
Foreface

The National Network of Physical and Mental Health in Japanese Children – which edits and publishes this book – was formed in 1979: the International Year of the Child. The NGO was established with the hope to foster the healthy growth of children and expand their rights. In the years since, we have shared the results of relevant surveys and widespread efforts, in order to fully understand the changes in the child's body and mind. We have also continued to discuss physical disorders that children have presented with, in an effort to remedy these issues. The "Database of Physical and Mental Health among the Children" initially served as discussion material for the 8th Meeting of Physical and Mental Health among the Children conference held in 1986. Three years later, the "Annual Report of Physical and Mental Health among the Children" was born, and the 2020 edition became the 32nd book in the series.

The Japanese version of this text is edited in three parts every year. The first covers this year's children's body and mind statistics, based on evidence and narrative, the second presents basic statistics concerning children's bodies and minds, and the third is a recording of a special lecture held during the previous year. The book has not always been edited in this manner. In the previous approach, the third part appeared in the 2002 version, while the first appeared in the 2007 version, and so forth. From this, it evolved, little by little, according to the demands of each period. Notably, the second part (in which the true value of this book lies), has been edited in a consistently way from the beginning. And we have continued to do so with the intention that it may be used to discuss children's bodies and minds anytime, anywhere, and to anyone. Thus, our network members strive to collect as wide a range of government statistics and research results as possible, under the four pillars of survival, protection, development, and lifestyle. Nowadays, this book is widely used not only for the annual conference but also as a textbook for workshops in various parts of Japan, as well as a resource for childcare workers and for teacher training at universities.

We have decided to deliver the digest version of the second part in English for various reasons. First, the physical and mental health challenges of Japanese children, which gained prominence in the 1960s, are becoming increasingly complicated and serious. As a result, we have a stronger desire to make the SOS internationally known. There is another important reason for this decision. Last year (2019) was the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 25th anniversary of its ratification in Japan. Additionally, in March, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child presented the "Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Japan" to our nation. Thus, it was a year that consistently made us consider children's rights from an international perspective, and the English language was selected for its international reach.

As we all know, people's lifestyles have inevitably changed in 2020, as COVID-19 raged across the globe. Of course, children were not exempt. It was a year when we embraced notions of planetary health, as this disease was not unrelated to the global world. It is also for this reason that we decided to publish the English version: mustering our courage to overcome the barriers of using a language that we were not fluent in. We hope that this book fosters global discussions on the bodies and minds of children, and that the rights of the children's bodies and minds will be guaranteed.

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