

Greetings

What is needed for community recovery

Miyagi Prefecture Mental Health and Welfare Association

Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center

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It has been 11 years since the Great East Japan Earthquake, and it has been just as many years for us at the Miyagi Disaster Mental Health Care Center (MDMHCC). We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has watched over and supported the activities of the MDMHCC.

We have considered the mission of the MDMHCC to be both supporting injured individuals as well as supporting the revitalization of communities that have suffered severe damage. Unfortunately, after the 2011 earthquake disaster, the world experienced traumatic events. Under these circumstances, we sometimes consider the characteristics of “humans” as living things from the recovery process of communities that are different from ours.

The first is the characteristic of “gathering.” It may be that “gathering” is an instinct shared by all living things, not only humans. I believe that people instinctively come together to overcome crises. Forming a circle before a team sport or huddling together when it is cold may be some examples. After the Earthquake, various salons spontaneously sprung up and started to operate, and some of these groups have remained active.

The second is the characteristic of “working.” It would be wonderful if we could “talk” about our painful experiences and complaints when we come together, but it seems that “talking” requires too much preparation. To regain our autonomy, we silently create, instead of talking. After the Earthquake, we saw people making artwork, such as knitting, stuffed animals, and furniture. The other day, I had the opportunity of seeing Ukrainians who fled to another country silently making quilts colored in blue and yellow.

The third is that “culture” will be the axis of recovery. “Culture” can be said to be the identity of a community. It reaffirms who we are and creates a stepping stone for collective recovery. In the “gathering” and “working” mentioned above, we get a glimpse of the “culture” that is unique to the community. For Ukrainians, blue and yellow are the colors of their national flag that symbolize their identity. Let us take a moment and think about ourselves. What is the “culture” that we cherish?

Just like our bed head before going to work, it takes effort and ingenuity to notice the things that have become part of our bodies. The time has come for us to take a proper look at how we are recovering from an extreme catastrophe. We believe that it is also the mission of the MDMHCC to reflect on this process of community recovery, organize it, and pass it on to future generations. We are only partway there. We hope to continue receiving your guidance and encouragement in this endeavor.