

## Column: It's always all right—"Daijoubu"



Mr. Takao Ogiya  
Director General of APIC

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Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, "Go for it Japan!" has been a catch phrase for the Japanese people. However, many people now feel uncomfortable with these words.

If we are told to "go for it" when we are in a painful or difficult situation, we feel more discouraged because we do not know what else we should do. Although these words mean that we will work together to do our best, it still depresses us because it is derived from negative thinking about the actual situation.

Rikuzentakata City in Iwate prefecture suffered severe damage from the earthquake and subsequent tsunami, as have other affected areas. Although the beautiful pine forest comprising as many as 70,000 pine trees was washed away by the tsunami, just one pine tree miraculously survived. This pine tree has become symbolic of the hope for restoration, inspiring courage in many victims.

Seeing the miracle pine tree, many people interpreted the message as, "Here I am. It's all right," which offered them peace, hope and courage to start on the path to restoration. In this way, the term "It's all right" sounds positive, allowing people to view their actual situation from a positive perspective.

It is often said that experiences help us grow into better people. However, I wonder if that is true. Even if we have discouraging experiences that are similar to others, our future may vary from theirs depending on what attitude we adopt toward these experiences. Some people may take a negative view, blaming themselves or others, and remain discouraged. Obsessed with such negative feelings, they may live unhappy lives.

On the other hand, some people may see similar experiences positively, considering that the experience should mean something to their lives. They may develop from their own experiences and cultivate their character. Such people are almost always tolerant of others, filling those around them with warmth, hope and energy. It is as if they were radiating a golden aura.

It is not experience itself, but attitudes toward experiences, that help us grow into better people. I believe that what is necessary for today's Japanese, as well as for people all over the world, in going through various life experiences is the key term "It's all right."

Since we are given the gift of life, our existence must have meaning. If we find meaning in everything we experience, and believe that all experiences will be beneficial to us, so indeed they will be. Therefore, it is important to always say, "It's all right," no matter what happens.

Certain Japanese terms have become common throughout the world. A recent famous term is "*Mottainai*", which was introduced by Ms. Wangari Maathai, who was a Kenyan environmentalist. She won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in the area of the environment, which was the first time the prize was given for work in this field. At this time, the term "*Mottainai*" became widespread around the world. Similarly, "tsunami" is also used across the

world.

It is my great hope that “It’s all right”—“*Daijoubu*” in Japanese—will become a common term that is utilized around the globe as we all work to make our world a better place.

