

Unit 11 Reason and emotion

11a Hikikomori

Reading Japan's lost generation

- 1 Read the article about the *hikikomori* in Japan. Answer the questions.

- 1 What is the *hikikomori* condition?

- 2 What could be responsible for it?

- 3 What could happen of the problem is not addressed?

Language focus unreal past

- 2 Look at these examples of the unreal past (1–5) from the article. Match them with their uses (a–e).

- 1 It's high time that they pulled themselves together...
- 2 The hikikomori would rather their parents left them alone in their rooms...
- 3 ...the parents, whose success the young hikikomori wish they could emulate.
- 4 If only the parents would act more firmly... the problem would not exist.

Some of the earliest hikikomori in Japan, young people who have withdrawn from society to the safety of their bedrooms, are now reaching middle age. Some people feel that it's high time they pulled themselves together. Others feel that it's a sign of dysfunction in society.

Most hikikomori are males from middle-class families. Their families try to help them, but the hikikomori would rather their parents left them alone in their rooms.



- 5 Supposing that nothing were done about it, then Japan would be left with a generation...
 - a describes a wish for action (someone else to do something)
 - b describes a preference (for what someone would like to happen)
 - c describes something that should be done now or soon
 - d means "what would happen if...?"
 - e describes a wish for the opposite to be true

- 3 Complete these sentences by putting the verbs in the correct tense. Sometimes there is more than one possibility.

- 1 Supposing you _____ (be) in my position, what _____ (you / do)?
- 2 If only we _____ (leave) earlier, we _____ (not / get) stuck in all this traffic.
- 3 I would rather _____ (tell) her myself than you _____ (tell) her.
- 4 I wish you _____ (live) nearer. Then we _____ (be) able to meet up more often.

So what is it about Japanese society that has given rise to the Hikikomori condition?

Some say that it has to do with today's uncertain economic prospects in Japan. College graduates are competing for fewer jobs and businesses are less inclined to offer long-term employment.

Others blame the parents, high achievers in their own careers, whose success the young hikikomori wish they could emulate. These parents know their children are disappointed, so they enable them to live a reclusive life. If only the parents would act more firmly, these critics say, rather than shielding them, the problem would not exist.

This is both a personal and a social problem that needs to be addressed. Supposing that nothing were done about it, then, as the hikikomori's parents grow old and retire, Japan would be left with a generation who are not integrated into the working or social life of the wider community.

11b Don't think too much

Reading how we decide

- 1 How do you make important decisions? Look at the statements by four different people and say which one best describes you.

1 *"I always try to let fate decide. So let's say there was a popular show I wanted to see but the tickets were really expensive. I'd wait a couple of days and then call up to buy the tickets. If they were sold out, fate would have decided for me."*

2 *"When it comes to difficult decisions, I find I often have to go with my gut feelings. If I try to use reason, sometimes I go round and round in circles, because there are just too many factors to consider."*

3 *"I find the easiest way to make a difficult decision is to make a points system. If I had to decide whether to take a new job, for example, I'd score each advantage of the job with a positive number and each disadvantage with a negative number. Then I'd add them up and see if the total is positive or negative."*

4 *"Feelings can be very deceptive. I try to make decisions in a completely rational way and ignore what my emotions are trying to tell me."*

- 2 Read about a book on decision making by Jonah Lehrer. Which statement in Exercise 1 best describes what the author thinks?

How do you make difficult decisions? Do you follow your feelings or gut instincts? Or do you think things through as rationally as possible? Take that decision to change job, for example. What were your thought processes? Did you think, "Were I to take the new job, I would increase my skills and experience and it would probably lead to other opportunities"? Or did you think, "If I took the job and it didn't work out well, where would I be then?" Perhaps you're someone who suffers from regrets. So you took the job and then thought: "Is this really the job for me? Had I stayed where I was, I'd probably feel much happier."

Of course no decision-making is easy, but there's a lot of evidence to suggest that we make things harder for ourselves by not being reasonable. In other words, we don't base our decisions on a good understanding of how we have arrived at that decision. Often when we think we have based a decision on objective facts, actually we have distorted the reality to make it fit our feelings. Should you doubt this, read Jonah Lehrer's bestseller *How We Decide*.

In it, Lehrer explains quite persuasively how our brains make the best decisions when they analyze our emotions and feelings, and take them into account. He says that often we believe we have arrived at a decision rationally, when in fact we have used rational thought to justify a decision made with our feelings. Were we to recognize this, we would probably make better decisions and we might also feel less regret at making the wrong decisions. The brain behaves, in other words, like a stubborn leader or general who has his own strong views. He gives an order and then all his workers or troops have to make it work to justify his decision, whether in fact it's a good decision or not.

We must also be careful not to apply the same decision-making process to every decision. Simple problems, like which route should I take to work, are best solved by reason. More complex questions, like should I change jobs, require feelings and instinct because there are too many variables for the brain to process rationally. You might find, says Lehrer, that you would have made a better decision had you spent more time analyzing simple problems and less time deliberating complex problems.



11c Conditionals

Language focus review inversion in conditionals

1 Complete these sentences from the talk using conditionals.

- 1 _____ I to take the new job,...it would probably lead to other opportunities.
- 2 If I took the job and it _____ work out well, where _____ I be then?
- 3 _____ I stayed where I was, I'd probably feel much happier.
- 4 _____ you doubt this, read Jonah Lehrer's bestseller *How We Decide*.
- 5 Were we _____ recognize this,...we _____ also feel less regret at making the wrong decisions.
- 6 You might find, says Lehrer, that you _____ made a better decision had you spent more time analyzing simple problems...

2 Which sentences in Exercise 1 are examples of inversion in conditionals?

3 Rewrite these conditional sentences using inversion.

- 1 If the owner were to lower the price, our client would consider making an offer.

- 2 If we had been told earlier, we could have done something about it.

- 3 If anyone asks, I'll be back in the office on September 23.

- 4 If the pipes froze, it could result in them bursting.

- 5 If customers had just put the money in the bank, they would be a lot better off.

6 If it rains, please bring in any furniture from outside.

4 Rewrite these ideas as conditional sentences. Use inversion where the ideas seem more formal.

- 1 I rushed into buying the latest phone. A month later I saw the same phone for half the price.

- 2 You may need help finding your way around. Please ask any of the staff.

- 3 It's a good thing that shelters were available after the storm. Otherwise, many people would have been left homeless.

- 4 Faced with the same situation again, would you do the same thing?

Word focus move

5 Replace the underlined phrases with the correct expression with *move*.

move the goalposts	move to tears
move up a gear	move up in the world
on the move	

- 1 I was deeply touched by their bravery in the face of such hardship.
- 2 She has become more prosperous—she used to live in a one-bedroom apartment.
- 3 We need to work faster if we are going to get this finished on time.
- 4 I couldn't tell you what she's doing these days. She's always changing activity.
- 5 They said that anyone over eighteen could apply but now they've changed the rules.

11d Conversations at work

Real life recognizing feelings

1 Read three conversations in the workplace.

Conversation 1

A: You look a little taken aback. I didn't mean to offend you during the meeting when I said that I didn't like your ideas for changing the website.

B: No, that's OK. You're perfectly entitled to give your opinion. I was just surprised because yesterday when I showed you my ideas, you said they were good.

A: Yes, they are good ideas, but I don't think they're really appropriate for what we're trying to achieve. Anyway, I'm sorry if that came out wrong at the meeting.

B: I just wish you'd been a little clearer yesterday before I proposed them to everyone.

Conversation 2

A: You seem worried. Is something bothering you?

B: Yes, it is actually. You shouldn't have talked to Sarah about my feelings about my new job.

A: Did I say something to upset you?

B: Yes, you told her that I wasn't really happy working in the back office.

A: Well, you aren't, are you?

B: No, I'm not. But I don't want her to think that I'm a complainer or someone who can't put up with a little routine paperwork.

A: Oh well, I'm sorry. I really hope I didn't give her that impression.

Conversation 3

A: Sorry, why are you laughing? I don't understand what's so funny.

B: Nothing. It was just the way you said "no" so sharply to Gary when he asked you if you wanted to go with him to the trade show.

A: Sorry, perhaps that sounded abrupt.

B: No, it's OK. He's very thick-skinned. I don't think he would have minded. Anyway, everyone knows where you stand now.

2 Check (✓) the subject that the people are talking about. There are two extra subjects.

- a someone worried that others have the wrong impression of them ☐

- b someone upset that they were not asked to a meeting ☐
c what one person thought about another's proposals ☐
d someone saying something too directly ☐
e a joke that was taken the wrong way ☐

3 Answer the questions.

- 1 In conversation 1, why is the second person upset with the first person?

- 2 In conversation 2, what does the second person worry that Sarah might think about her now?

- 3 In conversation 3, is Gary likely to be offended by what the second person said?

4 Language skill recognizing others' feelings

The speakers used phrases to recognize the effect of what they said on their or others' feelings. Complete the phrases.

Conversation 1

- 1 You _____ a _____ taken aback. I didn't mean to _____ you during the meeting.
- 2 Anyway, I'm sorry if that _____ wrong at the meeting.
- 3 Please don't _____ me disloyal.

Conversation 2

- 4 You _____ worried. Is something bothering you?
- 5 Did I _____ something to _____ you?

Conversation 3

- 6 Sorry, why are you laughing? I don't understand what's _____.
- 7 Sorry, perhaps that _____ abrupt.



11e Avoiding misunderstandings

Writing an email message

1 Writing skill avoiding misunderstandings

Read the emails (1–4) and underline the phrases that help the reader to avoid a misunderstanding.

1 Hi John,

I'm still waiting to hear back from you about buying some of my old furniture. Were you that horrified when you saw it? I'm joking of course! I don't want to pressure you in any way—it's just that I'm moving in two weeks' time and I need to figure out what to do with it.

Let me know.

Best wishes,

Hakim

2 Dear Sian,

Thanks for getting back to me so quickly. In your haste, you attached the wrong document. It's the photo of the main university entrance that I need, not the one of your vacation in the south of France! Can you resend?

Thanks.

Jen

3 Dear Sarah,

Just to let you know that we won't need you on Sunday after all. Frederica has volunteered to help us with the packing. Please don't take this the wrong way. We do really appreciate your offer.

See you soon, I hope.

Paul

4 Hi Barney,

That wasn't the answer I expected! I thought you wanted to be involved in this project. Don't worry. I'm not offended in any way. It just took me by surprise.

Speak soon.

Gustavo

2 Read these emails (A–D) and match them with the impression that they give (1–4).

- 1 This person seems offended not to be asked.
- 2 This person seems too busy to deal with correspondence.
- 3 This person seems annoyed to be kept waiting.
- 4 This person seems to be making a rude comment about the reader.

A Hi Des,

That was a very long answer you sent me. I will reply to you when I have time to read it properly.

Jeff

B Dear Brigitte,

Great to hear from you! Your spelling hasn't improved much since we were at school. I had to re-read your email three times before I could understand it. Your idea of meeting up on December 8 sounds perfect. Let me know where you'd like to meet.

Take care,

Rosalie

C Dear Mr. Nasri,

I sent you a quotation as promised a week ago, but you have not replied. Are we to suppose that you are not interested?

Kind regards,

David Temperley

D Dear Berni,

I received your email saying that you don't want to take up my offer of advice about the design of your website. I hope the person you have found to help you with this does a good job.

Yours,

Jasper

3 Rewrite the emails from Exercise 2 so that you avoid the possibility of the reader misunderstanding them.

Wordbuilding heteronyms

1 Match the words (1–8) with their definitions (a–h).

- 1 delegate (n)
 - 2 alternate (v)
 - 3 row (v)
 - 4 wound (n)
 - 5 tear (n)
 - 6 minute (n)
 - 7 sewer (n)
 - 8 refuse (v)
- a someone who works with a needle and thread
 - b change places periodically
 - c say no to something
 - d a drop of water from the eye
 - e a unit of time
 - f a representative
 - g a cut or injury
 - h propel a boat with oars

2 Look at the words in bold. What part of speech are they? What do they mean?

- 1 I **wound** a piece of bandage around the cut to protect it from infection.
- 2 Please try not to **tear** the material when you put the cover back on the chair. It's very tight.
- 3 I put a **minute** amount of sugar in your coffee before I remembered you didn't take sugar. You won't taste it.
- 4 We have a job share. We work on **alternate** days of the week.
- 5 It is well known that rats live in the **sewers**.
- 6 Household **refuse** collection is on Thursdays.
- 7 Good managers learn how to **delegate** responsibility to their team.

Learning skills the Internet

3 The Internet has some great resources for learning English. Here are a few tips using these.

News: Visit an English language news website and listen to a story that you are already familiar with. Write down new words that you learn.

Songs: Find a song sung in English that you like and try to write down the lyrics. Then do an Internet search for the lyrics and compare.

Talks: Listen to TED talks. These are free and are categorized by subject. Listen without the transcript and see how much you can understand. Then listen again, this time following the transcript. Make a note of any new words.

Blogs: Try to find blogs about stories that have interested you in *Life*. Perhaps post a comment on their blog and start a conversation.

4 Do one of the things in Exercise 3 this week. Then tell a fellow student about your experience.

Check!

5 Do the crossword. All the answers are in Student Book Unit 11.

Across

- 3 Unit 11a was about this kind of intelligence (9)
- 4 "thrilled to _____" means "very happy" (4)
- 7 if you are very angry, you are _____ (5)
- 9 the opposite of reasoned and logical (10)

Down

- 1 a human-like robot (7)
- 2 the title of Kahneman's book: *Thinking Fast and _____* (4)
- 5 and 8 a stronger way of saying "I wish..." (2, 4)
- 6 "moved to _____" means "so touched that you cry" (5)
- 8 see 5 Down

