

2019 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – 3rd Prize]

It's a Weak Point, and That's Okay

(Original in Japanese)

Kentaro Sugimoto

(Age 7, Japan)

Kosaka Elementary School of Kanazawa City, Ishikawa

"Good morning."

"..."

"Good morning," I say to my friend in the classroom. But my friend just smiles. My friend isn't good at talking in front of other people. So, he often goes quiet and looks like he doesn't know what to do. Even when I talk to him, he doesn't answer, and sometimes it makes a big question mark appear over my head.

I usually talk too much, so at first, I couldn't understand how my friend was feeling. But we sit near each other in class, and when we line up by height I stand in front of him, so pretty soon we were always together. Now, during long recess breaks, my friend and I play tag together. First, I'm 'it' and I chase him and tag him, and then we take turns being 'it' and chasing each other. Sometimes, when the two of us are running around, other friends join us, and we all play together.

That's when I remembered a picture book I read last year during summer vacation, called *Du Iz Tak?*, where bugs talk in their own bug language. The first time I read it, I couldn't understand what they were trying to say, and I didn't think the book was interesting. But as I read it a few more times, I could tell from the bugs' expressions and movements what they were feeling and saying.

When we try to guess someone's thoughts and feelings, we usually just pay attention to their words. But as I spent more time with my friend, little by little, I could tell what he was feeling by looking at his face. I think it's important to pay attention not only to someone's words, but also to their expressions and movements when we try to understand their feelings.

The way I think of kindness is, when someone is not good at something and needs help, we understand their feelings and quietly help them. Everyone has different strong points and weak points. When the people around us understand that something is difficult for us and give us help, we don't worry about our weak points so much. I might have a hard time, too, if there's something I am not good at. But at those times, I'm sure that someone will notice how I feel and give me a hand. That's why I want to become someone who can understand the feelings of the people around me and quietly help them. I hope that by helping each other with our weak points, we will create a society that is filled with kindness.