A Society That Values Each Individual

(Original in Japanese)

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When I saw that the theme of this essay was 'kindness,' I immediately thought of the kindness I felt when I was in elementary school. We often speak superficially, saying things like, "That person is really nice," but the kindness that I experienced was the real thing—a kindness that warms you deep down in your heart.

I was in Grade 6 of elementary school. My grandfather, who had raised me from the time I was very young, was diagnosed with cancer. My grandfather had always been there to listen to my stories, and had always supported me. I loved my kindhearted grandpa, and he was my emotional bedrock. Due to the effects of the cancer, my grandfather, who was a big man, rapidly lost weight, and he became unable to do various things. I was full of anxiety and loneliness. When I looked at my grandfather, now thinner, lying on his futon, I realized how much human beings can change, and it gave me a strange feeling. I didn't even know what to say to him.

At that time, I met the nurse who came to provide home care. The nurse cleaned his body and carefully warmed his feet with hot water, and I was impressed to see how skilfully she handled him with such care.

Then, the nurse spoke to me: "What's your grandpa like?"

The nurse also took time to listen to my grandmother, who was taking care of my grandfather. She talked about my grandfather's youth and what he was like as a father and husband. She talked about his friendships and hobbies. I could feel both my and my grandma's hearts becoming a little lighter.

As the nurse was leaving, she said, "You can contact me after hours, too. If there's any problem, or if something doesn't seem right, please don't hesitate to get in touch."

The nurse wanted to know a lot about my grandfather, and she valued and cared about him. She also wanted to relieve the anxiety my grandmother and I were feeling. From the nurse, I felt compassion and profound kindness.

After that, my grandfather's condition worsened, and he was hospitalized. A short time later, he fell into an unconscious state. I was thinking about how I would never talk with him or see his smiling face again, gazing at him with an empty feeling, when the doctor in charge came in. The doctor praised my grandmother for how she took care of him, and my family for their cooperation. I could feel how the doctor's words calmed the tension in the hearts of my family members.

At 5:10 am, my grandfather was confirmed dead. The doctor conveyed the news to us in a solemn, quiet voice, and when I looked at him, I became calm and was able to accept my grandfather's death.

From the time my grandfather fell ill, both the nurse and doctor showed concern for us, his upset family, and they treated my precious grandpa with great care. Ever since then, I have continued to be moved by their kindness. I have strongly felt that I want to be kind to everyone in my life, keeping in mind that each person is precious to someone.

When I was in junior high school, I had a friend in my class who was distressed and just could not come to school. At that time, I remembered the words the doctor had spoken to my grandfather: "You don't have to endure this. We can take away your pain."

I couldn't do anything about my friend not being able to attend school, so I set my mind on relieving the loneliness and anxiety that my friend was feeling. I would go to my friend's house to tell her what was happening at school and bring messages from school, and I would talk with her and send her emails. I think those words from my grandfather's doctor helped me to come up with this idea.

When I thought about what would make for a society full of kindness, what came to mind is a society where each individual is valued and cared for. Just like the nurse and doctor who treated my precious grandfather so well as he went to the heavenly world, I too would like to face each individual in my life with great care and respect. In that way, I hope to become an adult who can create a society full of kindness.