A Kindness Chain

(Original in Japanese)

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I like people who are kind. When I am with a kind person, I somehow feel at peace. I'm sure this does not apply only to me. Anyone who comes in contact with a person's kindness gets a warm feeling from it, I think. Therefore, I would like to try and be kind to more people.

To carry out ten acts of kindness, I did things that I consider to be friendly and generous. When people thanked me for the things I had done, I began to feel how great it is to be kind to others. On my way home from school, I decided to give up my seat on the train to an elderly person, since I thought it was a kind thing to do. I had given up my seat several times before, but each time it took courage to do it. This time, I got up my courage and offered my seat, but this person scowled at me and said "That's all right." Up until then, I had thought it was normal that when you were kind to someone, they would be grateful to you, so I was disheartened by this person's response.

Even after I got home, that incident was all I could think about. Why did that woman reject my offer? Did she dislike the kindness I showed to her? As I was having these kinds of thoughts, I realized that, in the first place, I didn't know the meaning of the word 'kindness,' so I looked it up in the dictionary. When I looked up 'kindness,' it said 'being considerate.' When I looked up 'considerate,' it said, 'showing thoughtfulness and compassion toward others.' The definition of 'thoughtfulness' was 'thinking about what is good and helpful for the other person.' With this understanding, I realized that what I had thought were acts of kindness were not really acts of kindness after all. In carrying out my ten acts of kindness, I had hardly been thinking of the other person at all. It

didn't matter who I was kind to, as long as I could carry out the action. When I looked back on it, I realized that even though the person on the train was elderly, she was also very healthy-looking, so I probably didn't need to offer her my seat.

Understanding the definition of 'kindness,' I realized that there are many kind people all around me. People are concerned for me, people listen to me, people lend things to me—there is no end to the things people have done for me. An act of kindness is not done to satisfy oneself, but to make someone else's day better. I say this because, when others are kind to me, I feel that they have made my day better.

To create a society full of kindness, I think we need to recognize the kindness we receive from others, and take up our own acts of kindness. Because I'm still in junior high school, it's hard for me to have an effect on society as a whole. But I can have an effect on the people around me. When I receive kindness, I feel that I want to give the same kindness to others. I imagine that other people feel this way, too. If we create a 'kindness chain,' passing kindness from one person to another, we can warm the hearts even of people we don't know. Also, when we notice small kindnesses, our hearts become warmer than if we had not noticed them, and that warmth can have a positive influence on our surroundings. It may not lead to a society full of kindness right away, but I think that doing what I can do is the first step to a society full of kindness.