

**NURTURING AN INDIVIDUAL
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When I think about the meaning of nurturing, I think of nourishing, training, educating and rearing. I think about what makes members strong in their faith—what helps them to get stronger, such as listening to them without judging them, keeping promises I make, finding many ways to support them in their practice.

❖ Rather than doing things out of a sense of obligation or because “my leader says so”—it ought to be something that comes from the heart; something that we bring to life within our own hearts because we are following in the footsteps of our mentor in his quest to nurture the youth.

❖ I started practicing in 1968 and received the Gohonzon the following year. Over the years I’ve gained an absolute sense that there is nothing greater than caring. It’s so heart-warming when I bump into members—or when they call—and they let me know that they’ve overcome their struggles; that they now understand why they have to do gongyo in the morning and evening, or why they have to focus when they pray; or that they feel good about themselves and understand that they are the Buddha, that the gem is in their robe no matter what they look like now or how other people perceive them to be.

❖ For me to hear people say, “I finally got it,” “I broke through,” “I’m really moving forward,” “Maybe I haven’t received my specific dream, but I know where I’m going” wipes out all the unpleasant things I experienced in my life. I feel I’m doing a little something in my corner of the world to propel the movement of kosen-rufu forward. That to me is beautiful.

❖ I remember the passage in which Nichiren Daishonin says, “When Bodhisattva Fukyo bowed in reverence to the four categories of people [monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen], the Buddha nature inherent in the lives of these arrogant people bowed back to him. This is the same as how, when one bows facing a mirror, the reflected image bows back” (“Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” in *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 769). If we truly respect other people they respect us in turn. If we are unstinting in our concern for them, we will be protected and supported by them.

❖ We can nurture people in our districts by creating and maintaining a warm, wonderful atmosphere where they feel free to express themselves. To have unity and mutual understanding strengthens the organization where people want to come—and stay. The district can be a great place to have fun while we encourage one another to base everything on prayer first and share the Daishonin’s Buddhism with others, subscribe to the publications and learn about the importance of studying Buddhism so that we can practice correctly.

❖ Dealing with the situation regarding the temple is difficult, but if we have compassion, then we will educate ourselves first and then others through dialogue so that we can prevent one another from going astray and losing faith. When we feel confident about our

organization and our practice, we can feel the joy and excitement of SGI activities and the joy of hope for the future.

❖ Nurturing the youth means allowing them the freedom to express themselves without judging them—to trust them a thousand percent so that they, in turn, can trust us wholeheartedly. To entrust them with the movement of kosen-rufu for the new century means giving them the baton and allowing them to take us into the new century with their fresh, innovative and diverse ideas. A perfect society does not destroy its youth or dismiss its elders.

❖ The main point is to really enable a person to stand firm on their belief and on their understanding that the Gohonzon is absolute—that we need strong faith to be able to experience the greatest life force that we can conjure up.

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