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**LOVING WITHOUT
LOSING YOURSELF**

**PARENTING WITH
LOVE AND BOUNDARIES**

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A project of Childbirth and Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand

**THE FIVE LOVE
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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@bambibangkok.org or visit bambibangkok.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:

English speaking, Tel 05-310-4573;
tanitmel@btinternet.com

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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Dear BAMBI Families,

February often makes us think about love, but in family life, love is rarely loud or dramatic. Love, actually, is in the small, ordinary moments. It is in sitting on the floor to play when you're tired, listening to a story you've already heard three times, or showing up for one another even on the messy days.

Have you heard about the Five Love Languages? As parents and partners, they show us that love is not always received in the way we tend to give it. One child may feel most loved when we spend uninterrupted time together (quality time), while another lights up from a hug (physical touch) or a few kind words (words of affirmation). Some children notice when we do something for them (acts of service), others treasure small gestures or presents (gifts). When we begin to understand how each family member feels loved, relationships soften. We argue less, connect more, and feel seen in ways that really matter.

This awareness also shows our children something powerful. Love does not have to look the same for everyone, it can be expressed in many ways. Knowing this helps children feel seen, loved, and secure in who they are and respectful of others, creating healthier and stronger emotional bonds at home.

I am also excited to share some wonderful news from the Playgroup department. Over the past year, we have almost doubled the number of Playgroups. Watching families find connection, support, and friendship through these groups has been incredibly rewarding. Even more Playgroups are on the way, opening up new spaces for families to come together and grow.

Thank you for being part of BAMBI and for contributing to a community built on care, understanding, and everyday love. It is a privilege to grow alongside you!

With love,

Hilda Anita
BAMBI Playgroups Coordinator





One of the trickiest questions in life may well be, "What is love?" Despite the many ways it can be defined, no single explanation ever feels complete, and perhaps that's exactly as it should be. We each experience love differently, at different moments in our lives, and for different people and things. What I find most fascinating is how our own definition of love shifts over time, shaped by who we are and what we need in each season of life. Love doesn't stand still—it grows, adapts, and thrives when given space to do so.

This February, BAMBI Magazine explores the many shapes love takes, and how it deepens through connection, compassion, and healthy boundaries that honour both closeness and individuality. We invite you to join us for a deeper look into love, actually.

Our earliest experiences shape how we love, and sometimes, also how we lose ourselves in the process. "Loving Without Losing Yourself" by Claudia Gomes explores emotional intelligence, healthy boundaries, and the difference between intimacy and self-abandonment.

In "The Five Love Languages in Family Life", mother of three, Rachna Singh Sachakul shares how understanding that love looks different for every child and responding to each child's unique emotional needs accordingly transformed her family life.

From toddler tantrums to screen-time struggles, Sara Salam's "Parenting With Love and Boundaries" looks at why boundaries matter, and how communicating them with empathy strengthens the parent-child bond.

"Love Unlimited", Joe Barker's comedic look at fatherhood, reminds us that although parenthood may involve blood, stitches, and repeated assaults on one's dignity, somehow, love for our children survives.

This month's recommended reads, also love-themed, include "An American Marriage" by Tayari Jones, and "An Invisible String" by Patrice Karst. The former is a touching novel about how love, loyalty, and identity are tested when a young Black couple's marriage is torn apart by a devastating injustice. The latter is a gentle, reassuring picture book that helps children understand that love creates invisible connections, keeping us close even when we are apart.

In non-themed content we have "Navigating the Wonders of Wildlife" by Clare Dawn Cooke, "Supporting a Partner Through Pregnancy Loss" by Anatta Zarchi, and "The Importance of Developing the Mother Tongue in Younger Children" by Rosana (Sana) Sirinarang.

Clare explores how Thailand's rich biodiversity offers children meaningful opportunities to connect with nature, highlighting family-friendly wildlife encounters, everyday learning, and ways to raise curious, nature-aware children while staying safe.

Anatta discusses how even when grief looks different for both partners when a pregnancy ends, they can still show up for one another with empathy, patience, and care.

Rosana's piece looks at how supporting the mother tongue builds confidence, strengthens family bonds and supports multilingual learning when children start going to school.

At its heart, this issue is a reminder that love is not a single story, nor a fixed state. As you turn these pages, we hope you find moments that resonate, challenge, comfort, and perhaps even reshape how you think about love. On behalf of the magazine team, Happy Valentine's Day!

Sanam Rahman
Editor



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Eowyn Crisfield

A specialist in bilingualism and language acquisition. Eowyn is a celebrated author and professor at Oxford Brookes University. With a PhD in applied linguistics, Eowyn is able to support families in ensuring their language development supports the very best outcomes.

Louise Jupp

Louise is a professor in Child Development and Early Childhood Education at the celebrated Seneca College, Canada. She is a leading specialist in Reggio-Inspired learning, known for translating Reggio principles into meaningful practice in international schools. Her work centres on viewing the child as capable and curious, and on shaping relationships and environments that help that potential shine.

Lisa Low

Lisa Low is an international thought leader, consultant, and educator with over 30 years of experience across the world. She supports families and schools in supporting children with emotional and social wellbeing, diving deep into the science of relationships, regulation, and belonging in order to achieve success.

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PLAYGROUPS & ACTIVITIES

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

PLAYGROUPS

Name	Location
Wonderkids	Wonder Woods Kids Café & Co-Learning Space
Little Seeds	The Tiny Seeds International Pre-School
Kiddiezilla	Market Place Nanglinche (3rd Floor)
Kiddieville	Playville
Little Steps	Future Steps International School Bangkok
Little Panda	Nancy Language School
Little Treehouse	Little Treehouse Nursery
Saturday Nana	Storytime Preschool Bangkok
Yenakart	Noddy by Elizabeth International Playgroup
Little Tots <small>new!</small>	Tiny Tots International Learning Centre
Niko Niko <small>new!</small>	Sukhumvit (See registration for details)



ACTIVITIES

Name	Location
Toddler Music	Skyview Hotel Bangkok Sukhumvit24
Football	Noah Futsal
Little Athletes <small>new!</small>	Noah Futsal



SIGN UP TODAY!

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





BRIGHT START



Bright Splashers

Mondays, 12:20-13:10

For children aged 1.5–3 years | Splash Pool

A joyful water-play session designed to introduce young children to the water in a safe, supportive, and playful environment. Guided by our expert coach, children explore movement and floating to build early swimming confidence.

Bright Explorers

Thursdays, 12:30-13:30

For children aged 1–3 years | Parent and Toddler Room

This hands-on session invites young explorers to dive into a world of sensory fun. With activities such as painting, water play, mud mixing, and natural material exploration, children develop key early skills in a joyful, creative environment.

Bright Beats

Wednesday, 10:00-11:00

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

An energetic, music-filled session designed to ignite your toddler's love for sound and movement. Through singing, dancing, and rhythm games, children develop key early skills in a joyful and engaging environment.

Bright Tumblers

Friday, 08:00-09:00

For children aged 1.5–3 years | Prep MPH

A fun-filled movement session designed to support physical development through purposeful play. Children build strength, coordination, and confidence while exploring soft obstacle courses in a safe, supportive environment.

Bright Splashers



Bright Beats



Scan to register

Bright Explorers



Bright Tumblers



LOVING WITHOUT LOSING YOURSELF

It can feel like love means self-sacrifice and losing one's individual identity, but Claudia assures us that self-love and personal space are essential in any healthy relationship.



Photo by Andres Ayrton from Pexels



About the Author

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

Our idea of what relationships should look like comes from what we learn as children from our parents, friends, schools, magazines, and media. This influences the way we relate to others today. Of course, as adults, we have choices, but our subconscious mind also plays a big role, whether we are aware of it or not. In romantic relationships, for example, common cultural narratives such as "two halves becoming one," "doing everything together," or "needing no one else," can influence our expectations.

The way we see ourselves, the way we believe in who we are, dictates most of our behaviors when interacting with others, especially with those we love.

So, who are you when you relate to others? Do you feel you have healthy relationships? For many of us, the concept of healthy relationships is not very clear. It certainly wasn't for me, but it is something I have learnt. Emotional Intelligence is a relatively new concept, but, like any other skill, it's something anyone can develop. In this article, we are talking about loving without losing ourselves, and about how to maintain our personal space and continue to practice self-love.

WHEN LOVING BECOMES SELF-ABANDONMENT

You may already recognize some of the points I am about to mention, and that is a great start. Awareness is the first step towards building a healthier relationship with yourself and with others. Self-abandonment usually happens because of one or more basic fears: judgment, not being enough, abandonment, rejection, and so on. These are some signs that you might be practising self-abandonment.

Silencing your own voice: You notice that you stop expressing yourself freely. You cut your words short, feel that what you say doesn't really matter, fear being misunderstood, or avoid speaking up so you don't create problems.

Over-adapting: You stop doing what you want and start doing what others want. You let go of important things in your life, work, friends, hobbies, family, personal time, pleasure, rest.

Fear of disappointing others: You become hyper-aware, perfectionistic, and start changing yourself to avoid disapproval. You fear making mistakes or being judged for your decisions.

Prioritizing harmony over authenticity: Being yourself is no longer an option; being what is expected becomes the goal. There is no confrontation, no difficult conversations. You make sure you are never the one who "creates problems."

Confusing love with sacrifice: You give yourself fully, without boundaries. You stop living your own life, abandon what you love, and constantly meet others' demands without prioritizing your own needs.

SELF-LOVE IS NOT SELFISH

This is one of my favorite topics to talk about because it is so deeply misunderstood. Loving yourself does not mean you love others less, quite the opposite. When you truly love yourself, you are able to love others more fully, for who they are, with respect, depth, and awareness.

Self-love is not emotional distance. It is the ability to express your emotions in a way others can understand. Personal space



Photo by By Karola G from Pexels

becomes a priority because you understand your need to know who you are and to remain authentic in your relationships. Taking space does not mean rejection; it means you are able to care for yourself in the same way you care for others. You develop autonomy, which is not a lack of commitment. On the contrary, it is what allows you to commit with clarity and certainty.

Self-love is emotional grounding. It is inner stability. It is the ability to show up fully in a relationship. It means knowing yourself, respecting yourself, and being compassionate and kind towards yourself. It is understanding why you do what you do and working with that reality in the best way possible. It is being yourself, without shame, without fear, with confidence, presence, and integrity.

THE SPACE THAT BRINGS US CLOSER

When personal space is honored, life feels different, more balanced, more stable, more fulfilling. For some of you, this may feel challenging, because it requires personal change in order to create a life that truly fits your needs, desires, and rhythm.

Independent lives: Regardless of the type of relationship, we are human beings with individual needs. When those needs are ignored, emotions such as resentment, anger, grief, or frustration often surface to signal that something is off. Independence allows you to explore who you are and understand your uniqueness. It is not about distancing yourself from others, but about practicing interdependence, living your own life while remaining connected.

Personal desires and rhythms: We all have our own pace, our own journey, and our own definition of what brings peace, balance, and joy. Our rhythms are not the same. Trying to make others become like you is exhausting for everyone involved. Control, when rooted in fear, is unhealthy. Letting go and trusting allows you to see more clearly what is good, and not good, for you.

Silence and solitude: This is where one of the biggest fears often lives: being alone. It is usually in these moments that the mind creates stories, sometimes dramatic, catastrophic ones. Yet it is precisely in silence and solitude that you create real space to listen to yourself, to hear your fears, and to address them. These moments help regulate your nervous system and bring emotional balance.

Emotional breathing room: You need space to be with your emotions, and sometimes space to not be with them. Emotional management is not easy, especially at the beginning. As you become more familiar with your inner world, it gradually gets easier.

Space nurtures desire. It brings curiosity back, something new to discover about the other person. Autonomy deepens intimacy because you are able to express yourself clearly, and others can do the same with you. Relationships thrive when they have room to breathe, where trust is present and open communication is part of the dynamic.

INTIMACY WITHOUT FUSION

Emotional intimacy needs to exist without losing individuality. When two people merge into one, it becomes difficult to honor both sets of needs. Intimacy grows through respect for each other's wishes, understanding desires, compassion for mistakes, and kindness towards one another. It is when presence becomes more important than dependency, when active listening and emotional availability take priority over unaddressed fears and wounds.

LOVING AS A WHOLE PERSON

When love is conditional, it doesn't necessarily mean something is wrong, but it is important to be aware of it, especially if your intention is to love someone for who they are, not for what they give you in return. Some examples of conditional love include:

Performance: Love based on meeting certain standards, such as a parent who only praises a child for good grades.

Compliance: Love that depends on agreement and the absence of challenge.

Appearance: Love based primarily on physical attributes such as looks or weight.

Utility: Love based on what someone provides, be it status, money, or convenience.

There is nothing inherently wrong with loving with conditions, as long as you are conscious of your choices and of the type of relationships you want to create. This matters because it helps you understand who you are when you love. Ask yourself these questions:

What parts of yourself are you preserving?

What are you no longer willing to sacrifice?

Are you being honest with yourself, and with others, about your choices?

Does loving expand your life, or does it shrink it?

A NEW WAY TO LOVE

Loving yourself without self-betrayal is where real change begins. Healthy relationships are built through small, conscious steps towards a better life. They begin when you stop the inner battles and shift your perspective about yourself, the world, and the people around you. It means taking things less personally and understanding that we are all connected, and that we need one another to grow into better versions of ourselves. Choose people who honor your identity and love you for who you are, flaws included. Love with more presence, more openness, and a whole heart. And remember, you cannot lose yourself when you truly know and accept who you are.

Treatment for Child Snoring or Enlarged Adenoids

Snoring is common but may also be the first sign of obstructive sleep apnea, which is common in preschool and kindergarten children. It can have effects on daytime learning, behavior, and emotion. If your child makes noise when breathing during sleep or snoring becomes noticeable, you should consult a doctor.

Obstructive sleep apnea in children is treatable

The most common causes are enlarged tonsils and adenoids, allergy, and respiratory tract infection. The diagnosis and treatment includes:

- Patient history and physical examination – asking for risk factors
- Sleep test – overnight sleep study to determine if your child suffers from obstructive sleep apnea
- Treatment – depends on cause and severity of the condition

Surgical removal of the adenoids and tonsils

The tonsils and adenoids are tissues at the back of the throat that help fight infection. Tonsils are visible at the back of the mouth, while adenoids are hidden behind the nose. They are removed through the mouth, leaving no scars. The surgery takes about 15-30 minutes, and the child usually stays in hospital overnight and goes home the next day.

Although tonsils and adenoids support immunity, other defenses like the lymphatic system and vaccinations protect against infection, so removal does not increase the risk of infections.

Taking care of your child after the surgery

- Avoid food or drink that will irritate the surgical wound
- 5-7 days after the surgery, take cold/liquid diet e.g. icecream and yoghurt. Avoid hot food.
- After a week, take soft diet e.g. boiled rice and congee. It is ok to take food at room temperature but avoid hot food.
- The doctor will schedule a follow-up appointment at one week and two months to assess the condition



Snoring can be found in **3-12%** of children.

Surgical removal of tonsils and adenoids improves quality of sleep

The surgery can significantly improve symptoms of obstructive sleep apnea (75-100%). Studies show that the surgery will:

- Improve quality of sleep
- Improve overall health and behavior
- Improve brain function
- Improve small motor development and attention



Dr. Pasakorn Thavornant

Otolaryngologist at Ear Nose Throat Center, Bangkok Hospital.

For more information, please contact:

Bangkok Ear Nose Throat Center

⌚ 2nd Floor, Building B, Bangkok Hospital

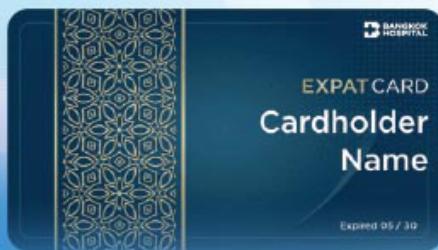
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NAVIGATING THE WONDERS OF WILDLIFE

Clare shares her perspective as a mother on the many benefits and opportunities that living in Thailand gives us for exploring nature with our children.



About the Author

Clare is a British mother of two who has spent 15 years immersed in Thailand's vibrant wildlife and culture. Currently leading early years at Brighton College Vibhavadi Bangkok, she is passionate about nurturing young minds while celebrating nature's beauty. Her experiences inspire her writing on motherhood and wildlife, blending international perspectives with local experiences.

Growing up in the UK, my childhood was filled with simple outdoor pleasures: catching ladybirds, keeping caterpillars, discovering bird nests and scooping tadpoles from the pond. The biggest threat was usually a dozy wasp on a hot summer's day, making the outdoors a safe playground filled with awe and wonder.

As a mother, I want my children to experience the same sense of wonder that shaped me, while understanding the responsibility that comes with it. Thailand's rainforests, beaches and wildlife provide an excellent opportunity for this; however, awareness and caution must always be at the forefront. Some creatures, while fascinating, are best observed from a distance.

From early on, we've taught our children that animals have boundaries; they are not toys. Seemingly calm or curious creatures can react defensively if startled. Primates like macaques can be aggressive around food, snakes, especially juveniles, can appear suddenly, and even city-dwelling monitor lizards can surprise you. Dog or cat bites, whether from pets or strays, carry a risk of infection or rabies. Observing quietly, keeping a distance and reporting bites immediately are essential lessons in balancing curiosity with safety.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

Exploring Thailand's wildlife with children is easiest and safest when choosing family-friendly destinations that combine accessible trails, managed habitats and opportunities to observe animals responsibly. Understanding local customs and animal behavior has also been key to keeping our family safe. We stick to paths, avoid tall grass and watch for warning signs, behaving in a way that respects the environment's balance. Here are some of our family's favorite locations to visit:

Khao Sok National Park: This is one of Thailand's most impressive protected sites, with lush rainforest, limestone cliffs and emerald-green lakes. Families can enjoy boat trips on Cheow Lan Lake and guided walks, with chances to spot gibbons, hornbills, reptiles and occasionally elephants. The area and surrounds are well-managed and child-friendly.

Bangkok City Parks: Bangkok offers surprisingly rich urban nature. Benjakitti Forest Park's raised walkways allow children to observe birds, fish and monitor lizards safely, while Rot Fai (Queen Sirikit Park) features a free butterfly house, open green spaces and a scenic

cycling loop ideal for family outings. 'The Green Lung', Bang Kachao, also offers a peaceful escape into greenery and wildlife just minutes from the city.

Khao Yai National Park: Our family favorite, Khao Yai is an excellent introduction to national parks. Well-maintained trails, drive-up viewpoints and optional night safaris offer opportunities to see elephants, deer, gibbons, porcupines, and occasionally rarer wildlife.

Pran Buri Mangrove Forest Walkway: This elevated walkway near Hua Hin lets children explore a fragile mangrove ecosystem



safely. Families can spot crabs, mudskippers, fish, birds, and small reptiles while learning about the importance of mangroves to coastal environments. There is also the option for a longboat tour through the system.

Beaches and Islands: Thailand's beaches and islands provide gentle wildlife encounters, from hermit crabs and starfish to colorful reef fish. Family-friendly options include Koh Lanta, Koh Chang and Koh Samet, offering calm waters, beginner snorkelling, and easy access. With sensible water safety and sun protection, these environments are both magical and educational.

Exploring these locations becomes even more meaningful when families take time to observe, play, and learn from the environment around them.

WILDLIFE-RELATED FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Spending time together in nature doesn't need to be complicated. Simple activities can spark curiosity and deepen children's connection with the natural world.

Classic games like Pooh Sticks are always a hit. Transient art, such as creating mandalas or pictures using natural materials, encourages creativity without harming the environment. Nature photography is another wonderful option; photographing plants and insects up close offers children a fresh perspective and teaches careful observation skills.

Our children love personalized "I Spy" nature sheets, and these work well for different ages. Create checklists of items children might encounter, mixing easy finds with more challenging ones. You can

also try nature tic-tac-toe, making a board from sticks and using shells or pebbles as Xs and Os. These activities are fun, low-cost, and help children learn to observe, respect, and enjoy the wildlife around them.

UNIQUE PETS AND EVERYDAY LEARNING

Living close to the equator offers opportunities to observe and care for animals that would be considered exotic elsewhere. Over the years, we've reared caterpillars into all sorts of butterflies, as well as Atlas moths, which can grow to the size of a dinner-plate. We're currently keeping orchid mantises that resemble delicate white flowers.

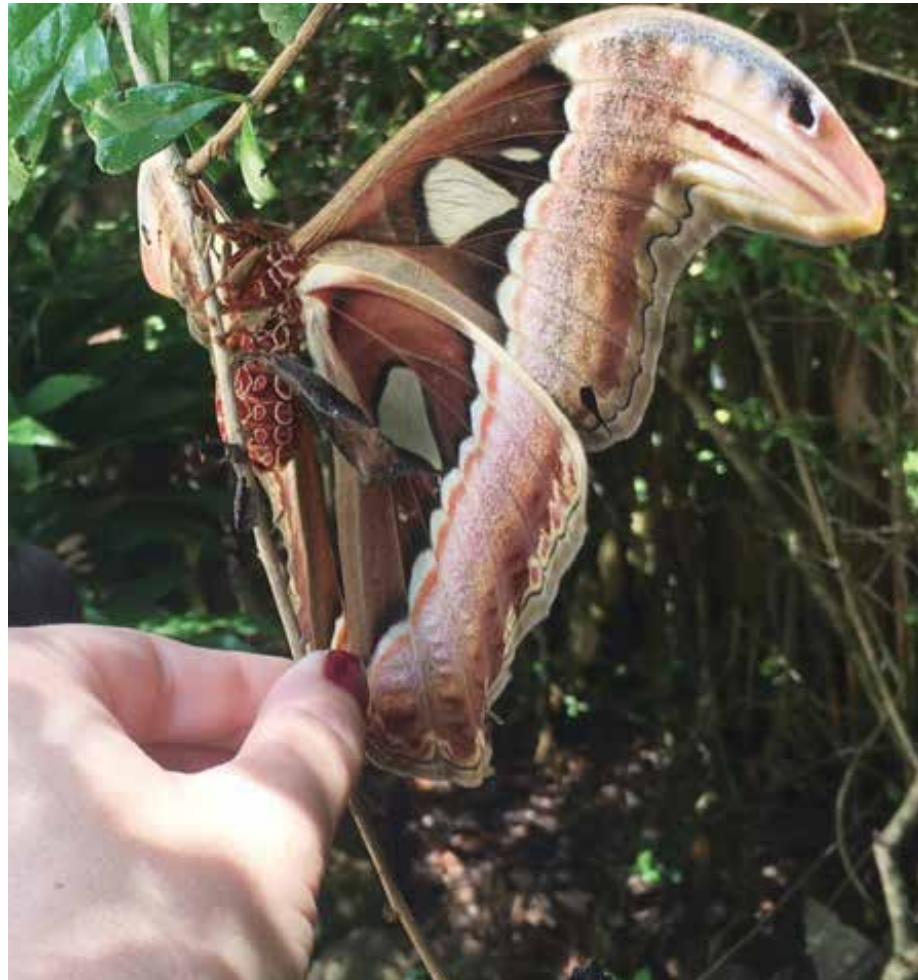
Tropical fish that would require complex aquarium systems in the UK can often thrive here with simpler setups, provided their needs are properly understood. Species such as angelfish, guppies, and Siamese fighting fish are widely available, but research is essential. Some fish are prone to nipping tank mates, while others, like Siamese fighting fish, are best kept alone.

As with any pet, informed care and respect for their natural behavior are key. All of our pets have been sourced from ethical suppliers, each providing invaluable lessons in care, respect, life cycles and adaptation.

A FINAL THOUGHT

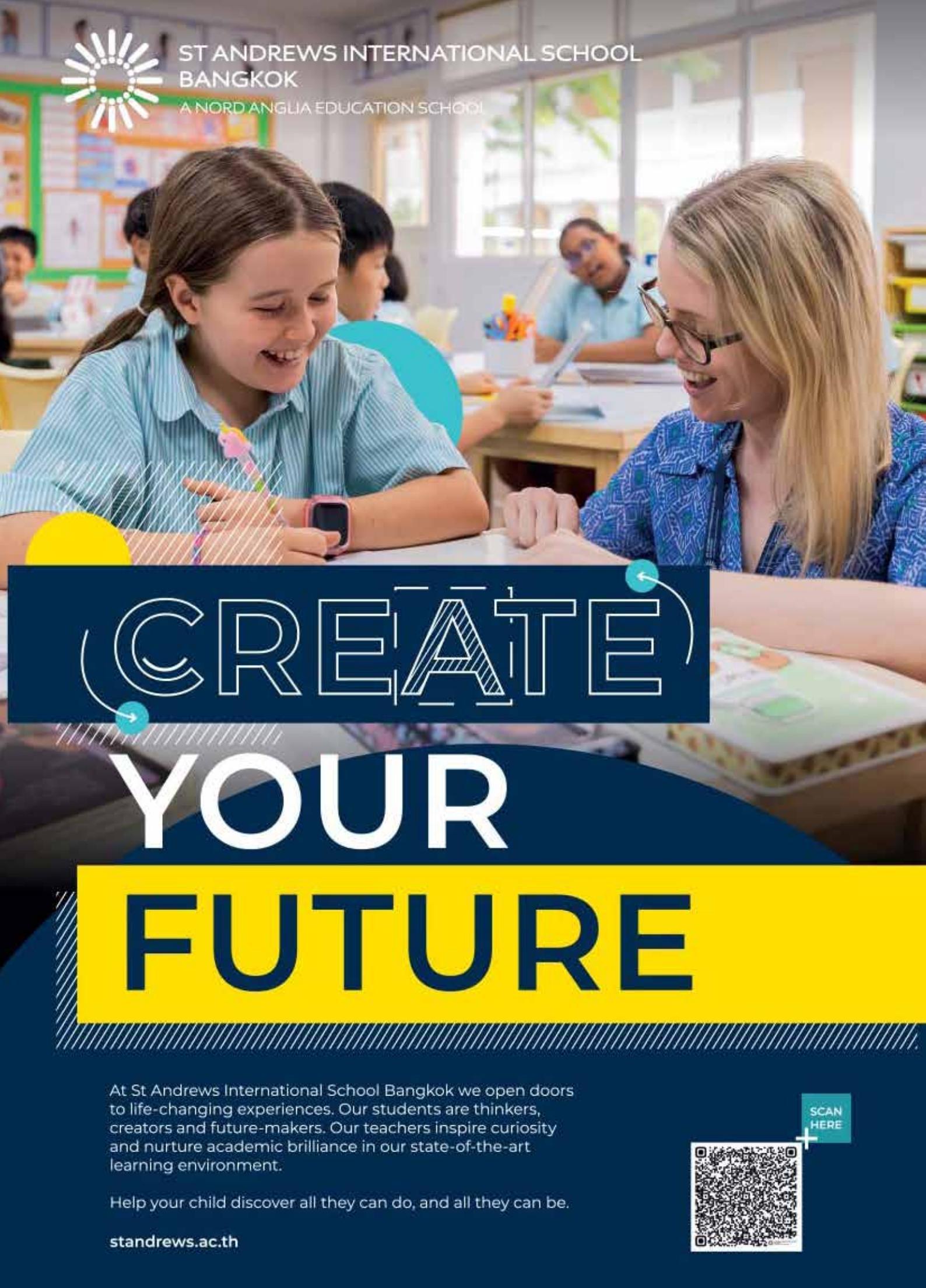
Raising children in Thailand offers a rare opportunity to grow alongside one of the world's most diverse ecosystems. By encouraging curiosity and modelling sensible caution, we can help our children develop a lifelong appreciation for nature—one that balances wonder with responsibility. Living here continues to teach us the delicate art of coexistence, and I hope these lessons will stay with my children wherever life takes them next.

All photos courtesy of the author.





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THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES IN FAMILY LIFE

We all want our children to know how much we love them. Rachna shows us that to truly tell someone how deep our love is we need to understand their love language. Using the right love language will strengthen our bonds with partners and children.



Photo by Karola G from Pexels



About the Author

Rachna Singh Sachakul is an entrepreneur and proud mother of three. She embraces life with positivity, warmth, and trust, balancing family, work, and personal growth while enjoying a touch of glam. She believes in living with intention, spreading joy, and making every moment meaningful. "Think positive, shine bright, live fully."

As a parent of three wonderful children, my 18-year-old daughter, my 9-year-old son, and my 6-year-old son, I've come to realize that love is far more than just a feeling. It is something we express, nurture, and communicate every day. Over time, I've learned that the way we show love matters as much as the love itself. Each of my children experiences love differently, and discovering how to speak their unique "love language" has transformed our family life.

With a diploma in child psychology and a strong belief in positive discipline, I've always sought ways to honor each child's individuality while nurturing their emotional security. When I found Dr. Gary Chapman's framework of the Five Love Languages, it offered a simple yet effective lens through which to view and connect with my family. Applying it has not only strengthened my bond with my children but also deepened the connection with my partner, creating a home filled with trust, warmth, and joy.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION: NOURISHING MY DAUGHTER'S CONFIDENCE

My daughter responds most deeply to Words of Affirmation. Now moving beyond her teenage years into young adulthood, I've noticed that genuine, thoughtful words resonate more than any gift or gesture. A simple, heartfelt statement, "I'm proud of how you handled that challenge," or "I love the way you think through things carefully," can light up her day and strengthen the trust between us.

Child development shows that positive verbal reinforcement builds self-esteem and emotional resilience. I have experienced this firsthand; her confidence, thoughtfulness, and independence are continually nurtured by consistent affirmation. More than anything, she knows that she is seen, heard, and valued —a feeling that has anchored our relationship through years of growth and change.

QUALITY TIME: MY SON'S WINDOW TO FEELING LOVED

For my 9-year-old son, Quality Time is his most meaningful expression of love. Nothing lights him up more than focused, undivided attention. Whether we are exploring outdoors, building complex LEGO structures together, or simply sharing stories about our day. It's in these moments of presence that he feels safe, appreciated, and connected.

A child's emotions highlight the importance of attentive, responsive interactions in fostering secure attachment and emotional development. What I've learned is that it's not about the length of time we spend together, but the depth of our presence. Brief moments of full engagement can leave lasting memories and connections. These experiences have helped my son grow in confidence, empathy, and emotional awareness, while also teaching me the power of slowing down and being fully present.

PHYSICAL TOUCH: MY YOUNGEST SON'S LANGUAGE OF LOVE

My youngest connects most naturally through Physical Touch. Hugs, high-fives, hand-holding, and playful interactions are his ways of feeling secure and understood. These gestures go far beyond simple

affection, they communicate safety, reassurance, and deep connection.

In early childhood, affectionate touch plays a vital role in emotional regulation and the development of secure attachment. For him, a hug before school and during pick up time, a gentle hand on his shoulder during conversations, or cuddles while reading a story are more than gestures. They are daily reminders that he is loved unconditionally. In practicing positive discipline, these moments of touch also provide a foundation of trust, helping him feel guided and supported as he learns to navigate the world.

ACTS OF SERVICE: STRENGTHENING OUR PARTNERSHIP

While understanding the love languages of my children has been transformative, applying them in my relationship with my partner has also had significant benefits for our family. For both of us, Acts of Service— simple small gestures like helping each other with tasks, supporting one another during busy days, and listening and supporting each other as a team, have become a meaningful way to express love.

Children notice these acts. They internalize the kindness, cooperation, and reliability they see in us, learning how to show love thoughtfully



Photo by Jonathan Borba from Pexels

and respectfully. Modeling these behaviors teaches them not only about empathy but also about how to nurture meaningful relationships outside the home.

TURNING EVERYDAY MOMENTS INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION

What I love most about the Five Love Languages is how they transform ordinary routines into moments of love, connection, and joy. Celebrating each child's individual way of feeling loved allows them to flourish in their own unique way. Every shared laugh, gentle hug, encouraging word, and thoughtful gesture strengthens our family bonds while supporting the development of confidence, empathy, and resilience in my children.

This approach has also taught me that parenting is not about perfection. It is about awareness, intention, and empathy. It is about learning the language that speaks to each child's heart and communicating love in ways that resonate. Each moment of intentional connection is a building block, creating a foundation of trust and security that my children carry with them beyond the walls of our home.

A FAMILY THAT GROWS TOGETHER

The impact of understanding and applying the Five Love Languages is deeply meaningful. Conflicts feel easier to navigate, communication becomes clearer, and emotional bonds grow stronger. As a parent, I have seen how small, thoughtful acts of love can transform everyday family life into an environment where everyone feels valued, understood, and supported.

By tuning into my children's and partner's individual needs, I have noticed growth not only in them but also in myself. I've become more

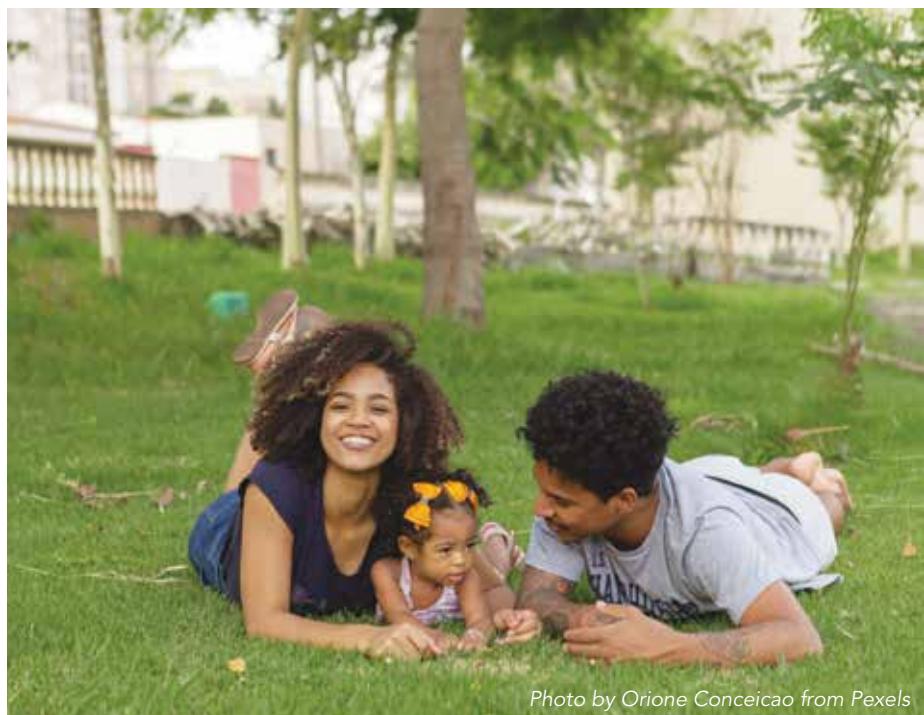


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patient, more intentional, and more appreciative of the little joys in daily life. It's a continuous journey of learning, adapting, and celebrating each other's uniqueness.

LOVE, AWARENESS, AND JOY

At its core, embracing the Five Love Languages is about awareness, intention, and empathy. Every family member experiences love differently, and learning to speak each other's languages enriches life in ways that are both simple and profound. It nurtures secure attachment, emotional development, and communication skills in children, while also deepening adult relationships within the family.

Through these consistent, heartfelt expressions of love, my home has become a place of warmth, trust, and happiness. My children share moments they will remember and carry with them—moments that teach them about love, kindness, and connection. And as they grow, they will take these lessons into their friendships, relationships, and eventually their own families.

A LIFETIME OF CONNECTION

For me, family life is at its most rewarding when love is intentional and understood. Through the Five Love Languages, I've learned that the most meaningful moments are often small, shared smiles, gentle encouragement, a hand held at the right time, or an act of kindness when least expected. These simple gestures create bonds that are lasting, resilient, and full of joy.

Parenting with empathy, understanding, and intentionality has strengthened my family in ways that are both visible and subtle. It has created a home where my children feel safe to express themselves, where my partner and I feel supported, and where each day presents countless opportunities to connect, grow, and celebrate love.

At the heart of it, this journey has reaffirmed what I've always believed: love is most powerful when it is understood, communicated, and celebrated in ways that speak directly to each heart. And it is in these small, intentional acts of love that family life becomes most beautiful, meaningful, and joyful.

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PARENTING WITH LOVE AND BOUNDARIES

It can seem like parenting means constantly saying no to our children. In this article, Sara provides a timely reminder of how important it is to set consistent, loving boundaries, even if that often involves saying no.



Photo by Keira Burton from Pexels

About the Author

Sara Salam is a mother to energetic boy-girl twins who keep her on her toes and regularly challenge her ideas about patience, boundaries, and quiet. She writes about parenting as she learns it—one day, one mistake, and one small win at a time.



Last month while buying last-minute presents for friends and family, my three-year-old daughter insisted on buying a new doll. She already has many dolls at home, and I was tired and mentally juggling a long list of tasks. I said no—quickly and firmly. But what followed was a full-blown tantrum in the middle of the mall which forced me to cut the trip short.

On the way back, I replayed the moment in my head and realized that the issue was not that I said no but how I said it. My response made sense to me as an adult but it may not have been the best way to communicate to a three-year-old. At home, I gathered every doll she owned from every corner of the house, laid them out in a line and asked her to count them with me. Seeing them in one place followed by a gentle talk helped her understand why we did not need another one. That moment reminded me that affection combined with clear, structured boundaries matters—but only if those boundaries are communicated in a way children can understand and appreciate.

Parenting often sits at the intersection of love and limits. Many of us worry that setting boundaries might damage our connection with our children. At the same time, giving in too often can leave us feeling overwhelmed and unsure. The balance lies not in choosing one over the other but in learning how to offer both together.

WHY BOUNDARIES MATTER

Children do not come into the world knowing how it works. They learn through daily interactions—what is allowed, what is not and what happens when emotions feel too big to manage. Boundaries help children make sense of their environment. They provide predictability which helps children feel safe.

When boundaries are unclear or inconsistent, children test them more. This is not manipulation; it is exploration. Children push limits to understand where those limits stand. When adults respond with calm consistency and with easily understandable rationale, children slowly learn to regulate their behavior within those limits.

Boundaries also teach an important long-term skill: self-regulation. A child who grows up with clear expectations is better equipped to manage frustration, delay gratification, and respect the limits of others. These skills do not develop overnight and therefore, need to be nurtured early on.

MAKING ROOM FOR FEELINGS WHILE HOLDING LIMITS

Love is essential, but love alone does not guide behavior. Similarly, setting boundaries forcefully with an “I told you so” approach may work in the short term, often out of fear or confusion but children do not always understand the reasons behind the rules. This can lead to power struggles and resentment on both sides.

Empathetic communication changes this dynamic. Acknowledging a child’s feelings does not mean giving in. It means letting them know they are heard. Saying, “I see you really want that doll, and it’s hard



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when we can't get what we want," helps a child feel understood, even when the answer remains no.

Children are more likely to accept limits when they feel emotionally safe. This sense of safety comes from knowing that their feelings are valid, even if their requests are not always met.

MAKING BOUNDARIES VISIBLE AND PREDICTABLE

A friend of mine struggled to limit her six-year-old's screen time. Every day ended in arguments and tears. After many failed attempts, she introduced a simple sand-timer set for thirty minutes. When the timer ran out, the TV went off.

Something shifted. The boundary was no longer abstract or tied to her mood or patience. It was visible and predictable. Her child could see time passing and prepare for the transition. Over time, resistance decreased.

This small change did something important: it made the child feel included. Instead of feeling controlled, the child felt informed. Being part of the process—even in small ways—helps children accept boundaries more readily.

PARENTAL GUILT AND THE PULL OF INSTANT RELIEF

Many parents struggle with guilt. We worry about being too strict or not kind enough. Sometimes, giving in feels easier in the moment. It stops the crying, the arguing, the stares from strangers. But instant relief often comes at a cost.

Children look to adults to help them understand the world. When boundaries shift based on convenience, children become unsure of what to expect. Clear limits, even when uncomfortable, offer long-term security.

Setting boundaries is not about control but about guidance. When children know what is expected, they

can move within those limits with more confidence. Over time, this helps them develop boundaries of their own. I already see this with my children, even in their toddler years. They tell me when they want space, when something feels unfair or when they need help. These moments are small but they matter. They show that children who experience respectful boundaries learn to express their own.

THERE IS NO PERFECT BALANCE

Parenting does not come with a fixed formula for success, although sometimes I really wish it did! We get it right one day and wrong the next. We may handle a tantrum calmly in the morning and lose patience in the evening. Balancing affection with structure is an ongoing process. It evolves as children grow and as parents grow with them. Love provides the foundation but boundaries give it shape. Together, they help children feel safe, capable, and understood—both at home and beyond.

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SUPPORTING A PARTNER THROUGH PREGNANCY LOSS

Losing a pregnancy is surprisingly common and extremely distressing. Anna shares some advice on how to empathetically support a partner at this difficult time and reminds us that everyone deals with grief in different ways.



Photo by Alena Darmel from Pexels



About the Author

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

When we talk about grieving, people often think of losing a loved one—family, friends, an old classmate, someone you already know. But how do you grieve the loss of someone you've yet to meet but already love so dearly, someone who was physically part of you? Grieving is a highly individual and sensitive process, and grieving a pregnancy loss can be distinctly different from grieving other losses. Other losses are heavily based on past and present relationships and events, while pregnancy loss is based on dreams and hopes for the future. To face a pregnancy loss is to grieve something that hasn't yet come to be. This is something that many people may not be able to understand unless they've experienced it themselves. This often poses a challenge to those trying to support their partner through such a loss. In this article, our counselors at NCS share some gentle tips and insights to help you understand and navigate this together.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF EXPERIENCING GRIEF

For many, pregnancy loss feels like a personal failing, as if their body is against them. This results in self-blame, a belief that they are at fault for the loss of the pregnancy, even if they know rationally that this wasn't something they could control. They might also feel worthless, alienated, or constantly scared, which affects their overall sense of identity. People grieving this kind of loss often withdraw, both physically and emotionally. They may become unusually quiet or snappy and irritable. Some people might be less expressive about their grief, but that doesn't mean it weighs on them any less. Even if a person says that they are fine, behavior and words that are out-of-character can be indicative of their pain.

It's important to remember that pregnancy loss can cause a lot of hormonal changes. Therefore, it is

essential to help your partner take care of themselves both physically and emotionally while their hormones readjust. NCS Counselor Johanna explains that this type of loss can make couples feel disconnected as each person processes the loss in their own way, and can be a reason why couples that experience pregnancy loss have an increased chance of separation. Counselor Joy adds that some people may cope by bottling up their emotions and throwing themselves into work or other hobbies to distract themselves, which can increase the divide and make their partner feel isolated. Couples who experience pregnancy loss often fear that they will not be

able to conceive again, or that they will lose another child the same way. This ever-present fear can cause a lot of stress and trauma, and therefore, it is important to be understanding of each other.

BEING THERE IS THE BEST SUPPORT

As with other types of losses, there are certain phrases that we typically use to cheer someone up. For example, "I know exactly how you feel" or "Forget it, we're still young, we can try again later". However, these phrases often unintentionally cause pain, even if they are well-meaning. So what does good



Photo by Liza Summer from Pexels

support look like beyond saying the right words, which are terribly difficult to find in such situations? Our counselors are all in agreement: the best way to show support is to simply be there. Be present, show that you care, do things for them. Most importantly, acknowledge their pain instead of brushing it away or minimizing it, even if it's with the intention of cheering them up. Sometimes there is nothing you can do to immediately lessen the pain, but it's always better to know that there is someone weathering the storm with you, rather than leaving you alone in the rain. In some situations, pain needs to be felt in its deepest form before we can slowly heal.

GIVING EACH OTHER SPACE, BUT NOT TOO MUCH SPACE

That being said, some people need more space to cope, but that doesn't mean you should completely live your own lives and not interact or talk about it at all. You can provide quiet support in the background while still giving them space. For example, make breakfast and leave it out for them before you go to work, help out with chores around the house to lessen their burden, or do

something for them that still gives them the space they need to grieve.

When people experience a loss, we often tell them to let us know if they need anything, or if there's anything we can do for them. But the truth is, most people don't know what they need during this time, or if they do need something, they're too scared to express that need. A user on TikTok shared that while she was grieving the loss of a family member, someone got her a coloring book, and though she didn't ask for it, it helped her pass the days where she didn't know what else to do or how else to cope. She didn't know she wanted it, but it helped her immensely. On the other hand, when people told her to let them know if she needed anything, she wasn't able to answer. This is why it can be more effective to simply show up than to ask what someone needs. You could do something similar for your partner, especially if there's something they particularly like doing.

This way, you are showing up for them even while giving them space. The most important thing is to understand what each partner needs during this time and find a way to

balance those needs. Although communicating can feel difficult during this time, it is important you try every once in a while to build understanding regarding your different styles of grieving.

TALKING ABOUT YOUR LOSS

Pregnancy loss tends to affect emotional and physical intimacy, whether due to a fear of being close, shame, hiding your own pain in order not to burden each other, or shutting down from the person you experienced the loss or the perceived "failure" with. How you rebuild your relationship depends on your own individual grieving styles and your own timeline. It is important to be there for each other and to talk about the loss together. If your partner needs some space, this conversation may come later when they are ready. For example, you could say, "Take all the space you need. Maybe we can talk about it in a few weeks if you're feeling okay. I'm here whenever you're ready. I'm grieving too and I don't want this loss to bring us apart. I love you." If you are struggling with intimacy, Counselor Johanna recommends starting by simply holding each other without any other physical expectations, so that you can slowly feel comfortable being close again.

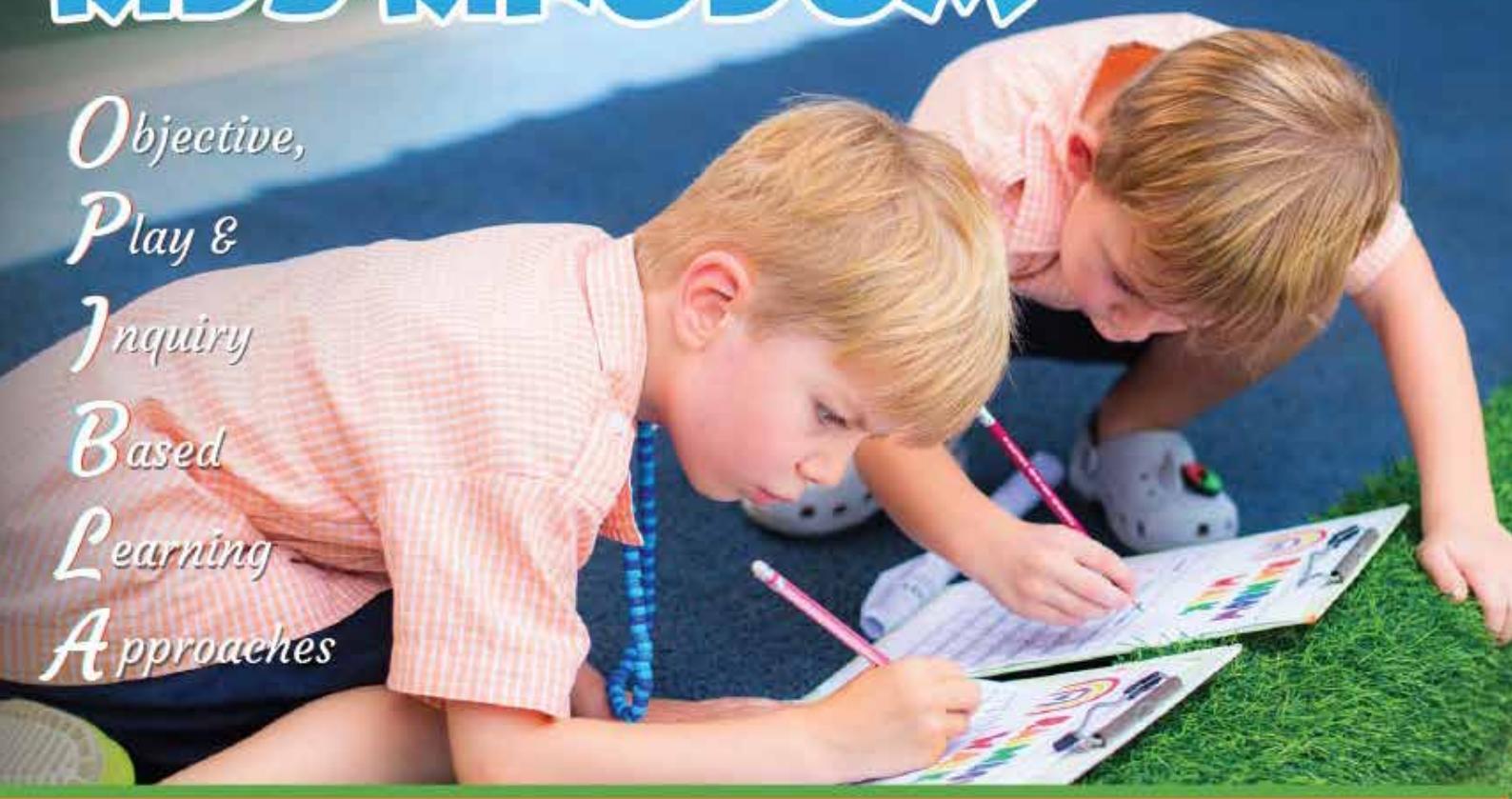
Finally, I would like to emphasize that this is a deeply sensitive topic, and you don't need to figure it out on your own, even if it feels like it. It is always okay to lean on those who care about you. There are also various support groups both online and in-person that you could join to connect with those who have experienced similar losses. If you are struggling to rebuild your relationship or would like guidance on how to navigate your loss or be there for your partner, you can always reach out to a counselor for professional support. Our counselors are here for you, and so are your loved ones.



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THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING THE MOTHER TONGUE IN YOUNGER CHILDREN

It can seem challenging supporting your children in speaking multiple languages, but Sana explains that there are a lot of advantages to maintaining a mother language alongside school languages.



Photo by Dziana Hasanbekava from Pexels



About the Author

Rosana Sirinarang, known as Sana, works in communications at NIST International School in Bangkok and is also an alumna of the school. She collaborates across departments to share stories of learning, well-being and community life, and has a strong interest in multilingual development and inclusive education.

For many families raising children in Bangkok, language is one of the first big questions they ask themselves about school, often before uniforms, lunchboxes or bus routes are even discussed.

Parents wonder whether their child will forget their home language once school begins. They worry about whether speaking two or three languages might confuse their child. Some quietly fear that using English too early could distance their children from grandparents, relatives and family traditions.

These concerns are natural. Language is deeply personal. It carries emotion, memory, humor and identity. For young children especially, the language they first learn plays a powerful role in shaping how they see themselves and how they connect with the people around them.

WHY THE MOTHER TONGUE MATTERS

A child's first language is usually the one they hear at home, in bedtime stories, morning routines, family jokes and gentle reminders. It is the language associated with comfort and security. Through it, children learn how to express their feelings, ask for help, and make sense of the world.

When children continue to hear and use their mother tongue, they often feel more confident and emotionally secure. They are better able to communicate their needs, share their thoughts, and build strong relationships with the people who care for them. This sense of belonging becomes a steady foundation as they step into new environments and new languages.

A STRONG BASE FOR LEARNING

Some parents worry that encouraging the mother tongue might slow down their child's

progress in English or Thai. In reality, maintaining a strong first language often supports learning rather than hinders it.

Children who understand how stories work, how sentences are formed and how ideas are shared in one language tend to transfer those skills naturally into other languages. A child who knows how to explain a thought clearly in their home language will usually find it easier to do the same in English later on. The building blocks of literacy, vocabulary, comprehension and confidence grow from what children already know.

Rather than competing, languages tend to support one another when children are given time and encouragement to develop them.

THINKING, MEMORY AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Growing up with more than one language gently stretches a child's thinking. Young multilingual children regularly switch between languages at home, at school and with friends. This daily practice strengthens memory, attention and the ability to focus.

Over time, many multilingual children become flexible thinkers. They learn to approach problems from different angles and often show strong listening and reasoning skills. These abilities support not only academic learning but also social interaction, empathy and communication.

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Language is closely tied to identity. A child's home language connects them to extended family, cultural traditions and shared family stories. It is often the language in which grandparents express love, tell stories from the past and pass on values.

When children maintain their mother tongue, they are more likely to feel secure in who they are and where they come from. Parents often describe the pride they feel when their child can speak confidently with relatives, understand family traditions and take part in cultural celebrations. These moments strengthen a child's sense of belonging and connection.

When a home language slowly fades, the loss can be quietly felt,



Photo by Alfo Images from (Alfo)

sometimes only years later, when communication with family members becomes limited. Supporting the mother tongue early helps preserve these important relationships.

SUPPORTING LANGUAGE AT HOME

Families do not need special training to support their child's home language. Language grows through everyday life.

Simple routines make a difference, reading bedtime stories, talking about the day over dinner, singing familiar songs or sharing stories about family history. Hearing natural

speech patterns, humor and emotion helps children build a rich vocabulary and a deeper understanding of language.

What matters most is consistency. Even short, meaningful conversations in the home language contribute to stronger long-term development.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

Schools also play an important part in supporting children's language development. When home languages are acknowledged and respected within the school environment, children feel seen and valued. This sense of acceptance

strengthens confidence and supports well-being.

In diverse school communities where many languages are spoken each day, children often move between languages with ease. Being able to draw on their home language, whether to think through an idea, ask a question or share a story, can deepen understanding and make learning feel more accessible.

Some schools create structured opportunities for students to maintain and develop their first language alongside English, rather than replacing one with the other. At NIST international school, for example, students can choose from twelve world languages during the school day, with many more options available after school. This allows families to support mother tongue development in ways that fit naturally into their routines and long-term plans.

LOOKING AHEAD

As families continue to move across cultures and countries, language becomes one of the most important threads that connects children to their roots. Supporting a child's mother tongue is not just about communication, it is about well-being, confidence and identity.

When young children are encouraged to value and use their first language, they grow up knowing that who they are and where they come from matters. From this place of security, they are better able to explore new languages, new friendships and new learning with confidence and curiosity.

The words children hear at home are often the first stories they carry with them into the world. When those words are nurtured, they continue to guide and support them long after childhood.



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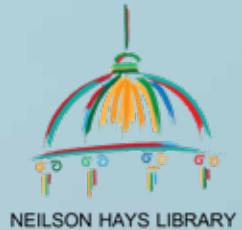
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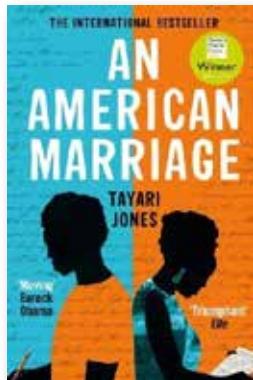
AN AMERICAN MARRIAGE

By Tayari Jones

Tayari Jones' *An American Marriage* is a stirring examination of how love endures, fractures, and reshapes itself under extraordinary strain. Newlyweds Celestial and Roy are torn apart when Roy is wrongfully incarcerated, and what follows is not just a story of injustice, but of the quiet, complicated aftershocks that ripple through a marriage. Jones writes with sharp emotional insight, showing how love is not just passion or loyalty, but also honesty, self-respect, and the ability to let others grow.

The novel asks uncomfortable questions: How long do promises hold? Can love survive absence? And what happens when two people's paths no longer meet in the same place? With elegance and compassion, *An American Marriage* reveals that love comes in many forms. Romantic, familial, and communal and sometimes, its truest expression is allowing each person to become who they are meant to be.

An American Marriage by Tayari Jones was first published in 2018. Other notable works by Jones include *Leaving Atlanta* (2002), *The Untelling* (2005), and *Silver Sparrow* (2011). A copy can be found in the fiction section of Neilson Hays Library.



THE INVISIBLE STRING

Written by Patrice Karst and illustrated by Joanne Lew-Vriethoff



Patrice Karst's *The Invisible String* is a gentle, reassuring picture book that introduces children to the idea that love doesn't disappear just because someone isn't physically close. Through simple language and warm illustrations, Karst follows two siblings who learn that everyone is connected by an "invisible string" that stretches across distance, change, and even loss. What makes the book resonate is its quiet recognition that love is both grounding and expansive, something that holds us close while giving us courage to explore the world.

Whether a child is experiencing separation anxiety, navigating new transitions, or simply curious about how relationships endure, this story offers comfort without sentimentality. It reminds readers young and old that true closeness isn't defined by proximity, but by care, memory, and emotional connection, those unseen threads that keep us tethered to the people who matter most.

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst, illustrated by Joanne Lew-Vriethoff, was first published in 2000. A hardcover copy is available in the Children's Corner of Neilson Hays Library.



Prepared by Kit Lang (@mskitlang) for Neilson Hays Library, Thailand's premier English-language library. The Children's Program offers Saturday Story Time, a cozy Children's Corner, and special holiday events. Adult programs include concerts, art exhibitions, book club, and book sales. The library is located in a beautiful historic building with a garden and cafe on site: 195 Surawong Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand. Follow us on Instagram and Facebook.

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LOVE UNLIMITED

In the spirit of Valentine's Day Joe has boldly decided to ignore his wife and instead focus on the bemusing fact that he still loves his children despite the awful things they have done to him.



Photo by Crystal Sing from Corelens



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. Find Joe on SubStack: BangkokDad [bangkokdad.substack.com/](https://substack.com/bangkokdad)

For Valentine's Day this year, I've decided to entirely ignore romance. So rather than wondering why my wife puts up with me, or pondering how I can persuade her to do so for another year, I'm going to focus on some of the things I love even though they're clearly not good for me. I don't mean chocolate, and I'm not yet ready to talk about the deep emotions that sausages or fish and chips stir in me. Instead, obviously, I refer to my children whom I dearly love, despite all the terrible things they've done to me.

Looked at objectively, this love makes no sense. These fiends have left me a hollow shell of the energetic and sociable man I used to be. They've frequently inflicted bloody and painful injuries on me. Yet, despite the indignities and damages, I still love them. Now I'm sure some clever person could explain that this is all down to evolution and biological imperatives, rather than their inherent adorableness. But I'm not here to delve into science or attempt to understand things; I just want to use this as a thinly veiled excuse to moan about the worst things my children have done to me, so that when they one day read this they'll feel so guilty that they'll immediately forgive me for all the birthdays I've forgotten, the times I've embarrassed them, and all the other awful parenting faux pas I'm bound to have committed.

Now, all parents suffer at the hands of their children. There are the sleepless nights, the constant demands for attention, the hobbies and friends we abandon as caring for our offspring sucks up our time. There are the tantrums and monotonous, circular conversations that drive us to the brink of insanity. These, and many other trials of parenthood, I've touched on elsewhere in the Dad Diaries. Today, I want to focus on the actual physical injuries I've received from my children.

Of course the sufferings of a mere father are nothing compared to what mothers endure through pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding, but it would be a harsh judge who held that this suffering is intentionally inflicted by our children.

BLOOD AND STITCHES

Whereas, when Marty split my chin open spraying blood across the hotel room, there was no doubt as to where the blame should lie. The undoubtedly villain of the piece was the vile four-year-old. Up until that moment, we'd had a lovely beach holiday with the waterslide proving just as thrilling as advertised. In fact, it was probably overexcitement from squeezing in a last few plunges into the pool before heading home that led to an irrepressibly bouncy Marty jumping into my chin. As I reeled back clutching my jaw, I saw flashing lights and wondered if I'd ever be able to eat again.



Having staggered to a wall and waited for the room to stop dancing, I admired the bloody handprint on the wall and the trail of blood I'd left on the floor. With blood everywhere, even my normally sceptical wife had to admit that, for once, I didn't appear to be over-reacting.

Holding a bloody cloth to my chin I lurched downstairs whilst my wife sped to reception in search of ice and a first-aid kit. Marty was more curious than repentant, and finally tiring of answering his questions about whether or not it hurt, I sent him to find food at the breakfast buffet so that I could test my jaw. Relieved to discover that I could still eat, I was feeling much more sanguine by the time I'd mopped up most of the blood and stuck on a plaster. Although I still had an unfortunate tendency to drip blood, I vetoed any plans to head to hospital and finished packing the car.

Since I felt a bit sick, had a touch of a headache and there were flashing lights every time I moved, we agreed it would be best if my wife drove. By this time, Marty had lost interest in my chin and was engrossed in his Where's Wally travel book—possibly the greatest gift we've ever received for keeping a small boy busy during long journeys—so I was able to devote the trip home to trying not to bleed on anything and thinking of convincing reasons why I shouldn't go to hospital. Sadly, when texted pictures, my mother and sister totally failed to back me up, and so I was packed off to the doctor as soon as we got to Bangkok. He seemed pretty convinced that he could see bone and that

stitches would be a good idea. Twenty stitches later, I was looking less of a mess and thinking that on the whole, despite the hospital visit, this wasn't as bad as when Marty bit me in the testicles.

AVOIDING SIBLINGS

Now if you have testicles and children, you are probably already aware of the almost magnetic, and extremely painful, attraction between the two. If you don't, you're probably, given what we've already discussed with regards to pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding, rolling your eyes in disgust about so much fuss over two little things, and I wouldn't presume to say you were wrong. Nonetheless those two little things loom large in the minds of fathers. I don't know if it's just Marty and Alice, but from the moment they could toddle, it seemed to be open season on my most sensitive parts. I imagine their inner dialogue goes something like this:

"Daddy's lying down, I wonder where I should stand/jump/belly flop? Hmm, right in the middle seems a good spot."

"Ooof!" I go as they land squarely just below my midsection.

"He's gone a strange purple color and is making funny noises, perhaps I should tell mummy. Now where is mummy?"

They turn round to see mummy crying with laughter. Briefly worried they think, "Oh no, mummy's broken too!"

Before realizing, "Hang on it's okay she's laughing. But why's she laughing? Was it because I jumped on daddy? Oh, I think it was! I should definitely do that again, many, many times."

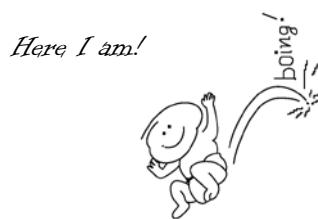
And so, the assault has been repeated every time I've laid down for the last four years. Mummy shows no signs of laughing less, and Marty and Alice seem to think it's all good fun. As for me? Well, no one is interested in what I think.

Furthermore, they don't confine themselves to simply jumping on my unmentionables. When Alice lies on her changing table, she delights in bucking and kicking like a young horse, and naturally my groin is at a perfect tabletop height for kicking. If I neglect to turn sideways on and shield myself with my thigh I'll find myself suddenly bent over and gasping for air mid-nappy change, whereupon Alice, sensing weakness, will redouble her efforts to wiggle free and escape the tyranny of the changing table.



Groins also seem to be unfortunately positioned in relation to children's heads, so that every madcap run and excited leap towards daddy ends with a startling headbutt. "I'm pleased to see you too," I gasp through clenched teeth. Given this proximity between children's heads and father's groins, and toddler Marty's tendency to bite, it probably shouldn't have come as a surprise when his headlong rush into my arms ended not with a painful headbutt, but instead with a vicious bite. Biting is never nice, but I would strongly recommend against being bitten on the testicles. It felt bad when it happened, and as I gingerly lowered my shorts and inspected the damage I thought I was going to need stitches. Fortunately, this proved not to be the case and it was to be another couple of years before Marty actually managed to hospitalize me.

Yet despite these repeated and, I believe, premeditated assaults I still love my two little monsters, and I hope they love me—as something more than just the butt of their vicious sense of humor. Now I really must turn to the real business of Valentine's Day: convincing their mother to put up with me for another year. Wish me luck.



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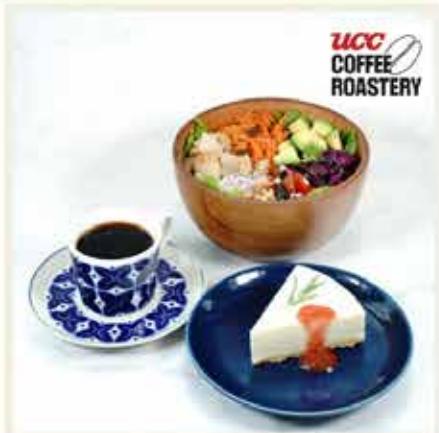


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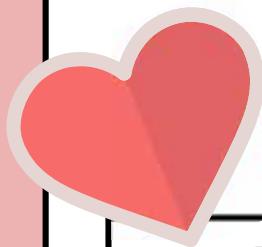
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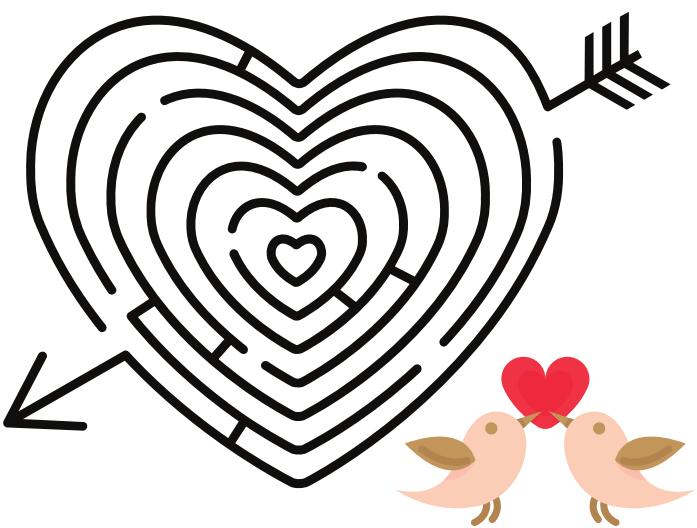
Valentines Day

What is love?

**Name someone
you love**



Maze



velo: _____

ycand: _____

wfolre: _____

esor: _____

isks: _____

Word search

A	T	R	A	E	H
E	S	W	E	E	T
V	S	G	U	H	A
O	C	U	P	I	D
L	K	I	N	D	A

HUGS
LOVE
HEART
KIND
SWEET
CUPID

Hugs & kisses



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