

Happiness through Support

The 13th English Speech Contest

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Good afternoon, everyone. Today, let me start with one simple question "Are you happy?"

I am a mother. I have one boy and one daughter who both are now in junior high school. On weekends, my husband, my son and I enjoy the Karate class at the Dojo in Kashiwa. We are all black belts. We enjoy our hobbies and daily life. You may think I am a very happy woman with a good family.

But the problem is that - My daughter is mentally handicapped - specifically, she has an intellectual disability and autism. Autism is a disorder characterized by difficulty communicating with people and a strong obsession with things.

Now, can you imagine the challenges faced by people with intellectual disabilities, especially people with autism? It's difficult for my daughter to understand language and traffic rules. So many surprises and troubles almost every day. Assisting her with bathing and toileting is no small task. In order to ask for help, I had to call police several times. Mentally and physically I am so fatigued.

Twelve years ago, When the doctor told me the result of the developmental test, I was seriously shocked as if the heavens had collapsed on my head. I was captured by an idea that she might no longer be able to pursue ordinary happiness and that she might be forced into a life which is inferior to other people.

However, what is "ordinary happiness" and what is "an inferior life"? Human lives are diverse, and in fact, I don't think it is possible to define ordinary happiness. Therefore, there is no inferior life.

After I realized this, I changed my mind positive: I started to pay more attention to her and think about how I would feel if I were her.

After receiving so many encouragement and heartfelt support from the society and from the people around, I found out that - no matter she is handicapped or not - the love and effort poured into children remains the same. Thanks to the support and

encouragement. I started to feel I enjoy helping her. Then my hard fate turned into a fun mission.

April 2nd is the World Autism Awareness Day. The symbol color is blue, which represents "healing, hope, and calm." Please remember to wear something blue on the day to show support. And please remember this speech "Happiness through support". Yes, you can make people around you happy. Dear my friends, I am confident I am very happy now.

Thank you for your kind attention.