



Title: Telephone of the Wind

**Full length video:** <https://youtu.be/taFGy-ZNaGM?list=PLXnS9j0Kr6MHjHtnmgSjrzAtQf7D349Y>

- 1 Welcome to Spotlight. I'm Liz Waid.
- 2 And I'm Bruce Gulland. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier  
3 for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live.
- 4 In Japan, there is a place with a very strange telephone booth. The small building sits on top  
5 of a hill in the middle of a garden. It seems odd there among the flowers and other plants. It  
6 is far from the city, but many people come to use it. People travel here from all over Japan.  
7 Years ago, booths like this were common. But there is one thing that makes this booth  
8 different. The telephone inside does not work!
- 9 Local people call this telephone booth kaze no denwa. In English, it means "telephone of the  
10 wind". Today's Spotlight is on the telephone of the wind.
- 11 Itaru Sasaki is a retired steel worker. He built the telephone of the wind after his cousin died.  
12 He loved his cousin very much. And he was very sad when he died. Sasaki wanted a place  
13 to talk to his cousin, even though he was dead. He knew no one could hear him. But he  
14 hoped that talking would help him understand his deep sadness. In an interview with the  
15 radio program This American Life, Sasaki said,
- 16 "My thoughts could not go over regular phone lines. So I wanted them to be carried on the  
17 wind."
- 18 Sasaki placed the telephone in his garden. When he became sad, he would visit the booth.  
19 He would talk into the telephone. He would tell his cousin how he felt. It made him feel  
20 better.
- 21 For a time, Sasaki was the only one who visited the telephone booth. But then, something  
22 horrible happened. On March 11, 2011, there was an earthquake off the coast of Japan. This  
23 was not a normal earthquake. It was one of the most powerful in over a century. The  
24 earthquake did a lot of damage in Japan. Even worse, it caused a tsunami - a huge wave.  
25 Tsunamis often begin from very large earthquakes under the water. Japan is an island in an  
26 area that has many earthquakes. So there are tsunamis also. The Japanese people thought  
27 their country was prepared and ready for any danger. They had built walls, and huge barriers  
28 on the coast to stop the damage. But no one alive had seen a wave this big.
- 29 In March 2011, the tsunami crashed into northern Japan. The water came over the  
30 protective walls. It destroyed homes, villages, and cities. The wave also damaged many  
31 nuclear power plants. One plant, Fukushima Daiichi, started to leak radiation. Many people  
32 who survived the tsunami still had to flee their homes. Even today, these people cannot  
33 return. Their homes, and the places they worked, are still full of poisonous radiation. Many  
34 thousands of people died in the tsunami. And even more are still missing.
- 35 The tsunami changed things for Sasaki. He lives in a town called Otsuchi. It is on the north-  
36 eastern coast of Japan. The tsunami destroyed most of Otsuchi. Some people tried to  
37 rebuild the town. Others just left. Life was not easy for them. Most people of the town knew  
38 someone who had died there. And the memories were very painful.



39 Sasaki knew how difficult these feelings were. He saw so many people struggling with their  
40 sadness. So he told them about his wind telephone. He let people come into his garden.  
41 They would use the telephone of the wind. He even put a notebook inside. Some people did  
42 not want to speak. But they could *write* about their feelings. Only a few people came at first.  
43 But soon, more people heard about the telephone. People from all over the country travelled  
44 to Sasaki's garden. Some visited many times. The telephone booth became a special place.  
45 People would visit it to remember those they loved.

46 NHK is a Japanese television network. They made a film about the telephone of the wind.  
47 The film was called "The Telephone of the Wind: Whispers to Lost Families." It was  
48 broadcast on the five year anniversary of the Tsunami. NHK recorded several visitors to the  
49 telephone. Some do not speak much. Other people speak just about their lives. They talk  
50 about their jobs, or their families. There are some people who cry. They express their  
51 sadness in the open.

52 In the film, one man walks into the booth. He is a young father. His wife's name was Mine.  
53 His son's name was Issei. His whole family died in the tsunami. So he is very sad. As he  
54 speaks, he begins to cry. He says:

55 "Dad? Mom? Mine? Issei? It has already been five years since the tsunami. If my voice  
56 reaches you, please listen. I do not know what I am living for. Issei, please let me hear you  
57 call me papa. I built a new house. But without all of you, it has no meaning. I want to hear  
58 your answer. But I cannot hear anything."

59 Talking to people who have died is something many people do. Many people honour the  
60 memory of people they loved in similar ways. They visit cemeteries, and talk at the place  
61 where the person is buried. Or they visit special places. This helps them remember the one  
62 who died.

63 But the telephone of the wind has become very special to many Japanese people. For many,  
64 the places they would visit are gone. The tsunami destroyed these places. The telephone of  
65 the wind provides a special place for anyone who wants it. It gives people the chance to  
66 express their emotions. It lets them know they are not alone.

67 In the NHK film, a mother and her children visit the telephone booth. The mother lost her  
68 husband in the tsunami. She begins to cry in the booth. She is sad that she will never see  
69 her husband again. And the booth helps the family to talk about him. As she leaves, the  
70 mother tells her children:

71 "We were all so sad. We did not think we could make it through. And that is why we never  
72 talked about Dad until now. But talking to him on the telephone today, it changed  
73 something."

74 Have you ever lost someone you loved? How did you deal with that loss? Is there a special  
75 way that people mourn the dead in your culture? You can leave a comment on our website.  
76 Or email us at [radio@radioenglish.net](mailto:radio@radioenglish.net). And find us on Facebook - just search for Spotlight  
77 Radio. The writer of this program was Dan Christmann. The producer was Michio Ozaki. The  
78 voices you heard were from the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan. All quotes  
79 were adapted for this program and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again,  
80 and read it, on the internet at [www.radioenglish.net](http://www.radioenglish.net). This program is called, "Telephone of  
81 the Wind". We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye.