

Life is precious, with life we enjoy many things. We are able to eat our favorite foods, visit different places in the world, spend time with our family and close friends, and create memories.

Yet as humans, we know our lives are limited. Some fear death, while others calmly accept it and plan how to use the time they have left.

This is a very personal decision, and I believe that we should respect each person's wishes. These decisions become harder when health starts to decline.

One issue that may come up is what to do if they receive a diagnosis that says that they don't have long to live. The doctor might encourage the person to stay in the hospital to receive constant attention, stay in bed, and this may help them live a little longer. However, this might not sound very pleasant, because it could sound like they are just waiting around for their time to come. This leads to many wondering, how should they live the rest of their lives in the best way possible?

This situation happened to my grandfather some years ago. He got lung cancer, and the doctors told him that he could live longer if he stayed in the hospital connected to tubes and machines, but he will not be conscious most of the time. Even though this was a tough situation to be in, his wish was to live the last few months at home, living his life, and being surrounded by the people he loves most. As a young man, he used to love traveling around Japan in a motor home, and always wanted to do the same in America. His last wish was to travel to the Grand Canyon. So that is what we did. He was even able to drive the motor home for a part of the trip. He passed away six months later at home. Although this was very hard for me, it meant so much to all of us that he was able to live his last few months of his life doing the things he dreamt of doing.

That experience has made me curious about health care in Japan and how older ones are spending their last few years. According to the National Library of Medicine, "Only 12.7% of Japanese patients died at home in 2015, although over 60% wanted to receive terminal care at home." This makes me wonder why they were not able to stay at home. Perhaps there are many factors, such as the hardship it would cost on the family, with the worry of not being able to provide the care needed. Every family wants what's best. But I do think there is a large benefit for families to work together and try to fulfill the older one's wishes. This may mean a lot of sacrifice for the families. But from my own experience with my grandfather, it was worth every moment. All of us were glad to have spent that time with him, helping him bring his dream to life.

What does this experience teach us? For me, this has helped me to understand that the topic of death does not have to be something we should ignore. In fact, talking about this with your loved ones can actually make the process less scary. Perhaps the best lesson is to not take even one second of life for granted. Live each day appreciatively, take all opportunities that come your way, and don't forget to tell the people you love how much you care about them.

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The Last Lesson He Taught Me