

Introduction

Who will convey, who will receive, and how will experiences be conveyed?

Miyagi Prefecture Mental Health and Welfare Association

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The Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred 13 years ago damaged private psychiatric hospitals in Miyagi Prefecture, with three coastal hospitals in particular being hit by the tsunami. On the basis of this experience, the Association of Miyagi Psychiatric Hospitals created a book titled *MIYAGI 3.11 2011 Record of the Great East Japan Earthquake*. We compiled not only the records of each hospital but also the notifications of special measures during the earthquake. We distributed copies of the book to psychiatric hospital associations across the country to express our gratitude for the support we received and to help us in future disasters. Afterward, a large earthquake occurred in the Kyushu region. When I subsequently talked to the director of the affected hospital and asked him about the book, he told me that he had not seen it.

Forty-six years have passed since the magnitude 7.4 Miyagi Earthquake, which originated off the coast of Kinkazan at 17:14 on June 12, 1978, occurred. Hardly any tsunami was recorded with this earthquake, but a seismic intensity of 5 was recorded in Sendai and Ishinomaki cities, and 27 deaths occurred in the prefecture, including people crushed by block walls. A survey conducted June 2023 on the Miyagi earthquake⁽¹⁾ indicated that 78.5% of the respondents knew the date of the earthquake, but only 73.3% of all respondents knew the correct date. The correct response rate among those in their 50s and older was 81.0%, but the rate among those in their teens to their 40s was 44.2%. A survey conducted by Sendai City on experiences from the Great East Japan Earthquake⁽²⁾ indicated that 37.2% of respondents had “already conveyed it or had left something behind,” with the response rate among those in their 60s and older in particular being at least 40%. A survey conducted in February 2024 among sixth graders in Miyagi Prefecture who were born after the Great East Japan Earthquake⁽³⁾ indicated that 17.7% of the children were unable to give the date of the Great East Japan Earthquake, which suggested that the memory of the disaster was insufficiently conveyed to subsequent generations.

In March 2024, 20 local newspapers conducted a survey⁽⁴⁾ on whether past lessons were put to good use in response to the Noto Peninsula Earthquake that occurred on January 1, 2024. Response rates for “not much put to good use” and “not at all put to good use” were 21.2% and 14.0%, respectively. There were also many negative opinions regarding the environment of evacuation centers, such as “the landscape of evacuation centers is the same as those of the March 11 disaster.” However, 3.2% responded with “sufficiently put to good use” and 35.6% responded with “put to good use to some extent,” indicating that 38.8% think that the lessons have been put to good use. Opinions were expressed on not only the “tone of the announcer who called out for tsunami evacuation,” “early support from areas that experienced the earthquake,” and “partitions and cardboard beds at evacuation centers,” but also that “it would be strange if the lessons were not put to good use.”

The generation that experienced the Miyagi Earthquake and the Great East Japan Earthquake have earthquakes and disasters as a part of their life history and carry them as unforgettable memories. Conveying the experience of disasters to generations that have not experienced earthquakes or disasters may be challenging. There is also the saying that “most people only see the reality that they want to see.” In the present day, when disasters have become more commonplace, I think it is becoming increasingly necessary to continue recording experiences, disseminating daily information to convey experiences, and utilizing the wisdom gained from these experience in push-type support in disaster-affected areas.

1. What was the date of the Miyagi Earthquake? Only 44% of those in their 40s or younger knew it was “June 12”–Kahoku Shimpo survey, Kahoku Shimpo, 2023-6-7, Kahoku Shimpo Online, <https://kahoku.news/articles/20230606khn000040.html>, (Last accessed 2024-06-28)
2. Sendai City, Citizen Awareness Survey Report on Disaster Prevention (Summary), 2019
3. One in six sixth graders born after 3.11 in Miyagi Prefecture cannot correctly write the date of the Great East Japan Earthquake–Kahoku Shimpo, 2024-02-26, Kahoku Shimpo Online, <https://kahoku.news/articles/20240225khn000024.html> (Last accessed 2024-06-28)
4. 3.11, Kumamoto... Were the lessons put to good use in the Noto Earthquake? Survey by 20 local newspapers–Experts say “Wide-area damage in depopulated areas could also happen in other areas”–Kahoku Shimpo, 2024-03-01, Kahoku Shimpo Online, <https://kahoku.news/articles/20240229khn000027.html> (Last accessed 2024-06-28)