

The Path to find Your Way in Life

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We all have some kinds of worries or inner conflict. Some of you may have lost sight of your path and what you truly want to become. But I say that those doubts are never worthless things; they're parts of the process to find your way in life.

What I'm going to talk about is the experience I had in England where I spent two weeks in this past summer taking a language course. Actually the school I attended was located in the countryside called Plumpton, the south of London renowned for its red double-decker buses or the Big Ben.

Plumpton was like another world to me. All the buildings were made of brick, all I could see is the everlasting plain and the hill that separates the ground and the wide open sky, and all I could hear was English, Russian, German, and no Japanese. And I didn't even have the mobile phone connection, so I felt homesick.

And it was also a big setback when all the students around me laughed out loud when they heard the teacher tell some jokes, I was the only one with a fake smile pretending to understand. I couldn't actually catch what he was saying. And I couldn't have enough courage to talk to people so I made no friends.

"I want somebody to help, but how can I express my feelings? I want somebody to listen to me, but how can I make them see with my poor English? Who can I talk to in the first place? Oh what am I doing?" That's how I was thinking.

But I knew I had to change something, I knew I couldn't stay that way anymore. So I began to set goals every morning and carry them out. I decided to be the first to say hello with a smile or to ask somebody if I didn't understand. It sometimes went well, but I would need to start the process again when the next day came, and step out of my comfort zone every day.

And one day after the morning classes, when everyone had gone to the cafeteria, I was alone in the classroom. I could no longer stand the solitude

from not using Japanese or my mobile phone to communicate, and I felt frustrated thinking “What I’m doing is wrong! That’s not what I want! What on earth am I doing?” Then one teacher realised how I felt and asked me “Are you okay, Miki?” I suddenly burst into tears and told her everything; that every night I was crying in bed, not being able to understand the lessons and unable to make friends; that every morning I woke up early to set goals which weren’t going well; that every day I was practising smile in front of a mirror. I said: “Even though I’m so desperate, I can’t tell anyone. It’s impossible to make myself understood in English anymore”. Then she said: “Okay I want you to just try one thing. Try to be open to just one person first. That’s my advice for you.” I thought this could be my chance — my last chance.

Later that evening, we were enjoying a camp fire. I was talking and having some candy and a coke with one Chinese girl who likes Japan. She knows the names of many Japanese animation characters or Japanese singers far better than me. I was surprised to hear the girl begin to talk about the Senkaku islands as I’d been thinking that that topic was not to be touched. But even when I clearly insisted that those islands were definitely Japanese territory, she actually showed interest in talking about it rather than responding awkwardly as I expected. And we went on and on about other topics and talked deeper and deeper and it became more and more enjoyable.

As I looked around for that one person to focus on, I came to feel like talking to more people and getting to know them all better. And I found so many friends around me when I noticed, and I came to understand better and better what people were saying.

And surprisingly in the last class I was voted MVP for those two weeks by the students. I was really pleased to see why I was elected: “He is intelligent, polite, and very friendly to everyone. So we can all rely upon him.” Then I realised that I wasn’t wrong; that I didn’t have to regret that time of feeling lost and down, or even crying — that was all part of finding my own path.

So if you have any worries with yourself at the moment, if you don’t have enough courage to take the first step towards something you truly want to become, I want you to know that you have already taken the first step by dealing with your concerns seriously by yourself. So no matter what happens, believe in your decisions. Believe in the path you have chosen or the path you’re about to choose. Everything on that path is your life.