

When I pronounce something wrong, my friends make fun of me. They think that I'm making a joke or that it's clever wordplay. I always play along, laughing and pretending that everything is okay. Actually, I want to tell them, "Stop," that I have trouble talking and sometimes stutter. I put up with it because I want to get along with my classmates. I was always afraid of being teased about my pronunciation and stuttering. When I was nine, a doctor told me that I was born with a long tongue, so I started going to physical therapy to train myself to use my tongue. At that time, I kept thinking, "Why? Everyone else could live as they liked, so why was it just me that couldn't?" But, I wanted to be better.

Well, it wasn't just me. When I became a junior high school student, I found that everyone has troubles, but sometimes, they aren't obvious. One of my friends would struggle to follow instructions. Many of my other friends would gang up on him, saying things like "Stop talking!", "How annoying!" and "We don't need you!" I talked with my troubled friend in private, and he told me that he had a learning disability. He had trouble focusing, both in a classroom and in his normal life. As a result, he would often be isolated from others and was easy to make fun of. His situation reminded me of what a teacher once told me, "You can change some things with hard work, but some things are just out of your control." Yes, there was nothing that he could do, and I saw a bit of myself in him. And this made me frustrated. So, I yelled back at my friends, "Don't look down on him!" And then, the teasing stopped. As it turns out, while there wasn't anything he could do, someone else, like me, could do something. I realized that I can help others.

Recently, I learned about Tourette's syndrome on TV. It is a disorder that affects many people. One of the people on TV sometimes can't control his voice and yells out. He asked a friend of his from Nigeria, "Do you mind my strange voices?" and his friend said, "No. Nigeria is a country full of love. If we find a person being bullied, everyone helps. It's different from Japan." These words have remained in my heart. In Japan, people are very concerned with being part of the majority. If someone is in trouble, people isolate them and ignore because they think it is none of their business and they don't want to become a target. It would be easy to help them, but people are too reserved to act. Instead, they make invisible walls, keeping them from helping others. But others need help.

In the future I want to be a teacher who can develop students' strengths and help those in trouble. In order to do that, I will encourage people and ask them, "What is bothering you?" I will take an active interest in others and support them. This is how I want to break the invisible walls between people. I think it's important to accept everyone's ideas and understand their individual personalities without stereotypes about them. As a future teacher, it will be my job to show future generations that anyone, regardless of ability, gender, nationality, or culture, they can achieve an understanding of the people around them and live their best lives. I want to inspire the people of Japan to be more willing to help those in need and make an all-friendly society. "Japan is a country full of love," I want to be able to say this with all my heart.

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