

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Depression Misunderstood

The article in the Perspective section of the Jan. 28 *World Tribune* brings to light an ongoing dilemma in our organization. The author states “that depression is misunderstood by society as a whole...,” and she also feels that this attitude is reflected in the type of guidance given to members who are struggling with mental health issues. In my experience, it is not only the issue of misunderstanding the very real medical aspect of depression and other mental diseases, but also the role of the psychologist or psychiatrist in helping the patient stabilize his or her life.

Having been an SGI member for 35 years and a psychotherapist for 19, I have seen or heard about a wide range of reactions members have had to fellow members who are seeking treatment for emotional problems. On the one hand, there are leaders encouraging members who are suffering with these disorders to chant daimoku to find a psychiatrist or therapist who can truly help them begin to look at their problems and find the appropriate solutions. On the other hand, there are others who will state that psychotherapy or psychiatry is like a heretical religion and goes against Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings. This view stems from that person’s personal view and has no doctrinal support in any of Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings or President Ikeda’s guidance. Yet this misconception dangerously continues to exist and as the article points out, makes these members feel their daimoku is powerless when results aren’t obtained. Worse than that, it leads them to believe that chanting “is the only cure” and that taking medication, for instance, is a lack of faith.

Daimoku brings forth wisdom, the wisdom to select the right medical help, whether the problem is physical or emotional. If our organization is to become an integral part of society, now is the time to pay closer attention to the superstitious ways in which people can interpret Nichiren Daishonin’s great teachings.

—LARRY SHAW, Los Angeles
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I was quite encouraged by the perspective written by Lori McDaniel (Jan. 28 *World Tribune*, p. 3). I am a bipolar person who is often misunderstood. In the beginning of my practice, I did well. I was established in society and introduced people to the Gohonzon. My fire turned to ash, or rather, depression. I became inconsistent.

After listening to President Ikeda’s guidance and participating in activities when he came to San Francisco, I still landed in jail. Being clinically ill and acting out left me unable to focus on the Gohonzon. My heart remained in the right place, but I could not control my emotions.

Upon my return, I enrolled in intensive therapy and partial hospitalization. For the next two years, I gained the meaning of human revolution. I challenged myself to gain balance while raising my new baby daughter on my own.

Now I am a different person. Slowly building a new foundation, I’ve become purely consistent and centered around the Gohonzon. Thank you for your article!

—STEVEN BAJONE, Sacramento

I am writing in response to Lori McDaniel's article about overcoming depression. I spent the better part of my life in a vicious cycle of clinically diagnosed "manic-depression." I'm also a women's district leader, practicing 15 years. I've been hospitalized twice for a total of four months in-patient and eight months out-patient treatment. This does not include many years in weekly therapy, as well as support group meetings and lots of different drug therapies.

Presently, I no longer suffer from "manic-depression." It's been about six years since I've experienced any major mood-swings or interruptions of my daily life. While I agree that it is devastating and treatment is needed, I am appalled at how many people go on drug therapy automatically without seeking to get to the root of the "illness." I put both manic-depression and illness in quotes because I don't truly believe it to be a disease in the way Lori and many others speak of it. Yes, I think there is a chemical imbalance that some folks are predisposed to at birth. But I also feel that going deeper to unlock and release the feelings at the cellular level with both our Buddhist practice and mind/body therapies is the only way to truly cut this karmic chain of suffering for future generations. In a crisis, yes, drug intervention is crucial; but not as an ongoing "bandaid" therapy. I know what I'm saying is extremely controversial and many will disagree. However, I'm proof that it can work another way. Thank you.

—REBECCA TOROSIAN, New York City
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Friends for Peace

Upon entering the San Francisco Landmark Area New Year's 2000 Gongyo Meeting, I was given a notice for the Boys and Girls Jan. 23 kick-off meeting. I put it with the collection of papers handed to me, thinking that it didn't look like it applied to me. Early the next morning, while I lay thinking in bed about whether I would attend the meeting, I remembered "The Story of Ohashi no Taro's Determined Son" printed in the Dec. 3, 1999, *World Tribune*. Somehow I had never read this Gosho. I started skimming through it, and it just grabbed me.

I really felt a lot of connections to it. I lived with foster parents a large part of my childhood, and always missed my father dearly. He finally finished his military duties and returned home with a Japanese wife. By then I was 17 and wanted to see the world, so I joined the military. My mother (stepmother), sensing the dangers I faced going into the world young and alone, converted me to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. She still worried about me, but knew I would always be protected, as I was, even through the Vietnam War. Now my father has passed on and I still miss him, but it is really a blessing not having to worry about my mother as she is still practicing strongly and is receiving major benefits in her life.

The family issues in the story were moving to me, but the purity of faith and hope of a child, combined with the power of the Lotus Sutra offer more than can be expressed in words. I must admit I envy the parents of fortune children, and I hope the Boys and Girls Group activities really do well. When I finished reading "The Story of Ohashi no Taro's Determined Son," I had so many tears that I could hardly read. I looked through bleary eyes to reread the title and saw next to it the logo "Friends for Peace"; how appropriate and wonderful. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

—LARRY E. WILLIAMS, San Francisco
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Thanks, Jorge Silverio

Greetings from Tokyo, Japan! I am an English teacher here at Soka Junior High School, Tokyo. I was very happy to read Jorge Silverio's experience (Jan. 1 *World Tribune*) because I am now the vice young men's leader for Grupo Pasion. This group was established by President Ikeda to help foster capable leaders for the Spanish speakers who live in Japan. Mr. Silverio's efforts for propagation in Cuba—a country that has so much suffering and yet so much potential—his experience really touched my heart. Here at Soka Junior High School, volunteering teaching Spanish to my Spanish club members really brings hope that one day there will be free exchange between Cuba, Japan and the entire world!! I cannot wait to meet SGI-CUBA members and sing Guantanamera together!!!

—DAVID QUINTERO,
Tokyo, Japan
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Hello From Israel

Hello, my SGI friends—greetings from Israel. You can't imagine how good it feels to read the WT E-mail Express over here in Israel. World peace is getting closer in the Middle East. Thank you again and please sign me up for any other items you have by e-mail. I love you dearly.

—JOY WILLIAMS,
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