

# Smile training in Japan: preparing for life without masks

## Vocabulary Match

- |            |           |              |                |               |
|------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| mandates • | anxious • | emphasize •  | outcome •      | association • |
| • worried  | • result  | • directives | • organization | • highlight   |

## Article

As mask mandates are lifted in Japan, some people are feeling anxious about showing their faces in public again. To prepare, around 20 people attended a smile training session in Yokohama, where they were taught to flex various parts of their faces to achieve the warmest and brightest expressions of happiness. The training was led by Keiko Kawano, who runs a company called Egaoiku, which means "smile education." Kawano emphasizes the importance of smiling and the positive outcomes that come from learning to smile.

Many participants in the training are women, but more men have become interested in smile training, too, due to remote work and increased video calls. Some people are worried about how their faces will appear after wearing masks for so long. Smile trainers like Kawano and Miho Kitano, who run the Smile Facial Muscle Association, have seen a rise in requests for their services as people try to prepare for the "new normal" of life without masks.

## Quiz

1. Why are more men becoming interested in smile training?
2. What is the "new normal" that people are trying to prepare for?

## Conversation

- A: Hey, have you noticed that people are taking off their masks now?
- B: Yeah, I've seen that, too. But, I don't know if I'm ready for it.
- A: What are you talking about? It's about time we show off our pretty faces again.
- B: I'm just a bit embarrassed. Can you even remember what I look like?
- A: Well, no, not really. But, come on, we've got to let our smiles shine.
- B: Yeah... maybe later. Actually, speaking of smiles, have you heard of Egaoiku?

## Discussion

1. People wear masks for many different reasons. What reasons can you think of?
2. Are you excited or nervous to show your face in public again? Why?
3. Would you like to attend smile training? Why or why not?
4. Do you think the practice of smiling should be taught in schools? Why or why not?