

April, 2017

## **A message from the counselor for international students No.12**

by Kaoru Ikuta

Counselor for International Students, Center for Health Services

### **The Psychology of Weakness**

When your friend says to you, “You’re a weak person”, how do you feel?

When we can’t achieve our goals, for example, we lose an important match or fail entrance examinations or employment interviews, we feel worthless and often regret our weakness.

The word weak has negative meanings, such as, lack of ability, less power, no patience, weak-minded. Usually, a robot is made to be perfect to fulfill particular duties, however, Dr. Okada of Toyohashi University of Technology, has dared to develop so-called “Weak Robots”. For example, a Sociable Trash Box Robot, a tube-shaped box which can identify trash in a room, but doesn’t pick it up and is programmed to ask someone who can pick it up and throw it in to the robot via non-verbal communications, such as bowing. This is very different to the way robots are typically programmed. He says he has developed them focusing on the idea of how a robot may rely on someone around it and explains the role of the robot is achieving its goal by involving the persons around it and giving them the pleasure of help and cooperation. It seems Dr. Okada shows us a new way of thinking, weakness gives us a chance to enrich the relationships with others by using Weak Robots.

I had surgery seven years ago and my physical strength is weaker than it used to be. As my walking pace has become slower, when I walk with someone who doesn’t know my condition, I need to say the phrase, “I can’t keep up with you because I’m not as strong as I used to be”. To spend my daily life with physical weakness, which will never be recovered, I need to say the things which I can’t do and ask for help from people around me, like Weak Robots. When I say about my condition, people gain a new understanding of my weakness. Otherwise I become exhausted trying to keep pace with them.

At orientation for international students, I say, getting help from people around you is not a shameful thing. Although we have been educated to do things perfectly by ourselves, we can rely on people around us, in case of trouble. We can create relationships with others by asking for help, or showing our weakness. Those relationships will help you. Those who help you will get something by helping. Many Japanese students reflect on helping international students and it gives them a chance to think about themselves and their future plans.

In this issue, I have introduced you to a new way of thinking about weakness, which gives us a chance to enrich the relationships with others.

\*To make an appointment, please contact the Center for Health Services. ☎:045-339-3153

\*Previous messages are available on the ISC’s website.