

VOICES: As a Buddhist, how do you combat the winter blues?

Members from Seattle Joint Territory respond:

I wish I could blame the innate darkness I battle on the inside on the dark weather outside. How easy! I know that when I practice sincerely, chant daimoku and think of others instead of just me, my depression lifts. I don't care what the weather's like outside when I'm trying to polish my life on the inside. Weather doesn't determine life-condition. I know, because I started practicing where there is the best weather in the world (Southern California), and now I'm living here. I've seen the contrast, and it's irrelevant.

— HELENE MAIETTA, Seattle

I live up in Barrow, Alaska, where there are four to six months of darkness a year. You have to create an energy inside yourself — a weather of happiness inside you. You do this by chanting daimoku and by looking at the beauty in everything.

— LORRIE FROST, Barrow, Alaska

I lived in Alaska for three years during high school. I lived in a small town and it was grey and overcast sometimes for two months straight. You didn't see the sun. That was very depressing. At that time, I didn't know about Buddhism. Now, I actually kind of like the rain. The rain is really cleansing. Many people are moving here from all over and adding to the congestion. The rain cleans the air, cleans away the smog and cleans up the dirty streets. It's like starting again fresh. It even smells good. Everything is greener and fresher.

— JOHANNA RICHARDSON, Seattle

When it rains, that's the best time for me to read and do things inside the house. It is also beautiful to see the rain — when my life-condition is high. So I try to raise my life-condition so that I can enjoy the rainbows.

— MEGUMI INOUE, Seattle

When I first moved to this area 20 years ago, I hated the wintertime. I heard people talk about the beautiful fall colors. I tried to appreciate them, but I had a heck of a time. Over the years, I found I can overcome the winter blues by throwing myself into SGI activities. Also, rather than look at winter as a negative thing, I've come to see it as an opportunity to do more things inside the house, like reading and indoor projects.

— TOM EDDY, Tacoma, Wash.

I try to laugh a lot. Fortunately, I have a young women's division member who lives near me and we talk. I ask her to say something nice or we get together and chant. I do a lot of self-care things: keeping the house musical, keeping it light, going for walks, playing with my kitty and staying connected with my friends. I also have a tendency to really sleep, so I have to set the clock!

— KENYA DAUGHERTY, Seattle

I love the weather here. It enables me to look inside myself. I think maybe that's why some people go nuts. You're inside all the time, you can't see the sun, and you're just focused on your immediate surroundings. How do I combat it? I put it into my music. I go

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into cafes and see all kinds of beautiful works of art. Stuff I've never seen. Some of it is really bizarre. Only people who live in this kind of environment can develop and create that kind of art. If it's beautiful weather all the time, you want to go out all the time. The rain keeps people inside to work on their art.

— VICTOR SALAZAR, Seattle

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