

## Life is ...

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Life. What does this word mean to you? Some of you might say life is the most precious thing of all, and it may be true. But these days, I've been asking myself this question over and over again, because I had two unforgettable experiences about life and death. Since then, I've been wondering what life is.

One of my unforgettable experiences is about the birth of new life. One of my cousins gave birth to a baby this April. When I visited my cousin at the hospital, the newborn baby was crying vigorously with her soul and body reacting on each other. Exhausted with crying and laughing, the baby fell asleep, but she was very cheerful and expressive. Her behavior made me think that life comes into being, and keeps growing because of the affection from various people. In turn, newborn lives give joy and excitement to people around them. Whenever we see newborn babies, we can't help feeling happy at their innocent smiles.

The other experience is about a death in my family. This June, I lost my grandfather. A day before he died, I visited him at the hospital. He looked frail in the bed. When I said to him, "I'll come to see you again," he responded to me faintly. Sadly, he passed away the next day. It was as if he had been waiting for me to come to see him off. At the funeral, my father said to me, with tears running down his cheeks, "Grandpa must have been very glad to see you." Grandfather was resting peacefully in the coffin. Of course, I was very sad, but unexpectedly, I accepted his death calmly. That was probably because he looked gentle and mild, as if he were satisfied with his life. Also, there were a lot more people present at his funeral than I had expected. My grandfather and those people had supported each other in their lives in different ways. Thus, I came to realize that death reminds us of the significance and uniqueness of the person.

Through these experiences, I learned something very significant about life and death. Life and death are the opposite sides of the same coin; they are one, and because of death, life is precious. Also, a life is related to other lives. You are alive thanks to the support from other people. This means that your life does not belong only to you; it also belongs to other people around you; your family, friends, and neighbors. However, recently we tend to be insensitive about life and death, and we feel as if each of us were living separate from others. Do you think a life is just an

impersonal fragment? I don't think so.

I want you to cherish not only your own life, but also lives of those around you, because those lives are tied together. You might wonder what it means to cherish someone's life. I believe it means to respect, care about, and love the person as they are. But don't think about it so seriously, and take it easy. All you need to do is spend time with the people you care about. As for myself, I am determined to cherish everyone around me as well as myself, and take over the role of uniting the lives I come across in my life, because every life is, I believe, wonderful, unique and tied together.

Now we are living in 'the Information Age'. We cannot be ignorant of what is going on in the world. Once we come to know the horrible truth of war, it should be our responsibility to take action to make the world a better place. Each of us should consider what we can do. I believe this is the first step to making a peaceful society.

The final thing to consider is this: "Vote for a person who is actively promoting peace"

The Japanese government is trying to revise its Constitution. The voting age was lowered from 20 to 18 years old. Getting involved in the election is important for young people because they can make their own decisions about the future. Now I'm seventeen. I will be able to vote next year. I'm happy to take part in the decision making process.

We should know about the tragic past events and learn from them. Think about the future and try to choose the best way possible. What we do now can make a big difference in our future, either in a happy way or in a tragic way. Our future is in OUR hands.