

Sustainability
Magazine

Wa!

Become friends with
children around the world.

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**TAKARA
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GROUP

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Supporting Employee Challenges and Diversity with One TOMY!

TIPS FOR EACH EMPLOYEE TO FIND A WORKING STYLE THAT LETS THEM SHINE THROUGH IN THEIR OWN WAY

In the First Edition of the Sustainability Magazine Wa! for 2023, we put the spotlight on leave for male employees (childcare leave for male employees with young children). The conventional image of childcare leave might once have been that it was something for female employees with children to take, but recently there is a growing awareness of the need for both parents to take childcare leave, and it is one of the options available to employees to achieve a working style and life that suits them. To find out more, we spoke with a male employee who actually went on childcare leave and his supervisor, to learn about what childcare leave entails and to get their honest feedback. While the cultures and laws vary by country, here we are introducing one example from TOMY in Japan. We hope that this issue will bring you closer to obtaining a better work-life balance and wellbeing!

Direct interview with T-san, who has taken childcare leave, and his supervisor H-san

What is childcare leave actually like for male employees?

Prologue >> What is the state of childcare leave for male employees around the world?

As of 2022, the rate of childcare leave use for male employees in Japan was still quite low at 13.97%, but in Norway, not only is the rate much higher, but 80-100% of wages during the leave period are guaranteed, while in France, fathers are actually required to take childcare leave. As you can see, efforts encouraging male employees to take childcare leave have gained momentum in various countries.

It's childcare "leave," but it is not actually a holiday.

— In this issue we are talking with HT-san, project leader for WIXOSS in the TCG Division, about his experiences during childcare leave, and also getting feedback from SH-san, his supervisor in the same department. T-san, what impression did you have of male employees taking childcare leave?

HT: This time I took the childcare leave to coincide with the birth of our second child, but four years ago when our first child was born, it never even occurred to me to take childcare leave. At the time, the idea of male employees taking childcare leave was not mainstream in Japan, and since the timing of a transfer to a new department overlapped with the birth of our first child, I gave priority to getting accustomed to the new workplace environment and left the childrearing and housework to my wife.

— What discussions did you have about dividing up tasks of childcare and housework in the family while you were on childcare leave?

HT: On how to divide up the responsibilities, my wife had specific requests for me ahead of time. I was reminded of just how much there is to do, and I realized how hard housework is.

— What were the steps you took from once you decided as a family that you would go on childcare leave, to when you actually applied?

HT: I spoke with my supervisor H-san about the planned dates for childcare leave two or three months in advance, and he readily agreed. Then I got together with someone from HR to consider salary and career aspects, and consult over the best way to use the leave system. As a result, we settled on an approach to childcare where I took the leave for a month immediately after the birth of my child, and after that I took paid leave intermittently. Incidentally, the documents I needed to submit when applying were less than I'd expected, and the procedures themselves weren't difficult.

— What specifically was your daily life like while on childcare leave?

HT: At first I thought I all would have to do is look after the children, but it was incredibly tough! (laughs) First, I would get up at 7 a.m. Then I would get breakfast ready, make sure my eldest son had eaten, and take him to daycare. After getting back, I would

clean up breakfast, run a load of washing, hang it out to dry and then start preparing lunch. After lunch I would have about two hours of rest, but from about 3:00 p.m. I would start to bring in the laundry, bath my youngest son, and get dinner ready. Meanwhile, I would also have to pick up my eldest son from daycare, and feed my youngest son after getting back. Then, I would get my eldest son to take a bath and put him to bed. Every time my youngest son would wake up crying during the night I would get up and change his diaper or prepare some milk. And it would go that way into the next morning. It was truly hectic, and honestly every day felt shorter than a regular day when I was at work.

SH: The first month after a baby is born is tough. And the mother will still be recovering after just giving birth, so you need to support her as well. Even though it is termed "childcare leave," nothing about it is a holiday. We tend to think that "not working" means someone is on "vacation," but in this case they are still working hard on a daily basis doing something that is an important part of human life.

Childcare leave even builds team cohesion!

— Apart from the application procedures, what other preparations did you make before going on leave?

HT: I summarized the tasks that I wanted other team members to do, and made preparations to hand over my work to them smoothly. Everyone was readily accepting of my going on childcare leave, so I was mindful not to inconvenience them.

SH: T-san handed off his tasks perfectly. To be honest, I was a little worried about him being completely absent for an entire month, but my fears ended up being unfounded. But that doesn't mean that anyone, including younger workers, can hand over their work as well as T-san did. The support of supervisors, senior members and colleagues is important to achieve that. In fact, if you have second thoughts about going on childcare leave due to worries such as thinking that it must be tough to hand over your work or being unsure whether it is something you can do, you are getting your priorities backwards.

— I think there are many people who think it is difficult to take childcare leave because they are worried about what will happen if progress in their work is delayed, or if it will be a bother to their colleagues.

HT: I can understand why people would feel that way. But in my case, while I was away, my colleagues went above and beyond and it was truly helpful. The other side of that coin is realizing that the job goes on even when I am not around. Perhaps up

to that point, I'd been doing too much of what could have been left to my colleagues.

SH: After T-san's absence, I think the other team members ended up doing even better jobs. I believe there might be other advantages to childcare leave in terms of work and team building.

HT: While I was on leave, I was devoted to raising my children and housework, but by gaining time to spend away from the workplace, I also gained the ability to see my job from a bird's eye view.

SH: Rather than an image of children that the company has from a marketing perspective, by actually devoting himself to raising his child and learning what a child really looks like in front of his eyes, I think it was an important experience for him as an employee of TOMY.

— Lastly, what message do you have for people thinking about taking childcare leave?

SH: Work is but one part of a person's life. And even more than that, I think turning your attention towards things other than work through taking part in childrearing is a precious thing. That's why I recommend that people thinking about going on childcare leave should not hesitate to discuss it with their supervisors. And if you want to know more about childcare leave experience, of course contact our guy T-san here!

HT: (laughs) Personally, I think I have grown as a human because I was able to properly engage with my children. It was a valuable experience to learn the realities of what goes on with children and to gain the same perspective of parents who are actually doing their best to raise their children.

It helps your family, and you can also gain valuable lessons that can be applied to your work. In that sense, I wholeheartedly recommend that male employees take childcare leave!

Message from Members of the Diversity Task Force

In Japan, the percentage of male employees taking childcare leave was 0% in FY2018, but the figure has gradually increased since then. By FY2021, the percentage had risen to 20%, suggesting a changed mindset across the company as a whole. While the laws and cultural aspects vary by country, we will make every effort to develop the workplace culture and mechanisms that enable all employees to strike a balance between work and home life.

Members of Diversity Task Force/Manager MN (left), Senior Staff YY (right), Corporate Human Resources Group, TOMY



Feel free to ask about any of your concerns about childcare leave experience.



I think childcare leave offers many benefits to your life. Feel free to consult with the people around you about it.