

It feels like it's already starting to get warmer than it should be in April this year. I hope this doesn't mean that there will be a hot summer! Or have I just forgotten how warm the spring can be in Japan? Either way, I am already starting to miss the cold days of winter.

It's the end of April, but I am still meeting new first year students in my classes at school and in our ESS (English Speaking Society) Club activities. After the long spring vacation, it's nice to see the new students' smiling faces, their willingness to do activities in English class with enthusiasm, and to hear them shouting out to me in English in the hallway. I wonder how the personalities of these students and their classes will change in the upcoming year. There's no way to know, but I enjoy watching the students' development from year to year so I'm looking forward to getting to know them better. I feel a new kind of energy as I teach their classes and meet them at school every day.

The meaning of spring has changed for me in many ways since I came to Japan. For one, in America the school year starts at the end of August and ends in May or June. So when the weather starts warming up at home, it's a sign that the year is almost finished, not just beginning as it is in Japan. At the same time, in America, many students and teachers get "spring fever" which isn't a real kind of illness, but just a way to describe the feelings about summer coming soon when people have trouble focusing on their work or their studies. Many students who get good marks all year long but whose results go down at the end of the year blame spring fever. Now that I live in Japan, I don't have the same antsy feelings that something is about to end. Spring in Japan is a time for a fresh start, when classes start with new teachers and new students, and for me, I think of all the new allergies that I've discovered in Japan as my own kind of Japanese "spring fever."

Even though Japan's seasons are not so different from the seasons in nature in America, I think it's really interesting how much my own outlook and attitude in each season has changed. When I eventually go back to America someday, I wonder if my idea of the seasons will change back to what it used to be. Maybe I will always see flowers blossom and remember the feeling of a fresh start that I have now that I am living in Japan. Either way, I'm glad that I've had this chance to live in Japan and have a new point of view for a short time—it probably isn't something I will forget in the future.