

# Meeting People



In 2001, TJF produced the Deai resource, which is designed to introduce the personalities and daily lives of seven real Japanese high school students through photographs and text. "Meeting People" takes up one of the seven students each issue, turning the focus toward topics of concern to the individual student and introducing some of the photographs and text in Deai. In this way, we hope to provide information useful for a better understanding of the seven students and the Deai project. We will also offer, in conjunction with the Deai website (<http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/>), necessary explanatory material, related resources and data, as well as ideas for class activities. In this issue we take up Yoshida Kojiro, and read his story to understand how he gained confidence in himself in high school.



## Meet Kojiro

ある人は、<sup>ひと</sup>ぼくのことをおとなしいと思<sup>おも</sup>うかもしれませんが、<sup>べつ</sup>別の人はよくしゃべるやつ<sup>ひと</sup>だと思<sup>おも</sup>うのではないでしょう<sup>か</sup>。自分<sup>じぶん</sup>でも二面性<sup>にめんせい</sup>があると思<sup>おも</sup>います。時<sup>とき</sup>と場合<sup>ばあい</sup>に応じて、<sup>お</sup>積極<sup>せっきよく</sup>的にも消極<sup>しょうきよく</sup>的にもなります。<sup>ひと</sup>

(マイストーリー「ぼくはこんな人」から)

Some say I'm quiet, but others probably think I'm quite talkative. Actually, I have both these sides. Depending on the time and situation, I can be either aggressive or passive. (From Kojiro's "My Story")



### Profile

名前:	吉田功二郎
歳:	18才
学校:	市川高校
住んでいるところ:	兵庫県姫路市
クラブ:	弓道部
好きなもの:	動物や植物
将来の夢:	獣医

## For Teachers

### Class objectives

#### 1. To think about parents' expectations.

When Kojiro started junior high school, he still shut himself up at home. He really wanted his parents to understand his position, having been unable to live up to their expectations about the path he should follow. When he started attending the high school that he had chosen himself, he realized that there are more paths than just the one his parents had imagined for him. His perspective on things was broadened and his attitude grew more confident and positive. In this issue, students read Kojiro's My Story passage and think about their own parents' expectations, their future, and their relationship with their parents.

#### 2. To consider the balance between *ganbari* (serious effort) and *kutsurogi* (relaxation) as it relates to a person's psychological growth and stability.

Today Kojiro is self-confident and lively. It is the balance between *ganbari* and *kutsurogi* that keeps his life on an even keel. Students read Kojiro's account of how he found confidence in himself after entering high school, and think about the balance between hard work and taking it easy.

## Kojiro's View—There are any number of paths one can follow

### Moving

I was born in the city of Nagasaki, Nagasaki prefecture.<sup>\*1</sup> When I was in third grade, my father was transferred by his company to a job in Himeji, Hyogo prefecture.<sup>\*2</sup> This was a traumatic experience for me. It may be an exaggeration to say that Nagasaki and Himeji are two different cultures, but there were certainly a lot of things I wasn't used to. First, the language was different and I felt a gap between myself and the people of Himeji. The environment we lived in was also completely new. In Nagasaki, our house had been surrounded by orange orchards, so after I got home from school, I would just go out looking for bugs and play in the woods and fields. Although there were parks around our house in Himeji, not many children played outside. Usually they gathered at someone's house to play video games.

While I found the new environment bewildering, my classmates would tell me "you talk funny," and they were quick to criticize my weaknesses. I found the mean things they said and did very painful. Not only that, having to be with other people all the time was very confining and depressing. In Nagasaki, I had been an equal among my peers, but in Himeji, I felt as if I were somehow on a lower level than my classmates and left out of their circle.

In October of the year we moved to Himeji, I fell from high recreational equipment during a school outing, broke my left arm, and had to be hospitalized for two or three weeks. When I was well enough to go back to school, it was arranged that I would study in the school infirmary instead of the regular classroom. During that time I often talked to the school nurse, who listened to me patiently and was very kind. Then, when fourth grade started, the school nurse was transferred to another school. I couldn't go to the infirmary any more and I didn't want to go to school, so I shut myself up at home. My parents worried about me and did their best to take me on outings, to the ocean or to the rivers to fish. During the summer holidays we went on extended vacations and in the winter we went to the Shinshu area, where I got my first experience skiing.

During that period, I found the pets I kept a big comfort. I had a turtle, two cats, and a dog. My menagerie now, by the way, consists of four turtles, three cats, two dogs, and four birds. Along with animals, I also like plants, and I've learned a lot of plant names. I like taking care of plants and often stop by the local garden shop to buy a new potted plant or two.

When I started junior high school, the students in my classes were all different from before, but I still couldn't get over my reluctance to go to school, and I still had trouble fitting in with the other students. Rela-

tions with my family members were not so good. For a while, I hardly talked to my parents, big brother, or younger sister. I ate about once a day, but that was all. I spent most of my days reading books that happened to be around the house. I shut myself up in my room and didn't see anyone.

Around that time I began to sense my parents' expectation that I would excel, following the model path of getting into a top high school and a university, and then going on to a white-collar career at a good company. I wasn't able to live up to their expectations about the path I should follow, and I really wanted them to understand my position. I didn't say that to them right out, however. I didn't think saying it would do anything to resolve the situation. Defiantly, I thought it didn't matter what happened to me. And yet, at the same time, a desire began to grow very gradually in me to lead a normal life and go to school like everyone else.

### A Turning Point

Finally, I reached the turning point. In October of my third year in junior high, I went to school after a long absence. During English class, the teacher began to tell us about three private high schools located in the prefecture. One of them was Ichikawa High School. In Himeji some people don't have a good image of private schools: there is tendency to think of them as the places where students go whose grades and test scores are not good enough to get into the public schools. However, listening to the teacher's explanation, I began to think that maybe private schools might have strong points not found in public schools. I knew that a person like myself, with a poor class attendance record in junior high school, would be at a serious disadvantage applying to a public high school, which invariably stresses regular school attendance and class performance.

Ichikawa High School had a system under which they would accept a certain number of students recommended<sup>\*3</sup> by my school. If I could fit the requirements to be recommended, I had a chance of being admitted to Ichikawa even if my *naishinsho* (内申書 ないしんしょ confidential school report on the student's grades and conduct)<sup>\*4</sup> was not that favorable. When I realized that possibility, I began to feel a ray of light was shining my way. I thought to myself that this might be my last chance to get on track to a normal education. I went to my teacher right away and told him that I wanted to be considered for a recommendation to Ichikawa High School. The teacher understood my desire very well, and set down the condition I would have to fulfill: I had to start coming to school regularly, starting the next day.

When I did start commuting to school, I found my classmates friendly and encouraging. My homeroom teacher also cheered me on, and I convinced myself that "all I have to do is just do it" and I started commuting

regularly to school and even attended extra classes at *juku* (塾 cram school). It all paid off, and I was accepted. My parents were really happy—as was I—when I managed to get into the high school I had chosen myself.

### Entering Ichikawa High School

When I started attending Ichikawa High School, I tried my best to act cheerful and friendly so as not to create a bad first impression. I was also determined not to be bullied and made fun of, like I had been in my previous schools. I joined the *kyudo* (弓道 Japanese archery) club and made a lot of friends. I also discovered the challenge of setting a goal for myself and working hard toward that goal. For example, when the kanji proficiency test was to be held two months later, I decided to take it and studied hard to see how good a score I could get. I worked hard and achieved my goal. Then I set myself another target to strive for. For the first time I began to feel that I was getting through school on my own efforts.

I also realized that there are any number of paths

one can follow. The students who graduate from Ichikawa choose a variety of different career paths. Some go to work right after graduating, others go to vocational or technical school,<sup>5</sup> and others go to university. I realized that there are more paths than just the one my parents had imagined for me. My perspective on things was broadened and my attitude grew more confident and positive. So far, I have never been late for school or missed a single day.

When I was in second year of high school, my mother told me: “We would be happy if you could get into a good school and find a job in a good company.” What she said confirmed what I had thought back in junior high school, but since I had already set myself the goal of becoming a veterinarian, I wasn’t upset. Rather, I realized that it’s perfectly natural for parents to have certain expectations of their children and that it would actually be rather sad if they had no expectations of you at all. I began to understand that I had actually been very fortunate that my parents had high expectations of me.

## Notes

### \*1 Nagasaki 長崎

Located in northwestern Kyushu. The prefecture is composed of four hilly peninsulas and many offshore islands. Historically, it played an important role as a channel through which cultures from abroad entered Japan. During the centuries under the national policy of seclusion in the Edo period (1603-1867), Nagasaki was Japan’s only window on the Western world. Its main industries are manufacturing and fishing as well as tourism. Pop.: approx. 1,507,000 (2002).

### \*2 Hyogo 兵庫

Located in western Honshu and bordered by Kyoto and Osaka prefectures to the east, it was the location of the Himeji domain during the Edo period. From the time of the Meiji Restoration (the establishment of a new government in Tokyo in 1868), an industrial zone emerged along the coast. The port of Kobe, opened in 1867, was a



driving force of Japan’s modernization. Pop.: approx. 5,578,000 (2002). Himeji is a city in southern Hyogo prefecture and is noted for Himeji Castle, completed in 1610. Major industries are electrical machines, food processing, steel, and oil refining.

### \*3 Suisen nyugaku 推薦入学

System for screening applicants for entrance to high school based on recommendation rather than performance on an entrance examination. The criteria of evaluation are a letter from the student’s junior high school principal, confidential school report on the student’s grades and conduct, interview, short essay, and achievements in extracurricular activities such as sports and club activities.

### \*4 Naishinsho 内申書

Confidential record of school performance and conduct during junior high school that is submitted to high schools to which a student applies for admission. It records grades, data on attitudes and conduct, and achievements in extracurricular activities. Admittance to high school is usually determined on the basis of written examination scores and the content of the *naishinsho*.

### \*5 Senmon gakko 専門学校

Educational institutions that respond to the needs of society by providing training in practical skills and specialized technologies. The requirement of admission is graduation from high school. There are *senmon gakko* for training as a beautician, in computer skills, language, social work, nursing and other paramedical care, dressmaking, and many other specialties.

## Discussion Points

### 「親の期待」をどう受け止めるか

#### How to handle parental expectations

When Kojiro started junior high school, he still shut himself up at home. He sensed his parents’ expectation that he would excel, following the model path of getting into a top high school and a university, and then going on to a white-collar career at a good company.

He really wanted them to understand that he was unable to live up to their expectations about the path he should follow. He didn’t think telling them so would do anything to resolve the situation, however. When he started attending high school, he realized that there are any number of paths one can follow; there were more paths than just what his parents had imagined for him. His perspective on things was broadened and his attitude grew more confident and positive.

あなたは親の期待について意識しますか。  
Are you aware of your parents' expectations of you?

あなたは親の期待している道からはずれてしまったと感じたことがありますか。

Have you ever felt like you've diverged from the path your parents expect you to follow?

親が期待している道と自分の目標がちがっていたら、あなたならどう考えますか。

How would you deal with a situation in which your goals in life differ from the path your parents expect you to follow.

功二郎と母親との関係は、中学生のころとくらべて、どのように変わったでしょうか。

How has Kojiro's relationship with his mother changed in comparison with when he was in junior high school?



YK-P07

Kojiro's mother was really happy when Kojiro managed to get into the high school he had chosen himself. When Kojiro was in second year of high school, she told him that his parents had thought it would be a happy life for him if he could get into a good school and find a job in a good company.

## Class Ideas

### 「がんばり」と「くつろぎ(リラックス)」

#### *Ganbari and kutsurogi*

1. Re-examine the My Story text, photo sheets, and photo captions in the text booklet or on the Deai website (<http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/>) for Yoshida Kojiro from the standpoint of *ganbari* (serious effort) and *kutsurogi* (relaxation). Read the captions listed below and sort them into either A or B.

#### A 「がんばり」 *Ganbari*

Goals that Kojiro has set for himself and worked hard to achieve:

Things that Kojiro is working hard at now:

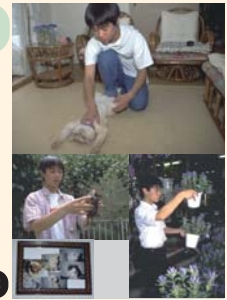
#### B 「くつろぎ」 *Kutsurogi*

Things that comforted Kojiro when things were tough:

Times that Kojiro sets aside for relaxation:

2. Have students introduce a personal experience in which they gained greater confidence by setting themselves a goal and working toward it. Students should also think about what it was that supported their ability to work hard toward that goal at the time and what they did for relaxation.

ペットをかっています。



YK-P03

おんがく  
音楽をききます。



YK-P04

アロマテラピーをします。



YK-D19

ざぜん  
座禅をくみます。



YK-D10

きゅうどうぶ  
弓道部で部長になりました。



YK-D13

とも  
友だちとおしゃべりします。



YK-D14

じゅく  
塾で勉強します。



YK-D18

いちかわこうこう  
市川高校に入りました。

かんじけんてい  
漢字検定を受けました。

Discussion Points/Class Ideas by Fujimitsu Yuko, Japanese Language Advisor, Japan Foundation Manila Office in the Philippines, Former Japanese Language Advisor of The Japan Foundation; Auckland ACENZ in New Zealand