

**Correspondent:      The Mystery of the Missing Million      20th October 2002**

00.00.23 - PR: In Japan, nearly a million young men have turned their back on the outside world.

00.00.36 - PR: They are refusing to set foot outside their house, many do not leave their room for years.

00.00.45 - PR: One man in ten in his late teens or early twenties is living as a recluse.

00.00.50 - PR: It's called hikikomori in Japanese it means to withdraw from society.

**00.00.55 - Title Page: The Mystery of the Missing Million**

00.01.13 - PR: At first, hikikomori sounded an almost comical condition - like a mega teenage sulk. In fact it's a serious social disorder that only exists in Japan.

00.01.35 - PR: Most sufferers live in the sprawling suburbs that surround Japan's major cities.

00.01.51 - PR: After an hour's journey from central Tokyo, I joined our translator and researcher, Mai. She told me that hikikomori is a highly sensitive subject in Japan.

00.02.00 - Mai: It's been really difficult but we have managed to set up a family to visit ...

00.02.04 - PR: Parents often feel ashamed if their child has become a recluse. Affected families rarely discuss hikikomori openly.

00.02.17 - PR: In these suburbs, silence surrounds a condition about which little is understood.

00.02.24 - PR: A recent survey found that three-quarters of sufferers are male, in most cases the eldest son.

00.02.31 - PR: The mother of a seventeen year old boy agreed to meet us. A few years ago her son simply entered a room and refused to leave.

00.02.41 - Aston: PR - We've spoken to the mother and she says it's fine for us to go into her house but she's deeply concerned that our presence here will alert the neighbours that there's something wrong at home.

00.03.03 - PR: She asked us to be as discreet as possible.

00.03.14 - PR: The boy's mother, Yoshiko, owns a sweet shop. Her house is just behind the shop.

00.03.20 - PR: She showed us the room her son never leaves; it used to be the family kitchen.

00.03.26 - PR: She was nervous. We said her neighbours will never see this film but she still didn't want to give her son's name.

00.03.34 - PR: He uses a toilet adjacent to the kitchen and his mother brings him food. He never sees his father or younger brother and sister.

00.03.42 - PR: Until recently the family had eaten take away food or cooked on a makeshift stove.

00.03.48 - Mai translating Yoshiko: They built a new kitchen about a month ago.... until then it was very hard.

00.03.55 - PR: And how long has he been in the kitchen?

00.04.03 - Mai translating Yoshiko: Two years.

00.04.04 - PR: Two years without leaving the kitchen.

00.04.07 - Mai translating Yoshiko: Two years and a half.

00.04.08 - PR: Two and a half years. Shall I go through there?

00.04.12 - PR: Suddenly Yoshiko noticed a customer arriving. She hurried us into the stock room.

00.04.21 - PR: I was struck by her determination that no one should discover her secret.

00.04.31 - PR: Once the customer had left she led us around the back to the entrance to the house.

00.04.39 - PR: When did she last see him?

00.04.49 - Yoshiko: You might not call this seeing him - but I did hand over his meal at nine o'clock. He won't let me into his kitchen. I can only approach him near the entrance, just outside the kitchen. He's at the opposite end with a table between us. So I say; look, here goes. And I throw the food to him.

00.05.13 - PR: Does he wash? Does he get his hair cut?

00.05.20 - Yoshiko: He cuts his hair himself when he takes a bath. He once asked for a pair of scissors. He takes a bath about every six months. He took one three weeks ago, so right now, he doesn't smell as bad as he would otherwise. The toilet is nearby. He rushes down the corridor and it's right there.

00.05.53 - PR: An incident at school often triggers hikikomori. In this case it was psychological bullying from another pupil.

00.06.05 - Yoshiko: He'd send letters to blackmail my son using someone else's name. There was a photograph of my son in the classroom and he would stab a nail into it. He'd write my son's name everywhere to harass him. For a long time my son couldn't figure out who was doing these things. He started to doubt his own brother and sister; he was that afraid and that scared.

00.06.41 - PR: An emotional problem at school was to remain unaddressed by family, teachers or counsellors.

00.06.54 - PR: He looks such a happy child.

00.07.01 - Yoshiko: These photos were taken in 1996. You can see the kind of boy my son was. When we learned who was doing all the nasty things, we thought we'd settled everything. We believed that everything was solved once and for all.

00.07.28 - PR: In fact the problem became much more serious.

00.07.31 - PR: Yoshiko's son spends most of his day playing video games. Their only contact is at meal times.

00.07.39 - Yoshiko: What do you want for lunch? We don't have rice. I can cook some Chinese noodles?

00.07.51 - Son: Subtitles: I don't know. You're trying to harass me.

00.07.55 - Yoshiko: Subtitles: No, I'm not trying to harass you. I can prepare some toast.

00.07.59 - Son: Subtitle: I don't want it.

00.08.00 - Yoshiko: Subtitles: You don't want it? You mean you don't want it yet?

00.08.04 - Son: Subtitle: I don't know.

00.08.09 - Yoshiko: Subtitles: Would you rather have something later? Are you not quite through with the game?

00.08.18 - Son: Subtitles: The game doesn't have a clear-cut ending. It just goes on.

00.08.22 - Yoshiko: Subtitle: Ok, we'll have something later.

00.08.33 - PR: When Yoshiko speaks to her son from outside the door, she's unable to see him.

00.08.40 - Mai translating Yoshiko: He's just in the garbage somewhere.

00.08.45 - PR: There's so much garbage that you mean even if she looks in, you don't see him?

00.09.01 - Mai translating Yoshiko: He can't throw away what he touched.

00.09.09 - PR: So there's two years of garbage that's piled up there?

00.09.14 - Mai translating Yoshiko: Yes.

00.09.28 - PR: You want us to be quiet. Ok.

00.09.42 - PR: Yeah ok, so we're being sent out now.

00.09.51 - PR: Well, she didn't want us to see the kitchen but we saw the rubbish outside; apparently there are huge amounts of rubbish inside. But you know she doesn't know how he'll react if he knew we were here.

00.10.08 - PR: Yoshiko's son had no symptoms of mental illness before he became a recluse. Two years later, the family's life is ruined.

00.10.22 - PR: After a few years some hikikomori sufferers recover enough to re-enter society.

00.10.29 - PR: Yasuo spent three years as a recluse. Now he's a counsellor working for a parents' support group. Families pay him to offer advice and sometimes talk to sufferers.

00.10.43 - PR: He told me that a person can spend on average four years in seclusion before parents set aside their shame to seek outside help.

00.10.57 - PR: Today, Yasuo was visiting a boy experiencing a severe case of social withdrawal.

00.11.05 - PR: How long, how long has he been in the bedroom?

00.11.13 - Mai translating Yasuo: About two years. But he hasn't spoken to his parents for four or five years now.

00.11.19 - PR: There's no communication whatsoever?

00.11.24 - Mai translating Yasuo: Nothing.

00.11.25 - PR: How does he eat or ...?

00.11.34 - Mai translating Yasuo: Well he doesn't know, nobody knows. All they know is that he is still alive.

00.11.42 - PR: Yasuo then said that my cameraman and I shouldn't try to come along. He believed our presence outside the family's house would attract

attention.

00.11.52 - Mai translating Yasuo: It's because of the neighbours; the family doesn't want the neighbours to know that someone is visiting the house. It's very important to keep it secret from the neighbours.

00.12.06 - Mai translating Yasuo: It's very important to know that you are foreigners and you can stand out very easily.

00.12.15 - PR: Yasuo asked us to park some distance from the house. We then had to improvise.

00.12.23 - PR: So while those two head off to the house where the boy in the bedroom lives. We have to stay here in the car, my cameraman and I. We've been told in fact we can't even go outside because we'll probably attract attention from prying neighbours. But what we've done is we've given Mai, our translator, a video camera so that she can record whatever happens inside the house.

00.12.47 - PR: Mai was asked not to identify the boy's mother. Her son Tomatsu is twenty-six, he became hikikomori after dropping out from university.

00.12.56 - PR: She has not seen her son for four years even though she sleeps in the next room. She knows he's alive because she hears the floorboards creak.

00.13.06 - PR: Yasuo goes upstairs to show the boy that he's there but believes it's too early in his counselling to talk to him.

00.13.14 - PR: The strain has had its toll on the family. Tomatsu's parents are separating. A few days earlier his mother talked to him through the bedroom door.

00.13.25 - Mother: Voice over: I spoke to him about custody. I said: 'You can choose either your father's side or mine so please decide by yourself.' Well of course there was no response from him just silence as always. So I said: 'Okay, I'll leave a note here, please tick either me or your father'. When I came home later I found my name totally crossed out. When I saw it I was very shocked!

00.13.50 - Yasuo: Voice over: This is a definite improvement on what's been happening.

00.13.56 - Mother: Voice over: Yes it is. He'd been ignoring me until then, so I should be pleased that he at least answered me.

00.14.09 - PR: When Yasuo and Mai return to the car, they were cheered by the news that Tomatsu had responded to an outside influence.

00.14.18 - PR: This is seen here as important progress.

00.14.21 - Mai translating Yasuo: He can feel that he's getting better slowly.

00.14.25 - PR: And that's the first communication in years is it?

00.14.31 - PR: Yeah. How's the mother dealing with this? How does she cope?

00.14.40 - Mai translating Yasuo: She hasn't heard her son's voice for a long time. She just talk through the door, talk to him through the door.

00.14.47 - PR: But anyway she sounded hopeful today.

00.14.59 - Mai translating Yasuo: She says she was really happy to get the reaction from him.

00.15.05 - PR: The problem remained hard to understand. I kept wondering why parents allow their children to remain in a room for so long.

00.15.17 - PR: Yasuo's next case was a boy who'd remained in his bedroom for a year. Again Yasuo wouldn't allow a foreign camera team in - only Mai.

00.15.30 - PR: The boy's name is Akira. He's nineteen and became a recluse after failing exams at school.

00.15.39 - PR: Yasuo begins his counselling by placing the family at ease.

00.15.44 - PR: He wants them to understand Akira's condition and treat him sympathetically.

00.15.55 - PR: Yasuo then goes up to Akira's room.

00.16.06 - PR: He hears a noise inside the room and decides to talk to the boy.

00.16.16 - Yasuo: Voice over: Hi there. I visit here sometimes but please don't worry. I brought a present for you today ... Ronaldo's Brazil shirt. It's only a replica but please have it if you like. I'll leave it downstairs. See you!

00.16.53 - Mai: Voice over: What was his room like?

00.16.58 - Aston: Yasuo Okawara - Hikikomori Counsellor: Voice over: Very dark. No light. He wasn't wearing any clothes and was watching TV. It's summer but it felt very strange to see him naked watching TV. The atmosphere was very bizarre.

00.17.13 - Mai: Voice over: What did he say?

00.17.19 - Yasuo: Voice over: He was sort of smiling at me. I don't think he really hated being talked to but I could tell that he wanted me to leave as soon as possible.

00.17.36 - PR: It's very hard for me to understand. This is a syndrome that exists only in Japan. What is it about Japan that makes so many people want to shut themselves away?

00.17.54 - Yasuo: Voice over: I think everyone has a different reason. The causes are complicated so I can't give you an exact answer. In my case I was stressed out by our competitive society. I became a workaholic. It's not that I wanted to become a hikikomori, I happened to end up as one.

00.18.21 - Yasuo: Voice over: Japanese society is not capable of accepting people with different attitudes so the lives of the people who are slightly different are very hard. If you drop out there is nowhere to go so the only place you can feel comfortable is in your house as a hikikomori.

00.19.08 - PR: This is Shibuya, the ultimate teen hangout in Tokyo, where youth trends are born and exported around the world.

00.19.36 - PR: Japanese teens are growing up under a tidal wave of technology.

00.19.45 - PR: Some spend more time communicating with machines than with people.

00.19.51 - Mariko Fujiwara: We have game machines. We have portable phones; with it you can play games throughout the day. Media in general creates a virtual reality.

00.20.06 - PR: Mariko Fujiwara runs a think tank that studies youth trends in Japan. She believes teens have lost the skill to chat face to face.

00.20.16 - Mariko Fujiwara: You don't spend as much time talking to your friends, talking to your parents, talking to your colleagues, people in the neighbourhood. In other words instant entertainment, instant excitement and this sort of stimulus replace the kind of human experience people were brought up for years and years.

00.20.53 - PR: The Shibuya district provides a release valve for young Japanese to go innocently wild. In their early teens the pressure is enormous.

00.21.02 - Mariko Fujiwara: They are always working, always studying, always busy with their school work, busy with the classes in cramming school.

00.21.14 - Mariko Fujiwara: With fewer children born into a family, if parents have some dreams or, or hopes for their children, if you are the only child you are the only one who can fulfil that so kids certainly feel pressured. And it's very much the parents' shortcomings that push their kids much too far and kids suddenly say to themselves and to the parents: 'I've had it.'

00.21.49 - PR: Mariko told me that most cases of hikikomori begin when a teenager refuses to go to school. So she suggested I visit what's become an institution in Japan ... the cram school.

00.22.08 - PR: More than half the children here attend cram school, usually before exams. They go in the evenings or at weekends, in addition to their normal lessons.

00.22.27 - PR: At this school there was a three-day camp for twelve year olds. The pupils work, eat and sleep at the school.

00.22.37 - PR: Japan's education system underpinned its post-war prosperity but recently its schools have had problems. Truancy has been rising; it's doubled over the last decade.

00.22.52 - PR: At ten o'clock, after thirteen hours of studying, the children take an exam.

00.23.07 - PR: When students are successful, their day is over.

00.23.16 - PR: But many are not.

00.23.27 - PR: Well it's just passed midnight and there are still more than a dozen kids who haven't passed the exam. They take the exam many times. If they fail they go downstairs, they study and try once more. And this process just keeps on going until they all pass.

00.23.53 - Teacher: Subtitles: You've failed. Do it again and try your best.

00.24.03 - PR: Well it's almost one o'clock now and there are still three students left trying to pass the exam.

00.24.13 - PR: The last boy in the class finally scrapes through.

00.24.26 - PR: In the dormitory above the exam room, he finds his bed.

00.24.39 - PR: Well it's now one thirty in the morning and finally everyone's come to bed. Everyone is sleeping in this room; we're all crammed together like sardines and in about five hours they'll be woken up again and you guessed it there'll be more examinations for the kids to take in the morning.

00.25.21 - PR: At dawn the students begin to study for the next exam.

00.25.31 - PR: I was exhausted after just one night here.

00.25.39 - PR: The competitive pressure sometimes leads to bullying. A minority can't fit in.

00.25.48 - PR: Some simply can't take it anymore.

00.25.57 - PR: Counsellors were only introduced in Japanese schools two years ago and there aren't many of them.

00.26.05 - PR: The country's rudimentary welfare system provides few channels to help pupils with emotional problems.

00.26.12 - Mai: Yep, the house is just round the corner.

00.26.14 - PR: We'd arranged to meet a boy who had no one to turn to while he was at cram school.

00.26.21 - PR: We've spoken to the parents of the boy and he's been in his bedroom, he's been in hikikomori for about two years but the good thing is that they say that they are happy for us to approach him and see if he'll talk to us.

00.26.33 - PR: Once again they insisted that we park our van on a nearby road and enter the house discreetly.

00.26.44 - PR: Yukiko Sasaki's son is twenty-two. Eight years ago she sent him to cram school. He never went to school again.

00.26.53 - PR: She makes dinner for the family; but her son is never at the table.

00.26.59 - Mai translating Yukiko: It's Japanese pizza.

00.27.00 - PR: Wow, really!

00.27.06 - PR: It seemed like a normal Sunday afternoon in a suburban Japanese home. Mother's cooking dinner, father's watching television, about to take the dog for a walk.

00.27.19 - PR: The only oddity is that their son Hiroshi, is holed up in a room upstairs. His father, who works long hours, went for years without seeing him.

00.27.28 - PR: If you knocked on the door, tried to see him, what happens?

00.27.38 - PR: In the past Kiyoshi didn't really relate to his son.

00.27.51 - Mai translating Kiyoshi: He will say that leave me alone, don't talk to me.

00.27.56 - PR: The parents told me that they made mistakes when Hiroshi was younger.

00.28.06 - Yukiko Sasaki: When he entered secondary school we made him go to cram school. We thought we should get him ready for his next entrance exam. The top priority was placed on his studies. We felt we should get him into a good school and I thought he felt the same. I think we put too much pressure on him.

00.28.44 - Kiyoshi Sasaki: Back then, I felt I needed to do these things because I wanted my son to become the most brilliant student of all academically.

00.28.55 - PR: How much have you been able to see of your son?

00.29.00 - Kiyoshi Sasaki: He'd sleep all day and stay up all night. So the time when I could see him awake was pretty limited. I had hardly any chance to talk to him. My son didn't want to see me. Well, that was how it seemed to me.

00.29.25 - Kiyoshi Sasaki: I think that any child in Japan could easily become hikikomori. In a sense the children out there are all susceptible. It wouldn't be strange for any child in Japan to withdraw from society. A little thing can set the stage for the child to become hikikomori.

00.29.51 - PR: Three plates are served; one is left on top of the stairs.

00.30.17 - PR: While Mr and Mrs Sasaki are eating, we're going to try to speak to their son. He's up in his bedroom where he's been all day long. Now, he said that he would talk to us but as his parents said he has some good days some bad so we are not absolutely sure. Anyway we're going to go up there now. Come on.

00.30.49 - PR: Subtitle: Hello

00.31.00 - PR: Can we come in?

00.31.04 - Mai translating Hiroshi: Ok.

00.31.05 - PR: Ok, come on in.

00.31.14 - PR: What's he been doing all day?

00.31.29 - Mai translating Hiroshi: He went to bed, he went to bed really late last night and so he got up at three in the afternoon today.

00.31.36 - PR: Mai, can you get Hiroshi to show us some of the things he does in his room all day?

00.31.46 - Mai translating Hiroshi: I listen to those CDs sometimes.

00.31.48 - PR: Michael Jackson. Michael Jackson's his favourite. And over there, the comics?

00.31.55 - Mai translating Hiroshi: Yes.

00.31.56 - PR: So you spend all day effectively in these small four walls that we're in now?

00.32.05 - Hiroshi: Yes.

00.32.07 - PR: How does that feel being here, doesn't it feel like a prison, like a self-imposed prison?

00.32.24 - Mai translating Hiroshi: But I feel comfortably by myself here. It's very comfortable for me. I play Playstation 2.

00.32.38 - PR: Hiroshi's parents provide whatever he needs in his isolation. He orders from the Internet, mostly it's video games.

00.32.46 - PR: You play for what twelve hours, fourteen hours, just carry on playing.

00.32.57 - Mai translating Hiroshi: Yes, except when I'm sleeping. He's playing Japan against Argentina.

00.33.13 - Hiroshi: Voice over: It's about two years since I started to stay in this room all the time. Before that, I'd often refuse to go to school and there were times I stayed at home. But it's been two or three years since I started to stay in this room all the time.

00.33.33 - PR: So you go to bed early in the morning, and sleep all day and then mostly up all night. I mean why do you do that?

00.33.46 - Hiroshi: Voice over: During the night everyone else is sleeping so I can be all alone. That way I can feel calm and comfortable. That's why I stay up all night.

00.34.01 - PR: Why do you think there are so many people like you, young men who live in these small square rooms in Japan?

00.34.15 - Hiroshi: Voice over: I guess there are many people who aren't good at communicating with other people. I don't know why but that's how it is.

00.34.25 - PR: Do you have any answer to that?

00.34.33 - Hiroshi: Voice over: Maybe it's because too much priority is put on school work. As a consequence people are having trouble communicating with their own families. Lack of communication is the problem.

00.34.48 - PR: Are you hopeful that one day you'll be able to, to leave this room?

00.34.58 - Hiroshi: Voice over: I can't be sure; not just yet.

00.35.07 - PR: I can see that he probably would like this interview to end, wouldn't he?

00.35.17 - Hiroshi: Yes.

00.35.20 - PR: Can you thank him for this? I think he's done really well. All right? You know letting us in.

00.35.29 - PR: And good luck.

00.35.32 - Hiroshi: Thank you.

00.35.40 - PR: Ok, I think we'd better wrap up. Ok. Come on let's go. Do you want to say your goodbyes to him? All right well, we're leaving.

00.36.10 - PR: In Japan, if children refuse to attend school social workers or courts rarely get involved.

00.36.17 - PR: Most consider hikikomori a problem within the family rather than a psychological illness.

00.36.24 - PR: And parents usually accommodate their child's request for solitude rather than seek professional help.

00.36.37 - PR: I wanted to learn about the treatment of hikikomori. There is no government programme here so I saw the author who first used the term to describe a mental health disorder.

00.36.51 - PR: Doctor Tamaki Saito is a psychiatrist. He estimates there are one point two million sufferers in Japan.

00.36.57 - Doctor Tamaki Saito: This is my recent book.

00.36.59 - PR: How to rescue your child from hikikomori?.

00.37.02 - Doctor Tamaki Saito: Yes, this is a guide for parents on hikikomori.

00.37.07 - PR: What's the first thing they should really do then when they think their child's hikikomori?

00.37.11 - Doctor Tamaki Saito: Yes. I think to make your child relax ...

00.37.17 - PR: Relax?

00.37.17 - Doctor Tamaki Saito: ... in the home and accept children's state and not to blame your child and try to communicate. I recommend to speak to your child every day. To say good morning and good afternoon or good night.

00.37.43 - PR: Even if the child's in the bedroom ...

00.37.44 - Doctor Tamaki Saito: Yes.

00.37.45 - PR: ... you talk through the door.

00.37.46 - Doctor Tamaki Saito: From outside the door, talk to your child. And if this process was successful the child can get out home.

00.37.59 - PR: So there's no cure by forcing the child out of the bedroom, like dragging him out, that's not a cure.

00.38.06 - Doctor Tamaki Saito: Yes, that's not a cure. That is very bad approach to hikikomori problem.

00.38.21 - PR: Recovering hikikomori sufferers are now able to move to private residential clinics. The treatment remains passive, counsellors believe

a recluse should decide for himself when he's ready to leave home and receive care.

00.38.38 - Doctor Henry Grubb: Good morning.

00.38.40 - PR: Doctor Henry Grubb is a clinical psychologist from Maryland University in the United States. He's researching hikikomori at a residential centre west of Tokyo.

00.38.50 - Doctor Henry Grubb: How are you today?

00.38.51 - PR: He's preparing the first academic study to be published outside Japan. He says young people the world over fear school or suffer agoraphobia. But hikikomori is a specific clinical condition that doesn't exist elsewhere.

00.39.10 - PR: I spoke to Doctor Grubb during his lunch break and found that as a western psychologist he has a very different approach to the non-intervention method of his Japanese counterparts.

00.39.22 - Doctor Henry Grubb: It's really hard to get a handle on this. How can a parent knowing that just inside that door, that's the question I ask my son, I've got a twelve-year-old, I've got four grown children, my child is inside that door and I don't see him. I mean ...

00.39.42 - PR: You'd knock the door down.

00.39.43 - Doctor Henry Grubb: Right. Simple; walk in. Why don't you just go in that door?

00.39.52 - PR: And what do they say?

00.39.53 - Doctor Henry Grubb: They have no answer. There's no answer.

00.39.57 - PR: It's amazing isn't it?

00.39.58 - Doctor Henry Grubb: Right, I mean you get some excuses; he'll get angry, he'll make a fuss, I can't do anything with him anymore, in the later stages but the question remains why didn't you go in the door in that first week? And then they tell you well people said just give him time, it's a phase, he'll grow out of it.

00.40.23 6 - Doctor Henry Grubb: Time is the worst enemy of this child. As time goes on it's harder and harder to leave that room. So month goes into month and year into year and the next thing they are in a room a decade. It is absolutely mind-boggling.

00.40.46 - PR: Japan's economic success after the war distorted the traditional family structure, creating a class of businessmen who worked long hours and rarely saw their children.

00.40.58 - Doctor Henry Grubb: The modern society has kind of one; stopped the father interacting with his child, taken away any skills that would give him prestige in the child's eyes and left the mother to cope with one child. Another issue they talk a lot about is that because of this one-child family, the child lacks the socialisation of the group at home.

00.41.20 - PR: Lower birth rate now?

00.41.21 - Doctor Henry Grubb: Right.

00.41.23 - PR: So that child relates to the mother ...

00.41.25 - Doctor Henry Grubb: Alone.

00.41.26 - PR: That's the key relationship and that can go badly wrong.

00.41.29 - Doctor Henry Grubb: Badly wrong. And that's key for her too. She is definitely co-dependent in this relationship because she keeps him in that room for twelve years.

00.41.42 - Doctor Henry Grubb: And if the parents don't have the skills or the coping mechanisms to help that child out of that room within the first week or two you're going to see a ....

00.41.54 - PR: an epidemic.

00.41.55 - Doctor Henry Grubb: I agree. Yeah, yes, an epidemic in the next few years.

00.42.06 - PR: Traditional Japan valued the nobility of solitude. Samurai warriors trained in isolation rather than be seen to be imperfect.

00.42.20 - PR: Japan's social order retains feudal echoes. Yet increasing numbers of young people feel they can't fit in; more and more are seeking the sanctuary of solitude.

00.42.36 - PR: Yukiko Sasaki and her husband now realise they failed their son in the past. They've joined a self-help group for parents and hope that in the coming years Hiroshi will enrol for university.

00.42.53 - PR: Yoshiko's son has spent almost three years in isolation but she's now made her first step towards approaching a counsellor.

00.43.03 - PR: The causes of this uniquely Japanese condition are complex and Yasuo's now advising a growing number of families.