

Imagine this, all of you here are aboard a ship. The ship is about to sink and the captain knows the passengers need to get off. To the English, he says, "If you jump into the sea, you're a gentleman." To the Italian, he says, "There's a gorgeous mermaid under the waves" and to the Japanese, he says, "EVERYONE is jumping into the sea." When I heard this joke from my English teacher, I thought that it described the national character of the Japanese people quite well. That is, one cannot make a decision by oneself very well. It also reminded me of an experience I had when I was in 6th grade.

Everyone around me started getting smart phones. I wanted one too, but when I asked my mom, she told me, "Well then, if you want to persuade me to get one for you, make a presentation on why it's necessary for you to have one." I wrote down every single reason that I could think of and gave a presentation in front of my mom in our living room. In the end, I wasn't able to convince her that I needed a smart phone, but by making me give a presentation, she helped me learn how to think for myself instead of following others.

Thanks to my mom, I also learned how to be more independent. When I was 11, I had the opportunity to travel to Australia by myself. No tour guides, no other students, just me. I wasn't sure about whether I should stay with an Australian family whom I had never met, so far away from my own family. My mom helped me to see the advantages and disadvantages of both going and not going, but she told me, "Ultimately, you are the one who decides." I finally decided to go. During my stay, I planned and organized everything when it came to how I would spend my time and money, except for a few set occasions. As I had a limited allowance, I tried my best to save money by resisting the urge to buy things of little importance, like snacks.

The unique experience of being in 5th grade and going on a solo journey taught me a lot. I learned that it doesn't matter what everyone else does, what is important is what I choose to think and decide. The decision I made and the experience I had gave me confidence and made me stronger. Even though my mom has taught me a lot, I never imagined that one day her teachings would lead me to disagree with her. One day, after my mom told me that money was getting a little tight, she asked me if there were any extracurricular activities that I no longer needed to do. I said "I think they're all important to me." Then she continued, "How about calligraphy classes? I think your writing is already beautiful enough!" Again, I said, "No, I'm not going to quit anything until I become good enough to teach it. Those were the conditions you made, remember?" My mom was speechless. I thought back to the time when I wanted a smart phone. This time, I had won my mom over.

Thanks to my mom's lessons, I'll continue to believe in myself as I lay my own path for the future. If the path I take is the one that I have chosen for myself with careful consideration, I know I will never regret it, even if it turns out to be different from what I had imagined. And one day, I'll definitely get that smart phone.

Oh, yes, I forgot that we were on a sinking ship! The captain is still shouting to the passengers. What are you going to do? Are you going to jump off because he tells you to? Or are you going to do it because you want to? I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to jump because I want to survive.