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My hobbies used to be exercising, including mountain climbing, but after getting married I started avoiding dangerous activities. I enjoy going out to eat and drink at delicious places in my neighborhood. Recently, I have been earnestly learning about the characters in Thomas the Tank Engine while watching episodes with my son. I'm originally from Kanagawa prefecture.

Q.Your period of childcare leave

It was 6 months, from October 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.

Q.I've heard that your wife is also working, so how did you decide how long you would take childcare leave?

My son was born on March 24, 2017. We planned to put him in nursery care, so we were talking about taking childcare leave alternatively.

Q.JAXA has various childcare support measures, such as annual paid leave for up to 60 days, a flextime system, a work from home system, and "male maternity leave (spousal delivery leave, childcare participation leave, etc.)".

Why did you choose to take childcare leave?

There wasn't any one reason that made me clearly decide to take it. However, in conversations with my wife after getting married, we often discussed that we would like to raise our children by ourselves, at least until they were one year old.

Considering my wife's career, I thought taking one whole year of childcare leave would be too long for her, so I also planned to take leave during half of that period. It may be too serious of a topic, but considering the labor shortage in Japan, we thought that one solution would be women's empowerment in the workplace. She often said that it would be a great loss if there were women who had to quit their jobs due to marriage or childbirth. I didn't hesitate to take childcare leave. Considering the future of Japan, I thought that society wouldn't work well unless men also helped raise their children.

Q.What were you most worried about when starting childcare leave?

My boss was positive about me taking leave, so I didn't have to worry about it, including my work. Looking back, I remember I got flustered because it turned out that my son was allergic to milk at that time and couldn't drink powdered milk, so I had to use an alternative milk for his allergies. Some children don't like alternative milk because it doesn't taste as good as regular milk. Also, when I started childcare leave, the number of times that my son was eating each day was increasing, so I was a little worried if I could handle that well.



Q.Please let us know if there are any factors that made you want to take childcare leave.

Although it was temporary, I was worried because I would not get income for a while. I knew that I would eventually get childcare leave benefits, but I was trying to economize for our situation.

Q.Please tell us if there were any events in your area or at nursery schools that you participated in during your childcare leave.

There is a community childcare room in my neighborhood, but I almost never went there. Nowadays, baby rooms in department stores are quite satisfactory. They provide a place for taking care of children without restricting my actions so much. I didn't feel too much stress when taking care of my son on my own, but that place helped me anyways.

Q.What do you think were the advantages in your family life as a result of taking childcare leave?

I don't think there is much of a difference in terms of the ability between my wife and I among the various situations of childcare. Of course, my wife and I respectively have strengths and weaknesses, and I think my son likes his mother more than me. So, we don't have any particular problems in situations such as overtime work, business trips, and meeting friends.

Q.Sometimes men can't even find the tea in their own kitchen without help from their wife, so it's amazing that you don't have any problems when one of you are not at home. Nevertheless, as a result of taking childcare leave, do you have any points of reflection, for example things you think you should have done differently?

This might be a little different from the answer to your question, but I think it would have been nice if we had gone to some nicer places or eaten out at nicer restaurants more often because children can't walk around so much until they become around 1 year old. Once that period passes, it is difficult to go to such places for a while until they can follow what we say.

Q.How did your boss, seniors, juniors, etc. in the workplace react before and after you took childcare leave?

Before the leave, I was often encouraged by them to do my best. After returning to the workplace, they brought me various interesting assignments, as if they tried to get me back to my former form. Even when I have to go home a little earlier, they understand that I'm doing my best to raise my son. I don't think there are any negative feelings towards me about that, as people outside generally imagine.



Q.What advice would you give if there was a male employee around you who is considering taking childcare leave?

Unlike in the past, the number of home appliances that can help you to cut corners doing the household chores is increasing, so it may be a good idea to research and buy such products. Or, I can give them advice about that.

Q.Please let us know if you have any ideas for the company that can encourage male workers to take childcare leave.

As for the culture within JAXA, I have never felt that it is difficult to take childcare leave, so I don't think I have any particular advice.

Q.Finally, would you like to take childcare leave again if you have another opportunity?

Yes, I'd like to. If I have another opportunity, I would also be taking care of my older child at the same time, so I may have to take it in two parts, one month after my wife gives birth and some more time after my wife's childcare leave finishes.

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