

THE MIRROR RULE by Yoshinori Noguchi

This is a true story, but the characters' names, occupations, etc. have been changed.

41-year-old Eiko Akiyama had something to worry about.

Her 5th-grade son Yuta was being bullied at school.

The bullying, though, did not seem to involve violence. He would be left out by his friends or be blamed for whatever went wrong.

"I'm not being bullied!" Yuta insisted. But it made Eiko's heart ache when she saw him look so lonely.

Yuta liked playing baseball, but his friends did not invite him, so he would go to the park alone after school and play catch against a wall.

About two years before, there was a time when Yuta played baseball together with his friends. One time, when Eiko passed by the elementary school on the way back from shopping, Yuta was playing baseball with his friends in the field. Yuta had made an error, and his teammates criticized him severely. They shouted at him and harassed him relentlessly.

"You're lousy at this!"

"We lost 3 points because of you!"

"It'll be your fault if we lose!"

Eiko thought, "So what if Yuta's not such a good athlete! Why can't they see that? At least he's a kindhearted kid..." Eiko was frustrated because it was so painful to see her son kindly apologizing to his teammates who had just said such mean and awful things.

Soon after that, Yuta was no longer invited to play baseball anymore. His classmates would say things like, "We don't want you to play with us because you just get in the way."

For Yuta, not being involved in baseball activities was the toughest thing. His pain only became obvious when he took his frustrations out on his mother. However, he never talked about his pain or loneliness. The toughest thing for Eiko was Yuta not opening up to her. He just kept insisting that he was fine. When Eiko would try to encourage him to make friends, he would say, "Stop bothering me! Why don't you just leave me alone?" When she asked him if he wanted to transfer to another school, he got even angrier. "I would really hate you then!" he said.

Eiko felt totally miserable and helpless for not being able to help him in any way.

One day, not too long after Yuta left for the park after school, he came back home looking upset.

“What happened?” Eiko asked.

“Nothing,” he lied.

The truth came out that night when she received a phone call from a neighbor friend.

“Eiko, did you hear anything from Yuta?” she asked.

“No, what?”

“Today, I was helping my youngest kid play on the swing. Yuta started playing catch against the wall as usual. Then, seven or eight kids, who I think were Yuta’s classmates, showed up and told Yuta that he was in the way because they were playing dodge ball. Then, one of them threw a ball at him. He left for home right away. I felt bad that I couldn’t do anything right then and there.”

Eiko was shocked.

“He didn’t say anything about it...” she thought. She was sad that he had not told her anything after having had such a painful experience. Even so, she could not bring herself to talk to Yuta about it either.

The next day, Eiko decided that she would call someone and ask for help.

His name was Mr. Yaguchi. He was her husband’s senior at school. Eiko had never talked to Mr. Yaguchi, but a week before, her husband had given her Mr. Yaguchi’s business card.

Mr. Yaguchi was also her husband’s senior in the kendo school where he used to go during his high-school years. Her husband had not seen him for about twenty years, but they ran into each other recently when her husband was walking around town.

They were excited about their reunion after not seeing each other for such a long time, so they went into a coffee shop and reminisced for about two hours. Mr. Yaguchi was now working as a management consultant. According to her husband, Mr. Yaguchi was also familiar with psychology, and he was good at solving problems for individual clients as well as businesses. So, when her husband talked a little about Yuta, Mr. Yaguchi said, “I think I can help,” and handed him his business card.

That day, giving Eiko Mr. Yaguchi’s business card, her husband had said, “Why don’t you give him a call directly? I’ve already filled him in.”

“Why do I have to ask a stranger for advice? You should ask him.”

“I’m more worried about you. You’ve been worried about Yuta for a long time. That’s what I asked Mr. Yaguchi’s advice for.”

“Do you think I have a problem? It’s only natural that I should be concerned. I’m his mother. All you need to do is drive your truck all day, so you can be as relaxed and care-free as you want. I’m the one actually raising Yuta. You don’t even worry at all. I’m not going to ask that person for advice. I’m sure he doesn’t know anything about raising a child anyway.”

Eiko threw the business card onto the table.

A week had passed since that conversation, and Eiko was so depressed and feeling so desperate that she had to do something. The story she had heard from her neighbor the day before had really hit her hard.

“I don’t want to feel this pain anymore”, she thought. “I will accept help from anyone at this point.” It was then that she remembered the conversation about Mr. Yaguchi, and luckily, she found his business card right away. About an hour after Yuta left for school, she made up her mind to call him. At that time, Eiko had no idea what an amazing thing was going to happen later that day.

A female receptionist answered, and transferred her to Mr. Yaguchi.

Eiko gave him her name, but since the voice of Mr. Yaguchi answering the phone sounded so cheerful, she hesitated and thought to herself, “I wonder if I should ask him for advice about a concern like this.”

She was having trouble finding what to say next when Mr. Yaguchi started talking. “Are you Mr. Akiyama’s wife by any chance?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Is that right? It’s nice to talk to you.”

“Sure, but what has my husband told you?”

“Well, I did hear a little from your husband. I understand that you are worried about your son...”

“Is it really okay if I ask you for advice?”

“I have about an hour to spare right now, so if you don’t mind, please tell me the story now over the phone.”

Eiko talked briefly about her son Yuta being bullied and left out of activities, and also about what happened the day before...

After listening to her story, Mr. Yaguchi began to talk.

“Sounds like you’ve had a painful experience. In fact, there isn’t anything more painful than witnessing the pain in your own child.”

When Eiko heard those words, her eyes welled up with tears.

Mr. Yaguchi, noticing that Eiko had started to cry, waited until she regained her composure, and went on. "Ma'am, if you really want to solve this problem, you may be able to find a way."

Eiko could not believe these words of hope, because this problem with Yuta was something that she had been worrying about for such a long time, and she had not been able to make any progress at all. However, she also wanted to believe that Mr. Yaguchi's words were true.

"If this problem can be solved, I will do anything. I mean it. But what could I possibly do to solve this problem?"

"Well, let's start searching. First, what's clear is that you are criticizing someone close to you."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Sorry. That was too big of a jump, wasn't it? I should take the time to explain the theory behind it before jumping right in to the sensitive issues, but that would take hours and I don't have that much time. So, I will start with the conclusion I have drawn. It has a theoretical basis, so I will let you know later some books you can refer to. For now, let me tell you what I think is the problem: You are worried because your dear child is being criticized by others, and that's because you are criticizing someone in your life you should be thankful to instead."

"Why do you think there's a connection between my child being bullied and my personal issues? This idea of yours sounds like a wacky religion to me."

"I don't blame you for feeling that way. With our school education, we grew up being taught mainly the material sciences in which the object is something visible to your eyes. What I am talking about now is a rule that was discovered a long time ago in the area of psychology. However, you may think of some very sound religious ideas that have been around a long time if it's easier to think in those terms. That's fine. I myself don't belong to any particular religion, though."

"All right then, please tell me about this psychology you're talking about."

"What happens in reality is one 'result'. A 'result' always has a 'cause', and that cause is in your heart. In other words, you can think of the reality in your life as a mirror reflecting what's in your heart. For example, by looking at a mirror, you notice, 'Oh, my hair is messy!' or 'Oh, my face looks pale today'. Without a mirror, you won't be able to notice your appearance. Think of life as a mirror. Thanks to this mirror called 'life', we can see the reflection of our inner self, which gives us a chance to change from the inside. Life is made so that you can keep growing yourself."

"What part of me is reflected that causes me to worry so much?"

“The consequence that is happening to you is ‘you are troubled because your dear child is being criticized and hurt.’ The cause I can think of is that you are ‘criticizing and hurting someone who you should be cherishing.’ Aren’t you yourself criticizing someone who you should be thankful for and who is closest to you? Speaking of someone closest, what about your husband?”

“I am thankful for my husband. Thanks to him working as a truck driver, our family can eat.”

“That’s good. Then, are you cherishing your husband? Do you respect him?”

Eiko was startled when she heard the word “respect”. Eiko had been looking down on her husband somewhat. From Eiko’s perspective, her optimistic husband could be labeled as a “careless person” or an “uneducated person”. Eiko graduated from a four-year college, but her husband was only a high-school graduate. Not only that, the way her husband talked was unrefined, and just about the only things he read were magazines. Eiko, whose hobby was reading, did not want Yuta to grow up to be like her husband.

Eiko mentioned that to Mr. Yaguchi.

“Are you thinking that a man’s worth is determined by his education, amount of knowledge, or judiciousness?”

“No, I don’t think so at all. I think that each person has his own strengths and special abilities.”

“If you think that way, then why do you look down on your husband for being “uneducated”?”

“Well... I guess I’m contradicting myself.”

“How is your relationship with your husband?”

“The things my husband says and does often annoy me, which sometimes results in a fight.”

“How is your husband dealing with Yuta’s issue?”

“I am always telling my husband about Yuta being bullied – a bit like whining. But I haven’t really asked my husband for advice because I can’t take it seriously. It turned out that my husband is probably the most difficult type of person for me to deal with.”

“I see. There may be a root cause. You need to deal with that cause even before you attempt to accept your husband.”

“A root cause?”

“Yes, you need to find out the root cause of why you cannot accept your husband. Let me ask you this. Do you express gratitude to your father?”

“What? My father? Of course I am thankful...”

“Don’t you have a feeling of “unforgiveness” toward your father somewhere in your heart?”

The word “unforgiveness” bothered Eiko.

“I suppose that’s true. Maybe I haven’t forgiven my father,” she thought.

She thought she was thankful for her father as a parent, but she was never able to like him. After being married, every year she would go back to her parents’ with her family to make an appearance for summer and New Year holidays. However, she hardly ever had a conversation with her father other than brief greetings. Thinking back, since high-school, she never had any family-like interaction with her father at all.

“I don’t think I have forgiven my father. But I don’t think I can forgive him, either.”

“I see. I understand that you don’t think you can forgive your father. But are you willing to give it a try?”

“Is my worry over Yuta really related to my father and husband?”

“I think you will find out if you try.”

“Okay. Please tell me what to do.”

“Okay, first, try what I’m going to tell you. Write as much as you want on a piece of paper about your feelings of ‘unforgiveness’ toward your father. Even venting your anger into your sentences would be fine, too. Words like ‘You make me sick’, ‘Damn you!’ or ‘I hate you!’ would all be okay. If you remember a specific incident, write it down and also note how you felt when that happened. Don’t hesitate to vent about any of your grudges. What you are going to write down is your feelings. Do it until you feel satisfied. When you are really feeling satisfied, give me a call again. I will give you my cell phone number, too.”

Eiko was doubtful that this would help in solving Yuta’s problem, but rather than not doing anything, she thought she should try if there was any possibility of it working. She thought to herself that she would do anything if there were a chance it could solve her problem with her son. Besides, she felt Mr. Yaguchi’s story was strangely convincing despite the fact that she did not understand the basis of it. After hanging up the phone and getting a report pad, Eiko started writing down whatever came to mind about her feelings toward her father.

When she was a child, he was a nagging father. Dinnertime often turned into lecture time. Yelling at his children when they didn't behave the way he wanted was just the kind of father he was.

"Dad doesn't care about my feelings at all!" she thought.

She did not like it when he would grumble about work when he was drinking. She also did not like it when her father, who was a site manager of a construction company, would come home in his work clothes covered with sand and dirt, and often have dinner without changing.

As Eiko was putting her feelings toward her father into sentences, before she knew it, she was writing many harsh sentences like, 'You jerk!' and 'You have no right to be a father!'

She also remembered one specific incident. When she was a high-school student, she went on a date with a classmate on a Sunday. Her father happened to see her when she was walking with a boy. Afterwards he had her explain, and he then gave her a lecture. She had lied to her parents saying that she would be going out with her girlfriend, and her father seemed like he was not able to forgive her for lying. She still remembered the words he had said at the time: "Is your relationship the kind that makes you feel so guilty that you need to lie to your parents about it? You will never be a decent woman!"

Thinking back, tears of anger came out. She put that anger into sentences, too.

"The way you are makes me want to lie to you! Don't you even understand that you are causing all this? Besides, it was so horrible for you to say 'You will never be a decent woman.' You don't know how much that hurt me! YOU are not a decent father! I shut myself away from you ever since then. It's your own fault!"

While she was writing these words, tears, would not stop rolling down her cheeks.

Before she knew it, it was past noon. It had been almost two hours since she started writing. She had written out all her anger using more than ten pieces of paper. Either because she didn't hesitate to write or because she cried her eyes out, she felt extremely relieved.

Eiko called Mr. Yaguchi when the clock showed just past one in the afternoon.

"Did you write down your feelings?"

"Yes, I let all my feelings out. I cried a lot, which made me feel good."

"Were you able to make up your mind to forgive your father?"

"Honestly, I may not be ready for that just yet, but I am willing to do whatever I can. If I could forgive him, I would, just to release myself from this pain."

“Then, let’s try. Forgiving your father is for nothing else but for your own freedom. Get a piece of paper. Then on top write the title, ‘What I Can Be Thankful to My Father For.’ Now, if you could thank your father for something, what would you think about?”

“First of all, for working and providing for us. Thanks to him working and earning money, our family was able to eat, and I could be raised.”

“Write those down on the paper. Anything else?”

“Let’s see... When I was in elementary school, he often took me to the park and played with me.”

“Write that down, too. Anything else?”

“Maybe that’s about it.”

“Now, get another piece of paper, and write the title, “What I Want to Apologize to My Father For.” So, do you have anything you want to apologize to him for?”

“I can’t think of anything in particular, but if I have to, maybe “for always resisting him in my heart.” But I don’t feel like apologizing from my heart.”

“It’s okay if the feeling is not there. We will start with formality. For now, write down what you just said.”

“I wrote it down. So, to start with formality, what should I do?”

“Listen. From now on, you must find courage. Maybe this is the time in your life when you will use your courage the most. What I am going to suggest may be the action that you would want to resist most. It’s your decision whether you want to proceed or not.

Now, call your father, and let him know the words of thankfulness and forgiveness. Remember, even if the feeling is not there, it would be okay if you just said the words. In fact, it would be okay just to read what you wrote down on the two pieces of paper. You can hang up the phone right after you say it. Would you like to try?”

“Um... for sure I wouldn’t be able to do this without using more courage than I have ever used in my life before. But if this would help solve my problem, I think it would be worth it. But it will be really difficult...”

“You can decide if you want to try or not. I, too, think it would be worth using your once-in-a-life-time courage. Well, I have to go now, so let me excuse myself. If you try, please let me know. Then I will tell you the next step.”

The idea that “formality would be okay” was the only thing that kept Eiko thinking that she could go through with it. As far as apologizing, she knew that feeling wouldn’t follow. Because of the thoughts that her father was the bad one, she thought it would be unreasonable for her to apologize. However, it seemed possible just to read what

she had written down. With this in mind, she was able to convince herself that she might as well try.

At the same time, Eiko felt it strange to find herself seriously considering making the phone call. Unless there was a reason like this, Eiko might have never in her life thought to call her father on the phone.

Right after her marriage, when she would call her parents and her father answered, she would say right away, "It's me. Would you get Mom on the phone?"

But now, just by saying "it's me" she could hear her father's voice calling her mother, "Hey, Eiko is on the phone." Her father knew that there was nothing Eiko would ever need from him.

However, on this day she would be talking with her father on the phone.

Thinking, "the more I hesitate, the harder it will become to call," Eiko made up her mind, and called right away.

It was her mother who answered.

"It's me."

"Oh, Eiko. How are you doing?"

"I'm okay... Well, Mom, is Dad there?"

"What? Your Dad? Do you need to talk to your father?"

"Yeah, just a little."

"Wow, that's a surprise. Well, what do you want to talk to your father about?"

"Um, well, it's a strange story, but it's complicated to explain, so would you just get Dad on the phone?"

"Okay. Wait a minute."

For the few seconds until her father answered, Eiko became extremely nervous. She had hated her father for a long time. She had refused to open up her heart to her father. Now, she was going to say the words of thankfulness, and then apologize. It would have been impossible if she thought normally about it, but for Eiko, who had been worried sick about Yuta, and since that concern was serious enough, she was doing something that she normally would not be able to do.

If there were a possibility that she would be released from that worry, she would do anything. These kinds of thoughts drove Eiko into continuing on with courage.

Her father answered, "What? You wanted to talk to me?"

Eiko started talking, panicking so much that she didn't even know what she was saying.

"Oh, well... I never told you this before, but I thought I should, so I called... Well, Dad, I think it must have been tough working at construction sites. Since you hung in there, I could be brought up. Well, when I was a kid, you would take me to the park and stuff, right? What should I say? 'Grateful' or any other words of thanks I don't think I ever told you. So, I thought I should tell you now... Also, I was, in my heart, resisting you a lot. So I thought I wanted to apologize about that, too."

She was not exactly able to say "thank you" or "sorry".

But she told him what she needed to say anyway. She thought that she was going to hang up the phone as soon as she heard her father's words. However, no words came back from her father.

"If he's not saying even one word, I can't hang up the phone". When she thought that way, it was her mother's voice that she heard from the receiver.

"Eiko! What did you say to your father?"

"What?"

"You said something terrible, didn't you? Your father broke down in tears!"

From the receiver, she could hear her father sobbing.

Eiko was struck dumb with shock.

She had never heard her father cry before in her whole life. Her father was always that strong figure for her. Now, she was hearing her father sob. Just because she expressed her gratitude even as a formality, that strong father was crying.

As Eiko was hearing her father sob, tears welled up in her eyes, too.

She thought, "Dad wanted to love me much, much more. He must have wanted to have more father-daughter conversations. But I rejected him. He was lonely. My strong father who would bear any tough things at work is now breaking down in tears. His love not reaching me was such a painful thing to him."

As Eiko's tears kept coming, she began to sob, too.

After a while, her mother's voice returned.

"Eiko! Have you calmed down, yet? Would you please explain?"

"Mom, would you get Dad on the phone one more time?"

Her father got on the phone. His voice was shaking with emotion.

“Eiko. I am sorry. I was not a good father,” he said and continued through sobs, “I think I made you upset a lot.” He was unable to speak anymore.

She could hear him sobbing again.

“Dad, I’m sorry. I was a bad daughter, too. And, thank you for raising me.” Eiko’s voice disappeared in her sobbing, too.

After a while, Eiko heard her mother’s voice again.

“What happened? Please explain later when you’ve regained your composure. I’m going to hang up the phone for now.”

Eiko was dumbfounded for a while even after she hung up the phone. For more than twenty years, she had hated her father. She couldn’t forgive her father. She was thinking that she was the victim. She was seeing only one side of her father, and she did not even try to see the other side. Her father’s love, weakness, clumsiness... she was not able to see. How painful it must have been for her father! How many tough times she must have given her father!

Thoughts came one after another.

Then, feelings of gratitude toward her father started to spill out.

“It would be okay to start with formality. Feeling will follow later.” She finally started to understand the meaning of the words that Mr. Yaguchi had said.

“Yuta will be home in about an hour”, she thought, and just then, the phone rang.

When she answered the phone, it was Mr. Yaguchi.

“Hi, this is Mr. Yaguchi. I have forty or fifty minutes of spare time, so I called. I felt like I hung up the phone in the middle of our conversation when I had to go earlier.”

“Actually, I called my father. I’m very glad I did. Thank you. It’s all because of you.”

Eiko briefly explained what kind of things she had talked about with her father.

“I see. It was good that you took action with courage.”

“I thought that Yuta being bullied was the biggest problem for me, but I feel like not forgiving my father for years was a much bigger problem. Thinking that I was able to reconcile with my father because of Yuta’s problem, I even feel that Yuta’s problem may have been a blessing.”

“It is good that you are able to see Yuta’s situation that positively now. There is something called “The Rule of Inevitability”, and if you learn this rule, you will find out the following: In fact, any problem in life happens so that you will notice something important. In other words, it doesn’t happen as a coincidence, but it happens

inevitably. It must happen. That means that there is no problem that comes to you that you can't solve. Problems happen because they can be solved, and if you face them positively with love, they will bring benefits that later make you say without any doubt, "I'm glad that problem happened, thanks to that..."

"I see. But Yuta's problem itself hasn't been solved at all, so that makes me worried."

"Are you sure the problem with Yuta hasn't been solved? It just might be much closer toward the solution. The world of spirit is all connected. If you solve the cause, then the result has to change."

"Could Yuta's problem really be solved?"

"I think that's up to you. Well, let's summarize a little. For you, the most painful thing regarding Yuta is that Yuta won't open up his heart to you. As a parent, you said that not being able to do anything is miserable and painful. You said you would not want to experience that painful feeling anymore."

"Yes, that's right. He won't even ask me for advice about being bullied. I want to help, but he rejects me saying, 'Leave me alone!' I feel helpless. Since I know how lonely my child is, as a parent, nothing is worse than not being able to do anything."

"It must be really difficult. By the way, you know by now who it is that was experiencing that painful feeling, don't you?"

"What? Who it is...?"

Then, the face of Eiko's father came up in the back of her mind. She thought, "That's right! This unbearable feeling is what Dad must have been experiencing for years. The pain of his daughter not opening up her heart... The pain of being rejected by his daughter... The pain of not being able to do anything as a parent... It's the same as my pain. Dad must have been experiencing this pain for over twenty years."

Tears rolled down Eiko's cheeks.

"I see. I was experiencing the same pain as my father was. He must have been in so much pain. I now understand why he couldn't quit sobbing".

"The problems that happen in life happen so that we will notice something important."

"I now understand my father's pain. Thanks to Yuta, I was able to find this out. Because Yuta didn't open up his heart to me..."

"Your son, your father and you are all connected through your hearts. Yuta demonstrated to you your attitude toward your father. Thanks to that, you were able to notice."

"I want to thank Yuta. I feel like saying, "Thank you for letting me notice something important." Until now, in my heart I was blaming Yuta, thinking "Why doesn't he talk to me?"

“Do you understand Yuta’s feelings now?”

“That’s right! When I was a child, I hated my father nagging. I hated him nagging about all kinds of things. When I think back, that may have been out of my father’s love for me, but at the time, it was a burden. I think Yuta is feeling the same way now. I think that my love may seem pushy, and it is a burden to him.”

“When you were a child, what kind of a parent did you really want your father to be?”

“I wanted him to trust me. I wanted him to think, ‘Eiko is fine just as she is!’ I don’t think I have trusted Yuta. I was thinking that unless I help him, he won’t be able to solve his problems. That’s why I asked him this and that, or lectured him... I want to trust Yuta more.”

“Now that you understand your father’s pain, and also Yuta’s, let’s move on to your husband. When I received a call this morning, do you remember me saying ‘the reason Yuta is being criticized and hurt is that you are criticizing and hurting someone close to you?’ ”

“Yes, I remember. I said that I was not able to respect my husband.”

“So once again, would you talk about how you feel toward your husband?”

“I can’t help but feel that my husband is ‘an uneducated person’ or ‘a careless person’. When it comes to Yuta’s issue, even if I am this worried, he is optimistic for no reason. So, even though I whine about Yuta to my husband, I don’t really ask him for advice because I don’t trust his opinion.”

As Eiko was talking, she realized that her attitude toward her husband was similar to the one toward her father.

“This is similar to how I felt about my father.”

“That’s right. In the case of women, the attitude toward their fathers often reflects the attitude toward their husbands. By the way, as I was listening, your husband sounds like he trusts Yuta.”

“Oh, that’s right! I see. I should have learned that part from my husband. Yuta seems to be telling his honest feelings to my husband. Since Yuta thinks he is trusted, he opens up his heart to his father. I wasn’t seeing the good part of my husband at all.”

“I see... It seems that your feelings toward your husband have changed. So now, I’ll give you some homework. You can decide if you are going to do it or not. This afternoon, you wrote two papers: ‘What I Can Be Thankful to My Father For’ and ‘What I Want to Apologize to My Father for’. On those papers, add as much as you can about what you can be thankful for to your father, and what you want to apologize about to your father. You can use as many sheets of paper as you need.

“When you are done with that, I want you to write one more list. The title of this one should be, ‘How Should I Have Thought to Act Toward My Father?’ You are not

writing this to regret your past relationship with your father, but so you can find a hint of how to act toward your husband from now on.

“Then one more thing: when Yuta goes to sleep at night, as you are looking at his sleeping face, in your heart toward Yuta, whisper ‘Thank you’ a hundred times. How does that sound? Would you like to try?”

“Yes. I will try for sure.”

Soon after she hung up the phone, Yuta came home.

As Yuta threw his school backpack in through the front door, he went to the park as usual with his glove and ball.

“He was chased away by his friends yesterday, and he is still going to the park again?” Eiko’s heart was filled with concern.

However, as if her homework were beckoning her in order to take her mind off her worries, she picked up her pen and paper and began.

Many things that she could be thankful for to her father came to mind:

What I Can Be Thankful to My Father For

- He provided for us by working hard as a construction site manager.
- When I was a child, I had a high fever in the middle of the night several times, and he would drive me to the emergency room every time. (It must have been hard for my father to do that in the middle of the night because he had to do hard physical labor during the day).
- When I was a child, he would often take me to the sea or river and teach me how to swim.
- I liked melons when I was a child, and every year on my birthday, he would buy a melon on the way home.
- I was bullied by a neighbor kid when I was a child, and he would go to the kid’s house to take care of the problem.
- I entered a private college, but he paid my tuition without complaining. (At that time, it must have been a big burden for my family).
- When I got my first job, he ordered sushi. (It was gorgeous sushi. At that time, I said, “I don’t like sushi”, and I didn’t eat it. My father looked disappointed).
- He said, “Just in case something happens to me...” Then, he opened a bank account for each of us siblings, and although it was a little, made deposits every month. (My father tried to hand me the money on the day before my wedding, but I didn’t accept it then and said, “I can’t carry it around, so it would be better if you deposit it into my account”).

What she wanted to apologize for came to her mind naturally following what she wanted to be thankful for.

As she was writing, tears welled up in her eyes. “I was loved so much. Dad loved me, and I rejected him. As I was obsessed with the feeling that I couldn’t forgive him, I was not able to notice his love. Then, even though I was loved so much, I didn’t do anything for him. I wasn’t being a very good daughter”:

She also noticed that she did not respect her father’s job. She was thinking that her father’s job as a construction site manager was “undignified” or “not intellectual”. Thanks to her father who kept working hard, she was able to go to college. She noticed this for the first time. She now felt respect and gratefulness toward her father’s job.

Just then, she had an image of her husband’s job as “not intellectual”. The image of dislike toward her husband as “uneducated” was very similar to the image she had toward her father. She should have many things to be thankful for to her husband as well.

As she was thinking that way, she went and got a piece of paper and titled it, “How Should I Have Thought to Act Toward my Father?” and regarding this, many thoughts came to mind right away:

How Should I Have Thought to Act Toward My Father?

- I should have noticed my father’s love behind his words and actions. I should have understood that he is not a perfect human being just as I am not a perfect human being. All of us are clumsy now and then in our own way.
- I should have been thankful for being taken care of.
- I should have loved my father rather than only having received love from him. (I should have tried to make him happy).
- Above all, I should have been honest with him and told him how I really felt, in order to help build a good relationship.

Eiko thought that this was exactly how she should think about her husband from now on...

The husband who works for her...

The husband who continues to be her life partner...

However, she was forgetting to be thankful to him.

This may have been her first time to think this honestly about her husband, and she thought that it might have been something to do with her being able to be thankful to her father. She thought, “I am going to thank my husband today”.

When she was thinking about all these things, Eiko realized that it was getting dark outside and that she didn’t do any housework all day. Since calling Mr. Yaguchi at around nine in the morning, she had been facing herself all day.

As she wondered what she should do for dinner, Yuta came bursting through the door.

“Hey, Mom, listen!”

“What happened? You seem happy!”

“You know Daiki, right? Actually yesterday, I was hit with a ball by Daiki at the park.”

“Oh, wow, is that right? Daiki is the one who bullies you most, isn’t he?”

“When I was leaving the park to go home, Daiki came to the park. Then, he told me that he was sorry for bullying me all the time.”

“Is that right?!” As they were talking, she felt as if she was experiencing a miracle. “This must have something to do with me reconciling with my father”, she thought.

Eiko decided to order dinner rather than prepare it so she could have time to talk to Yuta. While they were waiting, Eiko looked at Yuta and began to speak.

“I’m sorry I was nagging so much before. From now on, I will be careful not to nag so much. If you need my help, please don’t hesitate to come to me. Always remember, though, that I trust you very much.”

“Thank you, Mom”, he said, and Yuta’s face glowed with happiness.

Of all the things Yuta wanted, what he wanted the most was his mother to trust him. He went on and said, “Today is a little strange. Good things keep happening.”

Eiko felt exactly the same way.

Dinner arrived shortly, and Eiko said, “I am going to wait for Dad to come home, so go ahead and eat.”

“Oh? What’s wrong? You always eat before he gets home.”

“I feel like eating with Dad today. Dad is working hard and coming home tired. It would be lonely for him to eat cold ‘oyako-don’ alone, right?”

“Then I will eat with Dad, too! It would be more fun eating with the three of us together.”

“You are really a nice kid. You got that from your Dad.”

“That’s strange. Before, you always talked about Dad as being a little too unsophisticated.”

“You are right. I was wrong. Dad is kind, manly, tough... a man of men.”

“If I don’t study, I can only have a job like Dad’s, right?”

“I’m sorry, Mom was wrong about that, too. Dad’s job is a great job. It’s helping others. Besides, thanks to Dad working, we can eat like this. Let’s be grateful for Dad’s job.”

“Mom, do you really think so?”

“Yes, I do.”

The smile on Yuta’s face when Eiko said that was the happiest of the day.

A child naturally respects his parents and grows up seeing his parents as his models. Eiko’s words were like giving Yuta permission to respect his dad.

“It’s okay to respect Dad!” he thought, and Yuta was happy about that most of all. After a while, her husband came home, and the three of them ate the cold “oyako-don”. Maybe because they were waiting for him to come home, her husband was very happy, too. He was eating the cold “oyako-don” saying, “This is good! This is good!”

While her husband was taking a bath, Yuta went to sleep. Eiko, looking at Yuta’s sleeping face, started saying “thank you” in her heart. Maybe because of the words, the feeling of gratefulness came out from the bottom of her heart.

“I kept thinking it was because of him that I was worried. But thanks to him I was able to notice something important. I may have actually been led by him.”

Thinking that way, Yuta looked like an angel.

Before she noticed, tears welled up in her eyes. It was certainly a day she cried a lot. Soon after that, the phone rang. When she answered, it was a fax. In her mother’s writing was the following:

Dear Eiko,
I heard about today from your father.
Your father was crying as he was talking.
I was so happy, I cried, too.
Your father said that today was the happiest day in the seventy years of his life.
At dinner, although your father always drinks, he said that he didn’t want to ruin his happy feeling by getting drunk. So, he didn’t drink today.
When are you coming home next?
I’m looking forward to it.

Mom

“My father, who never skipped drinking at dinner, didn’t drink...” Eiko thought. She recalled the words that she had said to her father, and she realized just how happy they made him – how much they filled his heart. She also wondered if it might have been from loneliness that her father could not stop drinking, even when he was not feeling well, until now.

Tears welled up in Eiko's eyes again.

"What's wrong? Are you crying?" her husband asked, coming out of the bath.

Eiko told him everything that happened that day: calling Mr. Yaguchi in the morning... writing down her grudges against her father... calling her father in the afternoon and reconciling with him...

"Oh... Your father was crying, too..." Her husband listened with tears in his eyes, too.

Then she told him that Daiki apologized to Yuta for bullying him and being so mean.

"Well, strange things happen, huh? I don't really understand Mr. Yaguchi's way, but it is good that you are feeling so relieved."

Eiko went on to apologize to her husband as she was crying. "Thank you for everything. I'm sorry I didn't really notice how wonderful you are until now." Big drops of tears rolled out of her husband's eyes, too, as he was listening to Eiko's words.

The next day, Eiko told Mr. Yaguchi what happened, and gave him her sincere thanks. Her husband seemed to have called him the first thing in the morning, too.

"I received a call from your husband, too. I'm glad to have been of help. I respect your courage and action. If you're interested, I'd like to recommend a list of books for you to read. I'll choose a few of my favorites and fax you the list. Anyway, what's important is from now on, every day, make time to say the words 'thank you' to your father, your husband and Yuta a hundred times in your heart".

Later that day the door burst open.

"I'm home!" Yuta called out with a cheerful voice.

Then he continued, "Mom, listen! Today, I was invited by my friends to play baseball! I'm leaving now! Bye!"

Yuta bolted out the door with his glove.

Tears welled up in Eiko's eyes again. Choking, she could hardly say the words "See you soon."

- The End -

FAX

Dear Mrs. Eiko Akiyama,

The mirror called life allows us to notice very important things for us.

I'm proud of you for taking such courageous actions.

I have one favor to ask of you.

I think that this experience you had will help someone else.

So, when you have the opportunity, I would like you to talk about your experience.

This is the favor I ask of you.

I hope your life will be filled with the joy of knowing love and gratitude!

For your reference, the following is a list of the books that I recommend for you to read.

Ikikata (A Compass to Fulfillment) by Kazuo Inamori; Sunmark Shuppan

Genin to Kekka no Hosoku (As a Man Thinketh) by James Allen; Sunmark Shuppan

Ikigai no Sozo by Fumihiko Iida; PHP Kenkyujo

Yurusu to iu koto (Forgiveness) by Gerald G. Jampolsky; Sunmark Shuppan

Chikyu Dai Yosoku Orchestra Shikiho by Yoshiyuki Takagi; Sogo Horei Shuppan

Shiawase Seikoryoku wo Himashi ni Takameru EQ Note; by Yoshinori Noguchi;

Nihon Jitsugyo Shuppan

Mr. Yaguchi