

**VOICES: What ways do you find to encourage the non-Buddhists in your environment who may be suffering or facing obstacles?**

*Members from Texas Joint Territory respond:*

I think it is important to show the individual unconditional friendship and to share your past hardships along with your actual proof. You should dedicate whatever time you may have to that person and always use “soft power.”

— MANNY MATHEWS, Dallas

Of course, I always encourage people to try chanting at any opportunity that seems appropriate. However, I try my hardest to create a common ground of thoughts and feelings to communicate to them that they possess the power and ability to overcome any difficulty in their lives.

— ALAN SINGER, Dallas

First, I listen to them, then I share one of my life experiences that will be similar or relevant. I always chant for wisdom in solving obstacles. I tell them that I pray sincerely and deeply for the wisdom and strength to grow through the struggle. Our horrible experiences can be catalysts for growth. I always include this wisdom in my prayers daily.

— CHRISTINE BELL, Garland, Texas

Trying to just be there for them quietly is important. Let people feel comfortable and safe around you and feel the warmth of your heart in your voice. I try to think of learning from Bodhisattva Never Disparaging who always treated everyone with great respect — no matter how they treated him.

— DEBORAH WEAVER, Dallas

First, I encourage them to look at their suffering or obstacle objectively. Then I share how I solve problems in my daily life by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. I explain how my Buddhist practice helps me focus on the solution, not the problem, and accept all challenges as opportunities to grow.

— NORENE MANNING, Piano, Texas

I listen to their problems and have found out that helps a lot more than words sometimes.

— ARDELL RICHARDSON, Dallas