

My work and Self-Advocacy Activity

Ms. Mayumi Narazaki

Self Advocacy Group "Sunflower"

jlid@cf.mbn.or.jp

Abstract:

I am a care worker of a day service center for elderlies. I have worked for the center since four years ago. There are two reasons to work for elderlies. One of them is a memory of an old woman. When I was small, she took care of me while my mother was busy. She took me for shopping and shared snuck with me. The other reason is illness of my favorite farther. He was hospitalized when I was 27 years old. I went to the hospital to see him many times though I could not understand about his illness. I have a bitter experience when I worked for another day service center for elderly. I won't tell you about it.

In the days, I have gotten the second grade qualification of care working for elderlies. With the qualification, I went to the Public Employment Security Office (PESO) to find a job. It was not easy. After many times to visit the PESO, however, I could get a job of the day service center where I work for now. When I started to work, I could not memorize names of elderlies and had difficulty to understand routine of my work. As time went, however, I learned gradually and now have a lot I can do. But still have difficulty in my work because each elderly has different needs as each person has different wish. I am happy when elderlies say to me "Thank you" and when I get monthly salary.

Next, I tell you something about my life other than work. I am a member of "Self-Advocate-Group". Our mission is to give people with and without disability meet each other. We call it Self-Advocate Activity. There are more than 3,000 Self Advocate Groups in Japan. Not only in Japan, you find same kind of groups in Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam. I wish you to start a "Self-Advocate group" in your country, too. When you have started it, we may have an interexchange event with your group.

For the last, I wish you to meet with people with disability, to create society without discrimination towards people with disability and to understand that we, people with disability, are not different from you without disability. I hope all of you are happy.

<Keywords: Work>

I am a care-worker and work for a home for elderly people three times a week. This is the fourth year since I started working there. I have two reasons for doing my current job. For one thing, I fondly

remember an old woman living in my neighborhood when I was a young girl. She was kind enough to take care of me when my mother was too busy to care for me. I still remember that the two of us had snacks together and bought me my favorite things at shops.

The second reason for my choice is the illness that my father suffered when I was 27 years old. While I went to see him in the hospital many times, I did not manage to understand what illness he had.

I also remember bitter experiences that I had to go through at another day service for elderly citizens. I would rather not talk about them. Around that time, however, I became certified as the second grade care worker. With that qualification, I asked the employment center for people with disabilities and the Public Employment Security Office to help find employment. After several visits, they finally found an employment for me. At first I faced some difficulties at the new workplace, including the need to understand the sequence of daily tasks to be performed and remember users' names. While I have gradually become able to do increasing number of tasks, I still find it hard to identify different ways of care to be applied to different individual users. Users' needs vary from one person to another and so does the care required. Words of appreciation from users like "Thank you" make me feel happy. Another thing that I look forward to is the monthly payday.

I have created some get-together sites where people with or without disabilities can mingle on holidays. Such activities are also called self-advocacy activity in Japan. For your reference, there are some 3000 self-advocacy groups in Japan. Similar groups exist, to the best of my knowledge, in the rest of Asia, including Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. I hope that other Asian countries will also set up their self-advocacy groups, so that my group can have interactions with them.

Let me spend some time talking about the Sunflower Group, the self-advocacy activities that I am in charge of. Before setting up the group, I was among the participants in the "Youth Class" activities in Yokohama, the city where I live, where people with disabilities get together to play games, sing, draw pictures and write letters. This experience of participation motivated me to talk with my friends with disabilities and establish our group 11 years ago. The group, open to anybody with or without disabilities, meets every month to discuss our own issues. The group's activities also include the studying of the system related to us as well as more-fun oriented ones like baking cakes. We organize some events with other groups. At present, our approx. thirteen members with and without disabilities meet once a month.

I hope that the Sunflower group will develop into the one where people get together for enjoyable events without regard to disabilities, and come into contact with people of various backgrounds. I also hope to publish a book on self-advocacy activities to let people take a look at our activities and come to know us in action.

Now I would like to talk about my dreams that I wish will come true. I have three dreams in mind.

My first dream is to make the “Mamichan House”, where people with or without disabilities assemble to chat, eat sweets, drink, and have some occasional arguments among friends. I would like to have such life.

My second dream is to create a magazine to inform people with or without disabilities of the system related to disabilities and develop it into something like a source of information transmission.

My third dream is to make more friends with people from the rest of the world and to live somewhere in Asia (other than Japan), and to let them know more about Japanese culture and of how people live in Japan, including how Japanese people with disabilities live their lives. What I would like to achieve through those activities is to let them know about me, a person with disability, and at the same time, I would like to know what and how much I can do in the rest of Asia. I hope that I will meet people with the same disability as mine in the rest of the world and make friends with them.

Last but not least, I would like you to meet people with disabilities. Do not discriminate people with disabilities, and instead, see them as your equals. I believe that such mindset will make you happy.