

**No Blank Pages**  
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**You must not waste your invaluable youth in aimless pursuits. You must live your lives with all your might, to the fullest. You must not allow even a single blank page to appear in the diary of your youth. (SGI President Ikeda, *A Conversation with Youth*, p. 85)**

I have always had a lazy nature. Before I started to practice this Buddhism, I would do just enough to appear to others to be working hard but on the inside not really challenge myself. I was definitely not living my life with all my might, to the fullest.

As I started to practice Buddhism, this concept of taking responsibility for my life became my main focus. Even though it seems like a pretty simple concept, I didn't know how to put it into action in my life. What really helped me to "get it" was to watch the actions of other SGI members — how they put this concept into action.

And so I made the decision to go to graduate school and chose the best program in the best school for me. All of this seemed to come pretty easily.

I felt a great sense of accomplishment to have found a focus professionally and to have taken action to make it a reality. I felt like I was finally living my life to the fullest.

But when I started the graduate program, it was difficult — REALLY DIFFICULT. Not only the full-time classes but also my 20-hour a week internship, 20-hour a week job, responsibility as a joint territory junior high school division leader and trying to have a social life. Even though all of these responsibilities were the direct result of my dreams and practice, I was suddenly overwhelmed. It seemed all my greatest benefits had become my greatest struggles. I didn't think it was supposed to work that way.

If I looked at everything I was doing time-wise, there were not enough hours in a day to do it all. But from a faith perspective I was determined to do everything that I could. To my amazement, I found myself becoming much less lazy. I started to make much better use of my time and even found free time, which I enjoyed to the fullest.

When I received my master's degree after two years, I realized the true benefit of this experience. It wasn't the piece of paper I received at graduation but the deep sense of accomplishment and the belief that I could achieve all my dreams.

Even though I gained this greater sense of myself and confidence in my accomplishments, this was not the end of this experience. I then started to find myself in situations where I could use my experience from graduate school to encourage others. Helping others to realize their dreams by sharing my struggle truly made everything I went through seem worthwhile.

Although I now understand on a deeper level the importance of challenging myself and my limits, there are still times when I find myself slipping into lazy mode. That's when I am most encouraged by President Ikeda's guidance to "not allow even a single blank page to appear in the diary of your youth."

**WT**