

Has anyone here had the experience of living with disabilities? Have you ever lived in a wheelchair because of difficulties that you thought to be commonplace? I had walked to school and run in physical education class every day, but I couldn't anymore. I got a disease in both ankle bones when I was in elementary school, and I could not walk. I had a disability. I had an operation on both feet separately, but after general anesthesia, it became a big surgery. It took more than 5 hours. The hospital stay continued for a long time, and I could not go to school. Even after I finally got out of the hospital, I continued treatment and rehabilitation.

I was wearing a big cast on my legs, but I also got to go to school. However, even though I could resume going to school, I had to use a wheelchair, at school and at home. I could not go to the toilet or go up little steps alone. Because I couldn't carry the school bag by myself, my mother took my bag and we went to school together. Until my disease got bad, it was not difficult to go to school and other places I wanted to go with my own power. However, it became difficult after I began living in a wheelchair. Even when I went out with my family, the number of places I could not go and the places that I could not go easily increased. I knew it was difficult for disabled people to go out, but I had not experienced it myself before this disease.

However, I don't think that it is strange that there are people who use wheelchairs. I felt as if people were looking at me as a "rare person" or "poor person" in the wheelchair. There is one voice in particular I remember from that time. While I was in the wheelchair, someone said I look strange. People seemed to be avoiding eye contact with me. This happened in the hospital and even after I was discharged. While I tried to beat the disease with rehabilitation, people still avoided me.

Every time this happened I felt lonely, but my family always watched over and supported me. That is why my mother said to me, "Whatever happens, your mother is by your side". I think that she fought the sickness with me. I experienced many painful feelings and painful thoughts but I was able to do my best because I was not alone. I fought the disease with the support of my family.

It may be unfortunate that I got sick. It may be unavoidable to have a pain or painful thoughts due to the illness. But it was more painful for me to be avoided by other people after having such a painful experience.

Even after my legs healed better and I could live without a wheelchair, I started to hesitate to talk about my feet to people. Recently I have been getting severe dizziness and I am using a wheelchair again. My life is within a very limited range, but I am proud of myself. And even with a life that may seem limited, I have always resolutely tried my best to expand my possibilities, and I will continue making those efforts daily.

The feeling that "I am proud of myself and will never become lonely" is a sentiment that I can certainly hold even with those who are fighting more serious illnesses than me, even those who suffer from poverty and discrimination. People with disabilities, including myself, are not "out of the race" and never to be chosen in society. For me, I think that continuing to have the feeling of "living as a human being" will lead to "pride in being human" above anything else, even life with disabilities.

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Pride in Being Human