

Courage to be Happy

In this world, everyone is looking for a way to be happy. This is the story of how my new friend showed me how to be happy.

She was the only one among the participants to give a speech in sign language. She also watched the participants' speeches more carefully than anyone else. Seeing her like that, I wanted to be her friend, but I hesitated to approach her. After the contest, however, she approached me, and we became good friends. It was my first time to go out with a deaf person. She usually uses sign language to communicate, but since I have never learned it we just showed each other notes from our phones. It was fun to go shopping with her. As she faced products in storefronts, she held up the little finger of her left hand and twirled the palm of her right hand over it. It is sign language for "kawaii". We looked at the various items in the store and described how cute they were. I got to know that there are various ways to express my feelings, such as sign language, gestures, and facial expressions, that are not limited just saying things out loud. Our right palms twirled again and again.

Time flew by. I began to understand what it meant to be "deaf". When we entered a restaurant, and a waitress told us what to expect there. She looked a little sad and asked me what the waitress had said. I was stunned. I noticed just how many things she could not hear, a cool piano street performance I heard that day or a song by an idol group she liked. After being by her side for only a day, I realized that she could not hear any of these. And people unknowingly remind her repeatedly of what she has lost due to being deaf. It was a big shock to me. How pitiful she was, I thought. I believed it was natural that I should feel this way.

Later, as we were walking, she showed me a note that said, "Wait a minute. There are women cosplaying my favorite characters. I want to see them." I was surprised. She left me and walked closer and closer to the cosplayers. Then she showed them the screen of her phone. I ran up to her. Her notes read, "I like these

characters. Would you take a picture with me?" I said to them, "She is deaf. So, um, with notes..." She looked at me curiously. The women looked doubtful for a moment, but eventually smiled softly and said, "Okay." I took a picture of her and the women. She showed her thanks to us and looked happily at the photo of herself and the women. I asked her. "Those women are strangers, why did you want to take a picture with them?" She said, "Because they were cosplaying my favorite characters. I already told you that." What did I look like then? She laughed as if she knew how I felt. She is always perceptive. "There is nothing I should put up with just because I'm deaf." And she said, "I'm living a totally happy life."

I was with her for only one day, but my values have completely changed. There are so many things in this world that she could not perceive, yet there are just as many things she does in order to live in a world where she cannot hear any sounds. I think that I need to be more courageous to be happy, just like my new friend acting with her courage will help me encounter many different people and learn about them and their values. I want to be like her, who has the courage to take immediate action, who can confidently say that she is happy after having relationships with various people.

The other day, I was able to practice being courageous and helped an elderly person. He thanked me and smiled, which made me happy. I am going to try to continue doing this in order to pursue my happiness. I will be happy. After all, I know how to be happy.

(696 words)