

COME TO THINK OF IT, I MAY HAVE BEEN A LITTLE OFF

Tadashi (73) from the Kanagawa Prefecture, lives alone in an apartment complex

MAKING FRIENDS ONLINE

I'd lived in another town until age 55, but I decide to move to this area after my father passed away and I retired. My cousin invited me to move close to her. It's the first time for me to live alone. After my retirement, I always stayed home and got a little depressed. That's around when I saw a news story about Mixi, a popular social networking service back then. I've always liked using PC, so I got interested in it. I met a young person at the year-end party, and he invited me to Mixi. Then, my network with young people and the community kept growing, and I've made a lot of friends.

TAI-CHI, MEDITATION AND YOGA

Now, I'm involved in so many things. I'm full of curiosity. Living alone is surprisingly nice, as long as you're healthy. So, I've joined groups like Tai-Chi, meditation and yoga.

The Tai-Chi program is held every Monday at a park. Before the COVID outbreak, they also had a program indoor on Tuesdays and Thursdays. About meditation, I've been doing it for around 8 years, I think. At the meditation group, we would have no eye contact for 3 hours in a dimly lit room. We have 3 x 50-minute medication at each session. That's quite tough. After the session, we would go for a drink. Since I started yoga, my upper body feels really revitalized. So, I feel that my whole body is more balanced. I'm glad I've tried.

LOST MY APPETITE

I've been living alone since the retirement, so my life hasn't changed too much. I followed the self-restraint rules for 1 to 1.5 months, going out once every 3 days only to a supermarket. I was surprised how heavy items could get if I shop only once every 3 days. But even though I didn't feel any particular change, I might have felt stressed without realizing it. I lost my appetite, in a strange way.

A LITTLE OFF

While I was stuck at home, I watched some American TV series on Amazon Prime. I could easily spend 4 or 5 hours doing that, so I stayed up late quite often. I also started thinking about stuff like, maybe I should make the end of life plan, or something unnecessary. Although I knew I needed to keep my house clean, I didn't feel like doing it. Normally, I would do it in no time, but I was fine with a messy room. So, I thought I was my usual self, but come to think of it, I may have been a little off.

WEAR A MASK, DON'T TAKE A TRAIN

In the beginning, I was really worried that I might have been infected and didn't want to give the virus to anyone else without knowing it. So, I always wore a mask. But now, it's too warm. I do wear a mask when I go to a supermarket though. About a train, I rarely take it now. I don't go out using a train. If I really had to take a train, I wouldn't touch a strap. I would stand at the end of the door. That's the best place to stand.

MY BODY FEELS HEAVY

Since I'm not as active as usual during the COVID crisis, my body feels heavy and sluggish. I used to do yoga almost every day, but I've been lazy lately and sometimes skip it. Although I didn't feel hungry, I would eat between meals. So, the rhythm of daily life is quite messed up, and I've gained weight a little and my body feels heavier. I think it's one of the effects of the COVID crisis. My daily routines are changed, and I stay up late more often, though I am a night owl to begin with.

MEETING PEOPLE ONLINE

The best thing that has come out of the COVID crisis is that I can see people using Zoom, even with people I haven't been able to see. Since I like new stuff, like Mixi, I got interested in Zoom first. Then, I heard that a mindfulness meditation instructor in Tokyo would start a program via Zoom. I now attend the session every Monday, and it's amazing. People from all over the country can join the program via Zoom, and you don't need to go to a place. Usually, when we meet in person, we would go for coffee after the session. But when 10 of us get together, it's difficult to have conversation. When we use Zoom, we can talk with each other more easily.

A problem with Zoom is when one talkative person keeps speaking about something totally boring. Many people can get together via Zoom, but I think it works better when they set a theme and have active discussion on it. So, I would rather choose LINE LIVE for an online drinking party with friends. That app only allows 4 people at a time, so I think that's the ideal size. It's also free.

GO WITH THE FLOW

I always think of life as an experiment, where we keep taking on new challenges. So, the key word is to enjoy it to the fullest. My motto is “Don’t be arrogant, don’t compare yourself to others, enjoy life and live with composure” by Kirin Kiki, a famous actress.

Life in the post-COVID world? I don’t think much about it. I guess I will just go with the flow. This COVID crisis, I’ve never experienced anything like it in my life, really. So, I would not go against the flow. When the COVID crisis started, I was honestly surprised like, “Wow, what a heck is this?” Although COVID-19 does cause some problems, it could be interesting, this strange creature. That’s how I live every day.

Tadashi’s story was shared with us by [International Longevity Center \(ILC\) Japan – 国際長寿センター](#), member of the ILC Global Alliance, an international federation researching and advocating the vitality and the societal and economical position of older people. In the Netherlands, the ILC network is represented by Leyden Academy.