

Seeing Things from the Other Point of View

(Original in Japanese)

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For young people to take the initiative in building Japan's future, I believe that when someone's opinion clashes with our own, it is important to consider the other person's point of view, and to convey our own opinions using words that will reach the other person.

The other day in my moral education class, we read an article entitled "Protecting Wild Birds of Prey." The article made a strong impression on me personally, especially the part about communicating one's opinion in words that will reach the other party.

The article was written by a veterinarian based on his actual experience confronting hunters in a case where lead bullets in the flesh of deer and other hunted animals were causing lead poisoning in hawks and killing them. Normally, the author wrote, most of us would state our opinion to the hunters using words that criticize hunting and the use of lead bullets. But when speaking to the hunters, the author didn't say, "Don't use lead bullets" or "Please stop hunting," because at that time, hunting was not prohibited, and some people said that they needed to protect their livelihoods from the overpopulation of deer. If I were in the hunters' position, I think I would have felt antagonistic toward the author, wondering why I should stop hunting if it's not prohibited.

In this situation, the author continued to appeal to the hunters, suggesting that they change from lead bullets to copper bullets. That way, they could continue hunting without causing damage to the hawks. In the end, the author's wish was understood, and hunting with lead bullets was banned in Hokkaido.

When I read this article, I was moved by the way the author considered the hunters' point of view and thought about what to say to them.

When I was in about grade 5, the new coronavirus started to spread. Nowadays, we see people all over the city taking off their masks, but at the beginning people were wary of the virus, and it was normal to wear a mask even outdoors in the summertime. My elementary school was no exception, and everyone wore masks at all times. During that time, there was a boy in my class who took his mask off during recess and for a while afterwards. He didn't have any special medical condition; he just wanted to take it off. A lot of the kids who were in the same class told him to put his mask on. I myself spoke to him directly. But no matter how much we reminded him, he wouldn't put his mask on, so eventually we went to the teacher. After meeting with the teacher, the boy stood in front of the whole class and said, "I'm sorry for taking off my mask without permission, not considering that it would make some people uncomfortable in these times. I took it off because I was so hot after recess and really wanted to take my mask off. Please let me take it off for a little while." I was surprised at his behavior, yet I could also understand what he was saying. After that, no one told him to put his mask on. As I thought back on it, I realized that it was because he honestly expressed his feelings that his thoughts reached everyone.

Today, with the spread of the Internet, it's possible to post one's opinions online without revealing one's true identity. On the other hand, more people are suffering abuse because people believe what they hear without knowing the person's circumstances, and some even end up committing suicide. This might sound like glossing over the problem, but I think it's very important to see things from the other point of view, and to convey our opinions in words that reach the other person.