

Winning In My Family Revolution
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If you continue to strive in faith..., growing as a human being and becoming a sunny presence overflowing with good cheer, wisdom, warmth and consideration, then your family will naturally come to approve of this Buddhism. Thus, to be loved and respected by your family is the first step to winning them over to this practice. (SGI President Ikeda, *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 201)

This is guidance I have tried to put into practice more than any other. And yet there are few other guidance passages that have been so difficult for me to live out.

I guess that the prevailing religion in my family was rationalism, as any inclination toward belief in a higher power or force of any sort had been squeezed out through the harsh experiences my parents endured as Jews living in Nazi Germany, or during the Nazi era — experiences that made them cynical about justice in this world and contributed to a certain gloomy and cynical frame of mind. Added to this was the fact that my mother was stricken in the prime of her life with multiple sclerosis and that many members of my family struggled with depression (myself included).

I joined the SGI owing to the kindness of the people who were trying to introduce me to the practice and to their insistence that I could change my family's and my mother's situations with the power of Buddhism. I found it extremely encouraging and at the same time sort of frightening. The encouraging part was that it was within my grasp, within the realm of possibility, to change my family karma. On the other hand, it also meant that I had no excuse; to not exert myself to the fullest in practice would mean that I lacked compassion for my parents and siblings.

My enthusiasm for the practice, my fervor for it, however, made a negative impression on my family, to say the least. I learned that emotional behavior and words do not help in the process of sharing Buddhism with your family members, the people who know you and your faults the best. Another obstacle was my lack of confidence, both in myself and the practice. Could I really do this? Last was my constant tendency to blame my family for my problems, as if my human revolution consisted of watching those around me change to fit my requirements.

It has been a long and arduous struggle, one that is far from complete even now. But I can say without doubt or hesitation that practicing Buddhism in accord with President Ikeda's guidance has been the key to a total family revolution. My siblings and I, who were not close before I started practicing, are now very close. We have all united around my parents to support them. The power of daimoku has extended my mother's life through a major episode of epilepsy and two bouts with cancer — she has joyously been able to see the birth of five happy and healthy grandchildren. At the same time, my father, at age 82, is still going to work every day and is in excellent health. Last, I have enjoyed seven wonderful years of marriage and have a great 15-month-old daughter. My challenge is never to slacken — to be faithful to the spirit of this guidance throughout my life. I want to be able to say, "I won in my family revolution!" when I reach an old age.

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