

Found myself in New York

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When you see people who are different from you, what do you think about them? Do you think it is a good thing or a bad thing to be different? For example, when you see someone dressed differently or maybe with their hair styled differently, what do you think about them? Do you think they are expressing their individuality or do you think they are just weird?

I did some research about self-esteem and I found some data from the Japanese cabinet office. It shows that almost half of our young adults are suffering from low self-esteem. In a survey of seven countries, America, England, Germany, France, South Korea, Sweden and Japan, Japanese people had the lowest self-esteem. And I am one of the reasons why Japan came bottom of the list – I too have low self-esteem.

When I was a second grade student at elementary school, I started doing classical ballet. I was so passionate and really into it. The other people who were doing classical ballet were very skinny and had long legs and arms and they looked beautiful. Of course I wanted to be a ballerina. But I have short legs and arms and I was wearing glasses at that time. I wanted to look like a ballerina so soon after I started doing ballet, I started caring about my appearance. This was the beginning of my having low self-esteem. I thought I was not skinny enough. I did not like myself with glasses. I sometimes felt like I was a mistake. When it came to my appearance, I no longer had any confidence. Then I lost confidence in my personality as well. That happened during my three years at junior high school. I could not have any good relationships with my classmates. I was even ignored, and embarrassed by them. Three girls gave me a particularly hard time. At break time I could often feel them looking at me and laughing as I sat by myself, reading a book. Finally, I thought that I could not have a good relationship with others, because I was different from them. So I tried to be the same as others. I dressed like the people around me dressed. I did many things because the people around me did them. I was living my life to be like them. I spent all my time thinking about what other people were saying about me or how they were judging me. I was always trying to be perfect for my parents and people around me. Even though I was trying to be perfect, I still thought I was not good enough.

This negative thinking continued until I went to New York to follow my dream and become a dancer. There, I met so many people from all over the world and they lived their lives pursuing what they wanted to do without caring about what others thought. Even when it was obvious they did not have enough skill to be in the higher level classes, they still entered those classes. They did not think about what others thought or said about them. They were just challenging themselves and as a result they actually enjoyed those classes. I learned that no matter what, I am the only one that can make decisions in my life. How I live my life is up to me.

People will say what they want to. Maybe we can take those words people say as advice but we should not let their words affect our thinking in a bad way. It's how **we**

think or how **we** feel that will determine if our life is good or bad. And everyone has different thoughts, different opinions and different ways of thinking. It's okay to be different. We should be proud of who we are. This does not only apply to Japanese people – it's for everyone. Nowadays many people are suffering from low self-esteem but this thing can be changed by how we think. When I was in New York I realized that I am not different from others. I am just unique, as you are unique and we should be proud of our uniqueness.