

Right Support for People with Mental Illness

Ayaka Matsushita (NIT (KOSEN), Kurume College)

Have you ever suffered from some kind of mental illness? How much do you know about it? If someone close to you suffered from it, what would you do for them? Mental illness has gradations according to its seriousness. People start to have light ones at first, but there are many cases where the mental conditions get worse unconsciously.

I myself had a mental illness. When my condition was worse, I didn't feel like doing anything and kept sleeping at home or even in class. At other times, I got up and suddenly started to cry. I was really unstable. I couldn't concentrate and when I tried to read words in books, it hardly meant anything. Even when I was in such a condition, I didn't really notice that my mental condition went wrong. However, my homeroom teacher suggested that I should have a counselling session, and so I did. I also went to psychiatry in a hospital. About two years had passed since I first started to lose my mental balance. Like my case, as the mental illness cannot be recognized so easily and it is invisible, people hardly try to go to a hospital to cure it in its early stage. Therefore, the people around are key to let them know what they should do next.

It's not abnormal for someone to get mental illness. As you can see, the number of people with mood disorder has been increasing according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. One in five people is said to get some kind of mental illness in their life in Japan. There are about one hundred eighty patients suffering from depression out of ten thousand in Fukuoka and the number is the highest in Japan, reports Kubo, the statistic journalist. It means that about one person in fifty-five students can be a depression patient.

What can we do to help those people who suffer from mental illness? People who have some troubles with mental illness tend to show some kind of signs. For example, they don't have an appetite, tend to make more mistakes than before, or have less interest in things they like. If you find someone showing some of these signs, please listen to them carefully and keep being close. Empathetic listening, where you repeat empathetically what they say, would be of effective use. Don't say any negative words to them or include such phrases as "have you got better yet?" or "what is the cause of your mental trouble?" which you tend to say without a second thought. The person himself does not know when he can recover and what the cause is. Those words may drive the person into a corner. Especially, never deny anything about the person or make them hurry, or ask the cause of the mental illness.

I kept going to a hospital and about half a year ago I stopped taking medicine and now live a normal life. I am standing here now with the tremendous support of my friends, teachers, counsellors, doctors and many others. The methods of treatment vary according to the person, but it is sure that without other people's support, it is impossible to cure mental illness. Physical illness and mental illness are alike in that anybody has the possibility of getting it. If you know someone around you who seems

Ayaka Matsushita - 2
(NIT (KOSEN), Kurume College)

to be suffering, please speak to them and start supporting them.