

Let me begin with a question. Have you ever felt completely lost, as if you were surrounded by darkness with no clear direction? I have. In fact, a survey in Japan shows that more than 60% of young people feel some kind of worry or concern. Even in such darkness, I was able to discover a source of light. Not a flashlight. Not the sun. The light I found was my oshi.

In Japan, we have a term “oshi-katsu.” It means supporting one’s favorite artists or creators by attending live events, purchasing merchandise, or engaging with fan communities. My oshi is a group of YouTubers whom I greatly admire. Their passion, energy, and words offer me hope, strength, and motivation. However, oshi-katsu requires money, and as a junior high school student, I am not legally allowed to work part-time. So, I approached my mother with a proposal: “If I study hard, would you support my oshi life?” At first, she declined. “Studying is something you do for your own future,” she said. But later, she added, “If you can balance studying and oshi-katsu, I will support you.” That was the start of my challenge.

But let me tell you, oshi-katsu is not nearly as easy as you might think. Even purchasing merchandise involves a degree of risk. Blind packs are random. I spent all of my New Year’s money on these packs, and only ten percent included my oshi. My mother laughed and said, “You’re such an easy target.” Still, I refused to give up, because passion drives me forward. You might ask, “Is oshi-katsu your only reason for studying?” Of course not.

Some time ago, one of my closest friends once suffered from severe bullying. The situation became so serious that she even considered ending her life. I was devastated and wanted to help her, but I didn’t know how. Simply saying, “I’m here for you,” felt completely inadequate. So once again, I turned to my mother. My mother didn’t just comfort her with words. She took action — she talked to her teachers, helped her family communicate, and stayed by her side until things got better. Later, she asked me, “Do you know why I was able to help her?” I said, “Because you know a lot?” She smiled and replied, “No, it’s because I’ve learned. Learning gives you tools. It enables you to protect yourself and others.” That moment changed my perspective. I no longer want to be someone who is only protected. I want to become someone who protects. I want to be a source of light for others, just as my oshi has been for me. One day, I came across a video of the Self-Defense Forces. They do not seek fame. They simply help people with calmness and compassion. I was deeply inspired. I thought, “That is the kind of person I want to be.” Not famous. Not perfect. Just someone who quietly brings light to others.

At fifteen, life can often feel like a storm. Some days, I feel confident. Other days, I’m full of doubt. But perhaps that is what growing up truly means — not having all the answers, but choosing to keep moving forward anyway. So I will continue to study — not only for good grades, but to build the strength and wisdom needed to protect the people and dreams I care about. Light is not built in a single moment. It grows through daily effort. So I will keep going. And one day, I will be the light.

What’s that? You’d like to hear more about oshi-katsu? Great! I’d be happy to share more stories after the speech.

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Be the Light