

2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – 3rd Prize]

Life Is Now: The Importance of Taking Opportunities We Encounter

(Original)

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"You are free to write about your past accomplishments, or anything you have been working hard on recently." I look around, and see everyone's pencils moving instantly. I panic, because I am not special. I have no amazing accomplishments, or unique talents. However, something I did not know then was that life isn't simply about luck and talent. Luck and talent aren't the only factors to living a life full of challenges and adventures. Whether we can accomplish what we consider as success, and whether we can say that we are satisfied with our lives is all up to us. Although we cannot decide whether we are born with talent or not, we can decide what we do after we are born. We can do so much in a lifetime, but only if we are willing to; willing to take every opportunity that benefits us or people around us. Valuing this will ultimately lead us to live a much more fulfilling, adventure-packed life.

The life-changing experience that allowed me to think this way was meeting a friend, the same age as me, who had brain cancer. She was not in school for many days, since she was always in and out of hospitals. But she was a vital member of our class, since she motivated all of us to take on many challenges. When asked if any of us wanted to audition for the drama club, she was the first one to raise her hand. When our teacher was collecting volunteers for a charity run, she was more than eager to participate. She reasoned her actions by saying that she didn't know for how much longer she would be able to live. She wanted to take as many opportunities as she could in her limited time, so that she could have the same amount of experience that everyone else gains by the end of their lives. When I thought about this, however, I realized that this does not only go for her; in fact, it applies to everybody, since everyone has the possibility of dying tomorrow.

Opportunities are scattered everywhere. We inevitably encounter thousands of them every

day. The difference is whether we take that opportunity or simply push it away. In a way, they are similar to people. Humans are all over the world and we can find them anywhere, but the people that we can interact with are a handful. When we see someone on the train, it is likely that we will never encounter that person again.

Opportunities work the same way. Once we encounter an opportunity, that same opportunity will never come to us again. Therefore, if we see something that might be beneficial to us or others in the slightest way, taking that opportunity allows us to have a chance to gain countless lessons, knowledge and experiences that we would have never had otherwise.

Although taking as many opportunities as we can is challenging, what we can learn out of the experience is often a life-changing lesson. We could receive criticism, since we are trying out something new – something that we have no experience of. It could make us unmotivated and discouraged. However, the criticism we receive helps us in numerous ways: become stronger to criticism, realize our weak points, and use the criticism to grow. Moreover, it is not only criticism that can be gained from taking opportunities. By having enough experience, success will definitely come to us. It will give us confidence, which will motivate us to take on more challenges, which results in a positive cycle of us having a more fulfilling life and being more satisfied with ourselves.

Regretting and saying to ourselves, “Oh, I should’ve volunteered for that activity,” or thinking, “I actually wanted to participate in that club,” happens to everybody on many occasions. We cannot change what we’ve done in the past, and regretting does not change anything. However, we can change our actions in the future, and be more willing to take any opportunity that comes our way. Taking these small opportunities that we encounter daily – these opportunities that have the power to change our lives – should definitely be something that we all value in our lives.