



UNCLE JACK'S PUBLIC SERVICE PROJECTS

The Clean Air Team &
The Program To Preserve Hawaiian Place Names

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JAPANESE WISDOM SAYINGS

HANDOUT FOR UNCLE JACK'S LECTURES

Going To Japan On Your Own
A Quick Trip To Tokyo
Visiting Kyoto By Yourself
Enjoying One Week With A Japan Rail Pass
The Miho Museum
Japanese Gardens & Suiseki

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PRESERVED IN FOLKLORE worldwide there are many profound and humorous sayings which provide guidelines for humankind -- regardless of geographic and cultural boundaries. Familiar proverbs repeated in any nation reveal the true values of its people. Numerous Japanese sayings refer to old age, reflecting a tradition of recognizing elderly persons as repositories of experience and judgment. Also venerable objects -- from family heirlooms, to practical tools that indicate long periods of service -- receive great respect and are still revered after their time has passed.

Look through this collection of a few familiar Japanese Wisdom Sayings, and perhaps one in particular might seem to be speaking directly to you and giving you guidance at this point in your life:

OITE MASUMASU SAKAN NARI

"In old age one becomes increasingly vigorous."

(We generate greater control of our energies as we grow elderly.)

HACHIJŪ NO TE-NARAI

"To study penmanship at eighty ..."

(It's never too late for improvement.)

UMOREGI NI HANA GA SAKU

"Fossil wood will sometimes bear flowers."

(Old people living in obscurity can produce worthwhile things.)

TAI-IN WA ICHI NI KAKURU

"A great retired person lives unnoticed in the market."

(An enlightened individual can remain in urban surroundings, rather than becoming a pious hermit in some remote place.)

TOSHI WA KUSURI

"Old age serves as medicine."

(It cools a hot temper and heals wounded feelings.)

OI-KI WA MAGARANU

"Ancient trees cannot be bent."

(Don't try to make the elderly conform to new ways.)

OITARU UMA WA MICHI WO WASUREZU

"An old horse does not forget his path."

(Good habits of long standing are a sure footing for the future.)

NARAI SEI TO NARU

"Habit becomes one's nature."

(Constant repetition of either beneficial behavior or poor conduct will make these things your automatic actions.)

KUSURI YORI YŌJŌ

"Taking care of your health is better than taking medicine."

KAIKATSU WA KENKŌ NI SAKU HANA DA

"Cheerfulness is the very flower of health."

(This proverb has been substantiated by medical science.)

SEWASHII TOKI WA YAMAI NASHI

"When you are busy you have no illness."

(Those who remain active don't become sick.)

BAKA NO Ō-GUI

"The big appetite of a fool ..."

SUGITARU WA OYOBAZARU NI SHIKAZU

"Too much is worse than too little."

HOSOKU NAGAKU

"Lean and long ..."

(A frugal way of life generates longevity.)

TSUKIYO NI KOME NO MESHI

"Moonlight and boiled rice ..."

(One never tires of eating a simple meal in view of nature.)

TARU WO SHIRAZARU MONO WA MAZUSHII

"He who knows not when he has enough is poor."

(True wealth is contentment without luxury or excess.)

TAKAI MONO WA YASUI MONO

"Expensive articles are cheap articles."

(In the long run, it costs less to buy more durable items.)

INU NO KAWABATA ARUKI

"A dog's riverside stroll."

(Wandering and window shopping without purchasing anything.)

MAYOWANU MONO NI SATORI NASHI

"To one who does not wander, there is no enlightenment."
(Zen Buddhist encouragement of individual mystical exploration.)

SUKU MICHI YORI YABURU

"The road that is preferred leads to destruction."
(Our preferences for easy and delightful things can bring ruin.)

ZENSHA NO KUTSUGAERU WA KŌSHA NO IMASHIME

"When a cart ahead overturns, it's a warning to carts following."
(We gain experience by observing the mistakes of others.)

USHI WO UMA NI NORIKAERU

"To mount a horse after riding an ox ..."
(Making a change for the better.)

UMA WO USHI NI NORIKAERU

"To transfer from a horse to an ox ..."
(Making a change for the worse.)

INORU YORI KASEGE

"Toil rather than pray."
(It is better to work steadily than to rely upon good fortune.)

MIKKA BŌZU

"A three day priest ..."
(Said of persons showing immediate enthusiasm for something but quickly losing interest and giving it up.)

INOCHI KARA NIBAMME

"Second only to life ..."
(Said of something considered very important or valuable which requires determination to preserve or advance.)

ITTEMBARI

"One point stretching ..."
(This often used saying refers to concentrating on a plan and sticking to it and relying entirely upon it.)

JŪNEN ICHI-JITSU NO GOTOSHI

"Ten years as one day ..."
(Continuous pursuit of an endeavor.)

ARI NO IKARI WO HIKU YŌ

"Like an ant dragging an anchor ..."
(Attempting more than one is capable of accomplishing.)

YASE-UMA NI OMONI

"A heavy burden on a lean horse ..."
(Entrusting someone with a task beyond their ability.)

KUMO NI KAKE-HASHI

"To lean a ladder against the clouds ..."
(An impractical enterprise.)

TAKAI WA SAIRYŪ WO ERABAZU

"The ocean is not unreceptive to a small stream."
(Unimpressive persons and things can contribute to large ones.)

KAZE FUKU DOMO YAMA WA UGOKAZE

"Though the wind blows, the mountain does not move."
(Patient self-control remains indifferent to disturbances.)

O WO FURU INU WA TATAKAREZU

"The dog that wags its tail cannot be beaten."
(People who remain cheerful and affable and conciliatory are less apt to be treated unkindly.)

MINU GA HANA

"Not-to-see is a flower."
(Kindly overlooking certain things rather than commenting.)

JŪNIN-NAMI

"Ten persons in a row ..."
(Average, ordinary, mediocre)

HITO WA HITO, WARE WA WARE

"People are people, I am I."
(This saying advocates both individuality and tolerance.)

AKUYŪ WA NASHI NI SHIKAZU

"A bad friend isn't any better than no friend."
(Solitude is preferable to detrimental company.)

AU WA WAKARI NO HAJIMARI

"To meet is the beginning of parting."
(All personal relationships eventually end in separation.)

SAYONARA

"Well, if it must be so ..."
(Generally translated as goodbye, the literal meaning of this phrase conveys a suggestion of sentimental regret.)

SHIKATA GA NAI

"There is nothing that can be done."
(Japan's most frequently heard expression of calm resignation.)

SHOMOTSU WA HOZON-SARETA KOKORO NARI

"Books are preserved minds."

TAISEI WA RIJI NI IRAZU

"A great voice does not enter into vulgar ears."
(Sophisticated ideas are not understood by common people.)

ONORE NI HOSSEZARU TOKORO WO HITO NI HODOKOSU NAKARE

"What you do not wish done to you, do not to others."
(This saying came to Japan via the Chinese sage Confucius, an earlier version of The Golden Rule uttered by Jesus five centuries later in Galilee.)