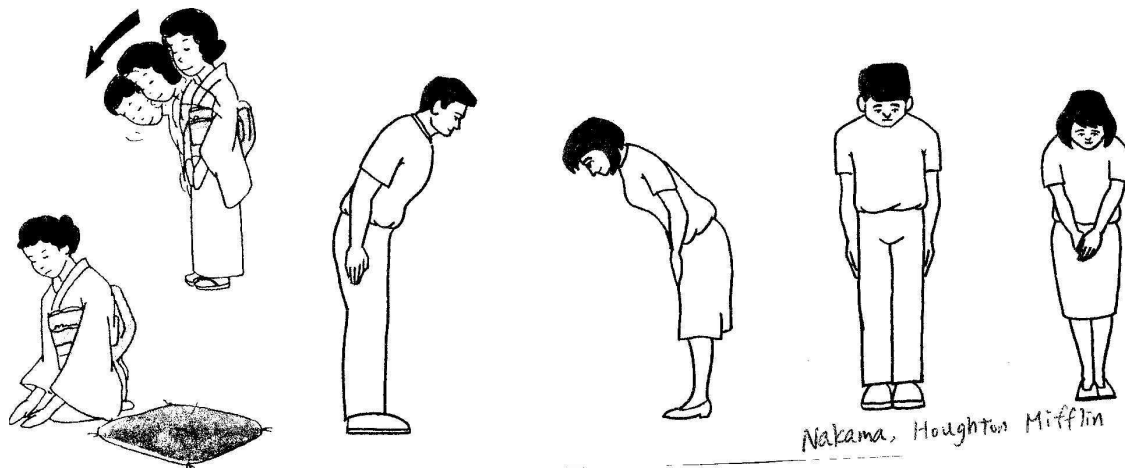


Culture Notes; Genki Lesson 1

Bowing おじぎ

Bowing is the important non-verbal communication to show respect to another person in Japan. Japanese people normally bow when they meet someone for the first time or with daily greeting or apologies. The lower you bow your head down, the more respect you are showing.



Japanese Family (かぞく)

The Japanese rarely praise members of their own family when speaking to someone outside the family. They are very conscious of the distinction between in-groups *うち* and out-groups *そと*. It is very important to be polite to those who are not in one's in-group, and praising members of your own family, the primary in-group, is considered impolite. Thus, you often hear a Japanese man complaining that his wife is not a good cook when in fact she is an excellent cook, or you may hear a woman say that her husband is impractical and inept at household matters. Similarly, boasting about one's self is considered socially inappropriate.

Within one's own family, *おとうさん*, *おかあさん*, *おにいさん*, *おねえさん* and similar terms are used to address senior members. First names are used only toward younger members. Thus, a daughter or son would call their mother *おかあさん*, and older brother *おにいさん*, and a younger sister by her first name. Senior family members tend to use a kinship term to refer to themselves when talking to younger family members. Instead of using their first name, parents usually call each other *おとうさん* or *おかあさん*.

(Nakama 1 p322)

When you talk about your family members to a person who is in an out-group, you will use formal form of words such as, *ちち* for father, *はは* for mother, *あね* for sister, and *あに* for brother.