

Be an Independent Thinker

Good afternoon everyone, I am Alisha and I am a fourth year student at Waseda University from Washington State. I will be sharing my testimonial on how I became an independent thinker through the Soetanto method.

So first, I will start off with before university. I was very active, did a lot of community service, I loved sports, was a cheerleader, very outgoing and I had huge dreams of moving to Tokyo and studying Japanese in depth and becoming a translator. But, it was when I entered university that I became lost and thought that maybe this was not the path for me. That is when my motivation really slumped and declined. I hit rock bottom my third year, as you can see in the chart, and I will go into detail on why that happened.

This is because I was bound by expectations and had a lot of family pressure. People telling me that it would be a waste if I didn't stay in Tokyo, and work there; a lot of pressure from the hierarchy system, learning keigo and adapting to that. Also, societal expectations. You have to know what you want to do by your second year and obtain your job by your third year. There is also a huge emphasis on age.

As a consequence, I became depressed and withdrew from society. I didn't see my friends, stopped studying, didn't care about my appearance, and I basically lived my life like a hermit for over a year. It was through attending Professor Soetanto's lectures and the many stories and messages that he conveys through his lectures, that I was able to regain my motivation.

One thing in particular that stood out to me is Professor Soetanto's testimonial, in which he began his university career at the age of twenty-six. This is totally unheard of in today's age, especially in Japan. He went on to obtain four PhDs by the age of fifty-two. That's exactly the type of role model I needed in my life at that time. He was totally unbound, didn't care about the expectations from the surrounding people or environment. He also stressed, don't take the easy typical road and don't enter the workforce without knowing your true ambitions.

For me, I never gave myself the opportunity to think about what I wanted to do and how I could contribute to society. Attending his lectures was a constant affirmation, as well as talking with my fellow students and confirming and reevaluating what I wanted to do personally that led me to set my own expectations. I was able to learn about myself and get to know myself and accept who I was.

In conclusion, I, and I am sure a lot of people in the audience and other students who have taken Professor Soetanto's lectures, can attest to the fact that we have all become independent and free thinkers. That is my testimonial, thank you very much.