

## Japan Sachiko Henmi

### 1. What is the Importance of this Topic?

- ① We encourage the people with intellectual disability to talk and act with fellow members.
- ② It is important for the people with intellectual disability to state their own opinion and to make their own decision.
- ③ Everyone has the right to get support.
- ④ We have the right to choose what support and education we need.
- ⑤ If all the above were in practice, we would have a better society.

### 2.Details

#### ①Our Activities

- I am the representative of an organization called "Start Line", located in Koriyama-shi in Fukushima Prefecture. This organization was founded in September 25, 2003.
- People with intellectual disability got together once a month to talk about their problems over a meal. Those who supported us also joined.
- In order to have people listen to our opinion, I gathered those who were active regardless of their intellectual disability and those who supported us. With the help of volunteers, I was able to gather nearly 120 people for the opening session.
- Since people wanted to have the chance to voice their opinions, we held our second session the next year and nearly 80 people came. The four groups in our prefecture decided to form a network to continue these gatherings.
- Once a year, the four groups took turns being the head office and held workshops in topics such as "Self-advocacy", "Work", "Community Living", "Free Topic conversation", "Social System" and "Cooking". Nearly 100 people came to each gathering during the 2 years.

#### ②How are these activities reflected in our lives?

- I participated in the annual convention for "Self-advocacy". I was relieved to meet many others from different areas who shared the same problems and worries. Many told me it was hard to voice their opinion in the beginning so I felt it was all right to be slow and unskillful.
- I felt there were many others in Fukushima Prefecture who were not able to attend national conventions but had the desire to voice their thoughts and problems.

- Through these activities to enhance self-advocacy, I can now speak comfortably in public. In my everyday living, I can now ask my colleagues at work to give me documents which I can understand. My colleagues tell me I have changed and become calm.
  - My circle of friends has widened and I am getting more information and this has helped me think more broadly.
  - Through my activity, I hope to understand the feelings of the seriously disabled and I have a very strong desire to speak up on their behalf.
- ③ What Effect does this report have on the Listeners?
- In order to be active, we need support. Good support means to be supported when we need help. Bad support means ignoring our ideas and to do more than necessary and not allowing us to learn through our mistakes.
  - Even now, I am reluctant to accept the word “intellectually disabled”, and previously I even felt I should not say the word.  
We are born as humans and even if we are slow and need support from others, we live a life like everyone else. I hope in the future a word can be found to define this.
  - I wish to keep on conveying this message in various places and occasions.

Thank you.

As a supporter

Fumiko Kaneda

1. If a supporter needs to be perfect.....
  - I am not qualified as being a perfect supporter. I make many mistakes and I do not possess any special quality. I feel that we both support each other.
  - I think of myself as the same human being of the same planet rather than as a supporter of people with intellectual disability.
2. My values as a supporter.
  - The most important issue is to consider the needs of the person with disability.
  - To work as a part of a network composed of professionals in the welfare community, professionals in photography, friends working in areas of agriculture and professionals in Japanese calligraphy.
  - Though, we live in a society with standardized values, at times there is a need to remix our values gained from different encounters with new places, things and people.