

Considering the Nature of the Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center and Disaster Support
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The MDMHCC was founded on December 1, 2011, about nine months after the Great East Japan Earthquake, with the establishment of a Stem Center in Sendai City. The following year, from April 2012, the Kesenuma and Ishinomaki Regional Centers were opened, and full-scale operation began throughout the prefecture. The MDMHCC was the first organization of its kind in Tohoku, ahead of Iwate and Fukushima Prefectures, and was founded with the aim of enabling people affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake to regain their peace of mind as soon as possible. We are a so-called coalition team, encompassing multiple occupations such as psychiatrists, public health nurses, psychiatric social workers, and clinical psychologists. We come from various backgrounds; some, like me, are transfers from private institutions. For others, this is their first job, and there are yet some who visited Miyagi for the first time after the earthquake. Also, each of us has our own personal sense of proximity to the disaster; on the day of the earthquake, some looked at the tsunami face-to-face and could not even leave their house for some time, while some watched the disaster from overseas. However, I think all of us share the same level of passion: we were all moved by what we had seen and threw our normal, daily lives out the window to take part in this venture.

The Center's business mainly consists of six items: (1) raising public awareness, (2) resident support, (3) support for supporters, (4) human resource development, (5) support for various activities, and (6) research. Each has important implications, but I feel the need for (3), support for supporters (support for those involved in support), is strongest. Public health nurses and other municipal officials are caught between coordinating external support while also working with victims and are struggling in this "gap." In addition, "living support counselors" who have been involved in support in temporary housing since the earthquake are also working hard despite being confused by the unfamiliar role they have been asked to take on. We believe that providing logistical support to those who directly accept the feelings of the people in such areas will lead to the enhancement of support for the residents.

It has already been a year and a half since the earthquake. The results of the AKB48 general election have become a hot topic across generations, and people have forgotten day and night as they have been uplifted by the medal rush at the London Olympics. Even in my hometown Miyagi, there are many bright topics out in the streets, including the breakout title run of Vegalta Sendai, and the earthquake seems to be a thing of the past. However, at some point, when conversation drifts over to that time, the emotions that people have kept hidden away flow out, often with tears. The sadness of losing something irreplaceable and the regret that something could not be accomplished come and go. Yes, we have kept the various "incompletenesses" we were unable to fully digest inside us all this time while attending to our daily lives. Though I open the lid I keep sealed over these emotions from time to time, I still quietly hope to one day be able to touch these precious memories with peace in my heart. Just as people who have overcome past record-breaking tsunamis and the experience of world war II have done.

In this disaster, many supporters from all over the country visited, regardless of occupation or industry, and supported our lives. In addition, the lessons learned from disasters in Hyogo and Niigata Prefectures have illuminated the uncertain road ahead. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the many people who came from afar. But alas, as the Nankai Trough topic has already been covered in the media, it is clear that the next disaster may not be far away. The extent to which we can apply this lesson to our future will be tested. "Support for supporters" does not mean "support that is provided according to the thoughts and expectations of supporters." The needs of the affected must always be paramount. I also want to highlight the value of humility, of walking in step with others. I suppose you might think all these cautions and warnings are too little, too late. However, as a lesson learned amidst reconstruction, I would like to emphasize once again that such an obvious, natural attitude is, in fact, easily lost in an emergency.

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