

Being Selfless

Oyasama often said:

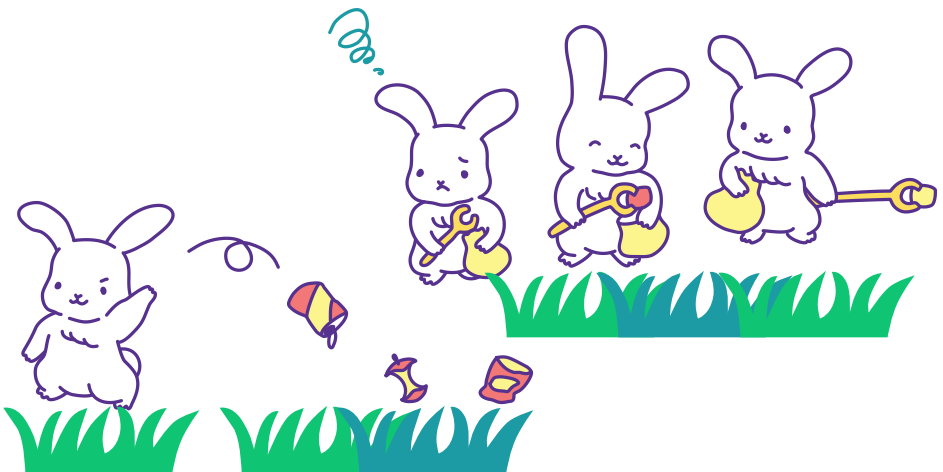
"I must save at least one person a day. Otherwise, I cannot let the day pass."

Anecdotes of Oyasama, no. 177

Imagine that you are cleaning up a park, a beach, or a sidewalk together with your family and others, doing this as *hinokishin* or "selfless and thankful action." One of your children offers a simple comment: "I wonder why people throw trash here. That's a nuisance to everyone." Picking up trash makes the place clean and gives it a refreshing feeling, thereby bringing a smile to everyone's face.

It seems that there are people who throw trash wherever they please and those who pick up trash. Some people create problems, and others try hard to deal with problems they did not create. This is not a matter of age or gender. There are young children who are sensitive and kind to others and some adults who seem to care only about themselves.

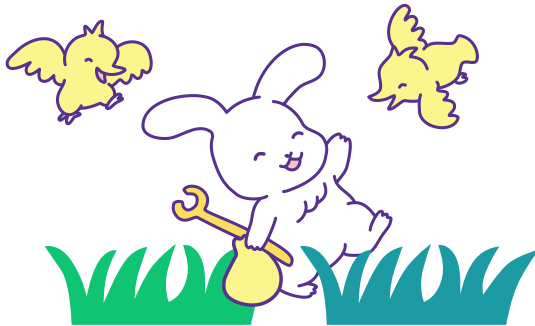
On the surface, it may seem as if those who clean up problems are losing out, often at the whim of selfish people. It may seem as if it pays to be selfish, because self-centered people seem to be having an easy time, letting their convenience take precedence over others'.



Yet is this really true? In fact, those who throw away litter are losing a great deal. Their behavior tends to invite trouble and alienate others. These people may even end up friendless. On the other hand, those who clean up litter know the selfless joy of doing things for others. Popular with others and surrounded by smiling faces, they are sure to enjoy a happy life.

Sometimes a word or a facial expression is sufficient to help others. If more and more people make a conscious effort to be helpful to others in their daily lives, the world will certainly become a better place. When we perform hinokishin, we realize how fortunate we are to be picking up litter instead of throwing away litter.

Nevertheless, some people dismiss the value of being helpful to others. They say things such as: "This is a hard world where you can't survive by being an idealist" and "You are so naïve; you should be thinking about your own well-being instead of others." If someone in an important position makes such remarks, you may feel convinced.



Yet there is someone who remained totally focused on helping others without regard to Her own or Her family's needs. Her life bears witness to the joy and happiness that comes from selflessness.

She is Oyasama. In the face of all the hardships and tribulations that befell Her, She lived with grace and joy. "I must save at least one person a day," She said. "Otherwise, I cannot let the day pass." Helping and saving others was the greatest source of delight to Her. As we come to know more about the way She lived, we will see that Her exemplary life eclipses any form of self-centeredness that may seem desirable. She is by our side, smiling gently. She is a beacon of hope and optimism for life in this world.