

## Life is like a Box of Chocolates

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“Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re going to get.” If you don’t know where this phrase is from, it’s from a movie called “Forrest Gump.” It’s one of my favorite quotes! But, if I hadn’t moved to Japan, I would have never understood this phrase. I used to be a very dependent person. I never made decisions for myself and instead, I followed the tracks my mother would make. I guess you could say I was like a puppet.

One day, during my last year in middle school, my mother asked me to move to Japan to learn more about my culture. Of course since I was still a puppet, I agreed. I went to experience the training that people do to become a maiko. Although it wasn’t an official training, it was not easy! They taught me the basics of Japanese etiquette from how to sit to how to talk. There was even a time where my host mother scolded me for an hour because I couldn’t pronounce the word “water” correctly no matter how much they explained to me.

After leaving and going to my grandparents’ house, I was fatigued. I didn’t know what to do with myself. I started to regret coming to Japan because so far I’d only had bad memories. I would lock myself in my room and just space out. I got in a fight with my mom and I ignored my family. It was a kind of dark time for me. I wasn’t allowed to go back to the U.S. and I felt like my life was starting to crumble! It was a dramatic thought considering I was still 14, but I really thought my life was going to end! Then, my grandmother saved me. She had found a high school I could go to. When I heard about it, I bolted right out of my room because I knew that this could be my chance to start over and make a new track for myself.

I enrolled right away, but from the start I was already having problems and altercations with my classmates. I couldn’t understand or follow along fast enough to explain my own thoughts or feelings. But after a while, my confidence started to grow. I started taking part and making decisions in

class. I engaged in class issues and I started wanting to be a part of something bigger, so I joined club activities. I also did volunteer work to improve my Japanese. Through it all, I found my confidence and a better sense of who I am. Some decisions I made caused broken friendships, but the ones who stayed with me became the ones who I really needed in my life.

Now that it's my last year as a high school student, I've noticed something: Even though I was following my mother's tracks, if I hadn't said yes to her I wouldn't have moved to Japan, I wouldn't have gained a personality, and I most certainly wouldn't have been able to talk here. What used to be the bitter memories that I resented are now memories I keep to be strong. Thinking back on how I've come all the way here, I definitely think life is really like a box of chocolates. You never know if the chocolate you choose is going to be good or not, and sometimes you get a bad one. But it's really just a matter of time until the bitterness goes away. In the end you're still going to enjoy every last bit of it. Thank you.