

# HAPPINESS IS IN YOUR HEART

*Yoshie (82) from Tokyo, housewife, volunteer, lives with her husband in an apartment complex*

## SANCTITY OF LIFE

My main activity is with a religious organization. Of course, I also do what I'm supposed to do for my family, like preparing meals. I also do volunteer work, so I was out every single day. The goals of the religious organization are based on the happiness of individuals, world peace, and the sanctity of life. To make everyone happy. Happiness is not somewhere far, but in your heart. These are the teachings of the religion, and I go to meetings to study those things. The organization also has a museum and hosts programs like music concerts and singing, so I enjoyed these leisure activities as well.

## TIRED

About the religious activities, all of them, including meetings, have been suspended since around February. All the other activities have also stopped, so my life has changed completely, being stuck at home. Things are a little better now, but I think stress has been piling up through so many different things. Now I know why, but back then, I had no idea why I was so tired. I had never felt tired before the COVID crisis. I couldn't sleep at night, maybe because I didn't get enough exercise. Since I have no problem doing physical activities, I was out almost every day. So, staying at home itself has been a challenge for me.

## TV AT FULL VOLUME

At home, the relationship with my husband wasn't great. There are only two of us in the house, and we usually spend time in the same room, which is quite small. When I was doing my things, he was just watching TV at full volume in the same room, all day long. He said he really liked to watch it, and it really bothered me. But we've become wiser, thank goodness. When you are in a hospital, you use an earphone, don't you? Other people can't hear the sound. So, I bought one of them, with a long cord, and asked my husband to use it when I do my things. He agreed to do it, and the problem has been solved.

## HEART EMOJI

My daughter's family lives in another city within Tokyo. She and her husband both work outside, and they often come home late because they're so busy and can't telecommute. So, I often text or phone their daughter, who is now in the 7th grade, because she is at home all alone. So, I think I've been contacting the granddaughter

more often since the COVID outbreak. I send her texts with a heart emoji symbol. I just love her. She gives me energy. I'm worried about the granddaughter, but I can't visit her. My daughter and son also say they want to visit me, but they won't for now because we may end up infecting each other.

## CAREFUL

Before the COVID outbreak, I went shopping every other day or so. But now, I do it every 6 or 7 days, a huge drop. Instead, I started using coop's delivery service. But I felt stressed about not being able to go shopping as often. Well, we can now go more freely though. I also make sure I use hand sanitizer, wash my hands, and gargle. Another thing is, I've started using paper towels, all disposable. As for masks, I wear a handmade mask when I take a walk or go somewhere that's not too crowded. But when I go shopping or take a bus, I use a disposable mask. After using it one time, I put it in a plastic bag and throw it away. My husband is old with underlying medical conditions, so I need to be careful.

## COOKING FROM SCRATCH

Cooking is something good that has come out of this pandemic. Before the COVID crisis, I had been so busy that I had little time to cook. But since my husband has diabetes and high blood pressure, I thought I might as well use this extra time cooking from scratch, like making soup stock with kelp and small dried sardines. No additives. My husband also seems to be enjoying the meals. Food is essential in boosting your immune system, right?

## MY APPEARANCE

Meanwhile, I've lost interest in buying clothes. I used to pay attention to my appearance and buy clothes, thinking that I should be dressed properly as I age. Shopping also helped relieve my stress. But now, I don't buy any clothes, and I don't even want any. Rather, I feel like throwing some away to prepare for the end of life. Well, I still find it difficult to throw them away, but I will need to do it at some point.

## SELF-CENTERED

When the COVID-19 crisis started, I realized that it wasn't that easy to discipline myself. You know, you love yourself more than anyone else, including your spouse, children, and parents. We are all self-centered. That's what I've realized during this crisis, almost painfully. I think I was able to overcome that challenge thanks to my faith. We don't usually reflect on ourselves, but I can do that every morning and evening during the religious service. I can step back and look at myself objectively. What the COVID 19-crisis has made me realize is that all the volunteer work I do for others are also for myself. I've been feeling that strongly over the last few months. I will keep working hard so that I can continue what I've been doing.

Yoshie'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  
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