

Relationships Depend On Us

'The relationships you form are a reflection of your own state of life,' SGI President Ikeda says. So if we change ourselves, we can improve our relationships. Below, two SGI-USA Youth Division Study Committee members share their perspectives on relationships.

Quality Time

By CRAIG GREEN

Once a few years ago, I got a phone call asking if I could meet my aunt at the airport. She had a layover for a couple of hours at La Guardia. I was asked to just keep her company — all that was required of me was my time and presence.

But this request threw me. To me, this would entail some large investment of time. I thought: “Why? I have so many things to do. I have to go to a meeting. I’m busy. I’m tired. I have to go to a meeting.” Blah, blah, blah.

So I chanted about it. And I began to realize how off I really was. I had begun to view everything that wasn’t directly connected to my dream, or a meeting, planning meeting or kick-off meeting, as less important. It was affecting the way I was treating people; I was wrong.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “The real meaning of Shakyamuni Buddha’s appearance in this world lay in his behavior as a human being” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 240). If I were to believe these words, then I needed to check my attitude and behavior.

As I sat with her in the airport, I thought how this was a woman that I’d known my entire life. She had raised five children, but had also done whatever she could to help me — whenever she could.

How could I have even imagined not taking the time to sit with her? All that it cost me was some time and the bus fare. She didn’t drill me about life; I didn’t lecture her on the Goshu. We just talked. It was the nicest trip I ever made to the airport.

I once heard someone say that kosen-rufu doesn’t take place at a meeting. It unfolds when we meet with people and get to know them. Likewise, I believe our individual relationships are the key to making this organization stronger. If I can’t become a person who can hold a conversation that’s not about myself, how can I support an organization that works for the sake of all humanity?

Relationships are a matter of give and take: Giving of oneself — without expectation of anything in return — and taking what is given with respect and appreciation. There must be some type of investment. I must give something of myself for the relationship to work.

Even if it’s just some quiet conversation at the airport.

Title: Relationships Depend On Us

Subject: World Tribune 07/04/97 n.3146 p.6 WT970704p06

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Keywords: Depend Divisional Experiences News Practice Relationships Study

Significant Others

By REIKO GROSELL

It takes effort to be in a relationship, whether it is with a significant other, a co-worker, a friend, a family member, etc. Relationships are complex and dynamic. And everybody deals with relationships differently. I want to focus on what I think many people grapple with — relationships with significant others.

SGI President Ikeda explains in his “Discussions on Youth” that love “should be a force that helps you expand your life and bring forth your innate potential with fresh and dynamic vitality. That is the ideal but, as the saying ‘love is blind’ illustrates, people often lose all objectivity when they fall in love” (Jan. 31 *World Tribune*, p. 7).

Have you ever been in a relationship where you are so “into” that other person that you forget all about your friends and priorities? Or where you feel you need to be in the relationship just because you are lonely? Or where you compromise your ideas or beliefs for that person? Or where your whole identity revolves around what he or she thinks? Or, worst of all, where you are involved with someone detrimental to your well-being but you stay in the relationship?

I’m sure we all have been in one of these situations some time in our lives. We try to self-reflect and learn from them and vow to never let them happen again. But strangely enough, until we find our “soul mate,” it may happen again — maybe in different degrees.

This is because we haven’t changed the root of the problem. Unfortunately, if we are looking for happiness in a relationship without finding happiness inside ourselves, we will be dealing with more unhappiness and emotional pain along the way. As President Ikeda says: “Happiness is not something that someone else, like a lover, can give to you. You have to achieve it for yourself. And the only way to do so is by developing your character and capacity as a human being; by fully maximizing your potential” (Jan. 31 *World Tribune*, p. 8). We have to find our own happiness first.

The key to doing this is within our lives. If we don’t realize this, no matter how hard we practice, our relationships will not change. As Nichiren Daishonin writes, “Your mastery of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of mortal sufferings in the least unless you perceive the nature of your own life” (MW-1, p. 4). By praying to the Gohonzon and striving to live courageously, we develop a strong sense of self. In this way, we can contribute something positive to any relationship — as individuals with our own goals and dreams, who at the same time can create new ones together with our significant others.

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