

I am TaTa, 4th year student of Isshiki High school, Part-time Night School Course.

I was 15 years old when I moved from Indonesia to Japan during the summer. At that time, I barely had any knowledge of the Japanese language, and aside from studying at a volunteer Japanese classroom once a week, I spent most of my days at home. I was always alone, and at times, only had my older brother as company. Half a year passed, and I have yet to make a single friend. I thought to myself, "I don't want to stay like this, I want to change." One day, I worked up the courage to talk to one of the girls at the Japanese classroom, but she barely looked my way. My courage wavered, and since then I have been scared to reach out to others, losing the courage to look people in the eye.

Winter came and my parents suggested to me saying, "Why don't you try going to high school?" In fear of my incompetence and the lack of courage in speaking Japanese, I firmly answered back, "No." We ended up in a huge disagreement. All the stress and anxiety started to fill my head and I could barely remember a day when I was not crying. However, my parents insisted and said, "We really want you to go to high school, it's our only wish!" In the end, I decided to apply for the entrance examination. A month before the exam, I studied the past examination sheets at KIBOU. I ended up passing the entrance exam, and enrolled to Isshiki high school.

The teachers at school wrote readings above kanji words, so I could somehow understand the lessons. Still, I could barely speak any Japanese, and have always felt like people were making fun of me behind my back. Whenever I go home from school, walking down from the bus station, and finally getting a glimpse of my home, tears suddenly start falling from my eyes. I felt tired, defeated, but my family never once made me feel alone. They encouraged me, telling me, "We believe in you," and "We're always cheering for you."

After that, I swore to myself, "I don't want to worry my family anymore, from now on I'll start studying diligently," and since then I attended school with a new resolve. I started studying 3 hours a day at home, searching up meanings of Japanese words and kanji, while memorizing them. I started making goals, working my way to achieving them, and the heaviness in my heart slowly started to fade. The feeling of people around me talking behind my back was gone. Then during the end of the exam week in my first semester, the class ranking was announced. I was very surprised. I placed 4th in class. I was so happy I started jumping up and down, overwhelmed with joy. Not once did I ever think I would be placed in such a high rank. This was an unforgettable moment for me. It was the first time I finally began to have courage and believe in myself since coming to Japan.

I felt motivated, and was looking forward to challenging myself in new things. During our

school cultural festival, I participated in a dance presentation with my seniors and classmates. I knew that performing in front of an audience takes a lot of courage, so we practiced until late at night. It was finally time to perform, and my seniors and I danced with our heart and soul. The crowd gave us a big round of applause, and I felt very happy.

I was in my 3rd year of high school when I passed the Eiken Test in Practical English Proficiency Level 2. My current goal is to master both the English and Japanese language to enroll to college, and study an international culture course. There are also many other foreign students like me studying at Isshiki high school. Talking and attending classes with them made me begin taking interest in different cultures. With that interest came the desire to learn and know more. I will forever be grateful to the teachers and friends that helped me become who I am today, giving me the opportunity to discover this dream I now have. I am also extremely thankful to my parents for their support and encouragements, and the push that made me enroll to high school.

Now being a 4th year student, I was given the opportunity to work part-time as an assistant teacher. I help foreign kids, who are still learning Japanese, assisting them in learning mathematics, or memorizing new Japanese words. Once a week, I attend a class in Hananoki elementary where I also assist students helping them understand what is being taught in class. Now those students are able to participate in class. Before, they used to be in fights, but now it is different. Every time I see children like them who cannot express what they think because they cannot speak Japanese, then consequently get bullied, and struggle with their studies, it reminds me of who I used to be. From the bottom of my heart, I want to encourage and guide these kids, because I truly do believe that someday these kids will also find the courage within themselves.

I was given the greatest opportunity to grow, giving it my all even with tears streaming down my face. I believe that there are opportunities waiting out there for everyone and I wish everyone the best of luck.