

## WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

### What Does It Take?

I appreciate Steve Piontek's personal perspective on the mentor–disciple relationship (“It Takes Faith,” Sept. 19 *World Tribune*). However, I think the editors should have made it clear that Mr. Piontek's essay, like the others in the series, is a personal perspective and not necessarily the view of the SGI-USA Study Department.

Like every element of Buddhist practice, the decision to take a mentor is personal and conscious. It doesn't take a leap of faith. It is a matter of the heart and mind, but it is a choice made with our eyes wide open.

When the young Daisaku Ikeda first encountered Josei Toda, he responded wholeheartedly to a person he recognized as having an understanding of life that he wished to share. Mr. Ikeda chose to follow this person who so strongly communicated his mastery of life as a human being.

He has since dedicated his own life to fulfilling everything Mr. Toda might have done had his physical condition not been so weakened by the deprivation of a wartime Japanese prison. As a matter of fact, he has done more than his mentor could have done, thereby demonstrating the greatness of the mentor through the actions of the disciple. A disciple embraces the heart and soul of the mentor, not one or two ideas.

— GUY McCLOSKEY, Chicago

*[Editor's note: The intention of this series of 10 essays, “Understanding Mentor and Disciple,” is just as you say — to share personal perspectives on this important Buddhist concept. The Study Department does review all such study articles before publication.]*

I thank the *World Tribune* and Steve Piontek for his excellent article “It Takes Faith.” This article really clarified for me how our Buddhist mentor–disciple relationship distinguishes itself from other traditions of mentoring and how we should approach this relationship.

I could identify with the writer's honest confusion and resistance to this relationship. Throughout my eight years of practice, I have felt at times that the relationship was foisted upon me. The unique aspect of the mentor–disciple relationship that I have overlooked when I simply read SGI President Ikeda's guidance is that as a disciple I need to respond to it. Those precious times that I have felt “connected” to President Ikeda through this relationship have been times when I have gained a much broader vision of my life and purpose, and broken through deadlocks.

Thank you again for reminding me that faith is the key to understanding this special relationship with President Ikeda. And that my mission as a disciple is to find one or two of his ideas or visions to make my own and thereby propel my life into an area I never would have discovered otherwise.

— VICTORIA LEHRFELD, Menlo Park, Calif.

Title: Mailbox: 10/17/97

Subject: World Tribune 10/17/97 n.3161 p.3 WT971017p03

Author:

Keywords: 10/17/97 December July Mailbox Opinion Tribune World