

Health promotion and education can be a more dynamic issue in Japanese local settings

Masaki Moriyama

Fukuoka University School of Medicine

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I. Introduction

Since its declaration in the year 1986, the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion¹ continues to guide the global practice of health promotion. This situation is also true in Japan, and recently the notion of health promotion is substantiated to yield two of the national health promotion and disease prevention agendas, Kenkou Nippon 21(KN21; Healthy Japan 2010)² in the year 1999 and Sukoyaka Oyako 21 (SO21; Healthy Parents and Children 2010)³ in the year 2000. The apparent characteristics of these two agendas are their multiplicity of

numerical objectives. KN21 sets a goal to increase quality and years of healthy life. The progress in achieving this goal will be monitored through 70 objectives in 9 focus areas such as nutrition, physical activity, mental health, tobacco restriction, alcohol restriction, dental health, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. All of objectives aimed at the evidence-based interventions and evaluations designed to reduce chronic lifestyle related disease. Although KN21 focused on people of all ages, more than 80% of objectives were for adults. Therefore, in order to include and cover maternal, child and adolescent health, SO21 was developed succeedingly. SO21 therefore

sets a goal to increase the health status of mostly younger generation, and 61 objectives in 4 focus areas such as (1) adolescent health and health education, (2) maternal and child health, (3) disease prevention and pediatric medical care, and (4) mental health in growth and child-rearing, were fixed. In both national agendas, local sectors including prefectures, cities, and towns were encouraged to develop their own agendas for the local people they serve.

As the notion of health promotion is still new in Japan, developing agendas at both of national level and local levels are good chance to substantiate the notion of health promotion in this country. In the first part of this paper, the ongoing process of developing agenda is analyzed from case-based observations. In the second part, a new series of trials are described for our people to think and discuss about their health more dynamically.

II. Image of Health Promotion in Japanese National Agenda

In both national agendas, health promotion is described as the leading discipline. In KN21, the world wide trend toward health promotion is described referring to Alma-Ata Declaration, Healthy People, Ottawa Charter and Healthy City Movements. In SO21, more words are devoted to describe the meaning of health

promotion and a descriptive figure (Fig.1) is provided to help the reader's understanding.

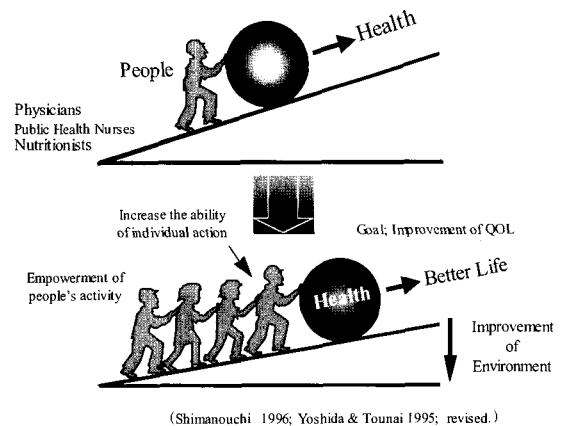


Figure 1. Image of health promotion in Japan

From these figures and texts2-5, Japanese understanding of health promotion emphasize "helping each other toward better health".

Since the declaration of KN21 and SO21, all of 47 prefectural governments and major communities' authorities started to develop their own agendas. As the author contributed to the committee of KN21 in the earlier phase of setting disciplines, the author had chances to visit more than 20 of health & welfare centers and/or community sectors locating in 13 prefectures for the advice during the past year. In each visit, most of the time was devoted to interviews, discussions and advisory lectures regarding the substantiation of health promotion. According to these interviews, human resources and its usages for developing new local agendas were summarized as follows;

- 1) Usually, one or two working groups and a committee are organized in the local sector to develop their agenda. In each of group and committee settings, collaborative strategy is valued as an ongoing trend and members are encouraged to give their comments and opinions.
- 2) The framework of national agenda is, however, not actually challenged, and in most cases, just the same 9 focus areas are adopted for each local agenda. Usually, the discussion regarding the coming agenda focused only on the details of objectives.
- 3) Key members usually confess the difficulty in reaching out toward the other sectors of the local government. Members also confess the difficulty in reaching out to ordinary people in the community.

These findings reflect the Japanese cultural tendency to value the collaborative and harmonic atmosphere rather than facing the critical understanding and sharp discussions among individuals. Therefore, in many cases, the only way to confirm the difference of opinions among people is doing some questionnaire survey. However, questionnaire survey only gives static and quantitative summary of different opinions, and it is never sufficient to conceive the dynamic nature of diversified understanding. Thus, in the process of developing local

agenda, local staffs usually confess;

"Doing planning together in the harmonious and friendly atmosphere within a given group is an agreeable first step toward health promotion movement. However, according to Ottawa charter, the greatest advances in health have been made through a combination of structural change and the actions of individuals. Therefore, we need to find our own acceptable structural change and/or the actions of individuals. However, how can we do?"

III. An Intervention Trial at a Committee Meeting

According to Ottawa charter, health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love. Health is created by caring for oneself and others. Therefore, in the Japanese scenery of health promotion movement, the rather superficial coordination and harmony within a small group should evolve into the more meaningful and dynamic understanding of the humanity including all dimensions of living world related to health. The author adopted the strategy of WIFY, and started his participatory intervention of health recognition in the phase of developing local agendas⁶.

1. Method and Subjects

WIFY (what is important for you?) is a

series of interactive questions originally designed for children to review their daily life and environment⁷. Therefore, it is simple and interactive. The basic question of WIFY is as follows: "Name five matters of importance in your life that you would miss if you lost them." This same basic question is asked in each of the following three situations;

- (1) "Imagine your daily life beginning in the morning, continuing through into the afternoon and evening."
- (2) "Imagine your home, your neighbors, your workplace and your community."
- (3) "Imagine your region, your country as a whole, your continent, and the planet earth."

The following paragraphs report a result of intervention in a committee meeting for developing a local agenda of health promotion, the comparable one to KN21. This is an opening meeting for the development that was held at a health & welfare center of Yamaguchi prefecture in February 2001. The attendants consisted of 30 of community-based stakeholders, and 6 of them were representatives of practicing physicians. The rest of participants were representatives of other community based professional organizations (such as nurses, dentists, nutritionists, school teachers and so on), voluntary organizations and other community leaders. In the usual setting of meeting like this,

participants usually sit silent and do not talk enough about their concerns, because doing so is considered to hurt the harmony of the meeting. Usually, Japanese people are accustomed to relax and go into details of one's concerns only within the small group for which they usually belong at their work place and/or neighbors. However, in order to develop a sensible local agenda that reflect the local people's health related concerns, the traditional static virtue should be replaced by the more dynamic enunciation of each participant's uniqueness. Therefore, WIFY was asked in the meeting.

2. The First Step

WIFY 1: "Imagine your daily life beginning in the morning, continuing through into the afternoon and evening. Then, name five matters of importance in your life that you would miss if you lost them."

WIFY1 is asked to reveal the personal dimension of one's life. WIFY1 guides respondents to think personally. Even if the reason of asking WIFY is explained beforehand at the beginning of the meeting and the consent was obtained, it was very unusual to ask questions like WIFY in the official meeting. However, all of participants replied without difficulty. The following eight responses were shown as examples.

Examples of written replies,

R1: "My family, food, water, car, good

sleep at night."

R2: "Water, air, base ball, golf, life, green woods, vacation, water, electricity, vegetable, relaxation, dinner, warmth, alcohol drinks."

R3: "My family, physical ability and health, electricity, food."

R4: "Jogging, playing tennis, drinks at dinner, seeing patients, personal computer and electric mails."

R5: "Vitality, foods, family, networking with friends, activity."

R6: "Foods, job and work, car, water, electricity."

R7: "Communication with family, friends in the community, being relied on, job role, power to act healthy, water for living, electricity."

R8: "Family, foods, electricity, supermarket, money."

Among eight examples of participants' responses, the first four are of physicians. The remaining four are of community leaders. It is rather amazing that participants revealed their hidden personal concerns so freely in response to WIFY1.

3. The Second Step

WIFY 2: "Imagine your home, your neighbors, your workplace and your community. Then, name five matters of importance in your life that you would miss if you lost them."

WIFY2 is asked to reveal the local dimension of one's life. WIFY2 guides respondents to think locally.

Examples of written replies,

R1: "People at workplace, car, my patients, telephone, friends."

R2: "Greens, safety, vegetables, health, life, my heart, relaxations, hot spring, recreation."

R3: "My family, television, car, my employees, personal computer."

R4: "Mount Ryuou, Akazaki primary school, tennis court, medical facilities in neighbors."

R5: "My family, public house, hospitals, health center."

R6: "Smiles of family, place for gardening, communication with friends, physical body to talk and to act freely, money that can be spent freely."

R7: "Our family, natural settings and yards around my house, place for living and acting together with friends in the community, ties of community, nice spiritual home for children."

R8: "My colleagues, my boss, my family, my care, supermarket and shops, community people."

In WIFY2, participants start to imagine about their community. No replies are the same. However, family and community seem to be the common issue of importance.

4. The Third Step

WIFY 3: "Imagine your region, your country as a whole, your continent, and the planet earth. Then, name five matters of importance in your life that you would miss if you lost them." WIFY3 is asked to reveal the global dimension of one's life. WIFY3 guides respondents to think globally.

Examples of written replies,

R1: "Our nation, our natural environment, seasons, harmony among people."

R2: "Stability of economic status, peacefulness, political reformation, democracy, safety, efficiency, heart, health, hope."

R3: "Park of Tokiwa, our emperor, our language, peacefulness, airplane."

R4: "Peacefulness, oil resource, clean air, food."

R5: "Nature, trip, colleagues and friends, friendship and communication."

R6: "Clean air, beautiful green fields and mountains, convenient transportation, clean water, information."

R7: "Children whom I met during my volunteer activities, Japanese environment after experiencing other countries' environment, exchanges and communications with my volunteer friends, our nation's natural beauty experienced in my trip."

R8: "The nature, water, tasteful air, democracy and peacefulness, food."

In this WIFY3, participants are encouraged

to shift toward a global view point. Peacefulness and natural environment seem to be the common concern among respondents.

5. The Fourth Step of Health Related Inquiry

"Imagine your health and others' health around yourself. Name five matters of importance regarding health that you would miss if you lost them."

This fourth question was asked after three WIFY questions. Before shifting to this fourth question, respondents were encouraged to review all of one's previous replies toward WIFY1, 2 and 3.

Examples of written replies,

R1: "Hospital, administration, health center, playing golf."

R2: "Vegetables, air, restriction of greasy foods, water, take a walk, sports."

R3: "Doing physical exercise, restriction of alcohols, abstain from smoking, coping to stress, control of blood pressure."

R4: "Restriction of alcohols, abstain from over-eating, doing physical exercise."

R5: "Communication and networking with people, good rapport, good and acceptable living condition, friends and colleagues."

R6: "Balanced diet, flower gardens, taking care and encouraging each other, gentle and tender attitude, networking with people."

R7: "Family based compassions and ties to prevent senility and dementia, working at the elderly people's house, care to my friend living with patient, assistance of health examination, physical exercise."

R8: "Vigorous body and mind, hospital in the neighbor, natural environment for good living, Supporting relationship with people in the neighbor, economic status enough for an assured living."

In this fourth question, participants thought about health. It is interesting that physicians and community leaders have different views toward health. All of four physicians referred to life styles that would cause chronic disease. Physicians' views accord with objectives to prevent chronic disease that were contained in the national agenda (KN21). In contrast, community leaders' views value human relationships and human environments above anything else.

6. The Fifth Step and Afterwards

By this time, all of participants finished writing their replies and some of participants started to look around the neighbors' replies. At this time, participants are encouraged to talk with other participants reflecting their replies. Spontaneous interactions and exchanges rose and continued for minutes. After all of exchanges were over in the example cited above, a key person in the committee, a public health

nurse taking a role of planning, confessed;

"Before I asked WIFY to the committee participants, I did not have any courage to talk and discuss with any of the physician leaders regarding our personal view points toward health. After I reflected on my own WIFY and shared WIFY replies with these physician leaders, I started to feel tight partnership with these authorities for the sake of developing our own agenda, not a mere replica of national agenda."

IV. Wify Revealed Uniqueness of Each Respondent

The above is a typical example of participants' response to three WIFY questions and a following question regarding health. During the previous year, the author had chances to ask WIFY to various group of people. Usually, WIFY was asked in the latter part of advisory lectures regarding health promotion.

By asking these questions sequentially, participants are supposed to think about health fully reflecting one's life related unique view points. It is interesting that most of participants not only responded to questions frankly but also increased their intention to share the findings with other participants. Actually, spontaneous exchanges between participants occurred and spread.

When participants are encouraged to think

about focus areas of health promotion after reflecting their own WIFY replies, increasing number of respondents mention about environment and human relationship that was not included in the national agenda. Therefore, in developing local agendas, incorporation of issues regarding environment and human relationship are challenges offered by people living in the community.

Our country has already attained a high level of health status because of numbers of social trials regarding disease prevention. In such a society that participants seek harmony within each of given situations, health promotion movement is also tended to be accepted as a socially controlled movement of "doing something together in a harmony". In such circumstances, developing a local agenda tends to trace the national agenda already developed under the guidance of epidemiologists. However, by asking WIFY, participants start to notice the more dynamic aspect of health realizing the uniqueness of self and others. Learning from other participants regarding their personal view of health and its further sharing will form the basis of further actions of individuals.

V. Individual Uniqueness as a Basis of Health Education

In the Western society, it is needless to say

that each people's individuality and uniqueness is a basis of health education and promotion. People's individuality is also important in Korea and China⁷. However, in such a culture that group based harmony is much more valued than individuality and uniqueness, rediscovering people's individuality and uniqueness is an indispensable process toward meaningful health education and promotion. Although "individuality" and/or "uniqueness" are important, they cannot be taught in the usual class room. The present study and related trials show the significance of WIFY to let participants to rediscover their situations participatory.

In this paper, adults' replies to WIFY are already analyzed. However, thinking about the future of health education and promotion in Japan, the children's responses are more important. Our new generation is expected to overcome the traditional culture of valuing harmony more than uniqueness. Table 1 shows Japanese children's WIFY responses⁸ as examples. For comparative reasons, Chinese children's WIFY responses⁸ are given in Table 2. Each school located in a suburban area in a historical city, Nagasaki in Japan and Beijing in China. In each area, a class of fourth grade children (9 to 10 years old) was visited, and WIFY was asked around the year 1999.

Five Japanese children mentioned about particular names of game and/or shop, and one Chinese child did so. Eight Japanese children mentioned about their home and/or family

(parents, mother, father), and three Chinese children did so. No Japanese children mentioned about school, and all of 10 Chinese children did so.

Table 1. Japanese children's case based responses⁸

Case	What is important for you?		
	WIFY1; Personal view	WIFY2; Communal view	WIFY3; Global view
1	Sleep, pillow, blanket, vehicle, life human, toilet paper, money	Store of <u>AKAGI</u> , tree, forest, air, sea, mountain, public office of <u>KOSASA</u> , match	Human, senator
2	Toy- <u>LEGO BLOCK</u> & model car & toy-mini car & doll, money, human life, toilet, meal-Gohan	Electricity, shop - <u>HELLO</u> & <u>BANBAN</u> , fire, car, bicycle	Shop- <u>JASCO</u> , Tokyo tower, eyeglass, TV, Hokkaido
3	Family, brothers, life, TV, friends	House, electric pole, tree, shop, school	Bath, town, gas station, car, nature
4	Home, family, foods, money, water	Tree, grass, shop selling vegetables, air, home	Home, fire, water, money, food
5	Clothes, shoes, game computer - <u>NINTENDO</u> & <u>SUPERFAMICON</u> , toilet & t-paper, air, money	Shop-Super <u>KOSASA</u> , nature, trees, leaves, mountain, school, public office, sea, river	Food, air, nature, home, water
6	Meal, umbrella, refrigerator, air conditioner, family, home, money	Nature, mountain, river, forest, shop (Super & <u>FAMILY MART</u> & <u>IWAI</u>), friends, waterworks facilities, dam, electric power plant, playing facilities, parks	World, Japan, USA, Brazil, Spain, stars, spaces, planet Mars & Saturn, the earth, ships, cars, people, scientist, friends, myself
7	Money, water, family, food, rice	Mountain, fields cultivating, sea, home, electricity	Fire, space-station, home, nation
8	Game - <u>PLAYSTATION</u> & <u>FINAL FANTASY</u> , home, TV, foods, drinks, money	Friends, electricity, peace, nature, shops	Peace, nature, electricity, TV, money
9	Water, food, family, money, river	Tree, air, plant-Kenaf, home, land	Earth the, the sun, the moon, home, fire
10	Breakfast, exercise, lunch, money, game-cards	Nature, human, friends, foods, air	President, nation, human, water, electricity, parents

* The underlined words are proper nouns representing some brand name or shops.

Table 2. Chinese children's case based responses⁸

Case	What is important for you?		
	WIFY1; Personal view	WIFY2; Communal view	WIFY3; Global view
1	Homework doing, housework doing, lessons reviewing, games playing, going to school, water drinking, soccer playing, flowers watering, eating, TV watching	Small forests, kindergarten, bridges, armies, gas stations, rivers, shops of Beihu, fields, restaurants	Water, the sun, hometowns, animals, the air, trees, campuses, meals
2	Going to school, TV watching, games playing, homework doing, soccer playing	Fields, rivers, kindergarten, trees, gas stations	Water, the air, animals, plants, schools
3	Teeth brushing, face washing, school going to, cleaning the classroom, playing after class, eating, homework doing, TV watching, sleep	Roads, factories, bridges, school gate, studying, high schools, villages, rivers	Bridges, the air, roads, vehicles, water, grain, street lamps, animals, human beings, schools, trees, flowers, houses, lands
4	Electricity, water, grain, trees, parents, classmates, home, sleep, schools, teachers, birds	Electricity, TV, study, water, trees, families, parents, birds, the sky	Electricity, TV, water, trees, the sky, birds, families, parents, teachers, study, schools, classmates, the earth
5	Getting up, face washing, home going, homework doing, classrooms cleaning, school going to, vegetable washing	Public corporation, forests, gas stations, restaurants, factory, rivers	Water, vehicles, Tian'anmen, fields, animals, the air, electricity, constructing sites
6	Study, classrooms cleaning, school going to, lessons reviewing, vegetables washing, cooking	Public corporation, gas stations, restaurant, kindergartens, fields, factory vehicle, trees	Vehicles, bicycles, flowers, grass, trees, animals, fish, rivers, the air
7	School going to, lessons reviewing, care from the teacher, games playing, TV watching, housework doing, homework doing, vehicles, time	Fields, trees, flowers, water, animals, factory, public corporation, friends, kindergartens	Water, forests, plants, the air, grain, human beings, animals little, friendship, electricity, computers, the army, motherland, schools, historical sites
8	Books, school bags, classrooms, vehicles, clothes	Forests, power stations, gas stations, rivers, kindergartens, public corporation, factories-electric line	Water, vehicles, the air, rice, houses, schools
9	Our schools, games, my mother, teachers, textbooks, our campus	Bridge in our village, our school, my mother, our teachers, our village	Our homeland, our earth, water, grain, mothers, trees, flowers, grass
10	Eating, water drinking, feet washing, flowers watering, toys playing, sleep, TV watching, friends playing with, study, homework doing, school going to	Villages, forests, kindergartens, gas stations, rivers, houses, fields, crossings, shops, public corporation	Houses, hometowns, flowers, trees, eating, water clean, lands, animals, fishes

The overall replies to WIFY questions are understood as images of reflection of one's living environment, and the respondent is expected to integrate these images to realize one's uniqueness and individuality. Although it is also true for children that health is created within the settings of everyday life (where they learn, work, play and love), the detailed profile of the everyday life is different and diversified between individuals and groups. Even within the framework of Japanese culture, our younger generation is apparently experiencing very different environment in comparison to the older generation. Understanding each generation's diversity should be the basis of health education and promotion throughout ages. The notion of "evidence based" is already popular in Japan, and numerical evidences are valued in both of KN21 and SO21. However, real individuality is still beyond the numerical evidence. Asking WIFY is only a starting point in this society in searching our own acceptable structural change and/or the actions of individuals. It is interesting that in both samples of Japanese and Chinese, the children enjoyed asking WIFY, and spontaneous exchanges arouse and continued. This finding suggests that chances of learning participatory by WIFY extend beyond the nation's border. Actually, some of my students started their new trials to learn participatory from Korean students⁹. According to their findings, Korean students are

unique in their dynamic and logical way of thinking. A new era is beginning for us to learn from Korean people from their dynamic way of life⁷. It is no doubt that the successful learning contributes for our establishing of more acceptable and more unique notion of health promotion and education.

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