



A Message of Love – Ashley Prescod

POP QUIZ: Can you guess what my favorite holiday is? It's *VALENTINE'S DAY!*

Valentine's Day is a great time of the year to give a treat to the people that we love. When I was younger, my mother would often work a lot. So, when she came home, she was very tired. But every year on Valentine's Day, I would come home from school to see my bed covered in plushies, flowers, a box of chocolates, and a card that said, "I love you".

However, Valentine's Day isn't only a day for romance. It's a chance to spread the love to those we care about. Did you know that on Valentine's Day in America, *boys* are the ones who give *girls* chocolate? And Americans do not have White Day!

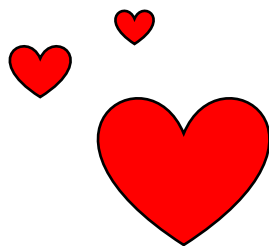
So, a few days or even a few weeks before Valentine's Day, a boy will ask a girl that he likes to be his "valentine". This means he likes her and, if she says yes, she likes him too! Then, on Valentine's Day, he may do something special such as plan a date somewhere together, buy her a card and chocolates, or give her flowers.

Still, even without a valentine, you can enjoy the holiday by giving something special to the people you love.

In fact, a Professor from the University of Arizona named Kory Floyd did research about the effects of showing love on stress. He found that if you communicate your feelings to the people you love, you will actually be healthier! You might have less stress, lower blood pressure (血圧), and a stronger immune system (免疫システム).

So, give a hug, send a text, make a card. Why not try lowering your stress by showing people you care?

Happy
Valentine's
Day!



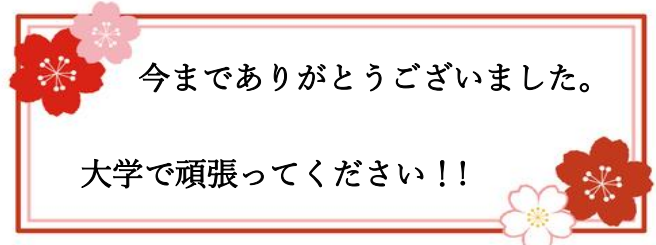
Advice for Your Next Step – Katelyn Sondereker

Soon, 三年生 will graduate, which is very exciting! Many of you are probably thinking about starting your new lives, so here are two pieces of advice for your next step.

The first is to collect experiences (経験を集める). Many of you are going to university, where you will have so many new opportunities. You should explore new places, meet new people, work at a part-time job, study abroad, or join a new club. Don't hesitate (ためらわないで); do things even if you are scared; try everything that interests you. Every time you do something new, you add a new piece to your puzzle (パズル). **Collecting these experiences and memories will help you to build a clearer picture of yourself and who you want to be.**

The second is to trust yourself (自分を信じて). Sometimes when we start a brand-new journey (新しい旅), it is easy to feel like we are drowning (溺れている) in deep water. This is a very natural feeling: When you jump into something new, of course there is a period of time where your head is underwater (水中). But I promise that you are not drowning. Trust yourself to know which way the surface (水面) is. Trust yourself to adjust to new things, to overcome challenges, to make good decisions, to find the people and things in life that will make you happy. **You can trust yourself in new waters because you have already learned how to swim.**

I have had so much fun teaching all of you! Thank you for all of the hellos and how-are-yous and smiles, both in the classroom and outside of it. You have all worked so hard to achieve your goals, and I am so glad that I was here in Japan to see it. I am looking forward to seeing what you all do next!



Please try it!

Microwave Chocolate Mug Cake Recipe



- 31 grams of flour
- 10 grams of cocoa powder
- 40 grams of sugar
- 1.5 grams of baking powder
- a pinch of salt
- 60 mL of milk
- 30 mL of oil
- 2.5 mL of vanilla
- 14 grams of chocolate chips

How to make it:

1. Grease a 12-ounce (or larger) mug with butter, cooking spray, or oil.
2. In a bowl, mix the flour, cocoa powder, sugar, baking powder, and salt.
3. Add the milk, oil, and vanilla and mix well.
4. Pour the cake batter in the mug and put the chocolate chips on top.
5. Microwave the cake in the mug for 60 to 90 seconds.
6. Take it out of the microwave (be careful it might be hot!) and enjoy!

Can you match the Valentine's Day tradition with each country?

1. Germany



A. People wear the name of the person they like on the sleeve of their shirt!



2. Finland



B. People exchange presents that are pig-shaped (like plushies and cards) because pigs are a symbol of love!



3. America



C. This country celebrates Friendship Day instead of Valentine's Day. People give gifts to their friends to show them that they love them.



4. South Africa



D. People who like each other give each other gifts like chocolate, flowers, and jewelry. Usually, boys give chocolate and gifts to girls.

