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**NOT JUST
A GIRL**

**FEMINISM IN
THE FAMILY**

FINDING YOUR MAMA TRIBE

MARCH 2025

Cover photo by Jana Capek

A project of Childbirth and Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand



What does our Community say?

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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.

Follow us on social media:



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bambibangkok

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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*Hello!
Can you find me
in the magazine?*



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We encourage you to bring your children to the event.

Dear BAMBI members,

My name is Arisa, and I am a mom of two girls from Japan. I started volunteering with BAMBI as a playgroup leader a year ago, and this year, I stepped into the role of media coordinator. Since English is not my first language, I've been relying on the latest technology to help me write this letter—but I'm excited to share my thoughts with you! This month, we explore "Becoming a Woman: From Girl to Mother." This theme reflects the transformation many women experience—how childhood shapes us, how motherhood changes us, and how we grow into our roles.



For me, motherhood has been an eye-opening journey. Growing up, I never thought my mother was perfect—she could be emotional, and she wasn't the best at keeping things tidy. But now, as a mother myself, I realize how hard she worked. Sadly, she passed away before I could tell her how much I appreciate her efforts, and I hope my gratitude reaches her in some way.

Before having my own child, I wasn't comfortable around kids—I didn't know how to interact with them. But when I held my newborn for the first time, an overwhelming love took over. At the same time, I felt a deep sense of responsibility. I wasn't sure if I had maternal instincts, but little by little, they grew within me.

Even now, I'm still figuring things out. Motherhood is a journey of trial and error, but I know I'm not alone. We all share this path in our own way, and BAMBI is here to support that journey.

At BAMBI, we strive to create engaging experiences for families. In February, we hosted Valentine-themed playgroups, and we plan to continue offering seasonal events. In March, we have our Annual General Meeting (AGM)—a great opportunity to learn about BAMBI and how to get involved. If you've ever thought about volunteering, we encourage you to join us!

Thank you for being part of our community. Let's celebrate the strength, wisdom, and love that unite us all as parents.

Warm regards,
Arisa Hirade
Social Media Coordinator





A few weeks ago, while we were making dinner, my six-year-old sous chef asked me if she'd have to cook when she grows up. This was a loaded question for me. Comments from overbearing relatives, as well as well-meaning but inconsiderate ones, came rushing back to me. "Who's going to feed your family if you don't cook?" "Your in-laws will welcome you through the front door and kick you out the back door when they learn you can't cook." "How can you, as a girl, have zero interest in cooking?!" It seemed that cooking was a task reserved for women, and if I had no interest in it or couldn't do it well, I would never be woman enough. Years later, my relationship with cooking remains complicated. As a mother to two fussy-eaters, I have found myself wondering, would my kids eat better if I was a more creative and passionate cook?

As a child and especially as a teenage girl, the rules I had to live by and the social expectations thrust upon me felt unfair. I'd compare my life with the lives of boys my age, and get exasperated by the double-standards and inequality I suffered. I thought things would improve when I became an adult, but unfortunately, not everything changed for the better. Finding the courage to unapologetically be myself is a battle that I, like many women, have to constantly fight, and this is one of the biggest life lessons I have learned in my journey from girlhood to motherhood.

This March, BAMBI Magazine explores the transformative journey from girlhood to motherhood. Discover how evolving challenges shape a woman's identity, the impact of childhood experiences on her parenting, the powerful example she sets for her children and how she embraces the resilience and wisdom gained along her path.

We start with the impact of childhood trauma on parenting in Anatta Zarchi's "Healing From Within: How Childhood Trauma Affects Motherhood", and move on to how it can be overcome in Claudia Gomes' "Breaking the Cycle: Moving Past Generational Trauma for a Brighter Future".

Surrounding yourself with people who can provide the support and compassion needed to grow from girlhood to motherhood is key to thriving in life, and through self-reflection, Natasha Duffin-Jones shares how her female friends played this powerful role in her life in "Finding Your Mama Tribe".

Growth also comes from the choices you make for yourself, and in "Beyond Motherhood: How to Keep Your Individual Identity", Jeannie Kim talks about how prioritizing her needs and interests during motherhood helps her maintain her sense of self and well-being.

In "Not Just a Girl", Rachel Ofo describes what her experiences as a little girl taught her about life, and the lessons she now teaches her little girl—to be kind, courageous, and a confident, independent thinker. Along similar lines and also drawing from personal experience, Sheena Low discusses the tools this generation of little girls need to flourish and thrive in "Forget Princesses, Raise Warriors".

Joe brings his usual touch of wit to "Feminism in the Family". He describes how as parents of both a little boy and girl, he and his wife are actively demonstrating equality between both sexes in their household.

Rounding up our thematic content, Readers' Corner showcases Kit Lang's reviews of "The Red Tent" written by Anita Diamant, and Phyllis Root's "Big Mama Makes the World". The former is a captivating tale of womanhood, sisterhood, and ancient traditions. The latter is a charming picture book which celebrates maternal love and spirit.

In non-thematic content we have "Let Your Hands do the Talking" by Sonali Vongchusiri, who outlines a simple but effective way to keep parent-child conflicts at bay, and "A Guide to Cloth Diapering" by Meri Wild, which is a must-read if you've been thinking of venturing into the world of cloth diapering.

I am confident that the articles in this issue will resonate strongly with many of you, and I hope they inspire you all to be "girl's girls", as Rachel puts it, and to raise your children with the same values.

Sanam Rahman
Editor



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BAMBI Committee, 2024

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.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS



Please scan for more details about the available positions.

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HEALING FROM WITHIN: HOW CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AFFECTS PARENTHOOD

Parenting often involves reflecting upon situations to be an even better parent. Anna encourages us to delve deeper to understand personal trauma, both major and hidden, and how this may be affecting our parenting.

Photo by ALINA MATVEYCHEVA from Pexels



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

Think about some extreme parenting characteristics—too strict, too controlling, too protective. Now think about where those characteristics come from. Perhaps strict mothers are trying to fulfill the expectations they themselves faced, or perhaps overly cautious mothers had reckless parents. Childhood experiences impact various aspects of adulthood, including motherhood. When trauma is unresolved, it stays within your mind and body, whether you have memories of it or not. And so, parents sometimes raise children with the experience of their own trauma, unknowingly continuing a cycle.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Firstly, we must understand what trauma means. NCS counselor Tatiana says, "Trauma, broadly defined, is a challenging event, or series of events, in which something disrupts your sense of well-being, connection, and safety. It might have happened too quickly and too overwhelmingly, and/or there was not enough support over a period of time. Post-traumatic stress happens when our nervous systems and thinking processes remain stuck in the traumatic circumstance, even when time has passed and the situation or people have changed."

NCS counselor Joy distinguishes between major trauma and hidden trauma. Major traumas are impactful and identifiable events that have a clear effect on mental health, such as accidents, natural disasters, abuse, harassment, shootings, and so on. Major traumatic events can sometimes be repressed or minimized as a self-defense mechanism.

Hidden traumas are things that hurt and impact us on a less identifiable scale. For example, having parents who are always working and never pay attention to you, or not having friends at school. These experiences are part of daily life and usually do not include a major event, hence why they are "hidden". These examples are less tangible and therefore less obvious; however,

they can still be deeply impactful and just as hurtful. Hidden and repressed or minimized trauma can make it difficult for you to connect the dots between the trauma and the emotional/behavioral consequences. Nevertheless, people have unique experiences with trauma that may not fit this general description, and I urge you to examine your own experiences individually.

People are often less conscious of hidden trauma as these are usually things that were part of the person's norm. NCS's founder and counselor Johanna raises this example: if someone was constantly body-shamed and told to stop eating growing up, they might let their own children eat junk food excessively. This isn't caused by lack of love but is due to the mother's own hidden trauma. Because the mother's diet was controlled growing up, she wants her children to be able to eat without worrying about their body the way she had to. She is trying to do things differently from the experiences that hurt her, fulfilling things she didn't have in childhood.

Here's another example: mothers who were abused might become over-protective of their children, trying to protect them from the dangers that they themselves faced. "Parents often give their children more or less of something based on their own bad experiences,"

Johanna explains. This creates a generational cycle: if the child in the first example develops health issues, they might end up excessively controlling their own child's diet, and so forth.

OUR TRAUMA AND OUR CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL WORLD

Trauma affects our emotional world, which in turn affects our parenting. Johanna says, "When parents are depressed or angry as a result of their own trauma or other experiences, children often think they are the cause." As a result, this affects the child's relationship with the parent and creates emotional issues. For example, they might grow up thinking they are the cause of other people's negative emotions, causing them to become a people-pleaser, or to have low self-esteem or anxiety.

It is essential that parents help children realize that they are not the cause of their parents' emotional struggles. Witnessing a parent's emotional turmoil is difficult, but the burden can be lessened by knowing that they aren't at fault. Parents might not think of telling their children this—it's clearly not their fault, right? Why would they think that? A child's emotional world is closely tied to their parents'. They do not yet understand that their parents' mood could be due to other



Photo: iStockphoto.com, Getty Images



Photo by capturenow

things, especially if it is directed at them or expressed in front of them, even subtly. Things that are obvious to us are not always obvious to others, especially to young children!

Johanna shares that an especially challenging time for mothers is, “when the child is the same age as the mother was when she experienced trauma, that can often trigger the mother. Her memories of her experiences at that age may come back, affecting her mental health and parenting.” Additionally, parents may also unconsciously push their own fears onto their children. For example, if a mother had a traumatic experience with thunderstorms, they might get anxious during a storm and tell their child, “It’s alright, there’s nothing to be afraid of,” even though the child has never before expressed this fear. This tells the child that thunderstorms are something to be scared of, causing them to fear them too.

HOW TO RECOGNISE HIDDEN TRAUMA

So how can you tell if you have hidden trauma that might affect your parenting? Joy shares some examples: “Being overprotective, too strict, over-worrying, excessive spoiling, or having a certain set of expectations”. Parents sometimes

take out their emotions on their children, turning the child into an outlet even if the issue does not lie with them. But how can you gauge these things when they may seem right to you due to your own experiences?

The answer lies in your relationships, primarily with your child. Are they scared or subdued around you? Do they talk to you? Do they often change the subject to something “safer”? Feeling safe and comfortable around one’s parents is a good sign, and doesn’t mean that your child is spoiled. There may also be clues in how you interact with others outside the family.

Johanna and Joy unanimously agree on the key to starting your healing journey: self-awareness. All of the examples given above require a certain degree of self-awareness—that you are struggling emotionally, going to extremes, using your child as an outlet, and more. Johanna says, “When you are aware of your own triggers, you break the cycle; when you’re not aware of it, it often repeats.” To start cultivating self-awareness, Joy recommends talking to the people around you and being open to what they say.

Another useful tip is to give yourself a “time-out” when you start to get

emotional. If you are about to shout at your child, hold yourself back and remove yourself from the situation for the time being; this gives you time to reflect before interacting. If your child has done something wrong, assure them that you love them even if you’re disappointed about this specific situation, and let them know that you need time before responding. This can help prevent you from doing or saying something you might regret out of anger. This method is a challenge with younger children, so we recommend leaving them with another caretaker while you take a few minutes for yourself if possible.

Developing self-awareness takes time. Even if you sometimes forget, it gets easier every time. You can also ask yourself: is this something I can handle on my own? Or should I see a professional? Seeing a therapist can be beneficial for both you and your child as you continue to raise them. Sometimes we need to work on ourselves and address these personal traumas in order to do what’s best for our children. Finally, Johanna shares one last piece of advice: “Reflect on the good things from your childhood, and pass those on to your children.” We often think of generational cycles as a curse, but don’t forget that they can also be a blessing.

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BREAKING THE CYCLE

MOVING PAST GENERATIONAL TRAUMA FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

How we were brought up affects our parenting, for good or bad. Claudia provides a guide to recognizing and breaking free from negative inherited patterns, ensuring healthier emotional and mental well-being for parents and children.

Photo by Nataliya Vaitkevich from Pexels



About the Author

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



Photo by Ron Lach from Pexels

We understand that when parents love their kids, they want the best for them. However, it can be difficult to grasp that, as a parent, you may unintentionally lead your children to a place where they need therapy, coaching, counseling, or other forms of support to process the impact of your actions.

Parents are the most psychologically significant figures in a child's life, regardless of the type of family they come from. Whether parents are alive, deceased, together, divorced, separated, same-sex, or single, they will always leave their children with something to work through. This may sound negative, but that is not the case. If you reflect on your own childhood, you have likely thought about things you didn't want to replicate from your parents or even said, "When I have kids, I will do things differently."

Many of us are unaware of the impact that family behaviors, emotional patterns, and belief systems have on our lives and those of our children. It is only when we are open and ready for change that we begin to recognize these influences.

Breaking these cycles is crucial, not only for your child's future but, more importantly, for your own well-being. Understanding these cycles leads to emotional balance and healthier relationships. It helps dissolve fears, outdated beliefs, and habits that no longer serve you.

WHAT IS GENERATIONAL TRAUMA?

Generational trauma refers to the emotional wounds passed down from parents to children. This transmission can occur through communication styles, unspoken rules, avoidance of certain topics, and parenting approaches. It can manifest in various ways, such as verbal, physical, or psychological abuse, neglect, abandonment,

addiction, or other dysfunctional behaviors. Additionally, it can stem from traumatic experiences parents have endured, such as wars, discrimination, poverty, or challenging upbringings. Parents are shaped by their life experiences, which influence the way they parent and behave according to their beliefs.

HOW DOES THIS PATTERN CONTINUE ACROSS GENERATIONS?

Repeated exposure to certain experiences makes them feel normal. Humans are incredibly adaptable and find ways to cope, even in the worst situations. Children, being resilient and intelligent, learn survival mechanisms that may stay with them throughout their lives—sometimes without them even realizing it.

When we grow up in an environment where certain patterns are ingrained, we unconsciously adopt them as our reality. Over time, these experiences shape the way we perceive relationships, success, self-worth, and emotional safety. Many individuals find themselves repeating their parents' behaviors despite vowing to do things differently. This is because our subconscious mind is deeply influenced by early childhood experiences.

It is important to note that parenting does not come with a manual. Parents do the best they can with the knowledge and resources they have. Generational trauma is not about assigning blame but recognizing an opportunity for healing and transformation. It is a chance to evaluate whether you are living the life you truly want or if you are still operating under inherited beliefs.

You may find yourself asking:

- What makes me so anxious?
- Why is it hard for me to connect with people?
- Why are my family relationships so difficult?

- Why do I feel invisible sometimes?
- Why am I so fixated on that person?
- Why do I need that person's approval?
- Why do I feel the need to be so independent in relationships?
- Why am I so angry all the time?

These questions indicate that you may be carrying emotional burdens from the past, such as anxiety, guilt, shame, emotional numbness, fear of rejection or abandonment, avoidance or attachment issues, and fear of vulnerability or intimacy.

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS OF GENERATIONAL TRAUMA

You might notice recurring behavioral patterns, including toxic relationships, lack of boundaries, difficulty expressing yourself, low self-worth, perfectionism, self-sabotage, or overachievement.

Family narratives also play a crucial role, with phrases like:

- We don't have money.
- Our family is unlucky.
- You have to be smart.
- You are not beautiful.
- Don't cry.
- Life is not easy.
- You will only succeed if you follow my path.
- Rich people are bad.

These statements, often repeated across generations, reinforce limiting beliefs and shape an individual's self-perception. Without questioning them, these patterns continue to control our decisions and behaviors, often leading to emotional distress and dissatisfaction.

The impact of generational trauma

Some of the effects on individuals and families include:

- Anxiety, depression, stress, and difficulty connecting with oneself
- Challenges in forming deep, meaningful relationships
- Harsh self-criticism and criticism of others
- Overprotectiveness or controlling tendencies
- Emotional distance and difficulty in expressing emotions

Understanding how these influences shape your interactions at work, in relationships, and in life is essential for personal growth.

HOW DO WE BREAK THE CYCLE?

Leaving the cycle of generational trauma is possible, but it requires openness and commitment. It is not an easy process, as it demands letting go of deeply ingrained beliefs and making space for a new, more authentic version of yourself.

Steps to breaking the cycle

Self-awareness: identify inherited wounds, beliefs, and

emotional patterns that no longer serve you.

Self-reflection: regularly check in with yourself, observe your emotions, and assess whether your actions align with your true desires.

Acceptance and recognition: acknowledge that your past has influenced you but does not have to define your future.

Education and learning: read about trauma, psychology, and emotional intelligence to empower yourself with knowledge.

Community and support: surround yourself with people who encourage personal growth and healing.

TOOLS THAT CAN HELP

Inner child work: a process that aids in healing childhood wounds and traumas.

Therapy and coaching: professional support to challenge limiting beliefs, enhance self-awareness, and promote growth.

Family constellations: a therapeutic approach developed by Bert Hellinger that reveals hidden family dynamics and emphasizes belonging, order, and balance within the family system.

Compassion: cultivating empathy for yourself and others, recognizing that everyone does the best they can with the knowledge they have.

Self-love: prioritizing your well-being—emotionally, physically, and mentally.

Rewriting your story: applying new insights to reshape your present and future.

Creating new family traditions: establishing healthier patterns for future generations.

The world offers numerous resources to help parents raise emotionally intelligent children. Parents who foster open communication, emotional vulnerability, and self-awareness equip their children with the tools to navigate life healthily.

Healing is a journey that requires time and effort, but it leads to personal and familial well-being. Remember, you always have a choice. You are not bound by inherited beliefs or past wounds. You can break free from what no longer serves you—even when it involves the most significant people in your life.

You are not alone. Generational trauma affects the vast majority of people worldwide. Support is available. Your courage to challenge the status quo may one day be a source of pride for your family. Believing in and working on yourself is the most powerful way to teach your children to do the same.



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FINDING YOUR MAMA TRIBE

Everybody needs good friends, and for new moms, supportive friends are the difference between surviving and thriving in parenthood. Natasha reflects on the loneliness of parenting and the comfort and joy that her friends bring her.

Photo by capturenow



About the Author

Natasha Duffin-Jones is a mother of two as well as an early years and primary teacher with a Master of Early Childhood degree. She is also a children's yoga teacher with her company, Story Time Yoga, specializing in teaching yoga with children's stories, developing literacy and emotional literacy. She also likes visiting different places in Bangkok with her children and documenting their adventures on her Instagram page @bangkokmamaandbaby.



Photo by Yan Krukau from Pexels

A quick Google search will give you a never-ending list of articles and blogs about why friendships are so important to parents, especially mothers. But why is it so important right now? According to new research, parents are feeling lonelier than ever before, missing support, and feeling burned out from their roles as parents (1). Parents are yearning for the connection to other parents but somehow missing out on making those all important connections (1). Sometimes social media can fill a void without needing to interact in real life, but this can somehow make parents feel even lonelier. As a parent, it can be easy to compare ourselves with others and miss out on the nuanced side of parenting while only seeing others through a screen and not in real life. With family and close friends often far away, how can family life be made a little easier and support systems be found?

GIRL POWER

To me, female friendships in particular have always been of the utmost importance. I grew up in the Spice Girls era, when we were always embracing our girl power, and my female friends have played a huge role in shaping the person I have become. From holidays together to becoming roommates, my best

female friends were absolutely vital to my survival as we navigated those huge developmental years. I remember before I moved to Bangkok over ten years ago, my best friend in the UK asked me what I was most worried about. I replied it was that I wouldn't make any friends, which she thought was an absurd worry! I fell pregnant with my first baby during the Covid pandemic and in Bangkok, which is miles from the UK where my family and friends are. Due to the lack of available vaccines, I had to shield for most of my pregnancy, and I found it to be the loneliest time I've ever had. I knew that I would need to make some mommy friends to help me navigate the next chapter of my life.

MOM FRIENDS

Fortunately, I was greeted by the most wonderful moms at the Breastfeeding Cafe at Bumpsy Daisy, and this fantastic group of women really helped me embrace the new role in my life. Going to the weekly meetups quickly became the highlight of my week and gave me not just something to look forward to but some laughs to get me through the sleepless nights as well as the reassurance that my baby was not broken and it just is that hard! As one friend told me: "Female friends who have children—they understand

completely what you're going through. Whatever stage they're at, they can relate. You need emotional support." Another friend explained: "Mom friends make motherhood less isolating and provide community and comfort in knowing we are not alone; that we aren't the first to encounter each challenge, and we won't be the last. Shared knowledge truly is both powerful and empowering." Having friends who are going through the same issues with their children at the same time can be such a benefit, and it definitely helped me feel less alone at so many points in my parenting journey.

CHANGING FRIENDS

Living internationally, I have come to realize that friendships change frequently as people come and go, and this can be a really difficult situation as making new friends is often necessary. As children grow, friendships will often change too. Then as anyone has found, trying to have a conversation when toddlers are involved is nigh on impossible as they both invariably dart off in opposite directions at any given time. However, I have found that friendships have become even more important as children's needs become increasingly complex and they start to pose challenges in whole new ways. Discussing this with



Photo by AnnaStills from Getty Images

a friend she commented, “Living here also means people come and go, and sometimes finding new friends after good friends have left can seem impossible and exhausting. But there’s so much available to us here in terms of places to go, communities, and connections, and people are very welcoming and open-minded, which gives us opportunity and time to grow friendships organically...” I find it can be hard to make new friends. From reading many articles about making friends, one piece of advice has really resonated: simply believe that people will like you. Taking the plunge and talking to other parents at school events and playgroups can seem really daunting at first; however, everyone is in the same position and it is reassuring to remember that!

FRIENDS WITH CHILDREN

Having children also changes your existing friendships. I remember after I had my first baby, I wanted to simply phone all my friends who were mothers already, apologize,

and say, “I never realized it was so difficult. I wish I had supported you better—I had no idea!”

Suddenly, life has changed and timings, activities, and availability are now governed by our children. My whole world was absolutely turned on its head and I had lost myself completely to motherhood. I am so grateful for the friends without children who have stuck with me through the journey and been happy to chase my toddlers around galleries with me or played games with them at parties to keep them entertained. Those moments of support mean more than people could ever know! Sometimes, friendships will come and go, especially while living internationally with people moving on to new pastures frequently and circumstances changing as you start a family, expand your family, children go to school, and so on. As life changes, friendship changes also, and it is important to evolve with circumstances. A friend explained to me: “Strong mom friends have made me stronger as a mom, a friend,

and as my own person.” When I became a stay-at-home mom, I was not prepared for the hole in my life where I had previously spent time with colleagues regularly and now this was no longer possible. Being surrounded by no one but children all day, I found my life to be busy but also incredibly lonely at times. I personally found it key to get out of the house and meet other people as having an adult conversation was essential for my survival, particularly during those baby and toddler years!

Actress and activist Jane Fonda has been an absolute champion for female friendships and preaches loudly about their benefits to all. She even advocates that they can be the reason that women live longer than men and that new friendships can be formed at any time in life. She famously said: “I don’t know what I would do without my women friends; they make me stronger, they make me smarter, they make me braver” (2). So be bold and branch out—we all need our mama tribe to support us!

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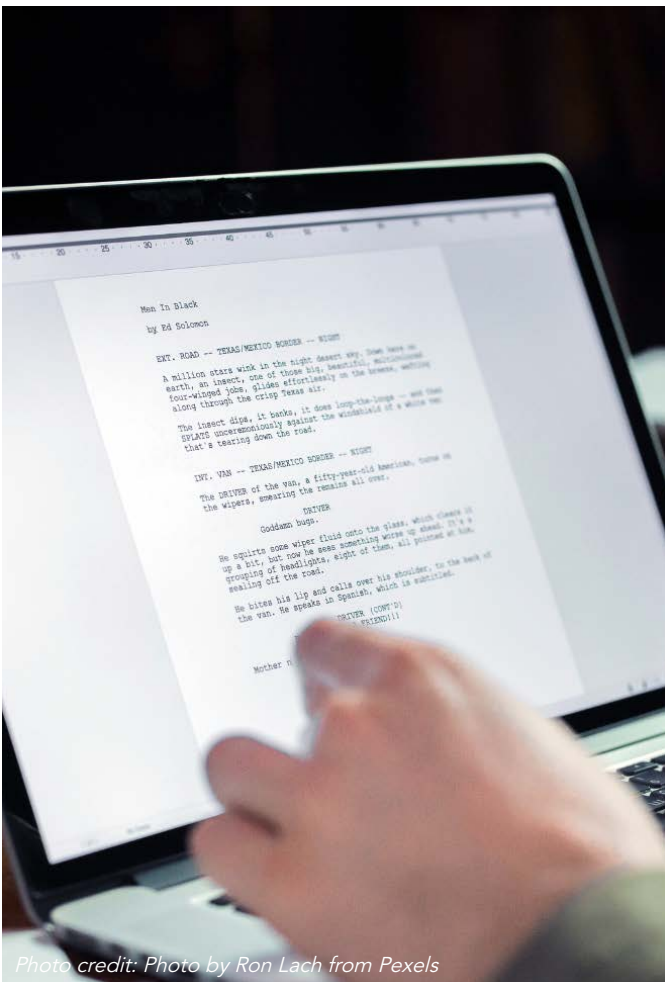


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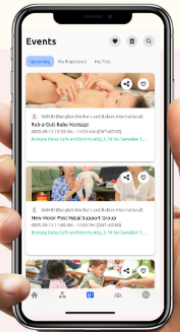
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BEYOND MOTHERHOOD: HOW TO KEEP YOUR INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

Jeannie reflects on the importance of self-care for parents and shares how she has embraced motherhood while maintaining her individual identity and continuing to grow and develop personally and professionally.

Photo by cottonbro studio from Pexels

About the Author

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



When I was in my twenties, I always knew I wanted children—one boy and one girl. But if you had asked me, “What type of mother do you want to be?” I would have been stumped. Thankfully, I’ve been surrounded by great role models who showed me what motherhood can look like when you nurture your identity, and what happens when you don’t.

Take my mom, for example. Growing up, she was a nine-to-five working mother who somehow managed to prepare every meal at home, hit the gym every morning at 5am, and attend church every Sunday without fail. She was also an incredibly loving wife to my chronically sick dad, who sadly passed away a few years ago. While she was tireless in her dedication to our family, I often sensed moments of frustration beneath her calm exterior.

I’ll never forget a phone call when she had a four-day hospital stay. She joked, “This is a fantastic holiday. I get healthy meals delivered to my feet and can rest whenever I want.” It was a lighthearted moment, but it highlighted an important truth: self-care is not just a luxury but a necessity for every mother.

So, before my first child, Kai, was born, I began reflecting on what kind of mother I wanted to be. I realized that to be a caring and nurturing parent, I needed to take deliberate steps to maintain my identity and ensure I didn’t burn out. Here are the actionable strategies I’ve embraced.

CONTINUE YOUR CAREER PATHWAY

Motherhood shouldn’t mean giving up your professional ambitions. I’ve always envisioned practicing acupuncture until I’m 80. Inspired by a mentor who continuously expands his skills, I integrated Pilates into my practice, trained in Europe and China, and am now pursuing a clinical psychology degree. Despite my four-year sabbatical as an acupuncturist while in Bangkok, I’ve continued expanding my career pathway by completing an



Photo by Rae Murugan from Studio UAE

honors psychology degree with the next goal of getting a clinical psychology degree when I return to Australia. My ultimate goal is to combine mental health, Pilates, and acupuncture into holistic treatment plans. This ongoing journey keeps me passionate and fulfilled.

STAY CONNECTED

Building a support network is essential. I was lucky to find my “mom tribe” quickly after moving to Bangkok. We meet weekly, usually at someone’s house, where our children play while we indulge in wine, cheese, and conversation. Sharing frustrations and celebrating wins with like-minded friends has been a lifeline.

COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS

In the past, I struggled with communicating effectively in my marriage. A psychologist once told me that men often feel the need to “fix” problems, even when we just want to be heard. Now, when I need to vent, I tell my husband, “I’m not looking for a solution; I just want you to listen.” This approach has strengthened our relationship and made me feel truly understood.

INDULGE YOUR GUILTY PLEASURES

For me, it’s watching mukbang videos on YouTube. There’s something oddly therapeutic about watching someone enjoy an

enormous meal. Everyone has a guilty pleasure; the key is to give yourself permission to enjoy it without guilt.

EXPLORE DIFFERENT HOBBIES

I’ve tried countless hobbies, from art classes to chocolate making. While not every hobby has stuck, the process of exploring new activities has been deeply rewarding. Bangkok offers a wealth of opportunities and I’ve been excited to try coffee art, knitting, and more.

CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Following my mom’s example, I’ve found fulfillment through volunteering. Since 2023, I’ve been a writer and playgroup volunteer for BAMBI. Volunteering allows me to share my experiences, connect with others, and feel less isolated as a mother in a foreign country.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Motherhood is a transformative journey, but it doesn’t have to come at the cost of your individuality. By nurturing your passions, building connections, and prioritizing self-care, you can find fulfillment in all aspects of life. Remember, a happy, fulfilled mother is the best gift you can give to your children. To all the expat moms in Bangkok: embrace your identity, lean on your community, and never stop exploring the things that bring you joy.



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NOT JUST A GIRL

Rachel wasn't taught to duck, and she doesn't want her daughter to duck a challenge either. Instead, as a self-confident, independent thinker, she'll face up to whatever life throws at her.



Photo by Germán TR from Pexels



About the Author

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



Photo by Any Lane from Pexels

It was a warm Saturday morning, and I had a baseball game. I remember walking up to bat, taking note of the pitcher, then quickly ending up on the floor. I was crying, covered in salty tears and clumps of red sand, with a baseball-sized welt on my face. Between angry coaches, worried parents, and a nonchalant pitcher, I was confused and just wanted to go home. Much of the event was a blur, but I do remember the smug look on the pitcher's face and the repetition of "He hit her on purpose because she's a girl" from one of my coaches. He even apologized for not teaching me to duck. That was the life I would be taught to live—either hiding or looking to someone else for help. Would I be constantly questioning the motives of people, worried that they deemed me inferior? Up until that point, ignorance was truly bliss. Nearly 30 years ago, I learned a hard, painful lesson about how life would treat me because I'm just a girl.

LIFE LESSONS

At that moment, the only thing I thought I learned was that boys were mean. However, looking back, I gained so much more insight into life and the world outside of my

bubble. Recently there has been a general, and pleasant, shift from feeble princesses and our nineties "Barbie girl". It's nice to see women lifting weights. It's refreshing to not feel shame when stepping out in sweat pants. Being able to travel and even move to other countries as a single woman has been one of the best experiences of my life. This acceptance of girls and women having more autonomy and overall strength has to have begun within. To make conscientious decisions to challenge views and beliefs ingrained in us takes real effort. When my daughter asks, "How do I look?" I have to fight the urge to reply, "Good" or "Cute!" and instead opt for "How do you think you look?" And after she answers, a simple "And that's all that matters" follows from me. Even though my answers never change, she never stops asking, but I know each time, her confidence and self-assurance are a tiny bit stronger, which I hope she'll continue to cultivate into adulthood.

RAISING INDEPENDENT THINKERS

With my daughter, I try to encourage independence. Will I urge her to walk down a dark soi at night?

Absolutely not. One of my favorite life quotes is "Thinking ability will keep watch over you, And discernment will safeguard you." (1) Giving our daughters the freedom to think will strengthen their ability to discern safe and unsafe situations. It can be scary, especially when we can't control the actions of others, but all we can do is what we can do. And stressing over what we can't do can rub off on our daughters. Studies show that oftentimes, children can recognize and be affected by the stress we feel (2). So the main takeaway is to breathe, take a step back, and reevaluate what we say, how we say it, and, especially, why we say what we say to our daughters.

Our motives also make a huge difference in the effectiveness of what we teach and share. Manipulation may appear successful at the moment, but again, what we do now will affect our daughters in the future. Any behavior they are used to accepting from us will inadvertently teach them what to accept in adulthood. Teaching from a place of love and compassion will build stronger daughters because it relies on trust and understanding, as opposed to fear. This means, even when we are angry, remembering



What does “raising a strong girl” mean to you?

We asked some mothers, and this is what they said:

“Emotionally secure and controlled, and independent to a degree, where she still looks to me for guidance, not the answer. A strong girl is one who doesn’t allow herself to be pushed over.”

“My goal in raising a strong girl is helping her to have the courage to stand up for her beliefs, not be afraid to be herself, and to find joy in being kind to others.”

“To create a strong girl, I must create an environment where she can grow her self-confidence and learn resilience.”

Photo by Yuganov Constantin

that “your anger is not about your kids, it’s about you” (3), may help us regulate emotions, allowing for more effective communication. When our daughters see that, it will inevitably teach them a thing or two about the strength behind controlling emotions as opposed to allowing emotions to control us. It’s also noteworthy to mention that how we treat ourselves and our daughters may trickle out to how we treat other girls around us.

BE KIND TO OTHERS

Unless it’s regarding a serious health or safety issue, it’s not our job to judge or comment on other people’s children, especially when it comes to physical appearance, and especially to their faces. I can’t count how many stories I’ve heard of well-meaning adults who’ve made comments on little girls’ weights or looks, ultimately hurting the child. I’m not advising to not compliment girls—on the contrary. However, compliments shouldn’t be limited to things they can’t control, like

genetics, but balanced with skills and attributes they can be proud of or that they’ve worked hard for, like academic ability, athletic ability, personality, or even the outfit they worked hard to put together that day. A “Wow, the way you held your own bag the whole walk was great! You’re so strong!” can go a long way. Along with this, seemingly harmless comments should be used sparingly. One day, my daughter, Juliette, came in sad because she couldn’t use the remote control car because “it’s only for boys”. As if women don’t drive, design, and build cars, motorcycles, rocket ships, and every other vehicle known to humans. So we must be mindful of what we say to others; it takes real work.

Overall, the foundation I’m setting now will hopefully help build a strong, confident woman in the future. I just want my daughter to continue being the happy, confident, dinosaur-loving girl she is today. I want to show up for her through

successes and failures. I want her to traverse this life feeling loved, even if someone around her doesn’t act loving. I want her to search within herself for the affirmations she needs. I want her to understand that although it feels good to hear nice things from people, it’s not necessary.

Hard things don’t get easier, we just get stronger. We have to aim to be a “girl’s girl”, which means supporting all the girls and women around us, giving strength and voices to those who may not feel confident. Strength can come in all forms, whether emotional, physical, or psychological. We should be teaching them that even if life comes at them hard and fast, like a baseball, they can handle it. Just get up, dust themselves off, and carry on. Whatever we do and whatever we teach, let’s remember to do it in love. Let’s love our daughters so much that when someone is “mean”, it won’t faze them. Let our daughters find their strength from our love.

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FEMINISM IN THE FAMILY

This month, Joe shares with us his take on raising his son and daughter in a feminist fashion to present equal opportunities for both, while reflecting on his own upbringing and the values he wants to present for future generations.



Photo by Yogendra Singh 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.

For March I've been asked to write about how I'm raising feminist children. I was actually asked to write about raising a feminist son, but since I also have a daughter I thought it would be a poor introduction to feminism to exclude her. Obviously this wasn't my first thought—my initial response to any question about child-rearing is panic as I realise I'm not doing whatever it is I'm supposed to be doing and didn't even know it was something I was meant to be doing. A sleepless night worrying that I'd negligently been creating misogynistic monsters followed, after which I decided that I should probably think about raising feminist children. Now all I needed to do was decide what that meant and how to do it.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO RAISE FEMINIST CHILDREN?

Now this undoubtedly means very different things to different people, but for me I think it means raising children who know that men and women should have the same opportunities in life; that girls and boys can play with the same toys, study the same subjects at school, and enjoy the same games and sports. I want my children to treat people with the same respect and consideration regardless of their sex or gender. So, how does one achieve these simple goals?

HOW AM I RAISING FEMINIST CHILDREN?

In raising feminist children, I have a huge head start as a stay-at-home dad with a wife who would, were it not for my fragile male ego, be clearly acknowledged as the head of our household. This fortunately plays to my strengths of doing as little as possible at all times. Simply by sitting at home, avoiding employment, and playing with my children, I'm demonstrating that this is something men do, while my wife demonstrates that women can have careers and a family.

Unfortunately, living in Thailand means my efforts to demonstrate male domestic responsibility are rather undermined by the fact that most of the tougher household chores are done by our female nanny, while I sit around drinking tea, criticizing her efforts, and bemoaning the onerousness of childcare. Still, Marty and I are regularly in charge of cooking and washing up, and there is certainly no idea that these or other household chores are a mother's preserve. Fortunately my wife is putting rather more effort into demonstrating a woman's right to a successful career.

WORDS MATTER

Focusing on my laissez faire approach to moral education, let's look at what else I'm not doing. Well, primarily, I'm trying to keep disparaging remarks about women to a minimum. Not that I'm in the habit of unleashing torrents of misogynistic abuse, but rather, I

recognize that words are important, and many common playground phrases of my youth do not support the idea that girls and boys are equal. So Marty and Alice will not be told that they "throw like girls"; nor will they be called "big girl's blouses" when they cry, nor will tantrums be met with demands to stop "acting like a girl". Tears are as appropriate for men as for women, and math and sports are as much for girls as for boys. The hiding of emotions by strong, silent men will not be venerated as a masculine trait to be proud of.

Alice, just like Martin, will be showered with kisses and hugs, told that she's loved and beautiful, and also told that she's strong and fast, creative and clever. Inevitably Martin and Alice will want to do different things and play different games, but it must be because that's what they want to do, not because that's what society, or we, expect of boys and girls.

Naturally we will sometimes want Alice to wear pretty dresses and look cute, but her clothes mustn't stop her playing or leave her unable to follow in her brother's muddy and adventurous footsteps. One dress has already had to be rejected because it was restricting her attempts to crawl. Martin's many beautiful truck T-shirts are stained and torn, and as Alice starts to show signs of moving, I hope her many lovely outfits will soon show the same results of plentiful playing and joyful eating. When there are puddles to be jumped in, trees to be



climbed, or mud to be stirred, then this is what needs to be done regardless of how clean or pretty children's clothes are.

THE FUTURE

This all sounds simple enough to start with. Treating both children equally, demonstrating that traditional gender roles are not the only option, and continuously reiterating that they can both try anything and regard their options as unlimited. The challenge will come as they get older and are exposed to the twin challenges of peer pressure and social media. When school friends are starting to declare that boys and girls need to behave in certain ways or they see content that says women should be treated in a certain way, it will need a more active response. My signature approach of doing nothing and hoping any problems go away will no longer be enough.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO LEARN?

Instead, it will be time for some serious conversations about how to decide what to watch on the internet, and how to interpret what you see. As someone who avoids conflict and confrontation at all costs this may take me well beyond my own comfort zone. My usual approach to people saying something stupid, offensive or wrong is to grunt noncommittally and edge away with a firm intention never to speak to that person again. This strategy has thus far worked perfectly with strangers, but I strongly suspect it will prove entirely inadequate



when it comes to raising strong-willed children with the strength to challenge prejudice when they see it.

Instead I will need to prepare for challenging conversations with my children when they repeat things they've heard at school or online. I may even have to accept that challenging conversations with other parents and teachers may be necessary. I really hope that future me is prepared for this because I certainly don't think I'm the man for the job at the moment, but at least I'm now thinking about what those conversations may need to be.

This, though, is all in the future, for now I can concentrate on building a firm feminist foundation by demonstrating, with my wife, that women and men are equally capable of doing household tasks, staying at home or going out to work, of playing sports or reading books. In short ensuring that Alice and Marty experience the same opportunities and see those opportunities available to both their parents.

Photos courtesy of the author



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FORGET PRINCESSES, RAISE WARRIORS

Sheena shares how she is raising an empowered daughter, inspired by her experiences, her mother's example, and a few of her favorite Disney movies!

Photo by cottonbro studio from Pexels



About the Author

Sheena is a mother to three-year-old August, runs Super Fly Honey, a brand that makes technical activewear

for pole dancers around the world, and dreams about writing children's books. After three years with a lot of yoga, deep friendships, purposeful retreats and IFS therapy, she realizes that becoming a mother is actually a superpower.



Forget the docile princess trope. Thank goodness today's Disney heroines are more Moana than Sleeping Beauty, more Elsa than Cinderella! Who hasn't belted out "Let It Go" and felt that surge of empowerment, that permission to cast off expectations and embrace your true, imperfect self? This International Women's Day, I'm raising a toast to the mothers who are raising empowered daughters, the ones who are equipping their girls with the courage to question, to explore, and to forge their own paths. Navigating the complexities of motherhood, I'm drawing on my own experiences to share the lessons I'm passing on to my daughter—the tools she needs to not just survive but thrive in a world brimming with possibilities that didn't exist before.

COMMUNITY

My childhood was a chaotic symphony of Friday night dinners with my boisterous Chinese family. We celebrated everything—birthdays, Chinese New Year, even the most obscure anniversaries. These gatherings weren't about pristine tablecloths; they were about raucous laughter, fierce loyalty, and the kind of love that holds you up when the world tries to knock you down.

Why it matters

Forget the fairytale. Life throws curveballs. Heartbreak, setbacks, moments when you feel utterly lost. A strong community, your own chosen tribe, is the anchor that keeps you grounded, the safety net that allows you to take risks, to stumble and rise again, knowing you have a soft place to land.

How to cultivate it

Head to a bustling local playground like Lumpini Park. Let your kids get messy, negotiate the swings, and forge their own friendships. True, being kids these friendships might not be as deep as your own, but it lays the seedlings of valuing community and knowing how to cultivate it. You might even find your own tribe among the parents on the sidelines.

Invest in connection by seeking out playgroups and activity classes designed for young children. These spaces offer a fertile ground for friendships to blossom and a sense of belonging to take root.

EDUCATION

My mother was no damsel in distress. She was lucky to be educated. It fueled her career, granted her financial independence, and ultimately, gave her the choice

to walk away from a marriage that no longer served her. Education was her escape hatch, her ticket to freedom.

I want my daughter to inherit that same fire, that unquenchable thirst for knowledge. We turn learning into an adventure—museums become playgrounds, books become portals to other worlds, and questions are a celebration of curiosity.

Why it matters

Education isn't about grades or gold stars. It's about equipping your daughter with the tools to dismantle limitations, to carve her own path, and to rewrite her story if she needs to. It's the key that unlocks a world of possibilities and gives her the power to choose her own destiny.

How to cultivate it

Forget the flashcards. Head to Neilson Hays Library, a treasure trove of stories waiting to be discovered. Or lose yourselves in the wonders of the Children's Discovery Museum, where learning is an adventure.

Open up new worlds by investing in a bilingual preschool or kindergarten program. Let her mind blossom with the magic of multiple languages, opening doors to different cultures and ways of thinking.

GROWTH MINDSET

Forget perfection. My classrooms weren't filled with straight-As and gold stars. They were messy, filled with questions, experiments, and the glorious freedom to fail. My teachers championed curiosity, not conformity. They taught me that intelligence isn't a fixed trait; it's a muscle that grows stronger with every challenge, every stumble, every aha moment.

That's the magic I want to weave into my daughter's life. We embrace the messy middle, the fumbles and frustrations that pave the way to mastery. Whether she's conquering a piano piece, mastering a martial arts move, or simply learning to ride a bike, it's the journey, not just the destination, that matters.

Why it matters

A growth mindset is armor for the soul. It's the belief that you can learn, adapt, and evolve, no matter the obstacles. It's the key to resilience, perseverance, and the unwavering belief in your own potential.

How to cultivate it

Let your child unleash their inner Picasso with finger paints. Embrace the chaos, the vibrant mess that is the birthplace of creativity and a "can-do" spirit.

Enroll your child in a creative movement or music class. Let them express themselves through dance, discover the joy of rhythm, and learn that the most beautiful melodies often emerge from a series of off-key notes.

SIMPLICITY

My most profound lesson in happiness unfolded unexpectedly amid the breathtaking peaks of the Himalayas. As a young and impressionable girl trekking through a remote village, I encountered families who possessed little in the way of material wealth yet radiated a joy that was both humbling and inspiring. Their laughter echoed through the mountains, their smiles were offered freely to passing trekkers like me, and their



Photo by nicolaeonescu from Getty Images

contentment seemed to stem from the simple act of sharing a meal or a moment of connection. It was a powerful reminder that happiness isn't found in possessions but in the richness of experience and the warmth of human connection.

That's the kind of joy I want to cultivate in my daughter's life. The kind that isn't dependent on fleeting trends or material possessions but on the richness of experience, the beauty of the natural world, and the deep connections we forge with others.

Why it matters

In a world obsessed with "more", it's easy to lose sight of what truly matters. Teaching our daughters to find joy in simplicity is an act of rebellion against the consumerist culture that tries to define us. It's about cultivating contentment, gratitude, and a deep appreciation for the beauty that surrounds us.

How to cultivate it

Escape the urban jungle and lose yourselves in the embrace of nature. Wander through Benjasiri Park, explore the hidden trails of Chatuchak Park, or simply sit under a tree and listen to the birdsong.

Plan a family adventure to a national park. Let the tranquility of nature wash over you as you hike through lush forests, marvel at cascading waterfalls, and reconnect with the simple rhythm of the earth.

EMPATHY

My childhood was a kaleidoscope of encounters with people from all walks of life. But it was in the dimly lit corners of casinos, amid the clatter of chips and the whirring of slot machines, that I learned one of life's most profound lessons.

There, I befriended women who defied easy categorization. They were sex workers, yes, but to my surprise they were also mothers, daughters, and sisters, navigating complex circumstances with remarkable strength and resilience. Many of them were sent to work as sex workers because a day of work equated to a year of work back in their poor home town. They taught me that every person carries a story, a universe of experiences that shapes their choices. They taught me to look beyond the surface, to challenge my own assumptions, and to approach others with empathy not judgment.

Why it matters

Empathy is the bridge that connects us, the key to understanding and compassion. In a world that's quick to judge and categorize, it's a radical act to teach our daughters to see beyond the surface, to recognize the shared humanity that binds us all.

How to cultivate it

Open her eyes to the world by filling your home with stories that celebrate diversity. Read books and watch



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movies that portray characters from different backgrounds, with different abilities, and different family structures. Spark conversations about characters' experiences, encouraging your daughter to see the world through their eyes.

Take your daughter on a cultural adventure. Explore the Jim Thompson House, immerse yourselves in the vibrant art scene at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, or wander through the bustling stalls of a local market. These experiences offer a glimpse into different ways of life, fostering understanding and appreciation for diversity.

RESILIENCE

Forget the fairytale endings. Life is messy, unpredictable, and often downright unfair. My parents, migrants who braved a new world with nothing but their resilience, taught me that. They faced countless obstacles, yet they never gave up. Their unwavering spirit became my inheritance, a guiding light through my own turbulent childhood and the challenges of building my own business.

Resilience is the gift I want to pass on to my daughter. It's the knowledge that she has the strength to weather any storm, to rise from every fall with renewed determination.

Why it matters

Resilience is the life raft that keeps us afloat when the waves crash around us. It's the ability to bounce back from setbacks, to learn from our mistakes, and to keep moving forward, even when the path ahead is uncertain.

How to cultivate it

Let your child build a tower of blocks then watch it tumble. Encourage them to build it again, higher and stronger. This simple act teaches them that setbacks are inevitable, but they are also opportunities to learn and grow.

Enroll your child in a martial arts class or a gymnastics program. These activities push physical and mental boundaries, teaching them discipline, focus, and the unwavering spirit to get back up, even when they fall.

ADVENTURE

From a young age, I felt the pull of the unknown, the irresistible urge to explore uncharted territory. My adventures have led me to encounter extraordinary people, to witness breathtaking landscapes, and to challenge my own preconceived notions.

This is the legacy I want to leave my daughter—a thirst for adventure, a curiosity that knows no bounds. I want her to explore hidden corners, to embrace new experiences, and to see the world as her playground.

Why it matters

Adventure isn't just about ticking off destinations on a map. It's about cultivating a spirit of curiosity, a willingness to step outside your comfort zone, and an open-mindedness that embraces the unknown. It's about discovering the world and, in the process, discovering yourself.

How to cultivate it

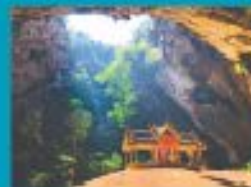
Create a treasure hunt with clues leading to hidden gems in your area. Explore the vibrant temples that dot Bangkok's landscape, each one a gateway to ancient stories and traditions.

Pack your bags and embark on a family adventure to a different part of Thailand, like Chiang Mai or the beaches of the south. Explore a new city, visit a national park, or experience a different cultural festival.

Raising empowered daughters is about nurturing their inner fire, that spark of individuality that makes them uniquely themselves. It's about equipping them with the tools to navigate a world brimming with possibilities, to embrace their strengths, and to create their own definitions of success. It's about fostering a love of learning, a spirit of adventure, and an unwavering belief in their own potential that will help them conquer the obstacles that will undoubtedly come their way.



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A GUIDE TO CLOTH DIAPERING

If your little ones aren't in cloth diapers yet, Meri has all the top tips for introducing reusable nappies into your baby change bag. With Meri's simple advice you'll soon be benefiting your wallet, the planet, and your baby's bottom!



About the Author

Meri is the founder of Tush Diaper and a mom of two. After 12 years in Thailand she currently lives in Chiang Mai with her Thai family. Passionate about sustainable living, she is dedicated to helping families embrace a healthier and more eco-friendly lifestyle. Find her on Instagram and TikTok @mummaofwilds

Cloth diapering is a journey that most parents start with the best intentions—save money, reduce waste, and make healthier choices for their babies. However, the reality is that lots of parents give up on cloth diapers within weeks, frustrated by persistent leaks and the hassle of managing them. If you're one of those parents, I get it—I was there too.

When I first tried cloth diapers, I jumped all in and bought a full-time stash, thinking I was making the best choice for my family and the planet. But frustrated after a few months of constant leaks and outfit changes, and endless laundry, I gave up and went back to disposables. It wasn't until my second baby came along and I realized how much waste we were producing that I decided to give cloth diapering another shot. This time, I took a different approach—focusing on quality materials, especially natural fibers, and that made all the difference.

If you're considering cloth diapering or giving it another try, choosing the right materials is key to success. Let's dive into what makes or breaks the cloth diapering experience and why natural fibers are the way to go.

WHY MOST PARENTS QUIT CLOTH DIAPERING: THE POLYESTER PROBLEM

One of the biggest mistakes new parents make when starting with cloth diapers is opting for cheap, polyester-based options. On the surface, polyester sounds like a budget-friendly solution—it's widely available and dries quickly. However, polyester is essentially plastic, and as we all know, plastic doesn't absorb liquid.

Instead of holding moisture efficiently, polyester-based inserts and diaper linings often lead to compression leaks—meaning the liquid gets pushed out when pressure is applied, like when your baby is sitting or scooting around. This results in constant leaks and frustration. It's easy to see why so many parents end up hating cloth

diapers when every diaper change turns into a soggy disaster.

WHY NATURAL FIBERS ARE THE BETTER CHOICE

Instead of polyester, investing in natural fiber options like cotton, bamboo, and hemp can make a world of difference. These materials offer superior absorbency that actually holds onto the liquid instead of letting it leak out.

Here's a quick breakdown of popular natural fiber options:

Cotton: affordable, absorbent, and easy to clean. Organic cotton is an excellent option for sensitive skin.

Bamboo: incredibly soft and highly absorbent. Bamboo retains moisture

well and is a great choice for overnight diapers.

Hemp: hemp holds the most liquid but takes longer to dry, making it ideal for layering with faster-absorbing fibers like cotton.

While natural-fiber diapers might cost more upfront, they last longer and perform better, saving you money in the long run and making your cloth diapering experience much smoother.

PART-TIME CLOTH DIAPERING

Another common misconception is that cloth diapering must be an all-or-nothing commitment. In reality, most families use a hybrid approach, combining cloth with disposables based on their lifestyle.



Here are a few flexible ways to incorporate cloth diapers without feeling overwhelmed:

Daytime use at home: cloth diapers work great when you're at home, where frequent changes and washing are easy.

Overnight solutions: many parents use cloth diapers at night—while it may seem daunting, it's actually one of the easiest ways to integrate cloth diapering since it's usually just pee.

Weekend cloth diapering: if you work full-time, using cloth diapers over the weekend can still make a big impact on reducing waste.

Remember, every cloth diaper used means one less disposable in landfill, and that's a win!

WHY CLOTH DIAPERS ARE WORTH THE EFFORT

Once I cracked the code with the right materials, I realized how simple and cost-effective cloth diapering can be. Instead of spending roughly \$25,000 on disposables each year, I wash and reuse the same diapers over and over.

Here are some compelling reasons why cloth diapering is worth considering:

Eco-friendly choice: disposable diapers take hundreds of years to break down. By switching to cloth, you'll be shocked to see how much you cut down on household waste.

Cost savings: disposables can cost between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per year, while a full-time stash of high quality cloth diapers are a one-time investment of about \$12,000 and can be used for multiple babies.

Healthier for baby: cloth diapers are free from the harmful chemicals found in disposables, reducing the risk of rashes and skin irritations.

Aesthetic appeal: let's be honest—cloth diapers come in the cutest prints and colors that disposables just can't match.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS: MAKING CLOTH DIAPERING WORK FOR YOU

If you're ready to give cloth diapers a try, or a second chance, here are some tips to ensure success:

Start small: don't overwhelm yourself by buying a huge stash upfront. Start with a few high-quality, natural-fiber diapers and gradually build your collection.

Invest in the right accessories: wet bags, diaper sprayers, and proper storage solutions will make cloth diapering much easier.

Have a washing routine: a simple wash routine is key—pre-rinse, wash with a good detergent, and air or tumble dry.

Mix and match: remember, it's OK to use disposables; find a balance that works for your family.

Cloth diapering doesn't have to be all or nothing, and it doesn't have to be a frustrating experience. By choosing natural fibers, investing in a few key items, and adopting a part-time approach, you can enjoy the benefits of cloth without the stress.

If you're on the fence, just remember—every cloth diaper used is a step towards a greener, more sustainable future, and your wallet will thank you too.

Photos courtesy of the author

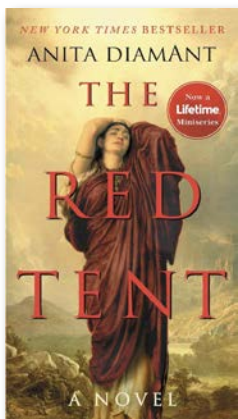


BOOKS TO INSPIRE

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THE RED TENT *By Anita Diamant*



Ever wondered what the Bible would be like if it were written by women? Anita Diamant's "The Red Tent" offers a richly woven reimagining of the biblical story of Dinah, daughter of Leah and Jacob, exploring the transformative journey from girlhood to motherhood. Set in a world where women gather in the red tent during menstruation, childbirth, and other rites of passage, the novel vividly portrays female experiences, relationships, and wisdom passed down through generations.

At its core, "The Red Tent" is a meditation on the evolution of womanhood. Dinah's journey through girlhood, sexual awakening, childbirth, and motherhood is depicted with honesty, emphasizing both physical and emotional depth. The red tent itself symbolizes sisterhood and shared knowledge, a sacred space where women find solidarity in navigating life's challenges. Diamant's writing celebrates the strength of these bonds, reclaiming women's voices in history and offering a powerful exploration of how the journey from girlhood to motherhood is interconnected and life-changing.

"The Red Tent", originally published in 1997 by Wyatt Books for St. Martin's Press, is a New York Times Best Seller. A paperback copy can be found in the fiction section of the Neilson Hays Library.

BIG MAMA MAKES THE WORLD *Written by Phyllis Root and illustrated by Helen Oxenbury*



Phyllis Root's "Big Mama Makes the World" is a delightful children's picture book that introduces young readers to the wonders of creation and family. With rhythmic, lyrical prose and charming illustrations, Root celebrates the interconnectedness of all life.

Big Mama, a figure of maternal love and wisdom, creates the world with care and boundless energy. She molds mountains, carves rivers, paints the sky, and breathes life into the creatures of the earth, all with joy and purpose. Her actions reflect the magical simplicity of nurturing life.

The story highlights the deep, interwoven nature of all things, illustrating how mothers, in their quiet yet powerful ways, create and sustain life. It serves as a heartfelt reminder of the profound influence motherhood has on both the world and those within it, offering young readers a meaningful and accessible exploration of creation, love, and the bonds that tie us all.

Phyllis Root is the author of over forty books. "Big Mama Makes the World" was published in 2003 by Candlewick Press. A copy can be found in the Children's Corner of the Neilson Hays library.

Prepared by Kit Lang for Neilson Hays Library.

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

LET YOUR HANDS DO THE TALKING

When you're feeling frustrated with your child's lack of cooperation, tempers can start to fray. Sonali shares a playful approach to dealing with conflicts to enable you to parent peacefully.

Photo by cottonbro studio from Pexels



About the Author

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

I'm a firm believer in the idea that you can't talk about parenting without talking about how you were parented. Many of us played the "good girl" role as kids and learned to put a smile on our faces and use a sweet voice, even when internally, we were upset. This carries forward into parenting and society's image of the "good mom"—the mom who is always calm and has a never-ending well of patience. It's no surprise then that those of us aspiring to be this mom may seem calm on the outside, yet internally we're stuffing down frustration.

If you've ever had the ooey-gooley "please, sweetie, eat your dinner" not work with your child, it's because your child can sense the frustration within you. But instead of ending up in a power struggle with them, you can acknowledge the struggle within you in a way that is connecting, playful, and authentic. This will allow you to create congruence between the internal and external you, and express and communicate in a way that connects with your child. This quick tool allows you to have an authentic connection with your child and yourself because you're being both playful and honest about a need to get something done and your need to be kind.

PICTURE THE SCENE

Your child isn't doing the thing you want them to—getting out the door on time, helping to tidy up, eating their dinner, or one of countless other possibilities. Your tension, annoyance, and frustration have been building. You want to stay on task, yet part of you doubts that when you ask kindly, you'll be heard. Imagine a table. Right now, you and your child are sitting at opposite ends, trying to convince each other to see it your way. Now imagine you and your child sitting side by side at the table, on the same team, facing the challenge, acknowledging both perspectives and the tension between them. By playfully acknowledging our frustration or doubt, instead of pretending it's not there, we take the tension off for us and them.



Photo by studioroman

HOW TO PLAYFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE OUR DOUBTS

You can playfully address your doubts and frustrations by using your hands as two characters, A and B, arguing with each other. To make it more fun, go all in and give them special voices. Here are some examples, but you can use it in lots of contexts and in whatever way works best with your kids!

Dinnertime:

- A: "She's going to eat her veggies."
B (shaking "no" vigorously): "No way! She's not even looking at 'em"
A: "Yes she is. Look! She's picking up a carrot now!"

Getting out the door on time:

- A (singing): "Shoes shoes shoes, it's time for shoes."
B: "It's not happening."
A (turning to kids): "Don't listen to him—he's SO negative, isn't he?"
B (as kids are putting on shoes): "Noooo!"
A: "Ha ha—I told you!"

With yourself while with your child:

- A: "Look at mom's face, oooh...she's gonna blow, y'all! Red alert!"
B: "No she's NOT! She's just going

to tell the kids she's tired and let's make getting ready for bed both quick and fun."

With an older child:

Many parents have been surprised that even some teens still get a kick out of the hands. And, you can also tweak it to just using voices and simply voicing the conversations that happen in your head.

WHY IT WORKS

When we are stuck in opposition to our child—with us holding the space of wanting to get something done and our child holding the space of not wanting to do it—we are experiencing externally a conflict that actually exists internally. We have a part of us that wishes we didn't need to do the things, too. And our child has a part of them that wishes they could just do the thing. By using our hands, we are holding both parts of this conflict together. Using our hands acknowledges the internal conflict we both feel, putting us and our child on the same side, facing the challenge as a team instead of us and our child on opposite sides to each other. Plus, you've always got your hands, so this doesn't require carrying any extra things.

BAMBI: THE TEAM

BAMBI is managed by an elected committee of volunteers and all BAMBI members are encouraged to volunteer. Vacancies can be found on the Call for Volunteers page in this magazine and are posted online; you are welcome to contact vicechairwoman@bambiweb.org with inquiries.

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