



## The Reason I'm Alive

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I am currently studying literature, language, and film at Kochi University while also taking courses to obtain a teaching license. A turning point in my life came six years ago. One morning during the third term of my first year in high school, my body suddenly wouldn't get out of bed. At the time, I had no idea what was happening to me and went from hospital to hospital. The final diagnosis I received was "orthostatic intolerance."

Orthostatic intolerance is a disorder caused by autonomic nervous system abnormalities, leading to severe symptoms like dizziness and lightheadedness. I also had symptoms of blood pressure dropping when I stood up, and at my worst, my systolic blood pressure was sometimes only around 70. Due to these severe symptoms, I couldn't attend school and gradually became confined to my home. I stopped communicating with my family, was too scared to reply to friends' emails, and eventually isolated myself from the outside world.

Later, I transferred from a regular high school to a correspondence high school, where I graduated at 18 thanks to the considerable accommodations made for my health. However, I wasn't in a condition to study at university, and I ended up dedicating two years to recuperation. During that time, I often felt restless about my stagnant situation. While family and supportive adults would kindly say, "This state won't last forever, you'll get better eventually, so take it easy for now," my parents worked every day, and my friends went to school daily. Only I did nothing, which made me feel out of place.

This discomfort grew into a broader sense of unease with society and eventually expanded into a discomfort with the entire world. The thought "I have no value" turned into the belief that "there's no need to care for something deemed worthless," which enveloped my heart. Consequently, I once gave up on myself.

Sometimes, I wonder what kept me holding on to my life. It was the presence of my family, who worried about me more than anyone else, and friends who trusted and waited for me. They taught me that "I have worth."

If it weren't for the many coincidences brought about by my illness, I wouldn't have come to Kochi, met many people, or participated in activities with KOCHI IYEO. I want to continue valuing encounters with people from different backgrounds and perspectives to broaden my horizons. Even when I become a teacher, a dream I've had since childhood, I believe I can convey something to children precisely because of my experiences.



Returning to my story, after my illness made it impossible to move or meet people, I started watching films. Initially, it was a form of escapism, but now films influence my reality. Through films, I've made many friends. At university, I also take courses about film, and I find myself studying it. My illness severed my human connections, and now, here I am, a movie enthusiast. However, I don't want to say, "I'm glad I had this experience" or "This experience made me stronger." For me, this isn't just an experience; it's who I am.

The term "self-affirmation" exists, but the one thing I can say is, "I am genuinely glad I was born as me and have lived my life as me." Therefore, I want to continue living alongside everyone.

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