

Dementia

新島学園高等学校 2年 恩 幣 礼 歌

Have you ever met a person with dementia? Dementia is a type of brain disease which negatively affects memory and behavior in elderly people. In Japan, since we have an aging society, the number of elderly people with dementia is increasing. The government announced that one in five people will develop dementia by 2025. Through experiences with my grandmother, I realized that we all must know more about dementia and change this society to a better one for its sufferers.

My grandfather passed away one year ago, and a half year later, my grandmother came to my house to live with my family. My grandmother is a person with dementia, but we didn't know how hard it would be to live with her. She started asking us the same things many times, such as "Is dinner ready?" after she had already eaten. She refused to take baths for several weeks and would smell quite bad. She would suddenly get angry at us for no reason. And she said things like "My wallet's been stolen!" despite that she had misplaced it on her own. I was really surprised, because I'd never seen my grandmother like that. It was difficult for us to communicate with her and understand her needs. As a result, we realized we couldn't live with her, and we returned her to her own home. But a few days later, I visited her house and I found that she looked very sad, which also made me feel sad and wonder why we couldn't have prevented the situation.

I realized that even though we knew my grandmother had dementia, we hadn't been taught how to cope with it. We caused my grandmother a lot of hardships because we couldn't understand her. So in our society, we need a system where we can learn about dementia. For example, we have a lot of opportunities to learn how to use AEDs in school and in our everyday lives. Like this, city or prefectural governments should offer courses to learn about dementia. In addition, not only adults, but young people should learn about it and how to talk to people with it. Our chances of meeting someone with

dementia will rise in the future, and we need to know how to communicate with them.

Though the number of people with dementia is increasing in our aging society, there aren't enough nursing homes to accommodate them. The nursing home in my area only accepts serious cases, and they rejected my grandmother. On top of that, there are a limited number of care workers, so the workers who help her can't come every day. So we'll also need to work with professionals to help people with dementia as volunteers. For instance, we can cook meals for those who have forgotten how to cook, and we can listen to people who repeat the same words over and over. When someone gets lost, we can help look for them. There are a lot of things we can do to help them. We need to have a system of watching and helping people with dementia in society. By joining volunteer activities like that, we can understand people with dementia more deeply and boost our awareness toward them.

The number of people with dementia will increase in the future. When that happens, if we understand it, we can communicate with sufferers more positively, and help them without being afraid of them or avoiding them. It is true that the government should take actions to care for sufferers, and medical practices may get better, but the problem can't be prevented like viruses can be with vaccines. Nor will dementia be cured in the near future. So until then, it's our responsibility to learn as much as we can to make the lives of sufferers as comfortable as possible. Let's tackle this problem together!