

Do you have anything special you can be proud of? I have a little brother, Mashu. He is 13 years old. I have never talked to my friends about him because he has Down syndrome, and I did not want them to say anything negative about my unique brother.

Down syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by a chromosome mutation. People with Down syndrome are born with various disabilities. For example, Mashu has a hole in his heart and a severe intellectual disability. During the coronavirus pandemic, he could not understand why he had to wear a mask, so our family had trouble going somewhere.

I often get frustrated with his behavior. However, even if medical science could eliminate his disorder, I hope he remains the way he is. Why? Because he brings lots of happiness and strength to our family. For instance, he often shares jokes and funny things, making our family laugh. No matter how down I may feel, he always smiles at me. Being with my brother makes me enjoy life more. His presence not only brings joy to our family but also to his friends and many others. For these reasons, I would not want to change what he really is.

I learned that about 90 percent of pregnant women whose child has Down syndrome choose to have an abortion. I was deeply shocked by the idea of selecting lives. I have also heard some opinions supporting the choice to terminate a disabled person's life, as these people believe that disabled people can only be a burden to healthy people and our society.

I found out that my mom once thought about killing herself and my brother when she knew he had Down syndrome. She did not know much about disability and Down syndrome and believed that disabled people and their families were destined to be unhappy. Even the doctor's explanation did not help her feel better. This shows that many people do not know much about disabilities.

The other day, I visited a unique café in Osaka city where people who struggle to communicate can work. The staff's faces are not visible, and they do not talk. Customers place orders through a small window, and drinks are served by soft teddy bear's hands from the window. Customers can touch the hands for as long as they want. Many people find comfort in those hands. The café is filled with thank-you letters from customers who appreciate more than just good coffee. I realized that both staff and customers gain happiness and strength from this experience.

So, what can we do? First, forget that the disabled person in front of you is disabled. Second, interact with disabled people just as you would do with anyone else. You will find that they bring a lot of happiness and strength into your life. Why don't we share the joy of communicating with various people together?

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Happy Life with Disabled People