

Okayama Prefectural Okayama Daianji Secondary School
Futaba Sato

Making it Count

“Time spent with family is worth every second.”

Whoever said this doesn't know my brother. If they did, they would immediately have second thoughts.

Here's something you need to know about my brother. Obviously, he is a boy. You all know what grade-six boys are like.

My brother and I don't have a lot in common. So it takes a LOT of patience to be around him. The sound of his footsteps approaching my room is basically a knock on the door from a total nightmare. Yes, even a nightmare knocks on the door. I wish my brother knew to knock. “Sister, Sister, Sister, dodgeball!” He thinks it is our daily routine to play dodgeball. As if I ever agreed to it, and as if he cared. He doesn't seem to understand that I have a life, too. Even when I am studying, it's always his call to start the game.

When I was in elementary school, I tried to resist -- tried as in failed. When my brother pushed me hard to force me into doing something, I pushed back hard. When he hit me, I hit him back double. Our fighting was doomed to get ugly. So unlike my brother, I learned to practice some self-discipline and decided to play along to save myself from even greater trouble.

On February 17, 2020, the Japanese government announced that the schools nationwide would be shut down temporarily due to the COVID-19 crisis. As much as the news shook the nation, it shook me greatly. I would be literally stuck with my nightmare all day every day.

My father also telecommuted from home, so the whole family ended up spending time together daily. Although this was something that we had wanted to do, in these turbulent times, it could be quite a challenge to keep our spirits up. As a matter of course, my parents and I talked less and less.

One day during our quiet meal time, my brother suddenly shouted, “Cheers! Today's menu is Mom's speciality. Let's make a toast to the fried eggplant.” My family burst into laughter while my brother stood with a beaming smile. My brother lit up our family in an instant. My father praised my brother, “ It's amazing that you could do this. I'm proud of you, Son.”

That day on, my brother hosted a number of family events. I have to admit that he is so talented in spicing up something mediocre into something a little more fun. “Sato Family's Watermelon Festival, 8 p.m. tonight. Be there!” My brother came running to my door to deliver the announcement. His footsteps weren't as

upsetting as before. In fact, I have come to appreciate my brother for going the extra mile for the family. As soon as we got a homegrown watermelon from our grandfather, he began organizing the event, making sure that everything was in place. He even made sure that Mom had put the watermelon in the fridge! Thanks to the organizer, the event did start at eight p.m. sharp. The finale of the event was Sato Family's Word-Chain Game. Everybody was forced to join the game, of course, and we had so much fun.

"Time spent with family is worth every second."

This saying turned out to be true. It also turned out that I didn't know my brother well enough. I look at my brother very differently now. In these turbulent times, I truly believe that we all should make the best of the given situation. For starters, how about getting to know your family more? It could take some effort and patience, but I think it's worth it. Why don't we all try to make it count?

I expect more events to be organized around the family, and more announcements to be delivered to my door -- not by my nightmare but by my brother. I only wish that my brother learns to knock. But as I said, it takes efforts and patience.