

**44th National Essay Contest on Human Rights for Junior High School
Students
Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Minister's Award**

What I Thought about Human Rights

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Recently, we had a bit of trouble in our class. It started when one of my friends used their smartphone to take a photo of the elementary school's graduation album and sent it to a group chat. At first, we were excited, while laughing and saying, "Ah, the good old days" or "That face, so funny." However, the atmosphere changed suddenly when one classmate said, "I didn't want you to show that photo around."

The classmate who sent the photo said, "I didn't mean any harm," but the way they said it came off a bit harsh, and they got into a minor argument. Other classmates were divided into two groups, with some arguing, "You are overreacting," and others arguing, "Stop it because the other side said no." The whole classroom ended up a bit tense.

At that time, I felt that I could understand the feelings of both sides. The classmate who sent the photo just wanted to share a memory with others, but I could also understand the feelings of the classmate who felt uncomfortable. I was left with a lingering uneasy feeling even after I went home. So I asked my mother, "What exactly are human rights?"

My mother told me, "People have the right to decide their own affairs themselves. Even if a person does not mean any harm, when the other person feels uncomfortable, respecting that feeling is what it means to be considerate." Hearing those words, I thought, "I see." The term "human rights" had reminded me of some large problems featured in the news about a war or discrimination, but I realized that human rights are very close to us, involved in our everyday lives.

It is true that, even when we think that something is okay, we can never be sure how other people will feel. What we do with good intentions, believing it to be the right thing, may in fact end up deeply hurting someone. Therefore, I think it would have been important for us in class to pause and ask, "Is it okay to show this?" and we should have acted after

considering the other person's feelings.

Communications on the internet, such as using SNS or LINE services, in particular, are convenient and enjoyable, but they also carry the risk that words or photos will spread to many people in an instant. Even if the sender does not mean any harm, the other person may feel that their privacy has been violated or feel embarrassed. How things are received varies from person to person, and what some people may think is a joke may be seen by others as bullying. Through this incident, I have realized that a casual act using the internet may cause a serious problem related to human rights.

After this incident, we discussed what we should have done at that time. As we shared opinions like, "We should have confirmed with the person before sending it," and "We should have deleted it immediately if they said no," our mood gradually became more positive. I feel that the incident led all of us in my class to think about others' feelings and helped us to become a little more mature than before.

Human rights are necessary and important for all people to live as they are with a sense of ease. In order to protect them, I believe that we do not need to do anything special, but acting with consideration in every interaction in our everyday lives is the first step forward. Imagining how others feel and respecting the feelings of people who dare to say no. I realized that such behavior will lead to the protection of human rights.

Through this experience, I learned the significance of taking responsibility for my own words and actions. I am sure I will clash with my friends or other people around me about something in the future. However, if I remember the viewpoint of human rights, I think I will be able to act in a way that respects others on those occasions. I want to be more mindful of my words and actions so that I can value the people around me. By building up small acts of kindness, I hope to help create a class where everyone can feel safe and at ease.