

A Person Who Teaches You Something Important

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When I was a child, I was preoccupied with the notion that getting a perfect score on every test and coming in first in running races, such as 50-meter dashes and marathons, were mandatory. However, I sometimes failed, and when I did, I threw a tantrum and, eventually, exhausted myself crying. For example, when I made a minor mistake on a test, I would go into a panic. When I was not selected on the relay team, I stayed on the school ground crying for three hours. In other words, I was a vulnerable perfectionist, or maybe just a self-centered, stubborn girl. In any case, I was unable to admit that I was imperfect. However, one teacher changed my uneasy mind, and that experience has enriched my KOSEN research life.

The teacher's tardiness and laziness annoyed me to no end at first. He was my fourth grade homeroom teacher, and a tall, thin man in his 50's. He habitually came to class late, and often closed his eyes while his students took a test. In contrast, I was as punctual as a radio-controlled clock and never sleepy. To make him aware of his behavior, I wanted to say, "Shape up!" I looked down on him, and felt that being one of his students was a horrible misfortune.

Nevertheless, I unexpectedly learned a very important thing from this unpunctual, heavy-eyed instructor. One rainy day in June, I made a small mistake on a mathematics test, and started wailing in class. The teacher calmly asked me, "Why do you stick to being perfect? You're always striving for perfection. To be honest, you're far from perfect. You frequently go into tantrums and annoy your friends. There is no perfect person in this world, so you don't have to be perfect!" His insightful words were a big turning point in my life, and did several things. They confused me at first, but made me realize I had never thought about why I had to be perfect. The lack of logical reasoning for my endless attempt to be perfect was appropriately pointed out. Second, they embarrassed me because I was annoying my classmates. Finally, they helped free me from my preoccupation with perfection.

It is good for KOSEN researchers like us to know we are not perfect though we aim at inventing perfect devices as an engineer. Otherwise, we would be sick and tired of our daily continuous research because failures are inevitable for us. Every day, I patiently design and develop electrical circuit boards and conduct experiments with them in an applied physics laboratory, but most of them do not work well. However, I am not upset about the failures any longer because I now take advantage of such setbacks and recognize them as stepping stones to success. It is important for a researcher not to be afraid of mistakes.

People similar to you are comfortable to stay with; however, someone completely different from you may tell you something important that you never notice. When meeting such a person seemingly so different from you in every way imaginable, think of this encounter as a great opportunity to discover yourself.