

SIGN POSTS
APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE
Teaching Others Means To Learn Ourselves

You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 95).

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The purpose of “teaching others” is to help them understand Buddhism and inspire them to take faith in it. To do so, we first must have confidence in what we say about Buddhism. Our confidence is what fundamentally empowers our communication.

Furthermore, teaching is more than regurgitating what knowledge we have. Of course, we ourselves should be clear about Buddhism. I often come to the painful realization that I don't really know what I thought I knew when I try to share Buddhist concepts with others. After my explanation, some people ask me, “So what?” and an awkward silence follows. So, whenever I study Buddhism, I ask myself, “What does this have to do with my life?” My uncertainty about the answer sometimes leads me to think that I have indigestion of Buddhist knowledge!

So knowledge alone is not enough. If we wish to help people to understand Buddhism and inspire others, we must understand who they are and extend our thoughts to their various circumstances. This necessitates compassion.

“Teaching others,” as the Daishonin encourages us to do in this passage, is no easy task. But the Daishonin is not telling us to wait until we become great Buddhist scholars or leaders.

When we rack our brains as to how we can best teach Buddhism to this person or that person, when we struggle and pray to deepen our faith in the Daishonin's teachings, we ourselves learn. When we try to “teach others to the best of our ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase,” our actions become a cause for our growth.

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