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Things I learned in Canada

What would you do if someone you were really close to did something horrible to you? Someone you like, or someone who's been on your side and you think always will be. Some may have a fierce quarrel, others may wonder why their friend did such things. Sadly in my case I didn't do anything but get hurt. Everybody at my school didn't like me but I didn't do anything about it. I became afraid of getting hurt that much and gradually I became unable to trust people. Since then I hadn't interacted with people deeply, and had told jokes in order to put a distance between myself and others until a girl, whom I will refer to as Haruka, fully changed my attitude toward people and perhaps changed my life.

Today I'd like to talk about what Haruka did to help me notice one of the most important things in life to me.

When I studied abroad in Canada last year, I was sent to the exact same school as Haruka, whom I met in Japan at the orientation we had for study abroad. In Canada, I wanted to be the sole Japanese person at the school, so that I would only speak English, but under so many circumstances I had to be with her all the time for the first few months. And, as I got to know her, she did many favors which now I look back on as being the most marvelous things.

First of all, even though it was obvious that I didn't trust people, she trusted me so deeply that she told or wrote me all of her secrets. Those secrets should have been too hard and scary to tell to other people including me.

she told me what was on her mind, what or how she thought about different issues.

She never ran away from her problems. When somebody didn't like her out of jealousy, she never said this was not my fault. She just tried to solve problems saying there must be something I can do to adjust. Last but not least, she always told me about the positive ways other students around us felt about me. This made me feel confident and took away my fears.

As a result of getting to know Haruka, I was able to realize three important things about breaking out of my shell.

First is that it shouldn't matter what other people think of you. If you trust somebody sincerely and show him your mind and honesty, he will trust you the same way someday just like Haruka had me trusting her.

Second is that you should always try to find a way to get along with others. This actually is really really harder than it sounds. Because sometimes people don't like you irrationally, so you may have to try even harder just to get along. You might think "why am I the one who must adjust and change?" But, I think those who can do that and be adults about it are the ones with a generous and tolerant heart. People would definitely respect you.

The last thing I realized is that not many people hate me. Thinking he or she might

hate me makes me look like I'm avoiding them and that makes them avoid me. And because they look like they don't like me, I, in this case, avoid them. To my surprise this is happening everywhere. Because that's so much easier. You don't have to get hurt if you distance yourself from those you think don't like you. But you won't know what and how much you are missing out.

You also might be nervous around people because they once really hurt you. Perhaps you doesn't want to get hurt anymore so you tell jokes to distance yourself from people, or try not to interact with people. You try to look cheerful and disguise yourself as a funny person and when somebody doesn't like you, you console yourself that the person they don't like is not who you really are.

This is how I lived my life until I met Haruka. I feel like I wasted a few years before changing and I really am not proud of those years. But I know many many people like that.

I'm so glad that Haruka made me notice such important things. And I really hope that this speech would reach those who haven't realized such things, and make them change.