



Today I shared an umbrella with a woman. Our kids are in the same preschool and we were on our way to pick them up when we felt the first drops of liquid humidity. She saw that I had forgot mine and offered to share. Even though we had never exchanged more than a smile before, we moved closer, matching our steps to share shelter. Instant companion. Just add water.

In moving to Korea, an ocean away from my roots, I have learned a new way of walking. There is plenty of awkwardness as I get close to people. Sometimes we are the ones offering help. Most of the time we are the ones receiving help. I would much rather be the one who knows the name of the vegetable, the one who can use present progressive tense without stumbling and can tell you the time confidently. It is exhausting to always feel like a child among adults who are talking just a bit beyond your understanding. I have to poke and prod at my own personality to go outside familiar and comfortable boundaries. But what kindness might I miss if I always walked under my own umbrella?

I have found a new pace for life, one that is ready to fall in step with someone more quickly, shared language or not. This new walk is slower and much better for my soul. Just add water. Or an ocean.

Elsbeth