

WE HAVE A CHOICE: TO LIVE OR TO EXIST

“We have a choice to live or to exist”. This is my mantra that I carry in my heart. My mantra came from a singer. His name is Harry Styles, a member of One Direction. He put this sentence on twitter because of one reason, and when I saw this tweet, I was very impressed. So I took this sentence, wrote it down on a piece of paper, put it on the wall in my room and say the mantra to myself every day at least twice before I leave the house. I know it sounds weird, but I feel I must. So today, I want you to think about what the word “live” really means, and of course “exist” too. Today what I want to say seems to be very simple. But I think it will be far more important than anything else. And we have few chances to think about the meaning of life, right?

As you may know, “live” means to have your home in a particular place or to remain alive till death. In fact, this is the definition written in dictionary and there are no more meanings. But, I know another meaning, and I want to add it to the dictionary.

When I was a high school student, I heard a piece of news that a little boy played a role in bringing peace to the world. His name is Lory Schwartzman. He founded a charity that raises awareness of bringing clean water to countries like Ethiopia, Uganda and India. On his sixth birthday, he asked each of his friends to donate 6 dollars, instead of giving him a gift. Thanks to his action, 2,400 dollars was gathered for the countries in need. His actions woke me up and I started to think that I should do something for someone. Yes! This is the meaning of “live” that I said.

Harry Styles who gave me the mantra became famous recently. Nowadays, there is no one who doesn't know him. In generally, singers just sing and lead a happy life. However, he doesn't try to focus on only singing. He takes part in charity activities and gives a helping hand to poor children by donating a large amount of money. His actions have taught me that we must care for others, and we should never look away from people facing trouble. That's why he said “we have a choice to live or to exist”, I think. We cannot be too careful about others.

How simple it is!! But I think, in Japan, few students take meaningful action. Japanese students seldom try to do good things except good things for themselves. This case exists in my college. A few days ago, the volunteer center in this college sent an E-mail to the students. The E-mail said “Volunteers urgently wanted! Please volunteer as much as possible.” Every student actually received it, but I heard that there were few students who responded to the offer. I used to be like that.

Don't you think sometimes “Who am I?” Of course, I was thinking about it. During my commuting time, when I was standing like a pole in a train, the words suddenly ran through my mind. It was like I was scolded by myself. “What do you live for!” “Are you doing something for someone?” “Aren't you full of your own affairs?” “Will you be satisfied with a life of just studying, working, enjoying yourself with friends, eating, and sleeping!?” I thought I was terrible person because I had just existed. Is it too much to say? But I was always suffering during class and in my daily life.

So I decided to take action and I actually got a chance to change my life. As you know, a big earthquake occurred in Kumamoto this year. The earthquake was bigger than any we had experienced. It's influence was huge. Many people lost their houses and jobs, and some people lost their families. After the disaster, many volunteer recruitment groups were founded and many people from other prefectures who wanted to help disaster victims volunteered for recruitment. This is one amazing thing that Japanese can boast about. We tend to try to help people without regard for our own reward. However, not all Japanese do it including students in my college. However, I did volunteer. Volunteers were requested to go to evacuation areas and help disaster victims. I served food, carried food and water, cleaned, and gave massages to old people who got tired of staying there for a long time. Then many people said to me “thank you” with smiles. When I saw those smiles, I felt happy and I realized that “to live for others is the job of my life.”

Does that make sense? “Live” has the meaning of “doing something for other's happiness” and this is the job of our life. Also such actions make you feel more comfortable with yourself. Our world is facing many troubles like terrorism, global warming, and disasters. There are many people who are confused by these troubles. Therefore, we must live for them. So why don't you start (really) living by living for others? What are you waiting for? Believe me, it will make a huge difference in your life.