**Step out of Your Comfort Zone**

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Do you have any experience putting off things because you don't want to do it? I have many times. Have you ever challenged something courageously? Humans have the character of hating change, because we feel anxious about unknown things.

 I hated change until the age of 17. However, a speech I heard changed my opinion. That was Bill Extro's speech “Why comfort will ruin your life?”. The speech contained the following two points. The first was that “What makes you comfortable can ruin you, and only in a state of discomfort can you continually grow”. The second was that "What dictates the size of a goldfish is its environment. " The meaning of this sentence is that you cannot grow if you spend it in a safe environment. I was very moved by this speech. At that time I thought that I couldn't develop as long as I lived life as usual, so I tried to challenge something.

To challenge myself, I applied for a two-week Thai training program last summer. The goal of the program was to have Japanese students, like me, study together with university students majoring in English in Thailand. It was my first overseas trip. From that experience, I felt that living in Thailand was very different from living in Japan, for example, food, traffic, language, etc. The most worrying thing I felt was that I couldn't communicate fluently in English. At first, I lost my confidence to communicate in English. Eventually, I started to only do activities with the other Japanese students who visited Thailand with me. After a few days passed, I remembered the contents of that speech. "What makes you comfortable can ruin you, and only in a state of discomfort can you continually grow". That memory helped motivate me to earnestly learn useful expressions and use translation apps. In the end, even though I couldn't speak English fluently I was still able to become good friends with the Thai people. I wouldn't have grown if I hadn't changed and continued to only communicate with Japanese people. I gained great confidence through this experience.

To continue challenging myself I went to the Philippines for three weeks this past summer, not only to continue learning English efficiently but also to challenge something new. This new challenge included free hugs, a questionnaire to 100 people, volunteer activities, and more. A lot of people refused to take the questionnaire, and when I tried to give free hugs, people gave me dirty looks. I felt uncomfortable but learned the Filipino way of thinking, concerning values, and love. In this way, I was able to feel new growth by actively challenging myself in the Philippines in ways I cannot do in my daily life.

 Surprisingly, challenging myself has become commonplace. I feel that joining this contest is another challenge, in a way. Looking back now, I have grown a lot since I was 17 years old.

In conclusion, people hate change. I was like that myself at one time. But if you don't challenge yourself, you won't grow. You will experience some form of adversity by leaving your comfort zone. However, If you actively bear the discomfort, you will be able to grow. Let's try something new. “What makes you comfortable can ruin you, and only in a state of discomfort can you continually grow".