

春日部市立葛飾中学校 2年

(girl) 2nd grade

Kasukabe Katsushika Junior High School

Seeing is Believing

I was an elementary student when I found English interesting. When I saw people talking in English I found them so cool and I said to myself I want to learn English too.

When I entered Junior high school, I decided to go for a home stay and study English abroad. I was a bit worried at that time because I had no idea what it's like to stay in a foreign country with people you don't know.

I talked to my English teacher about my plan. She gave me some advice. She told me each house in the U.S. has rules to follow, and I need to follow strictly. I felt a bit scared that time. Are they difficult to deal with? It made me wonder what those rules are? At some points, I had that second thought of not going for a home stay anymore. She also said that Americans don't take their shoes off inside the house, which is extremely opposite here in Japan. And when you eat noodles, you mustn't slurp the noodles out loud because it's not good manners for them.

In April of this year, I flew to America for a home stay. My host mother, Ms. Jazzy picked me up at the airport then went straight home. Their house was big. They had a huge garden and backyard which I seldom see in Japan. When we arrived, Ms. Jazzy opened the door and entered their house with her shoes off. I was surprised because it was the opposite of what my English teacher told me. So I just followed what Ms. Jazzy did. I also took my shoes off and entered their house. Ms. Jazzy said to me, "Enjoy your stay, please feel at home. Feel free to do whatever you want to do, consider our home as yours too". I was amazed how kind she was. So again, it was the opposite of what my teacher told me, there were no strict house rules. Then I thought, what if I backed out at that time when I got scared of the house rules thing!

In my 3 weeks of stay in the U.S. I discovered a lot of cultural differences between Japan and the U.S. With this home stay, I can frankly say that most of the time, it's not about what you hear from people around you, but it's about what you actually see with your own eyes.

With my experience, I came to learn the significance of not only learning the English language, but also the importance of discovering the world by yourself. Having the chance to see things with my own eyes was really worth it. Through this journey, I can say that one look is indeed, worth a thousand words. Seeing is believing. Let us not easily believe what other people are saying, because this may lead us to make wrong decisions. What if I made the wrong decision that time? Just because I believed in what I was told, I think it made a big difference in my life. How about you, what if one day you made the wrong choice because you choose to believe what is not true. Will you not regret it?

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He Gave Me Water

Imagine, you're in the desert. It's very hot, no wind, you have no enough water, but you have to walk to the oasis. How can you survive? Today, here I stand, I'd like to share my story about how water helped me to get to the oasis.

One day, when I was 10, I got so many rashes all over my face after running under the strong sun. I noticed I was not sweating at all. I felt so strange. The next day we went to the hospital. Unfortunately, I was diagnosed with "Anhidrosis." According to my doctor, I couldn't release the heat from my body so I couldn't cool down my body temperature. He advised me to skip exposing myself to heat. It was surprising because I didn't expect I was sick. How long will I suffer? Will I be fine when winter comes? I had no idea that this would be the beginning of my struggling days.

At first, I felt lucky because honestly I didn't like exercising. In my P.E. lessons, I didn't have to join the classes. But there were times I felt lonely when I saw my classmates playing. I wished I could also play with them, then I realized I was not totally lucky. I couldn't do what I wanted to do like what my friends normally do. After that I tried to practice running on cold days. However, every time I started running I felt sick. I was always disappointed and it really broke my heart. I was frustrated. It made me wonder, "Why only me?"

My family knew what I was going through. They were afraid that I might feel depressed because of my situation. My father told me that I didn't have to force myself to exercise. I was relieved by those words. In contrast, my grandfather said, "Let's do our best together. It's okay to go at your own pace." I was worried whether I could do it or not, but my grandfather was there to comfort me.

Five months later after I was diagnosed, suddenly he passed away. It was unbelievable for me and people around him. I felt empty because he really meant so much to me. After the funeral, I found a letter from my grandfather and these words were in it. "Let's do our best little by little." His letter inspired me to stand and try to run again like a withered flower that came back to life when somebody gave a drop of water.

This year, I'm proud to say I achieved my goal. I was able to finish the long distance running last year and completed all the competitions at the sports festival this year. Every time we talk about that journey, my mother always praises me how strong I am. She happily said, "I admire you because I know your agony. You're such a brave girl, a great challenger. Your grandfather must be very happy and proud of you." Then I noticed I could be a person who can make someone feel happy. I understood my grandfather's precious words, "Just do it."

So, everyone. This was my story. With my grandfather's message, finally I could reach the oasis. His words will always come to mind when I face difficulties. I want to be such a great person like him. He gave me water to survive in the desert. Now I'd like to share my water with people around me because my actions might help people close to me become happy. Nothing happens if I do nothing. So let's do it together little by little.

You are not alone. Who do you want to walk to the oasis with? With me, I can share my water.

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Quit or Not

"You did a good job," my coach said to me last year. When I heard that, that made me so impressed, because my hard work paid off. And, that word changed my mind. I would like to tell you that you must not give up on something that you already started. Never stop doing what you love. Never stop following your dreams to the top.

I have learned how to do calligraphy for 10 years. When I was a child, I didn't write the letters properly. I didn't like my bad writing and I wished I could write beautiful letters and got prizes. So I decided to learn how to do calligraphy. Everything I learned made me interested! Everything I acquired made me grow! But, there came a time that I got fed up with everything. I got tired, because I couldn't reach my goal. When I was about to give up, my parents told me, "Your decision would make you regret it." That word made me realize that giving up is not right. Instead, I must continue and do my best. So, I decided to continue calligraphy, and totally commit myself in improving my skills over time. And 5 years after I started calligraphy, I am proud to say I was awarded as a gold medalist in one of the calligraphy competitions in our city.

Furthermore, when I was an elementary student, I became a brass band member, because I admired the senior students who could play the instruments very well. So, I started to learn the trumpet. I practiced hard every day whenever I have time. At first, I practiced after school in my club, but it was not enough. I practiced even at home. I was so busy but I had a great time. I felt everything went well, but I got disappointed when I first joined a trumpet competition in my 3rd year of playing the trumpet. I was expecting to be the champion but I lost. I gave my heart and practiced so hard but I didn't make it. I was devastated, but I never gave up. After a year, I joined the competition again and played "The Beautiful Snow" on the stage. That situation reminded me of the great effort I have made since I started playing the trumpet. Finally, I won and got the gold award. I was so amazed. Today I have a chance to tell what I learned in my life. I want to be an inspiration to others. Never stop chasing your dreams. Your effort must lead you to make your dreams come true.

Have you ever had such an experience? When you are facing some troubles, how do you handle it? Did you have that courage to keep on going instead of quitting? Is giving up also your choice? Your answer must be NO! You must not give up on something you have started to do.

What I learned from this experience is that you must not quit on something that you are passionate about. The road may be rough sometimes but don't make that a reason for you to stop and keep moving. At first, when we face hardships, normally the choice is to just give up, because I guess it's the easiest way for you to escape. However, I'm sure that it's not the right thing to do. I believe that you can definitely achieve your goal. You just have to give your best shot and dedication to it.