

True Smile

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When was the last time you really laughed? The time you were chatting with your friends? Most people say that if you keep on smiling everything will be all right. In Japan there is an old proverb – JAPANESE - good fortune comes in by a merry gate. But can you smile even when you don't feel good? To be sure, when you see the person who is always smiling, it might cheer you up. But can you smile yourself when you are sad? What about when things are really getting you down, when you are unable to stand it, how do you smile then?

Let me tell you about one day when something unexpected happened to me. My father drove me to high school the same as usual. I didn't say much to him. In those days, I was at a rebellious age and I didn't talk much to my Dad. So I just asked him in a grumpy voice to pick me up after school. I would never have thought in a million years that that was going to be my last time talking to my father. He was taken to hospital unconscious later that same day – he'd had a stroke. About two weeks later, he passed away. He never woke up, he never said anything again. This was the most miserable thing that ever happened to me and after it happened, most of the time I couldn't stand being with anyone. Back then, many people tried to encourage me, saying "Your smile is so nice, you should keep on smiling." I was cheered a little by these words, but I still felt awful. Because I realized that if people face the reality about death, they feel nothing. I tried to find some activity to fill the emptiness such as talking with my friends and doing my hobbies. I'm sure I got relief from that. There was no other choice - I had to do something to avoid my feelings of grief. And pushing myself to be positive saved me.

There are some words that still linger in my mind. Last year, I applied for one dancing audition and one of the judges, who happens to be my dance teacher now, praised my performance and said some lovely kind words. She said, "Your smile is splendid. You have the power to cheer up anyone with your smile." Since my father passed away, I have been feeling regret because I couldn't repay him for all the things he did for me. When I think about it, it makes me feel miserable but I realize now there is something positive that I can do. If I smile maybe I can help others to forget about their own problems, even if it's only for a minute.

As a consequence of passing the audition test, I perform at basketball games in Okinawa. I'm a one of the cheerleaders for the Ryukyu Kings. Now, I have a practice three times a week and we have up to four games a month. Although people who know me think I am too busy, this routine has added vigor to my life. To say nothing of that fact that when I'm dancing I don't have to talk. When I perform on the basketball court I dance with a big smile on my face and I love to see when the audience start smiling back at me. So come on, let's start a chain reaction, let's start smiling at others, lets cheer each other up.