

Hello. 6:30 p.m. is my favorite time of day. At 6:30, I finish my club activity and finally go outside. My school stands in front of the sea. So, I feel a pleasant, cool breeze, and there are beautiful sights spread out all around me. I look out at the horizon and the setting sun. The sun is very big, and lively orange. It goes down slowly. The scene is almost like a painting. It's a relaxing feeling. However, I had an experience recently that made me think about the fragility of this existence.

My school is a member of the Junior Red Cross, so we visited the disaster area in Miyagi. As you know, 5 years ago the Great East Japan Earthquake happened in the Tohoku area. A huge wave struck the coast of Ishinomaki. More than thirty-five hundred people died and at least four hundred and twenty people are still missing.

I heard that Ishinomaki was almost completely reconstructed after the tsunami. How had it changed? It was my first time visiting, so when I got off the train I was like a regular tourist. However, my heart quickly sank.

We went around the disaster area while a guide told us stories about the big earthquake. The most shocking place was Okawa Elementary School, which had no walls, desks or chairs. We could see the classrooms from outside the building. The walkway to the gym had collapsed, and the building was unusable. I saw three memorials with single digit numbers next to some of the names carved on them. These numbers were their age. Many children younger than me had died. I pressed my hands together to pray.

The guide told us she had become a storyteller because she didn't want people to forget about the tragedy that had occurred. She told us that a ten-meter wave, much higher than predicted, hit Ishinomaki. As for my town, a 5.8 meter wave is predicted to come in less than eleven minutes if a big earthquake happens. After listening to her, I thought about that possibility. The terrible scene of Okawa Elementary School rose again in my mind.

After returning home, we talked about whether or not we would be able to take refuge from a tsunami like the one in Ishinomaki. Everyone said it would be impossible. But I don't want anyone to die. So, what can we do? What should we do? We can take our disaster drills very seriously, and improve our escape times every year.

However, another thing we should do is to pass on the tragic story to others, and spread the message to always be prepared. During the school festival in September, we asked the audience to pass on these things not only to the people living in my town, but other areas too. We also held classes for elementary school students. It was on the radio, on TV and in the newspaper. Our activities are also on Facebook and our homepage. Social Networking Services are very helpful to spread our message, and I want you to receive this message from the bottom of my heart.

I love watching the waves when I walk home. However, the way I feel now is completely different from how I felt before our trip. Life doesn't have any guarantees, so we should think about the best way to spend our time. I'm going to spend my time being prepared for a disaster, and spreading the message, to save lives with my own power for the sake of everyone living in Japan.