

2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – 3rd Prize]

My Cherished Values

(Original in Japanese)

Tomoka Yoshida

(Age 14, Japan)

Koka Gakuen Junior and Senior High School for Girls, Tokyo

The values we hold differ for each person. I think our values are shaped little by little, influenced by our circumstances, our school, our friends, and the experiences we have had up to that point. Therefore, even siblings who have the same parents won't necessarily share the same values.

The basis for my own values is, of course, my close family. My father has had a particularly strong influence. My father works at a hospital as a surgeon, and he performs major surgeries to save people's lives. From my perspective, my father is so dedicated to his work that I feel he prioritizes his work and his patients over his family. Even on weekends, when he is not on duty, he goes into the hospital to visit post-op and newly hospitalized patients. And even when he's at home, he watches surgery videos or reads books on surgery, studying hard every day. Seeing my father's devotion to his work, I feel I've learned what it means to act with sincerity, compassion, and a sense of responsibility toward patients.

I once asked my father why he works so much and puts work above everything else. He replied, "A doctor's duty is to heal patients." My father, too, saw his father and grandfather, who were also doctors, hard at work, and he must have learned compassion and responsibility through their actions.

In addition, I am the second of three sisters, so I've always been exposed to different ways of thinking. My older sister insists on having things her way, and my younger sister also insists on having her way but relies on me when she needs help. The three of us all have different ways of thinking, and we often get into quarrels. At such times, it's my role to settle the situation. I

have always had a neutral position, and often, after listening to the other person's feelings and what they have to say, I think about what they want me to say and give my point of view. This value of 'harmony' is one that I formed by growing up in my family. Thanks to this value, I feel that I've been able to build good relationships with my friends, both in elementary school and now.

Last summer, I volunteered at a senior citizens' center in Kunitachi City. Because of the pandemic, I couldn't volunteer in person, so I thought about what would make me happy if I were an elderly person. Since I couldn't interact with them, I came up with the idea of making something that would please them visually, so I made birthday cards for each of the people who went to the center, and delivered them to the facility. I wrote messages in large characters that were easy for elderly people to read, and I made origami cakes and flowers and pasted them onto colorful cards. I felt myself motivated by imagining the joy on their faces when they received the cards. I realized that, without even being aware of it, my own heart was fulfilled by the desire to bring joy to others. At that time, I understood a little about how my father feels toward his patients. Although I haven't been able to do anything great like saving lives the way my father does, it was the first time I felt that I could bring joy to people who were near me. That was the moment when I realized the values of 'compassion' and 'feeling happiness through other people's joy' inside myself.

I wish for a peaceful world filled with kindness and compassion. When we turn on the TV, we see news of the coronavirus pandemic, wars, and other disasters and tragedies that make us want to look away. Every one of us who is alive today has a responsibility and a duty to create a peaceful society in the future. In other words, if each of us is able to act with kindness and compassion, our actions will bring more smiles, and through a chain of compassion, I believe we can create a peaceful society. That is the kind of society I want to create. Even though I can't yet perform great acts that would open my eyes to the world, I believe that bringing smiles to people near me, like I did as a volunteer, will definitely lead to a peaceful society, so I would like to keep bringing smiles to the people around me. I think I can say that this is my way of life. Eventually, I hope to become like my father, a doctor filled with kindness and compassion who saves many lives.