

Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Minister's Award

To Wait

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My grandmother cannot see well because of a loss of central vision. Every weekend, I go to a supermarket to do shopping with her.

At the supermarket, we go to the sections where we can find the products my grandmother is looking for. Often, it is difficult for her to read the information stated on the products she is interested in. Because she cannot hear well either, I stand close to her ear and read out the information. She always tells me "Thank you." She is counting on me very much.

There are other difficulties she faces, one of them is paying at the checking counter. She cannot hear the amount the cashier tells her to pay. It also takes her a long time to take coins and notes out of her purse. One day, when my grandmother was taking out coins one by one, someone behind her tutted. When I sneaked a glance at him, he was kicking the floor, it was clear that he was irritated because my grandmother was taking so long to pay. Feeling the pressure, I got the purse from my grandmother and finished the payment quickly. "Why cannot people wait for us? Not everyone can pay in the same swift way." I thought. I felt very sad.

Another day we had a different experience, the supermarket counter was especially busy, and I was feeling uneasy. A long queue was formed behind my grandmother while she was paying. I got anxious at the sight of the queue, and since she was trying to manage on her own I told her, "Hurry up Grandma." Then, an old lady behind us told me, "Take your time. Don't press your grandmother so much." At that moment, I realized that I was behaving just like the person who tutted at the supermarket before, and I felt guilty. Why did I talk to her in such a harsh way, and why could I not wait? That day, instead of telling me "Thank you," as usual, she told me, "I'm sorry." Embarrassment and sadness whirled up inside me.

Living with my grandmother, I learned an important thing, it is, "to wait." It is important that I feel relaxed, that I do not press her, and that I wait for her. We need to realize that not everyone can do things in the same way. It is normal that some people need more time. The old lady behind us was also taking time to pay, but nobody was pressing her. This attitude of "waiting" is helpful not only for elderly people but also for small children and people with disabilities.

There is another thing my grandmother taught me. This is also related to our experience at supermarket counters. Once, when I was trying to help her as usual she told me, "I can do it myself." I used to help her with paying, although she had never asked me to. Now I think I was doing it because of my own view that, "Grandma is having a problem" and the pressure of, "We've got to pay quickly." This behavior of mine did not arise from my respect of my grandmother's human rights. It was the moment I realized the distinction between respecting someone's rights and lending a hand to help. My behavior was based on my stereotyped thinking, and I was forcing an unwanted favor on her. Without being able to wait, I was taking away opportunities for my grandmother to do what she can. It is important to carefully consider the feelings of others and help each other in a way to makes both parties happy.

My grandmother taught me one more thing, she always tells me something when she sees me. If I do something for her she says, "Thank you." Her words warm my heart. My grandmother also does many things for our family, but I tend to forget to thank her if my mother does not remind me. I once heard that words of appreciation and other forms of greetings are behaviors to recognize and accept

others. This makes me think that expressing gratitude or giving someone a greeting is the first step to respect other people's human rights. A greeting is something even I can do. I had felt that respecting human rights is something very difficult to do, however, we can exercise the spirit of respect for human rights in our everyday life.

My grandmother gave me many hints about the value of the human rights which everyone should have. I will do what I can step by step to not waste the hints I have received.