

“Father, why do you live away from home?”“Why does our family have to be apart?”I cried to my father. He answered, “My company needs me to work there.” Then I said, “Mother and I need you more. But do you still need to go?” I cannot forget his sad face when I said that.

At that time I was in the fourth grade and preparing for an entrance exam for junior high school. So my family chose to live apart like so many other Japanese families who have children like me.

Living away from home is called Tanshin-funin in Japanese and it is common in Japanese companies. Many Japanese companies ask employees to transfer to another place suddenly. And it is often uncertain how long they will be there. Tanshin-funin is not a simple matter for a family. We have to find a house, a school, we have to think about lot of things. As a result many families choose Tanshin-funin like my family did.

Four years have past and I have grown up to be able to understand why my father had to move away. However I still cannot agree, nor can I openly express my feelings and request my father to come home. I still suffer on so many occasions.

This April there was a big earthquake where my father lives. My father texted me “I’m OK”, so I could find him safe. But when I saw the pictures of the damage by the earthquake on the TV news, I started to worry about him again. Also, I especially feel his absence on weekends. I want to have dinner with all my family, but my father is not here. My father always says that having dinner altogether is fun when he comes home. But it makes me sad because it makes me realize how lonely he feels living without his family.

Now you can understand how much I dislike Tanshin-funin.

But nowadays I came to think that this experience of Tanshin-funin has not brought only unhappiness, but it has been an opportunity for me to find a new thing. That is, how important it is to cherish the time we share with our family.

I would like to introduce what my father and I are doing even though we are living apart.

At first my father comes home only once a month, and when he comes home, he always takes me to school by car. This 30 minutes-drive is a precious time for us to talk with each other. We enjoy talking about foreign music we both like. My father started watching foreign TV shows in his solo life, which led him to listen to foreign music. So, I’m glad we can have favorite things and hobbies in common now.

Secondly every Sunday night we promise to talk on the phone to catch up with each other. My father is now on a diet, so most of the conversation is about his diet progress. It is not necessarily the most exciting topic, but I’m relieved every time I hear his cheerful voice.

I think you can truly learn the value of your family members once you become apart from each other. You will learn just how important they are, which is something you may not realize when living together. I’m proud of my father because he lives away from us alone and works hard for our family, even though he feels lonely.

Now I would like to close my speech by sending a message to the person who has been challenging me.

“Mr. Tanshin-funin, thank you for giving me a chance to realize that my family is a treasure for me, and I will promise to cherish my family forever. But I learned enough from you.”

So, I think it is about time! “Mr.Tanshin-funin, please let my father come home!”

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