

Bangkok Girl

British Expat eating, drinking and exploring
my way around Bangkok



Bangkok Voices: Sukhumvit Wife Syndrome

Posted on Nov 3 2014 - 11:08am by [Bangkok Girl](#)

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When I first moved to Bangkok, I gave up a 10 year legal career and I thought the time away from work was going to be amazing. How wrong I was. But who was I to complain? I had a life in the sun, a condo with a swimming pool – life should have been a breeze.

You might remember Becky who recently shared her experience about being a [Mommy In Bangkok](#). Here's her take on her new life as an expat:



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"I have a confession to make. I am about to share something with you that even my priest doesn't know. I have been officially diagnosed with SWS, also known as Sukhumvit Wife

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Syndrome. This is not something to be taken lightly as I am sure several expat ladies can relate.

It all started about two years ago, when I arrived in the Land of Smiles. We arrived at 2am on a Friday, completely exhausted not having slept for 28 hours with an 18 month old in hand and a husband, who had plans to go to work on Monday morning. This was our first time away from home, so you can imagine my total shock when we weren't in the country for two days and he left me! He left me in a hotel room with a baby, no nanny, no friends, nothing! I am a strong woman and I didn't let that stop me, I made my way to the park with my son and so started my life as a Sukhumvit Wife.

As the months went on my husband would tell me about his work, he would travel to new countries, he was succeeding in his new role and I couldn't have been more proud. At the same time, full of pride for my husband I was angry, resentful, burnt out, and completely conflicted to be feeling this way. I would think to myself how unfair the situation was. I was stuck at home, trying to navigate Bangkok with a toddler, who was always one wrong move away from a total meltdown tantrum. I would whine to myself, "Why does he get to have a flourishing career when mine will be completely dead by the time I return home." Being a total drama queen, I would ask "How did my life come to this? Forget that this is a great opportunity to see the world! I just want to be out of the house and get back to work!" Finally, I realized with some professional help, that these feelings were completely normal for expat women. "Becky, you have what is called Sukhumvit Wife Syndrome."

The doctor explained how extremely hard it is for the wife, who has a promising career to leave it behind and follow her husband. Not only is she leaving her career behind she has left her friends, family, and everything she knows to move across the world to Sukhumvit to stay at home and all of a sudden is expected to accept the fact she is a stay at home wife and mom. For me the idea that I was doing nothing with my day was killing me. I do not count the time spent with my son because that is a given in my mind that I would be raising him while I am not working but I wanted to have something tangible I could work on and see the fruits of my labor and at the same time further my career and build my resume. I was feeling helpless, worthless, and simply bummed out. The doctor explained to me this is a major loss in my life and it is acceptable to mourn. I was assured that I am not the only one in Bangkok to be diagnosed with this condition. All of a sudden I felt liberated, once I realized that I am not alone I decided to make the best of it!



The prescription for this condition was one that I think any wife would enjoy and no it is not Zanax and a cocktail. I was told to embrace the time here and to enjoy the manicures, pedicures, rooftop bars, the delicious food, fruity cocktails, the help at home in the form of a nanny or maid that we are so fortunate to have, coffee breaks and lunch dates with

friends and most of all, the time that I would not have if I was home that I am now able to spend with my son. What a novel idea; slow down, enjoy life and the gift that I thought would be a total curse.

Don't get me wrong, there are still problems being a Sukhumvit Wife and dealing with this condition that no one back home could possibly understand. For example, the nanny or maid issues our local friends can totally relate to but God forbid you mention to a friend back home. Please do not even get me started on the foot massage that left me with bruises all down my leg, the pedicure that used nail polish that flaked off in a week's time or motorbike driver that tried to give me a kiss today at the end of my commute.

Sometimes life here is just unbearable.. maybe I should pop that Zanax and have that cocktail after all."

Thanks for sharing this Becky – it's comforting to know that I am not the only one who struggled with my new life as an expat. You can read more of Becky's writing on her blog [From Palmetto Pride To Pad Thai](#) or follow her on twitter @BeckyHorace

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Erica

November 3, 2014 at 3:10 pm - [Reply](#)

This is an awesome post. Thank you for sharing Becky. So many of us can relate to this. It's refreshing to know "you are not the only one". It took me a while to adjust and enjoy my surroundings and now I'm leaving soon. I hope this helps other woman that might be feeling the same.



Bangkok Girl

November 3, 2014 at 4:09 pm - [Reply](#)

I agree – I smiled when Becky sent it to me as it summed up pretty much how I felt when I first moved to Bangkok!



sarawuth

November 4, 2014 at 3:38 am - [Reply](#)

I Good Feel if bangkok Make you smile



sanjay

November 4, 2014 at 9:49 am - [Reply](#)

I hope I am not intruding but just couldn't help sharing my experience. I moved to KL last year to take up a new challenging job and my wife went through something very close to the Sukhumvit Wife Syndrome. She was depressed and sad and looked lost even though the quality of life we have here was much better than where we came from. However, the good thing was that I was prepared for it, having read about it in blogs and on various expat sites. The role the husband plays in helping his wife come to terms with the new reality cannot be under-estimated. I don't know how much I was able to help but I sure as hell tried my best to be there for her, encourage her, take her out in the evenings and weekends and in general be supportive. Now my wife has found something she loves doing – she is helping a visually challenged girl through school as a learning support volunteer. She has a wide circle of friends and is enjoying the expat life much more than she did initially. There are still bad days and I have come to recognise those and be careful. It is the family that moves and the lady should not have to suffer alone is what I strongly believe.



Bangkok Girl

November 4, 2014 at 11:38 am - [Reply](#)

Thank you for sharing your story Sanjay – it seems to be a really common thing that “trailing spouses” go through.

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About Me



My name is Anna and I am a British expat living in Bangkok. This blog is about my Bangkok experiences: eating, drinking, shopping, sightseeing and being an expat in general, together with any trips I am lucky enough to make around the rest of Thailand and SE Asia. Please feel free to send me an email: bangkokgirlblog@yahoo.com

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