

Believe in Your True Self – Marina Uehara

As classmates and teachers have probably noticed, I sometimes suffer from a stutter – Domori in Japanese. Stuttering is a condition where the words do not come out smoothly. I have had this problem since childhood, but it became even more severe in high school. At that time, I belonged to the Ekiden club. Ekiden is a sport in which teams compete in a very long relay race - it's a tough sport!

During club meetings we had to speak in front of everyone. I'm not good at saying certain words. So, for example at the beginning of a meeting, the words "Shitsureshimasu otsukaresamadeshita" were difficult for me to say. Every time my turn to speak approached, my heart raced with fear. And most days I couldn't say these words and mostly I asked my teammate to speak for me. I felt pathetic and-ashamed of myself. For me, the pain of this was stronger than the pain of the hard physical practice, and I often cried alone after training. It took courage to even talk to my mother about it.

The hardest time for me was when I was in my third year of high school. In Japanese class, I was given an assignment to write about social issues. I consider myself good at writing. In fact, after my teacher looked at all the manuscripts, mine was selected as one of the best five. To decide which of these five would represent the class, the teacher asked each of us to read out our speeches. Needless to say, I gave a terrible speech...I kept getting stuck at words I found hard to say and I kept repeating the same sounds. I was not selected.

I had been very confident about the content of the manuscript, so I was so frustrated and sad that I couldn't deliver my speech in front of everyone. "If I were a normal person" I thought "my speech would have been chosen".

For a while after that I was thinking that in the future, I would get a job where I wouldn't need to interact with anyone. However, no matter how many different jobs I searched for, I couldn't find one that didn't involve talking with other people.

So, I decided, 'If I can't avoid speaking in public or with other people for the rest of my life, I should completely change my way of thinking and just do what I want to do – I'll try to forget my stutter!' My policy became to stay true to my feelings and keep taking on new challenges.

So, I decided I'd become a Cabin Attendant, even though clear communication is essential for that job. Because I wanted to learn English, and also learn about the aviation industry, I decided to come to this university. Since April, I have tried many new things. For example, I worked part-time at weddings to learn about hospitality, volunteered at the Basketball World Cup which meant talking to players from Georgia!, took a simultaneous interpretation course, and participated in a one-day internship at ANA. And now I am participating in an English speech contest.

I still feel I don't have enough confidence, However, for my own sake, I value taking on challenges more than anything else and I can now proudly say, "My dream is to become a CA!"

Lastly, I just want to say that I think, to some extent, everyone has complexes. However, you only live once, so it would be a waste to give up because of these fears. I hope this story reaches those of you who want to challenge yourselves but are still hesitant.

Thank you so much for your kind attention.

