

University Prep
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What Does Success Mean for You?

The higher we go in school, the more we learn. I don't mean only studies. The more we grow, the more we come to have a competitive spirit. When I was a junior high school student, there was a ranking among us students. Because I belonged to a soccer club in junior high school and high school, I had to compete with others to get regular positions on the team and compete to win the game. In such environments, we began to be compared with others, although I don't know exactly when it began. A concept of success was established early.

"I go to the University that is better than his, therefore, I can get a better job and earn a lot of money." I don't like such talking. However, because my high school was one of the famous schools in my city, many students often spoke of 'high background and high wages.' Recently, I asked my friends, "What is success?" They repeated those words, as I had thought. I said, "I don't want to think so." They argued, "Be serious. You should be an adult who can understand society." You can imagine from their response why Japan is often called an "academic credentials society." I don't want to think so, but sometimes I realize it is true because people around me act that way.

To find the true answer to the meaning of success, I decided to ask people who have different lifestyles because I thought that people who have different lifestyles would have very different ideas. In my opinion, there are many different successes as we people are not the same human beings. I decided to ask the question like this: What does success mean for you?

I asked seventeen people in Norfolk. The interview technique was very simple. I asked them to write their ideas about their own successes in my sketchbook and to sign their names. People whom I asked have different lifestyles from each other and are of different ages: teachers, friends who study Japanese and major in something, friends in my class

who came from foreign countries, friends who have different cultures and different majors, and so on. There was only one common thing among them: I know them as well. They are all acquaintances who helped my short life in Norfolk. I could feel really familiar with them because I laughed and smiled and cried sincerely before them. So, I thought I wanted to know just their ideas. Later, I saw that their handwriting expressed their own habits, as if those habits could tell me about their stories that are named "My Life." As I expected, there were many different answers, but I found I could divide the seventeen people into some groups.

Four people answered this question very concretely. One person writes that success for him is to be able to fly fighter jets for the Navy. The other three people describe their exact dreams, too. They wrote about love: "making a great boy friend," "to find unchangeable love," and "to be a good wife, mother, daughter and career woman." I respect them because they have found the path where they want to walk. For them, success means fulfillment of a dream.

Another group had very similar answers to the first answers about dreams, but less concrete. Three people answered like this: "doing something you love to do and doing it well," "finding something that you love to do and making it your job," "to be able to do things I wanted to accomplish." To them, success means doing or achieving what they really want to do really.

Two people wrote about mentality: "to believe myself," "to be confident in myself." When we can get strong feelings like that, we can do anything. If we can believe in ourselves, we can find we are on the right path. They think that success is experienced when they can have a strong positive personal feeling. For them, success means to be able to believe in themselves.

Four people taught me humanities that work well in life: "doing your very best and feeling good about what you do," "enjoying life - this is not a dress rehearsal," "being the best person that you can be, to be able to respect yourself while living life to the fullest," "being

content with my life.” Success for them means to be a good human being and to like themselves and their life.

The other people have original successes. One man says that success is fulfilling one's potential, but most importantly, it is to understand God and to fulfill God's will. I felt the difference of culture very much when I read his messages. One woman says that success is world peace. Success for her has the same meaning among all people. She seemed to think of people all over the world and not just herself. She says that success means that everyone can feel peaceful and spend their lives happily. Another woman writes that success is making sense of what one is doing in life. It's very philosophical. She also says that success is not just a destination and something “achieved.” Success is a journey. So, success for her means being prepared in this journey.

As you know, there are a lot of successes. In fact, views of success seem to be different among all people. Some people show success with dreams. Some people show success with humanities. Some people show success very philosophically. I could understand one thing through these interviews: high background and high salary does not mean success for me. I do know I have not found my success exactly. Even if I can get a high background and much money, I can't fulfill my mind and forget things that are important to me. I am not deceived by the appearance of wealth. I want to find success from philosophy.

I thought of many questions when I was writing this research paper, but this one is very important: In your life, which chapter and scene do you think you will find and get success? Some may say they don't know when they get it. Still, I want to ask them about the scenes when they feel successful in their lives (stories). Is it in the end when they reach the goal in their lives? If so, how do we live day to day without any specific goals? Which role does success play in life? The more I think like that, the more questions I have.

Success is like a keyhole. Although I have tried to put a lot of keys in the lock, I haven't found the right one. The door of answers is not yet open for me. If I can find the

right key, how will I know it? What will it mean for me, for my life? I want to continue this research throughout my life because I haven't yet found my key to success. I want the seventeen people I asked this time to see me growing up through the many experiences, pleasures, and anxieties in my life. When I can meet them again, I will ask them many questions. Most importantly, however, I want to ask this question: Can I count on meeting you again as one of my successes?

Thanks!

And see you again!

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