

Can you hear that sound?

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Prrrr! Prrrr! Prrrr! My grandmother answered the phone, listened for a while and hung up. I asked her "Who was it?" She said with her sad voice, "I don't know...I couldn't catch what the caller said. Sorry. To tell the truth, I've become hard of hearing lately. When you speak fast, I pretend to understand, but really I can not catch what you are saying." I was shocked by what she said. I didn't realize that she could not hear my voice well. I was surprised that she only pretended to be able to hear normally.

According to a survey of The National Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology, about half the population over age sixty-five have difficulty hearing. From the results of this survey, I learned that hearing loss can happen to any elderly person. I decided I needed to change my mind about aging.

My grandmother's confession reminded me of my own doctor's words. In my case, I have a food allergy and I cannot eat fish. When I eat fish, it hurts my throat. When I was little, I asked my doctor with hope to be cured, "When will I get over it?" He said, "I don't think your fish allergy will go away, you just have to live with it. It is part of your character which means it is 'part of who you are'." The doctor also added that "With the help of other foods, you can cover the nutrition you need." From these experiences, I have learned two things. First is that we have to have self-confidence. Second is that we need to compensate for the small things that are missing from our lives.

When I was little, I rejected my allergy, I cried a lot and talked about my feelings with my family. I gradually calmed down, and got over it after talking with them. I understood that it is difficult for people who face trouble to accept their disabilities. Beep! Beep! Beep! People who need help sometimes sound the alarm in their hearts. Can you hear that sound? In order to listen to their needs, we must try to communicate with each other. I strongly believe in facing our flaws and helping each other become whole. If you consider a person's feelings or circumstances, you can find a way to support or help him or her. Let's start from the small things that anyone can do, because even small things are important.

One small step I made was to change my attitude toward my grandmother. I spoke more loudly, more slowly and looked her in the eyes when I talked with her. She loved the time she spent speaking with me, and her smile came back. Seeing her smile again, I understood that it was very important to have compassion for and to think from other people's points of view. Now it's your turn to take your own first step.

I like this phrase from the Bible, "In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you." I think a few compromises and considerations can bring a lot of smiles to all of us. I don't think it matters whether personal characteristics have been inherited at birth, or acquired over time from life experience. Each of us has our own character that shines through beautifully. When I am the same age as my grandmother, I hope I will smile every day. I believe the small actions that we each take will form a ring of smiles around the world. Let's make the small changes necessary to support one-another.