

大阪私立中学校高等学校連合会長賞

Osaka Private High School Federation's Director's Award

まあちゃん

My Sister, Ma-chan

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My sister is two years older than me, and she has Down syndrome. Hearing the word, Down syndrome, some only know its name and others do not even know anything about it. It is hard to explain in words, but it is congenital, and there is delay in child development.

My elder sister, Ma-chan, was already there for me when I was born, so I never had a sense of discomfort about her having a congenital disability or being different from other children. I hate the word “disability” because it makes me feel like there is a wall between her and them. I think that being born with Down syndrome is same as being born with a special individuality. Her heart is very expressive, and it is so much fun to be with her. But when I was a little girl, I have once felt embarrassed. I can laugh at it now, but she started dancing with the music in the store when we went out together. She was taking dance lessons, and she loved dancing. But I worried about what people would think of us, so I tried to stop her.

I used to cry in the restroom after coming back from school when I was an elementary school student. Here is what happened. One of my friends imitated people who cannot talk well and have disabilities. Her friends were watching it and laughing. It made me so sad. I was sad that there was no understanding. Maybe I took it too hard. I have talked to my mother about it. She told me not to care, but every time I heard them laughing and imitating, I felt my heart breaking down. I did not know what to say to them. All I could do was just bear what I heard. When I was in the sixth grade, my mother told it to my homeroom teacher, and the teacher asked me who was imitating to make fun of them. I was at a total loss. I did not want to be asked who. I only wanted the teacher to tell it to everyone. And it was not a matter we could help others understand by telling them off. So, I parried it and walked away. The teacher did not ask me anything anymore since then, so I thought it was forgotten. If the teacher thought the matter was something light and forgettable, I think that is a wrong idea. I had an entrance examination coming soon, so I stopped thinking about it.

There was one more thing which troubled me. It is being asked about my sister. I know I should not be troubled by it, but when I answered one time that my elder sister has disabilities, a friend of mine made a pity face. I regret so much that I did not choose right words. I think that the word, “disabilities,” was too harsh, so it must be one of the causes why she reacted so. Among children with Down syndrome, they are all different. But what they all share is that they all have a generous heart and unique personalities. They spend time laughing together, and they shed tears from suffers at times. It is something we all share as well. What is important is that we grow up by discovering ourselves and learning what we did not know before.

I have heard that Down syndrome can be discovered in most cases by taking “prenatal diagnosis” these days. That is to say, we can find out unborn child has Down syndrome or not before giving birth. I am not sure it is good to have such an advanced test, but I think it is significant to have a test in order to prepare ourselves. But in fact, among those who were told that the result was positive, most of them have been choosing to have child abortion. Main reasons are like these; they are not sure they can take good care of their child and they are so pessimistic about the future of their child. Without having proper understanding of how it actually is like to have a child with Down syndrome, they choose to kill the unborn child. It is unbearable for me to know that is actually happening. I believe that child abortion is absolutely unacceptable no matter what. Every single child has an equal right to be born. This is not naïve thinking. Having “Down syndrome” is never being unhappy, never being pathetic. Happiness, it depends on how one feels. I have been learning important things by growing up together with “Ma-chan” who has “Down syndrome.” Her gentle smiles and funny daily happenings let me forget my anxieties and worries. So, please do not kill your unborn baby without knowing well. Please be happy for being pregnant. Lastly, I would like to thank my mother and father for giving birth to “Ma-chan” and me. I deeply appreciate you both.