

Your Experience is Your Setbacks

同志社高等学校 2年 渡 邊 理 子

Oscar Wilde, the famous playwright, once said, “Experience is the name everyone gives to his mistakes.” When I read this, it reminded me of the unforgettable experience I had last summer.

For two weeks, I had the opportunity to join Oxford Royal Academy, which is a summer program that provides international students a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I stayed at Queen’s college, which is one of the beautiful colleges Oxford University has. I decided to join this program last spring and after I signed up for it, I was very excited, and couldn’t wait to go to Oxford.

On July 30th I landed at Heathrow airport in London, and took a taxi to Queen’s College. My heart was filled with excitement, but from the next day, that excitement turned into nervousness.

I started my first day of class with English Literature. I chose this because I wanted to try something new. I was excited but at the same time, I was a little nervous, because I had never learned it before and was afraid that I wouldn’t understand. When the class started, that nervousness turned into reality. We were reading “The Tempest” by William Shakespeare, but I couldn’t understand much about what we were doing. I thought that I wouldn’t be able to write an essay, or get good grades. I became even more nervous when I attended the Public Speaking & Debate workshop. I wanted to join this workshop because I wanted to step out of my comfort zone. I’m not good at speaking in front of people, so I wanted to improve that during my two-week stay. One thing we did in the workshop was to think of a two-minute speech and practice it within ten minutes, and deliver the speech in front of the class. I really struggled with this assignment because every time I make a speech, it takes me months to prepare it. And even if I practice it for a few months I still feel nervous when I speak in front of people. In that workshop, I got stuck in the middle of my two-minute speech. I asked the teacher if I could start over again, but the teacher told me to move on, so I

did. But, even though I somehow finished my speech, I thought that I wouldn't be able to do well in that class.

As I look back my first day of class, I was being quite hard on myself. I was forcing myself to do well on my first try. This is maybe because I had forgotten the most important thing. It was why I was there. I wasn't there to write an essay or get high grades or do perfectly in a two-minute speech. I was there to have an experience. The reason why I attended those classes was because I wanted to challenge and learn new things. I was just a beginner and I wasn't expected to do perfectly on my first try. And nobody can do perfectly from the beginning.

During my two-week stay, I made good friends, and talked a lot to the teachers and counselors. They really helped me. I sometimes talked to them about my worries in English Literature class and they always said, "It will be OK." It was a very simple word, but it was really true.

There are two major lessons that I learned in Oxford. One is to be confident and believe in yourself. There is only yourself that can believe in you under any circumstances. Another lesson is not to be too hard on yourself. As long as you're trying hard and making every effort, someone is watching you and understands your hard work. What I did in English Literature class was to do my best. I made every effort I could during two weeks. And the teachers knew it. As a result I won the prize for effort in English Literature class.

The experience I had in Oxford was truly unforgettable and I will definitely cherish it forever. When I bump into a wall and get nervous and afraid, I can remember what I did in Oxford and the lessons I learned. I can always keep in mind that it's all right to fail and make mistakes, because those failures and mistakes can become my precious experience that will help me all the way.