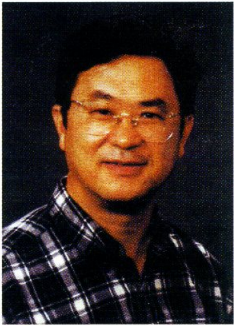


# The English Page with Excerpts

## Hikikomori: Social Withdrawal Syndrome in Japan

Psychologist Hattori Yuichi Describes the Japanese Family and the "Hikikomori Epidemic"



**Q:** What are the main causes of Hikikomori?

**A:** In simple terms, the root cause is attachment problems at early ages, which later lead to fear and distrust of people.

By "attachment problems", I mean the lack of healthy parent-child bonding. Japanese people seem to have close family relationships.

But actually, many Japanese have dysfunctional parent-child relationships.

Emotional neglect, absence of parental-child communication, and inhibition of a child's self-expression are often common in traditional Japanese families.

Japanese mothers and most fathers consciously or unconsciously neglect or ignore the emotional well-being of their children (In Japanese we call this "mushi").

For example, a young mother at church might appear to express love and attention to her toddler, when she is with other people. But at home, she may go hours or even days refusing to speak to that child.

Most missionaries might find this hard to believe, but it is not uncommon in Japanese families.

As a result, a Japanese child is conditioned to not complain or express his true feelings to parents.

A child's core belief is that "I cannot trust my parents and therefore others."

The lack of secure attachment produces fear, sadness, and anger.

To cover up these feelings, the child develops a dual personality - the distrustful and confused inner self (In Japanese we call "honne"), and the compulsively pleasing, co-dependent outer self (we call "tatemae").

All the while fear and distrust of people is present, some form of bullying or emotional abuse triggers the social withdrawal syndrome abruptly.

**Q:** What is the treatment for this disorder?

**A:** Treatment is to help a client form new healthy attachments with a therapist.

We don't rely on family therapy for new attachment, since the parents themselves have attachment problems. Hikikomori seems to be an intergenerational disorder.

The lack of secure attachment can be transmitted from generation to generation. The treatment goal is to resolve the fear of loving and being loved...

## My Son Who Refused to Go to School

Tosaka Hiroko



When kids refuse to go to school (futoukou) for whatever reason, how can they gain confidence to go again? What can the family do to help?

Hiroko Tosaka of Kawasaki city shares about her nine year struggle to get her son to

attend school.

Hiroko confesses they are not completely out of the woods yet, but she speaks with frankness and insight for others who are going through the same.

There was a lot of talk about the parents being at fault or the child being at fault when a child refused to go to school. Parents were often blamed for being overprotective of the child.

The only reason I was able to withstand the guilt and pressures was because of God's promises, my church friends, and their prayers.

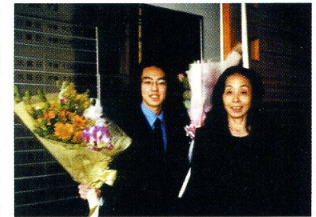
Every new school year my hopes were up thinking now my son would finally go to school, but every year it was the same let down. I used to cry in church all the time.

But God encouraged me through the words of Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 4, "There is a time to cry and there is a time to laugh".

I believed that some day God would bring laughter into our family...

Today, Hiroko's son who also trusted Christ has completed high school, graduated from Tokai University and now aims to go to graduate school.

Looking back, Hiroko says that this ordeal was good because through it she came to know Christ as her personal Savior.



## Pastor Naito's Q & A

**Q:** My husband will be retiring soon. As a woman who has been a housewife all these years, the thought of having my husband, who has known nothing but his career, now staying home all day makes me apprehensive. Do you have

any advice for people like me? My husband isn't interested in discussing this at all.



**A:** I would like to share two points of caution.

1. Remember that he shouldn't be treated like a child. He has carried responsibilities in a company for many years and is very capable. So no matter how casual your relationship, don't order him around. It will

only dampen his spirit.

2. A woman used to tell me, "My husband can't do anything and doesn't try do anything around the house." I believed her at the time and blamed her husband for her troubles, that is, until one day I visited their home.

To my utter surprise, I found the wife up on the house painting the roof and the husband sheepishly doing nothing inside. But then he whispered to me "You know, my wife is never satisfied with my work..."

The point is, whenever he does work around the house, don't criticize it even if he doesn't do so well or makes a mistake...

### Families of Famous Christians

#### Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965)

by Satoshi Nakamura



Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Albert Schweitzer is known around the world for his accomplishments as a missionary doctor who dedicated his life for the peoples of Gabon in West Africa.

Schweitzer was not only a physician but also a theologian, a philosopher, and even an accomplished musician.

However, historians say that he would have never attained greatness if it were not for the dedication and support of his dear wife Helena.

### The Blessings of Raising Ten Children

by Becky Benedict



When the child turns four or so he/she is a help to the family because they play with the younger brothers or sisters and "babysits" for the parents.

Most parents send these little helpers off to kindergarten which increases their own workload.

"How do you raise so many children" is a question I often get. I say, "The older ones help to raise the younger ones."

If all ten were babies at the same time, I'm sure I couldn't



have done it alone. For twenty years we always had a baby in the house, but the older ones helped care for the younger ones which made it possible.

When we say we'll accept all the children God gives us, then ultimately they are all God's responsibility.

If you plan your own pregnancy and birth a handicapped child, it's easy to condemn yourself, wishing you hadn't birthed the child.

But if the pregnancy was all left to God and he gives you a child with some kind of problem, you can say that God had a plan and a reason so you needn't take on the extra burden of responsibility.



Children become not what YOU planned but what GOD planned for us, and that makes it easier to parent.

What God gives is His responsibility and I know He doesn't give anything to us that we can't handle.

### Letters from our Readers

•We invite mothers of kindergarten children to our church to study the Bible using Barbara Bauman's book,

"Discovering the Joy of Parenting". It is well received by all and we have at least 10 non-believers who attend every time. We are very grateful for your textbook which allows us to share God's Word with women.

(Resident of Tokyo)

•Churches in the past have emphasized truth, but were weak on expressing love. Now we have swung the other way and emphasize love and acceptance, but compromise the truth of the scriptures. Thank you for your book "Gender Identity Disorder". I am glad to see a book which takes a balanced biblical stand without compromise.

(Missionary in Saitama)

•I read your book, "Stories for the Family" by Kaneko Koji, which I found to be easy reading yet very instructive with lots of hints which we can apply to our own families.

(Resident in Kanagawa)