

Love Yourself for Those Who Love You

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Are you proud of your personality? How many of you feel completely comfortable with who you are? For those who don't, what is it that undermines your confidence? I interviewed 20 people in my class, and 60% expressed negative feelings about their personality. Subjectively speaking, every person I asked has a unique and admirable personality. However, the answer rate showed the hard fact. So why do they underestimate themselves? Why don't they have confidence? What can we gain by being confident?

In our daily life it is very common to hear people say things like "I don't deserve it" or "she should do it instead of me". What I feel from overhearing such comments is that we Japanese lack confidence. According to the government's "Survey on the attitudes of young people in Japan and other countries", when asked if they were satisfied with themselves only 16.9% of Japanese youth responded that they were. In comparison, young people abroad such as those from the US, Germany, France, and Sweden were twice as likely to feel satisfied with themselves. It's not just my experience that Japanese people are not satisfied with themselves. It's also proven statistically. So, what makes it difficult to feel confident in our personality?

Every day we observe a lot of information online that influences our mind. For example the Myers's Briggs Type Indicator, otherwise known as the MBTI, has become increasingly popular. I myself am an ENFP which is also called the Campaigner type. According to descriptions, ENFPs are "very gregarious, love exploring, and are good at understanding and communicating with people. But is this who I really am? Are all ENFPs exactly like this? Probably not. Even though we share the same MBTI type, we're still unique individuals with our perspectives and personalities. While scrolling through Tik Tok or Instagram, I often come across posts ranking MBTI types , based

on things like intelligence, likability, or personality and whether they are considered “good,” or “bad” personalities. These posts might boost someone’s confidence, though at the same time it may make others feel insecure or judged. Overall social media can seriously affect our mindset and self-image.

Not only social media but also another problem which is unique to Japan makes us struggle to express ourselves. The question I raised earlier—‘Why do my classmates underestimate themselves?’—was something I explored through in-person interviews. What I observed is that many of them felt social pressure when reflecting on this question. It appears that Japanese people tend to be more humble and self-deprecating than they really feel when asked to describe themselves. One possible reason for this is our cultural emphasis on modesty. This could also be tied to the strong sense of group cohesion in Japan. While individualism in Western countries encourages people to act confidently and assert their opinions, in Japan, it is considered important to align with the group and to show consideration for others.

So, what can we do to be more confident? Our environment, evaluation from others and our experiences all shape how we perceive our own personality. At times, it can be difficult to change our mindset on our own. Let me share a quote that my teacher mentioned during our morning service:

“Even if you can’t love yourself, —there are people who love you. To not deny them, I love myself.”

When I first heard this quote, it felt like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. Letting go of social pressures allowed me to embrace who I truly am. Now, it’s my turn to tell you. Even if you struggle to love yourself, choose to love yourself so that you don’t dismiss the people who value you, who are proud of you, and who care about you.

After this speech contest, when you return home, take some time to reflect on my words and think about how you approach yourself and others in your

daily life. Sometimes, being modest is a wise choice that can guide how we live. But there are also times when it becomes a shelter, hiding the true essence of who we are. It's important to find the balance that feels most authentic and sustainable for you. Your personality is a reflection of your true self, and finding the right balance between modesty and authenticity, collectivism and individualism, allows you to embrace who you are, while still growing and connecting with others in meaningful ways.

Thank you.

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