploration.

I've also learned that allowing our children to embrace their own experiences and desires often requires us to examine our preconceived thoughts and opinions. I hope this information helps you, like it did for me, embrace risky play with more of an understanding of and greater confidence in the benefits of this type of play for children.

WHAT IS RISKY PLAY?

Risky play is characterized by thrilling and exciting forms of free play that involve inherent risks, such as the potential for physical injury, due to the uncertain nature of the activity. Figure 1 highlights the types of risky play and some examples of each (2).

What are the benefits of risky play? In Southeast Asia, where attitudes to play are more cautious, the idea of "risky play" may seem counterintuitive. However, recent

Figure 1: Types of risky play

TYPE OF RISKY PLAY	EXAMPLES
Playing at height	Climbing, jumping, balancing at height
Playing at speed	Biking/scooting/skating at high speed; sliding; running
Play involving tools	Activities involving objects like sticks, play weapons; using real tools like a hammer
Play involving potentially dangerous elements	Playing near fire, water, rocks
Rough and tumble play	Wrestling; play fighting; martial arts
Play with risk of getting lost	Play involving limited supervision, e.g. hide and seek, exploring
Play involving impacts	Contact sports; games and leisure activities involving bodily contact

research suggests that allowing children to engage in age-appropriate risk-taking activities can have significant benefits for their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development (3):

- **Physical development:** Risky play helps children develop strength, coordination, balance, and agility. It also provides opportunities to develop gross motor skills and spatial awareness.
- **Cognitive development:** Engaging in risky play requires children to assess risks, make decisions, and problem-solve. This helps them develop critical thinking skills and improve their ability to learn from their mistakes.
- **Emotional development:** Overcoming challenges and fears associated with risky play can boost children's self-confidence, resilience, and sense of accomplishment. It also helps them develop emotional regulation skills and learn to manage their own anxiety.
- **Social development:** Risky play often involves social interaction and cooperation, such as playing with friends or siblings. This can help children develop social skills, communication skills, and the

ability to plan, problem-solve, negotiate, and compromise.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Risky play wouldn't have the name it does if it didn't come with risks! And while it's one thing to understand the benefits, it's certainly another to feel comfortable allowing and supporting a child to participate in this type of play. Research into risky play indicates that the most impactful parental fear is the fear of serious injury (4). However, the vast majority of risky-play-related injuries result in minor injury that requires little to no medical input (5).

HOW CAN I EMBRACE RISKY PLAY BUT MINIMIZE RISK?

Each family will have their own level of comfort with the risks associated with different types of risky play. It's also important to respect the cultural values and concerns among your community; not everyone will be comfortable with risky play. While keeping our children safe is of utmost importance, research suggests that families today are imposing too many restrictions on risky outdoor play, which may hinder children's development (5). It's therefore important to still find ways for your child to explore risky play as well as minimize the risks to their safety:

Start small: Begin with low-risk activities and gradually increase the level of challenge as your child gains confidence and competence.

Provide supervision: While it's important to allow children some autonomy, adult supervision is crucial to ensure their safety and allow you to intervene if and when necessary.

Adopt a paradigm shift—from keeping children “as safe as possible” to “as safe as is necessary”.

Teach safety skills: Explain to your child the importance of assessing risks, making safe choices, and using appropriate safety gear, such as helmets and protective clothing.

Reframe “be careful” to more specific and informative language, such as “pay attention to the log in front of you” or “that tree branch looks weak and unstable”. This will encourage safety awareness and problem-solving skills.

Encourage communication: Talk to your child about their experiences with risky play. Ask them about the challenges they faced, how they overcame them, and what they learned from the experience.

RISKY PLAY OPPORTUNITIES IN BANGKOK

There are countless opportunities for risky play in Bangkok, especially outdoors:

Take advantage of the endless sunshine: Invite your child to ride a bike, scooter or skateboard, or roller-

skate (depending on developmental stage, of course!) in one of the many parks, especially parks with tailored ramps and slopes.

Climb trees: Choose trees with sturdy branches and low-hanging limbs to minimize risks.

Balance / walk on and jump off logs: Look for fallen logs in parks or nature reserves. Start with short distances and gradually increase the challenge as your child gains confidence.

Build forts: Encourage your child to build forts using natural materials like sticks, leaves, and mud. This can foster creativity and problem-solving skills.

Play-fight with sticks, branches, large leaves, or materials from tree trunks: Try to blunt the end of sticks or help your child select blunt sticks. Discussing shared rules around areas appropriate to strike at and words that cease play immediately can help children feel more safe and secure.

Explore surrounding areas: Weekend getaways provide fabulous opportunities to explore some of the beautiful nature surrounding Bangkok. Rivers, farms, and camping grounds provide lots of opportunities for exploration and creativity.

If you still feel unsure about risky play, one of the various outdoor playgrounds with swings, slides, and climbing apparatus might offer safer opportunities for your child to explore play with risk. And if outdoor spaces aren't right for you,

indoor play centers such as Bounce or Harborland also encourage risky play.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Risky play involves challenging activities with a perceived risk of injury, like climbing trees, building forts, or playing near water.
- Risky play is beneficial: it helps kids learn, grow, and become more resilient.
- Any child can engage in elements of risky play appropriate to their development.
- The occurrence of injury requiring medical attention as a result of risky play is minimal.
- Risky play is an excellent chance to teach your child about risk assessment. Help children understand and manage risks by helping them develop an awareness of perceived risk, for example, “The rocks are slippery, hold on,” or “Pay attention to the broken tree branch when climbing the tree.”
- Not everyone in your community will feel comfortable with risky play. If this is the case, you can try creating risky play opportunities with just a particular few friends.
- Remember: Risky play is a natural part of childhood development. By providing a supportive and encouraging environment, you can help your child reap the many benefits of this important type of play.

Disclaimer: This information is for general knowledge and guidance only. It does not constitute professional medical or child-development advice. Always prioritize the safety and well-being of your child.

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Ever wondered how kids see the languages they speak, listen to, and learn? Here's what five little linguists from the BAMBI community shared about their favorite languages and how they use gestures to express themselves.



Imora
8 years

1. How many languages do you hear at home, and which one's your favorite? Why?

Three—English, Swahili, and French. French is my favorite because I love how it sounds.

2. What's the funniest word you've learned in any language?

"Gaga" in French. It means "slightly mad".

3. What's the longest word you know?

Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious

4. What's the best thing about knowing more than one language?

You will be able to communicate with many people, even those who are not from your country.

5. How can you tell or show your family you love them?

By being kind to them and saying thank you and sorry when you wrong them.

6. What's a word or phrase mommy or daddy say a lot?

I love you.



Zeeshan
9 years

1. How many languages do you hear at home, and which one's your favorite? Why?

Five languages: Tamil, English, Hindi, Malayalam, Arabic. English is my favorite because I understand it best.

2. If you had to teach your best friend one word from any language, what would it be?

Nandri ("thanks" in Tamil)

3. What's the longest word you know?

Micropachycephalosaurus

4. How can you tell or show your family you love them?

I give them hugs.

5. What's your favorite word?

Smarty pants

6. What's a word or phrase mommy or daddy say a lot? What does it mean to you?

Papa. It means "my baby" in Tamil.



Pete
4 years

1. How many languages do you hear at home, and which one's your favorite?

Thai, English, Chinese. Chinese is my most favorite language.

2. What's the funniest word you've learned in any language?

Arrr ar ar ar ar

3. What's the best thing about knowing more than one language?

Reading signs and listening to music in different languages.

4. How can you tell or show your family you love them?

Pinching their cheeks

5. What's a word or phrase mommy or daddy say a lot? What does it mean to you?

"Pete!" This means mama wants something done NOW!



Amelie
3 years

1. Which languages do you hear at home?

English and Thai

2. What's the funniest word you've learned in any language?

Poo poo

3. How can you tell or show your family you love them?

Be silly with them

4. What's your favorite word?

Oh dear

5. What's a word or phrase mommy or daddy say a lot?

You are so lovely.

1. How many languages do you hear at home, and which one's your favorite? Why?

Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. My favorite is Cantonese because I can talk to my grandma in it.

2. What's the hardest word you've learned in any language?

The character '龍' (lóng) is the hardest for me. It means "dragon" and is shaped like a dragon.

3. If you had to teach your best friend one word from your language, what would it be?

I would teach her the word '朋' (péng), which means "friend". It represents our friendship beautifully, just like the moon (月) and stars together.

4. What's the best thing about knowing more than one language?

The best thing is that I can talk to more people and learn about different cultures.

5. How can you tell or show your family you love them?

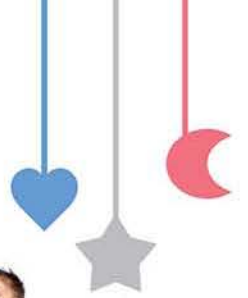
I show my love by giving them a big bear hug.

6. What's a word or phrase mommy or daddy say a lot? What does it mean to you?

My mom often says '加油' (ga yau), which means "keep it up" or "go for it". It encourages me to persevere and never give up.



Alisha
6 years



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DECODING YOUR CHILD'S LOVE LANGUAGE

Sonali shares her secret for building strong, stable, loving, and lasting connections with our kids in seconds. She reflects on the different approaches that work with each of her children, and what we need to think about with our own.

Photo by Winnie Bruce from Studio South Korea



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 Crystal Sing from corelens

You love your kids. Of course you do. We all deeply love our kids. And we pour our love into our kids—every time we play games with them, read to them, cook for them, and take them to the park or on play dates.

Yet sometimes we can feel something is missing. Like we're sending these messages of love that our child isn't receiving.

When this happens, we often quietly ask ourselves: "What else can I do?" We start searching for that exciting new thing to create a spark between us and our child, but when daily life is already busy, and there are many demands on our time, doing this can feel like a lot! And even if you could do it once or twice, it's not sustainable.

Yet it doesn't need to be so complicated—I think it's not about pouring more into your child's cup, or finding something "new". I've seen both in my own family and with the families I support that it's more than possible to create a spark of connection in seconds.

You may have heard that kids need connection.

You may have also heard that kids need stability.

My belief is that both are true, and when we combine these two ideas together, we see that what kids really need is stable, secure, solid connection. And here's the thing—it's what we parents crave too.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONNECTION AND STABLE CONNECTION?

Have you ever gotten an amazing massage, then you get home and within 30 minutes you're stressed again? The massage was connection. However, stable connection is how we keep ourselves in that relaxed, joyful energy in a sustained way.

Now, think of that friend you call, who when she picks up with her familiar "hello", it feels like being wrapped up in a giant blanket of love, approval, and care. Talking with her for just two minutes can lift your mood for the rest of the

day. That's stable connection—connection that you can tap into easily, is simple, yet felt deeply in every cell of your body.

The hack to stable connection is what I call insta-connects. Insta-connects are small yet impactful acts of connection that are both stabilizing and satisfying in seconds. They only take a second because they tap into your child's three core energies, AKA their love language.

AN INSTA-CONNECT PRIMER

Insta-connects take just a moment and can be put on repeat, so that your child feels deeply and fully loved and connected, immediately and intensely in every cell of their body.

An insta-connect feels like a glittery firework inside your child's body—it lights them up from the inside out—and the neat thing is it lights you up from the inside out as well. Insta-connects aren't just another thing on your to-do list. They energize and brighten the connection between

you and your child in a way that is invigorating for both of you.

FIVE KEYS TO INSTA-CONNECTS

Timing: I find they work especially well in the morning or evening before bed so a child wakes and goes to sleep feeling deeply loved and connected.

Unique: Insta-connects are unique to each relationship. If you have more than one child, each will have their own insta-connect. If you have a partner, they will have their own insta-connects with the kids that are different to yours.

Quick: Insta-connects are just that— instant. They are quick interactions that feel natural to you and your child. Think under 30 seconds.

No agenda: Ideally, these feel like such natural ways to connect they require no agenda. You don't particularly use them to heal moments of disconnection. Instead, they are woven into your family life and become a regular source of stabilizing connection.

Meet your needs too: Insta-connects are not only about your child's needs. As you develop insta-connects, it's important that they genuinely feel good to you too.

WHAT INSTA-CONNECT WOULD WORK BEST FOR YOUR CHILD?

The key to building routine and regular connection with your child is to create insta-connects that resonate strongly with them and you. You'll know you have found a great

insta-connect when their face lights up and they giggle or gaze back at you with love. You'll know because you will feel it too!

Insta-connects are effective when you work with your child's core energies. My strategy for discovering a child's core energies is to imagine them as babies. Think back to when your child was six months to a year old. What three words would you use to describe them as a baby?

Were they generous, cheeky, and physical? Or perhaps they were tender, goofy, and liked to win?

Write the three words down—these energies are the portal into instant, deeply felt connection with your child.

EXAMPLES OF INSTA-CONNECTS

Physical insta-connect: My eldest has always been very physical. Part of my journey was realizing that roughhousing doesn't work for me because I'm legally blind and someone coming towards me suddenly sends me into fight/flight.

So one insta-connect we have in the morning is when I wake him, I give him the most phenomenal 30-second arm and leg massage—there's deep pressure and I press down playfully hard with rhythm so his whole body and the whole bed jiggle a bit, and it wakes him up in a way that is physical, and fun for both of us, yet keeps me securely out of fight/flight. He's now a teen and the playful, physical loving insta-connects are still there, though they have evolved over the years, of course. Right now, during the day we block each other when we try to pass in the hallway.

If your child is physical like this, they may like it if you pick them up and spin them around with their morning hug. Or they may appreciate racing to bed, or you randomly picking them up and plopping them down on the couch for no particular



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reason. Again, remember it's only an insta-connect if you are enjoying it, too.

Tender fun insta-connect: My second child's core energies are tender, cheeky, and perceptive. Now I also enjoy being a bit cheeky—cheeky fun fills my cup!

When he was younger, if I saw him brushing his teeth in the morning or evening, and the door was open, I'd sneak in and kiss him on the back of the neck. Then I'd creep out.

He'd always say with a smile, "Mama, I saw you."

I'd pretend to be mystified.

"You kissed me," he'd say.

"Who me?!" I'd say. "Impossible! I'm right here in the hallway!"

Because we'd met his core energies of tender, cheeky, and perceptive, which connect with me as well, we'd both feel light, playful, and connected.

Silly insta-connect: My youngest daughter's core energies are silly, generous, tender, and physical. It's really important to her that her love is received by me in a way she can feel in her body. For her, our insta-connects are physical in fine motor ways—my oldest's are physical in gross motor ways.

One of our favorites, when I tuck her in or send her off to school, is after I kiss her nose, I grab it and gently pretend to pull it off. I then proceed to put it on my nose and tell her how much I like my new nose. Then she giggles and reaches for my nose—she takes hers back and then reaches a second time to steal mine.

Sometimes at night when I lean in for a kiss, she preemptively covers her nose. I tell her that when she does that I know she can feel my love. She beams at that.

A FINAL NOTE ON INSTA-CONNECTS

In discovering insta-connects, parents will often say to me: "Oh,

we do something like that already, but it happens randomly," or "We had a moment where I felt that spark once—here's what happened."

That's amazing! We're not reinventing the wheel here; all the insta-connect does is take that spark moment you both felt—the one that happened in under 30 seconds—and intentionally puts it on repeat. Remember that mornings, when they go to and return from school, and before bed are great times for an insta-connect. What's neat is that they'll start to initiate the insta-connect when they need to feel your love for them in their body.

So, my invitation to you today is to remember a spark you've shared with your child and place that on repeat.

Here I am!



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BUMPS & BABIES COORDINATOR

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About this role

This volunteer position focuses on organizing workshops and events for expecting parents and families with infants up to 18 months. You'll plan sessions on essential topics like breastfeeding, birth preparation, and newborn care, as well as fun activities like baby massage and Splash Bash. The role offers flexibility to design events and collaborate with venues and providers to create meaningful experiences for parents.

Who we're looking for

We're seeking someone empathetic, organized, and familiar with global care standards for moms and babies. Healthcare professionals, such as midwives or doulas, have traditionally filled this role, but anyone confident in sharing evidence-based information and knowledgeable about local services in Thailand is encouraged to apply.

Why join BAMBI?

This rewarding role allows you to support families during a life-changing time, foster connections, and give back to the community. So if you're ready to make a difference, join us and help parents navigate pregnancy, postpartum, and early parenting with confidence. For more details and/or to apply, please email to bumps@bambiweb.org



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A CUNNING PLAN

In true expat fashion, Joe swaps sunglasses for rose-tinted ones as he fondly recalls frolics, fun, frantic moments, and almost losing both his children during a family trip back home to not-so-sunny England.



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.



I find looking through rose-tinted glasses at life back home to be one of the great challenges of expat life. I miss family and friends, genuinely forgetting how annoying they really are. Obviously if you're family or a friend reading this, I don't mean you—it's the other really annoying ones I'm talking about. I fondly remember long spring evenings and golden sunshine, and forget the never-ending rain, the grey clouds, and the bitter cold. Above all, I think of England as a place of perpetual holiday because now when we're home, we're on holiday, and if holidays aren't fun you're either doing them wrong or have accidentally taken your children with you.

Last year I hatched a cunning plan. With my wife on maternity leave and me unhampered by the ties of gainful employment, we'd make an extended stay in England and my rose-tinted glasses would be shattered by the freezing realities of November in Northumberland. Two days of sleet and fog should have me yearning for the warmth of Thailand and put paid to any silly ideas of moving to rural England. I'm not sure my plan worked as we seemed to have a wonderful time, in our own special way.

A FAIR DIVISION OF LABOR

I don't think regular readers of this column can be in any doubt that my wife is a very lucky lady to have such a generous and considerate husband. These endearing traits of mine were at the fore when I nobly allowed her to run parkrun every Saturday while we were in the UK. She was concerned that I was missing out on the fun, but I assured her that I didn't mind her getting up early to run five kilometers up and down steep rainy hills while I

stayed warm and dry with the kids. It was a sacrifice, but one I was prepared to make. Pretty noble, I think you'll agree.

Having nobly looked after the children for the thirty minutes of a weekly parkrun, I felt no qualms about demanding two or three hours for my own runs every couple of days. It seemed totally fair to me. Martin was all in favor of these excursions as he got to watch YouTube while I was out. Each morning I'd be greeted with a cheerful "When are you going running?", and this most demanding of coaches would allow no procrastination, as he brought me my shoes and reminded me that I hadn't left yet.

In an attempt to make myself appear less selfish, I'd suggest meeting at a cafe with a playground so that it would seem like a family outing. Obviously I only did this for the tasty post-run cake. Whether they actually enjoyed these trips or whether an exhausted father was any use for entertaining children once he finally arrived at the cafe they'd been waiting at for two hours were questions I was very careful not to ask.

SEASONAL EATING

After parkrun we'd always have ice cream. In August this seemed reasonable—even essential. By November, when Marty refused to let the need to wear a hat and gloves, or even the sleet, interrupt his ice cream time, it seemed a little less sensible. While I shivered in two coats and a hoodie over a steaming mug of tea, Marty relished a raspberry ripple. The red ice cream just about hid his increasingly blue lips. Probably a good thing we

came back to Thailand when we did or he'd have gotten frostbite.

A LUCKY ESCAPE

My favorite day of our holiday was the Saturday when I didn't lose any children. Now to be clear, this wasn't in contrast to all the other days when I was shedding children like confetti; rather it was the day when an unfortunate series of events made it seem very probable that I was about to lose at least one of them.

It started innocently enough with a decision to take Marty's bike to parkrun. He cycled everyday in Bangkok but he'd been without a bike for several weeks and was excited that his cousin had lent him her bike. Now in hindsight there are differences between pedaling up and down our pancake-flat soi and the mountain bike routes of Hamsterley parkrun. Most obviously, I thought, the absence of motorbikes, but also, it turned out, a need for a much greater understanding of brakes and their usage.

Excited to be reunited with a bike, Marty decided we'd chase Mummy on her run. I'll draw a veil over the bribes, threats, and struggles required to get me, two children, a bike, and a stroller to the top of a very small hill. Suffice to say that it was not a pleasant experience and everything was, all too literally, about to go downhill from there.

Precariously clinging to a bike and a stroller on a hill that suddenly seemed to have become a mountain, I swiftly discovered there was no way I could control six wheels on the descent. With a despairing shove, I pushed Alice's stroller towards a passing bush, and hoped it would stick.

As we plummeted down the slope I failed to explain braking to Marty. Just as it seemed impossible for my legs to keep up, the slope leveled out, the bike slowed, and we were able to stop before the river became much



of a concern. Glancing back I could see no sign of a stroller. With shouted instructions to Martin not to drown himself, or move, I sprinted back up the hill.

Thankfully there was the stroller snuggled in among the stinging nettles with Alice giggling happily to herself. We descended at a more sedate pace, until the abandoned bicycle appeared, whereupon our pace and my panic increased substantially. Thankfully Marty was not in the river. Instead he was welcoming the runners around the final corner, in the traditional manner, by peeing at their feet. Having stopped this idiosyncratic form of cheerleading, we agreed not to discuss any of this with Mummy and went to see the Gruffalo. Oh, the relief that everyone had survived.

FAMILY TIME

One of the best things about going home is the free childcare. Marty and his granny would happily spend hours building train tracks and reading books while I lazed on the sofa and caught up on my reading. Sadly, my lazy idyll was ruined by others' selfishness. Apparently Marty's cousins also liked to see their granny, and work didn't consider playing with grandchildren a valid reason for calling in sick. Worse was to come as I realised the 800-mile round trip between my parents house and our house would limit their usefulness as babysitters. Whining all the way, I was forced back to fatherly duties.

It was this rather than the weather that may have made my cunning plan a success. Much as I loved our months in the UK, I was yearning for our nanny by the end. Children are so much more tolerable when someone else is looking after them.

Photos courtesy of the author





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FOOD INTOLERANCES VS FOOD ALLERGIES

What's the difference between a food intolerance and a food allergy, and how can both conditions be managed effectively? Registered dietitian Keren explains.



Photo by go_go photos from Pexels



About the Author

Keren is a registered dietitian specializing in pediatrics, including transitions to solids, picky eating, and regulating eating patterns. She also focuses on pregnancy, gestational diabetes, and weight loss. Keren firmly believes in evidence-based, personalized nutrition plans to achieve optimal health outcomes.

If you're an expat living in Bangkok, navigating dietary needs for your child can sometimes feel like an overwhelming task. The city offers a tantalizing array of flavors and cuisines, but what happens when your child's body seems to rebel against certain foods?

Understanding the difference between a food intolerance and a food allergy is essential in managing your child's health, ensuring they stay safe while enjoying the culinary richness of their surroundings.

THE BASICS: WHAT ARE FOOD INTOLERANCES AND FOOD ALLERGIES?

Food intolerances and food allergies often get mixed up, but they stem from different mechanisms in the body. Food allergies involve the immune system. When a child with a food allergy consumes or comes into contact with the offending food, their immune system reacts as if the substance is harmful, triggering a cascade of symptoms that can range from mild to severe.

On the other hand, food intolerances do not involve the immune system. Instead, they are usually related to the digestive system's inability to properly process certain foods. While intolerances can cause discomfort and disrupt daily life, they are not life-threatening.

Differentiating between these two can help parents seek the appropriate care and interventions for their child.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Food intolerances

Food intolerance symptoms may take hours or even days to appear. They include:

- Bloating and gas
- Abdominal pain or cramps
- Diarrhea or constipation



Photo by Vedrana Sucic from Getty Images

- Headaches or migraines in some cases

For example, lactose intolerance—a common condition where the body lacks the enzyme lactase to digest milk sugars—is prevalent in many Asian populations. This means some children might experience discomfort after consuming dairy products, such as Thailand's popular milk teas or creamy desserts.

Food allergies

Allergic reactions can manifest differently depending on the type of antibodies that are produced when the body is exposed to the allergen. Some are known as IgE-mediated reactions and occur within minutes of exposure to the allergen. Others can be delayed, developing hours to weeks after exposure. These are called non-IgE mediated reactions. Symptoms can include:

- Skin reactions: Hives, swelling, or eczema
- Respiratory issues: Wheezing, coughing, or difficulty breathing
- Gastrointestinal symptoms: Vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain
- Anaphylaxis: A severe, potentially life-threatening reaction that requires immediate medical attention

Common allergenic foods for children include peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, soy, wheat, fish, and shellfish. Thailand's cuisine often incorporates many of these allergens, making vigilance crucial for families.

DIAGNOSING THE ISSUE

Proper diagnosis is the cornerstone of effective management. If you suspect your child has a food allergy or intolerance, consulting a healthcare professional is essential. Start by keeping a detailed food diary to track what your child eats and any symptoms that follow. This can provide valuable clues for your doctor or dietitian.

For food allergies, tests like the skin prick test or specific IgE blood tests can help identify allergens. It's important to note that these tests should always be interpreted by a qualified healthcare provider, as false positives and negatives can occur.

Food intolerances, however, are often diagnosed through an elimination diet. This involves removing suspected foods from the child's diet under professional supervision and gradually reintroducing them to identify the culprits.

MANAGING FOOD INTOLERANCES AND ALLERGIES

Food intolerances

For food intolerances, the focus is on minimizing or avoiding the problematic food while ensuring your child's diet remains balanced and nutritious. For instance:

- **Opt for “free from” options:** For lactose intolerance, choose lactose-free milk or plant-based alternatives like almond, soy, oat, or rice milk. Many supermarkets in Bangkok now carry a wide range of these products. For gluten intolerance or sensitivity you may find gluten-free options less widely available in Thailand as in Western countries, but you can still find rice-based noodles, breads, and other products to suit your child's needs.
- **Monitor portions:** Some intolerances, like those to fructose or certain food additives, may be dose-dependent, meaning small amounts might be tolerated without issue.

Food allergies

If your child has a diagnosed food allergy, avoiding the allergen is crucial. For families living in Bangkok, this can be particularly challenging due to language barriers and the widespread use of common allergens in Thai cuisine. Here are some practical tips:

- **Learn the language:** Familiarize yourself with the Thai words for relevant allergens.
- **Carry an allergy card:** A card in Thai explaining your child's allergy can be a lifesaver when dining out.
- **Be prepared:** Always have an epinephrine auto-injector (sometimes known by the brand name EpiPen)—if prescribed—and know the location of the nearest hospital.
- **Cook at home:** Preparing meals at home allows you full control over ingredients.



Photo by bit245 from Getty Images

EMOTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR CHILD

Managing food allergies or intolerances isn't just about the physical aspects; it's also essential to address the emotional impact. Children can feel isolated or different if they can't eat the same foods as their peers. Encourage open communication and educate them about their condition in an age-appropriate way.

Empower your child by involving them in meal planning and preparation. For example, let them pick out safe ingredients at the market or help prepare their school lunch. This fosters a sense of control and helps them build lifelong skills.

BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

As an expat in Bangkok, finding a supportive community can make a world of difference. Many international schools are well-versed in accommodating dietary restrictions, but it's still worth engaging with the school to ensure

they understand your child's needs. Bangkok also has a growing number of online forums and expat groups where you can connect with other parents facing similar challenges.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Understanding the difference between food intolerances and food allergies, as well as recognizing their symptoms, empowers parents to take proactive steps. While managing these conditions can be daunting, especially in a foreign country, knowledge and preparation go a long way. Bangkok's vibrant food scene doesn't have to be off-limits; with the right tools and awareness, your child can safely enjoy a wide variety of flavors and experiences.

Navigating these challenges can be overwhelming, but professional guidance can provide clarity and support. As a registered dietitian, I can attest to the fact that seeking advice when needed can help create a safe and nurturing environment for children to thrive.

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

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

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LIVING WITH ALLERGIES

Since her son was diagnosed with a severe allergy, Chrissy has been learning how to navigate life to keep him and others with allergies safe. She shares her personal experience and insights so our community can better support children with allergies.



Photo by monticello from Getty Images

About the Authors



Chrissy, originally from the UK, moved to Bangkok in 2017 to work at an international school. With 20 years of experience in education and science, she now focuses on science writing and allergy education consulting. Chrissy enjoys attending BAMBI events with her three-year-old son.

At eight months old, my son was rushed to hospital struggling to breathe. It was an emergency and I had no idea what was happening.

The diagnosis was anaphylaxis as a result of cow's milk protein allergy (CMPA). Allergies don't run in our family so I knew nothing about them and had no idea how to navigate this situation, especially with a child whose diet was still largely composed of milk.

Over the following two years, I learned more about allergies, how to keep my son safe, and how to support others in their understanding. I also discovered that factors like C-section birth, early administration of antibiotics, and formula supplementation in hospital—all common in Bangkok—can contribute to the development of allergies.

HOW PREVALENT ARE ALLERGIES?

The World Allergy Organization (WAO) estimates that between 10% and 40% of each country's population has allergies (2). Allergies can develop at any age but more frequently develop before the age of five. They are also more prevalent in children and it is quite common to find several children in each class with allergies.

Studies show that the prevalence of allergies is increasing in both

developed and developing economies (1, 4). Additionally, my son's pediatric allergist has a huge waiting list, which suggests allergies are becoming more prevalent here in Thailand too.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON FOOD ALLERGENS?

The "Big 8" allergens are:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Fish
- Crustaceans
- Tree nuts
- Peanuts
- Wheat
- Soy

While allergic reactions can be mild in some people, for others they can be severe or even fatal.

WHAT IS ANAPHYLAXIS?

Anaphylaxis (pronounced anna-fill-axis) is a serious whole-body, life-threatening allergic reaction. It can occur when someone is exposed to something they are allergic to (an allergen) and is a medical emergency (3). Many people wrongly believe severe or fatal reactions only occur with peanut allergies; however, these fatal reactions can be to any allergen, most commonly milk (1).

DAILY LIFE WITH ALLERGIES

Navigating my son's allergy has been a journey. It came as a surprise

to realize that allergies can result in being excluded from things. The biggest one so far was when his school place was withdrawn over his milk allergy. We tried to discuss a care plan, but they could not accommodate us, despite milk being the most common allergen. Instead, we continue to attend playgroups and are grateful to those that are allergy-aware.

We cook all of our son's food at home, so we can be sure it contains no milk products. Menus in many countries have allergy labels, but that's rare in Thailand. Traveling can present challenges, it's a must to stay somewhere with cooking facilities and always have a supply of safe foods.

We're grateful to have oral immunotherapy—a type of allergy treatment—here in Bangkok, and know that back in the UK we'd be on a more than year-long wait list.

I worry about what school will be like for him. As a teacher, I've sadly encountered children being bullied because of their allergies. Research suggests that a third of children with allergies get bullied (5), including having the potentially deadly allergen waved in their face. As a parent, this petrifies me.

Schools desperately need more allergy education, both for the children and the teachers, to support schools to be more inclusive. The more we learn, the safer our little ones with allergies will be.

HOW TO BE INCLUSIVE AND CELEBRATE SAFELY AT SCHOOL

- 1) Send non-food items. Creative crafts, playful accessories, celebration props. These are not only allergen-free but also avoid the sugar overload that often happens with school celebrations.
- 2) Check with the class teacher about what allergens need to be avoided.
- 3) Avoid anything containing the Big 8 allergens—there are Bangkok-based shops that specialize in allergen-free chocolate and treats.
- 4) If you must send something with an allergen, ensure it is labeled.
- 5) Teach your child to avoid sharing food and about respecting allergies.

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EMPATHY THROUGH LANGUAGE: HOW TEACHING MULTIPLE LANGUAGES CULTIVATES UNDERSTANDING

Claudia explores how learning languages helps children develop empathy by increasing their understanding of cultural nuances, and enables them to view the world from different perspectives.

Photo by Tima Miroshnichenko



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/

I believe that empathy is a building block for a better future. Empathy allows us to connect with others on a deeper level as people feel heard and loved. Empathy enhances understanding and decreases conflicts as it opens doors for conversations that matter.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

We are all global citizens and it is imperative for global understanding that children learn multiple languages. When children learn a new language, they see the world from a different viewpoint, broadening their frame of reference. They are taking that first step toward understanding cultures and developing understanding and respect for other groups of people. With each new language, children's minds are opened to a variety of possibilities and fresh perspectives.

If you pay attention, in many languages you will find that words tell you part of their history. For example, my neighborhood in São Paulo, Brazil, is called Imirim. This name comes from the Tupian language and combines two words: "Y", meaning river, and "mirim", meaning small. When put together, "Imirim" means "small river". It was called this because of a stream, now hidden underground, that used to cross the neighborhood. Language is not just a tool for communication but a window to another way of life, or another "world".

By developing cognitive flexibility through understanding different cultures, children can better understand others. As their emotional intelligence grows, they learn how to change the way they interpret people based on the emotions they display. They become aware of different body language and expressions, or the lack of them. The experience of learning languages will make them more patient when dealing with someone who doesn't understand them, and make them more creative in finding new ways to communicate.

As a parent, you might worry that learning multiple languages will



Photo by Jovanmandic from Getty Images

be overwhelming for your child, especially when they use more than one language in a single sentence—known as code mixing. However, this is actually a reflection of their wide vocabulary rather than an issue of concern.

WAYS TO SUPPORT LANGUAGE LEARNING

- Take advantage of your existing circumstances. If you already have a bilingual household, teach both languages to your children when they are still babies or young as they are able to absorb information incredibly well at this stage.
- Encourage them to take part in multilingual settings at school, or on playdates, while travelling, at cultural events, by visiting different communities in town, and so on.
- Find ways to keep languages alive, for example, through conversations, videos, books, concerts, movies, and more.
- Teach the cultural aspects tied to the language, like learning the history of the country, old and new traditions, reasons for the holidays, names of geographic locations, types of food, and music.
- Encourage them to ask questions and be interested in learning about a new culture and language.

We can see in the Thai expat community how normal it is to change countries, meaning that children become used to changing environments. The goodbyes and

start-overs aren't easy, but they are part of what they know, and often they are much better than their parents at adjusting to new cultures and lifestyles.

THE ADVANTAGES OF MULTILINGUALISM

In today's world, multilingual kids are better equipped to take their place as global citizens. Their language skills will be a professional benefit and open doors to new opportunities, and they will have an advantage over those who aren't able to communicate as efficiently with potential employers and partners around the world.

As well as this, I believe that empathetic children grow up to be more compassionate adults who respect others and value diversity. This makes them the kind of people others like to work with and this gives them the potential to become great leaders.

Encouraging your children to learn a new language is incredibly beneficial for them. The "can do" attitude and positive interactions that languages offer are just the beginning. Something as simple as being able to communicate with people when you arrive in a new place is priceless.

Today some children still struggle to learn their own language as the right support is not always there for them. Having the special opportunity to become a child with multilingual skills is an incredible opportunity and can be the pathway to an amazing future.

HOW TO SIGN THE FINGERSPELLING ALPHABET



Aa



Bb



Cc



Dd



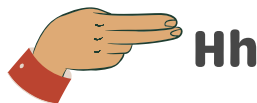
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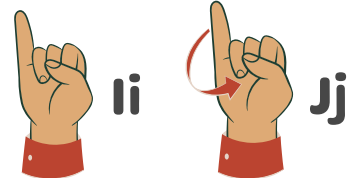
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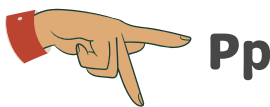
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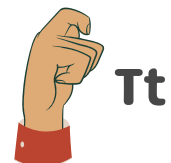
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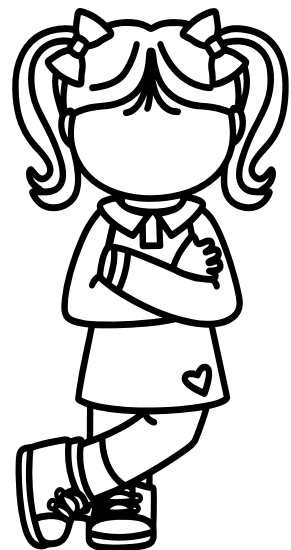
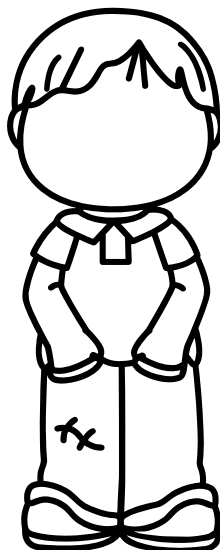
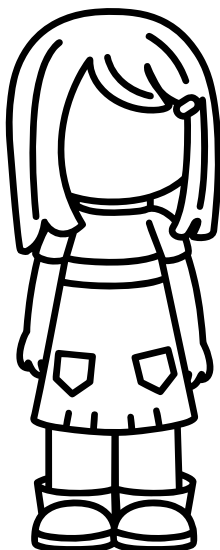
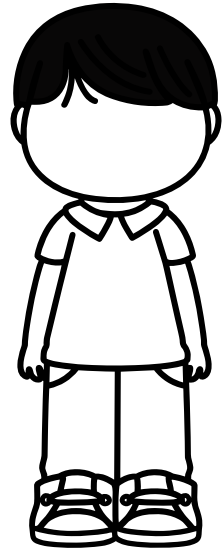
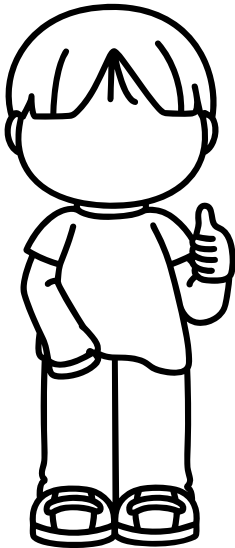


Zz



BODY LANGUAGE

Draw facial expressions to match the body language
then write the emotion underneath.



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