



Counsellor **Amanda Goss** recalls children growing with confidence in rural Thailand.

How many times have you heard yourself say: 'I can't because...' or 'I've never been any good at...' or 'I wish I had that kind of talent to...' or 'I'm just not very intelligent'...?

Years ago when I was in my twenties, I went travelling through Thailand. I was lucky enough to spend part of my trip with the Hill Tribe people where I slept in a hut on a hill, under a scratchy blanket, with several spiders whilst the goats and pigs slept underneath.

These people had very few material possessions and lived a sparse and frugal life up in the hills of Chang Mai. They were kind and smiley and generous. But it was the children who left a lasting impression on me.

These little cherubic, smiley small people, with their string and twigs and one football to share, who, by Western standards, would appear to have so few opportunities to thrive and learn, were by far more advanced than any child I had ever met.

Their clothes were clean but ragged and their little eyes lit up when a few members of our group brought out some sweets. However, there was none of the usual fighting and squabbling when the sweets were distributed. The older children (when I say older I mean three to four years old as opposed to little babies and toddlers) gave the younger children the sweets

given to them, and made sure they all had them first. Little toddlers deftly fed baby brothers and sisters; and older boys and girls of perhaps no more than five or six helped Mum with the cooking; carrying steaming pans and dishing up delicious local delicacies onto our plates without spilling a drop.

They could do anything. . . and despite having nothing were further advanced in dexterity and coordination, confidence and knowledge than our own spoiled screaming, pampered English kids. I couldn't believe it!

Ten years later I was to have my own little bundle of joy, and the experience I had in Thailand gave me faith in him and

'A torn jacket is soon mended; but hard words bruise the heart of a child'
Plato

all of his potential. As a toddler people exclaimed because he was putting his toys away and hanging his coat up. I gave him no limits. I wanted him to know he could do anything he wanted.

Unfortunately, we have not all had that experience growing up. Time and time again in my

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Write to: Amanda J Goss, Let's Talk

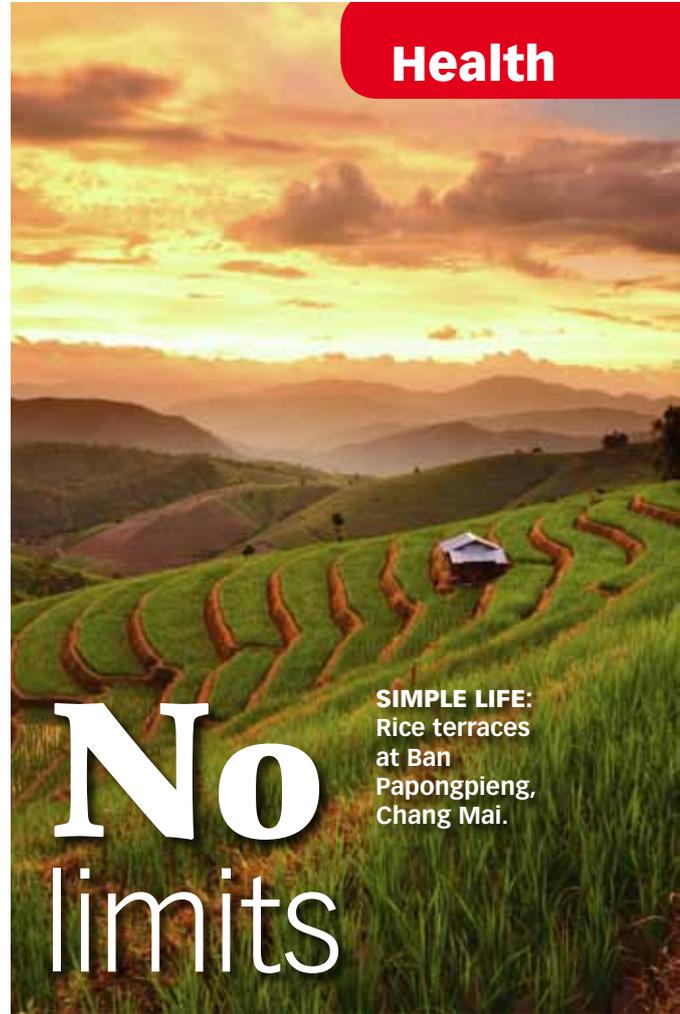
MA MBACP Psychotherapist & Counsellor,
Room 11b, St Ann's House, St Ann's

Street, Kings Lynn, PE30 1LT
■ www.eastangliacounsellingalliance.com/amanda_goss/

■ Email: amandajgoss@gmail.com. If you email please write 'Let's Talk' in the subject line.

■ Tel: 01553 827689 / 07760669246

■ More info: Harley Street, London Practice:
www.harleystpsychotherapy.com.



No limits

SIMPLE LIFE:
Rice terraces at Ban Papingpieng, Chang Mai.

consulting room I meet people who tell me that they are not intelligent, or clever. When I ask them how they know that, it's usually because once upon a time a cruel teacher or harrassed parent told them they were stupid, and they have carried the message on throughout their lives, never seeing the point of trying because it was futile as they were 'thick'. More often than not it was simply because they had not thought of trying anyway, convinced that their efforts would be futile.

A client I worked with recently told me that she had spent most of her life doing simple work because she thought she was 'not clever enough' for anything else. She has recently completed a law degree.

I left school with no qualifications, but completed my Masters in my forties.

I guess the moral of the story is to have confidence in yourself, don't be afraid to try new things and don't give your children or grandchildren any limits. You never know, they could be the next Prime Minister!