

# The Harmony in Variety

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Imagine that you are in a History class. The teacher is telling the students a funny story and everyone is laughing, except you. You feel like the teacher is yelling and the students are roaring with laughter in your ears. It feels as if there's someone drumming in your ear. I am the person in this story and this is how I felt. Before this happened, I used to believe that everyone feels the same and everyone sees the same world. However, my experiences in the United States have changed my mind.

I went to the United States as an exchange student and stayed there for ten months. While I was in the United States, the problem with my hearing started to become obvious. My left ear started to pick up sounds excessively. It embarrassed me because I needed to use earplugs in everyday life. At first, I thought people around me also heard sounds as loudly as me and they just put up with it. I couldn't believe that I heard sounds louder than everyone else because I thought it was ridiculous to think that my auditory senses had increased. Later on, I found that these symptoms are from a disorder called "auditory hyperesthesia".

In Japan, we are told to be a certain way. Everyone says something similar and everyone acts the same. People in Japan are afraid of being "different". It seems that people think word "different" has a negative connotation. It affects people's understanding and acceptance of developmental disorders or diseases. Not many people who have these problems want to come out about their disadvantages in Japan. It wasn't until I moved to America that I felt comfortable talking about my differences.

My host sister had autism, which is a developmental disorder without intellectual disturbance. Her autism was slight enough that she was able to take classes with other

students. Almost everyone in the class knew that she had a disorder, and so did the kids in her church's youth group. She wasn't afraid to talk about her disorder in daily conversations and introductions, and the people around her accepted and embraced it. There were also two other students who had autism in my host school, and they also took regular classes as we did. They seemed to be normal people who just had little inconveniences. As I kept interacting with them, I realized that there were no normal, or abnormal, people around me.

Just like fingerprints, we are individually unique, and we must be empathetic to others differences. There is no limit to diversity between individuals. Even something as simple as our five senses is different from day one. We create our own world based on these variations. Despite objectively living in the same world, the way each person sees the world is subjective.

With these experiences in the United States, I realized that everyone in the world is different. My nationality, race, culture, and past are some of the many facets of who I am. Now, even my sense of hearing is one of these facets. It may be scary to accept these differences. I know, I was scared, but if you look around, you will see that no two people are alike. Moreover, accepting yourself also means accepting the people around you. It's not easy to understand others one hundred percent, but we should always accept the contrasts between people. We need to change what "normal" means so that people like me are not ashamed of being ourselves. The first step is to take a close look at your world. What makes your worldview special?