

The Tenacity of

Marco Aizawa, a Singaporean who is part-Japanese and part-Chinese, blogs about his week-long experience in Japan after the country was tragically hit by earthquakes, tsunamis and dangers of radiation.

Two words haunted my mind the moment I laid eyes on the aftermath of the 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami - heartbreaking and terrifying.

The catastrophe had left thousands of residents with broken houses, broken equipment and shattered hearts. On the surface, the Japanese people looked well and calm, but deep down we knew they were hurting and crying out for their country and fellow citizens.

I went to Japan on a mission trip led by my church pastor to offer practical help to the Japanese people in Ishiomyomaki and Kessenuma, two cities in quake-hit Miyagi prefecture, but found myself distracted initially by my diabetic condition.

On the first two days upon reaching Japan, my blood sugar levels went a little out of kilter, probably due to the difference in time between Singapore and Japan as well as not being used to the local food.

Japan

After breakfast on the plane, my blood sugar check at Narita Airport read 11.4 mmol/L. Before lunch, it read 12.9 mmol/L; before dinner, it read 12.2 mmol/L and before bedtime, it read 3.5 mmol/L. I rescued the hypoglycaemia with half a packet of Ribena, and a Mars snack bar.

I was somewhat dismayed and anxious about being a liability to the team. However, everyone was very understanding and supportive, which was a relief indeed.

The next morning I woke up and checked my blood sugar level. Fortunately, it was 13.7 mmol/L. I took a light breakfast which included a Japanese rice ball, a bun with curry dip. Before lunch, my blood sugar read 15.5 mmol/L. I ate less for lunch and had a Japanese tuna bun, a vegetable bun and a green tea cookie.

Thankful that my blood sugar level had stabilised, I could focus on helping the Japanese clear their houses, remove their wrecked cupboards, broken refrigerators and water dispensers. I also helped a Japanese lady clear her garden, plus a few heavy tatami mats.





By dinner, my blood sugar reading had dipped to 3.9 mmol/L. I immediately drank half a packet of Ribena and ate another Mars Snack bar, and had my dinner of Japanese curry rice. Before I slept, my blood sugar level was 6.9 mmol/L. I fell asleep that night rather peacefully, pleased that my blood sugar level had been well maintained. Over the next four days, I was able to manage my blood sugar levels better.



One of the highlights over the next four days was helping Mr Abe, the owner of a printing shop in Kessenuma, to clear the incredible debris, broken equipment and furniture and piles of mud. He had offered his shop as a temporary place of worship to Pastor Nishigeshi whose church has been destroyed by the tsunami. After five hours of hard labour by an exceptional crew, the place was ready for use the next day.

This trip opened my eyes to so much. The people of Japan touched my heart with their

faithfulness to each other and their country, and their sincere and effusive appreciation of our help. I was most impressed by their determination to move on, to find peace and to rebuild.

If there are any two words that can describe Japan after what I have witnessed and experienced – they would be tenacious and extraordinary.