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Living with disability: alternative strategy for an old mother to be guided by her daughter with cerebral palsy.

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INTRDUCTION;

Suicides in Japan exceeds 30,000 cases every year for the past seven years since 2002. Suicides of people over 60 have been increasing and are the highest of all age groups. Despair over health conditions and disabilities are often pointed out as major reasons for these deaths.

STUDY QUESTION ; *How can people with disabilities assist elderly people in overcoming the stigma for disablement and illness?*

DESCRIPTION ;

In the early 1950's, being diagnosed with cerebral palsy (CP) was like being told a fatal illness. On the train home after being told that her baby has CP, the mother was about to jump from the running train with the baby girl in her arms.

Robert Murphy said "We do know that the stigma of disability is much worse in Japan than in the United States, and that the aura of contamination that often surrounds the disabled becomes attached to other members on the family. "

More than a half a century later, the mother, who was going to leap to her death with her daughter, suffers from impairments from a traumatic brain injury caused by a car accident. She also has depression, tumors, and dementia, and is in need of long-term care. The daughter, the one people thought "should not exist", lived as a person with CP in the local community, making relationships with people around her, and saying what needs to be said. The daughter gave birth to three children and raised them. Like many others with severe disabilities, the daughter acquired the skills and knowledge needed to lead an independent life, utilizing the technologies and services available and getting the care she need.

This lifelong achievement of the daughter is what the mother ultimately relied on. The mother left her husband and is living with the daughter and her family for some years now.

DISCUSSION

From a young age, people with disabilities have often been treated as the ones who "should not exist". People with disabilities fought hard against this thinking, people with disabilities learned to accept themselves as they are and discovered the meaning of life.

People with disabilities can guide our aging society to learn how to live with disabilities and to lead an independent life utilizing available resources.

References:

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- 3)Robert Murphy," Encounters: The Body Silent in America" in Disability and Culture, ed. Benedict Ingstad, and Susan Reynolds Whyte. 140-157(Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press,1955),144