Ibasho

Ibasho are psychological comfortable spaces (Kunikata, Shiraishi, Nakajima, Tanioka & Tomotake 2011, p.56). Ibasho is related to the concept of a home-being constantly connected to something meaningful and feel a sense of belonging to it. Ibasho can be newly constructed, openly flexible meeting places (Allison 2013, p.174).

How did Ibasho emerge in Japan?

Ibasho emerged when people’s zones of comfort become scarce. People are feeling increasing anxious and isolated from their surroundings (Allison 2013, p. 175). In Japan, there was an increasingly absence of human connection and security in a seemingly relation-less society (Allison 2013, p.175). Therefore, there is a need to create Ibasho in order for people to re-form bonds with one another and find a place in society where they can temporary escape from their current troubles and stress. Most importantly, these people can put down their social identity and enter these places as their true selves without being fear of being judged. In a psychology study conducted by Japanese researchers on mentally ill people and how they can promote a greater chance of having a sense of Ibasho, raising self-esteem was the key. They deduced that people suffering from mental disorders, in order to have a better quality of life, required a space where they could participate in social activities in the community (Kunikata, Shiraishi, Nakajima, Tanioka & Tomotake 2011, p.57). This manifested in the existence of an Ibasho. In addition, To be able to express one’s true self will lead to self-acceptance, which is a vital part for self-esteem (Kunikata, Shiraishi, Nakajima, Tanioka & Tomotake 2011, p.59). To achieve Ibasho in the study, the necessary components was divided into three subcategories: “Sense of recognizing true self, sense of recognizing deep person to person relationships, and finally the sense of establishing oneself” (Kunikata, Shiraishi, Nakajima, Tanioka & Tomotake 2011, p.59). Therefore, people who were lacking Ibasho were people who lacked the sense to recognize their true self, the importance of deep person to person relationship and establishing themselves.

Importance of Ibasho in Japan

Ibasho can exist in accordance to the different needs of the people. It is extremely crucial and helpful especially for vulnerable groups of people such as the elderly, abused children or simply even people who has lost the ability to find comfort in their lives.

Ibasho to address Child Malpractice

For child welfare workers working with abused children, Ibasho will be a place to feel peaceful, secure as well as gain a sense of acceptance and belonging in the space (Bamba, 2010). With the disruptions of familial relationship because of abuse, children will grow fearful and even have low self-value due to constant abuse. They also the chance to express themselves through activities (Bamba, 2010). However, their Ibasho according to them can be places like the bedrooms or communal spaces like the gym and playground. For example, to create an Ibasho, the care workers will play sports with their charges, but leave the autonomy to the children to direct and interact freely with their fellow friends. This practice is also known as minamori. It means that the children are being the watchful supervision under adults in the Ibasho. With minimal intervention by adults, this will encourage the children to slowly gain trust of adults as well as find a secure space to channel their self-expression in a caring environment. (Bamba, 2010).

Ibasho for everyone- Uchii no Jika

Chiki cha no ma is another manifestation of an Ibasho, not only a space, it is a space for mutual human contact (fureai Ibasho) In Uchi no jika (translated ‘my home’), was started by a women named Kawada Keiko in 2003. It is open to everyone from 10am-3pm daily. People can have lunch or engage in activities such as playing cards. There are rules such as helping one another through simple tasks like washing dishes, friendship cliques are not allowed and no one was allowed to wear the apron outside the kitchen. They are free to come and go and membership is extremely flexible. The homely atmosphere helps people to engage in “contact and companionship” (Allison 2013 p. 170) with strangers. Uchi no Jika allows individuals to achieve “recognition and acceptance” (Allison 2013 p. 172) of each other in this space. Overall, it helps building connections between people and people too, can relax in this space.

Ibasho for the Elderly- Honeywell Ibasho House

The Honeywell Ibasho House in Ofunato, Iwate was constructed under Operation USA with Honeywell Hometown Solutions in response to the Great East Japan Tsunami and Earthquake for its elderly residents to rebuild their community (Honeywell, 2013). In Ofunato, 30% of its population are residents aged 65 years or older. In the Ibasho House, it aims to be a “place where people feel welcomed and accepted in a non-institutional environment” (Honeywell, 2013). With the absence of stress on the individuals by institutions, in the space, it is focused more on the social. By taking part in the activities of the House such as community programs held in the house, the space will also encourage the elderly to take up social services. Through the space, the elderly too can recover their personal resilience and thereby moving on with their lives after huge disasters.

Video

Honeywell Ibasho House | Corporate Citizenship | Honeywell
References


