

# A Safety Net for Mental Health

## Edit and Issue

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## Schedule a counseling appointment

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Office hours: (excluding holidays)  
Monday through Friday 10:00~20:00  
Saturday 10:00~18:00

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※We will reply to you within two business days  
after receiving your message.

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You can also schedule a  
counseling appointment  
through the LINE app.

(\*Reservations only.

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"Search", choose "ID", enter  
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## Spring has come! Smile has come!

April is a season to start new things. You may be moving to a new location, or having new work fellows. Changes in the environment, even if they are good ones, can be stressful. The new environment needs to be psychologically safe in order for us to assimilate to it smoothly.

Psychological safety is a "state in which you can feel safe in expressing your opinions and feelings", and three essential elements are: (1) facial expressions, (2) language, and (3) attitude. Not only does this apply to the workplace, but also daily life.

For example, let us imagine a situation when you get a problem in an airport and ask a question to a ground staff. What if the ground staff looks glum, talks in a small voice with the eyebrow furrowed, and moves slowly? If you encountered such a reaction, you would feel hesitant to ask a question and it would make you feel down even though you were looking forward to the trip.

On the other way round, you would feel relieved if the ground staff greets you with a smile (even through a mask) asking you whether you need a help, or checks your reservation status promptly. You will surely want to use their services at the next opportunity. A good atmosphere is created in a flow of (1), (2), to (3) above.

Let us think about (1) facial expressions first, particularly how to smile. The face has approximately 30 muscles. There are two keys in making a smile: lowering the outer corners of the eyes, and raising the corners of the mouth. The former is more difficult than you think. They are never lowered unless you are truly laughing from the heart. However, you can do the latter by intention. The tip lies in the pronunciation of the word [i] in Japanese (or "e" in English)

Words such as "cheese" include the sound [i] that makes a smiling face when you take pictures. My recommendation is "oishī suītsu" (tasty sweets). This leads us to pronounce the sound [i] three times and the last one is elongated, which is particularly effective in turning up the corners of your mouth. Before meeting customers, try to practice saying it loud when you brush your teeth or wash your hands in a restroom with a mirror. If you imagine your favorite dessert such as a sponge cake (this is generally called "shōto kēki" (short cake) in Japan) during the practice, it will be even more effective. To begin with, try to make a smile even if you force it to yourself, then your words and attitude will naturally be more cheerful.

Smile for you (for the others). Smile for me (for your own relaxation).

Let's start April with a nice smile!

## Counselor's Oasis

Working out at the gym refreshes body and mind together. However, you may find yourself in a monotonous routine with the machines you use when you work out alone. That's why I sometimes take a studio class such as yoga and boxercise classes. In these classes, I had to use muscles that I do not normally use, such as twisting my body or stepping backwards, and that makes me feel good. "I am stretched. I know I am stretching!" The next day I can realize the results through the pain in my muscles (lol). Engaging in certain types of exercise (repetitive exercise, aerobic exercise, etc.) promotes secretion of various hormones such as dopamine and serotonin, enhancing my physical and mental health.