

## EXPERIENCE—BETH LA MURE, HOLLYWOOD, CALIF. TRANSFORMING MY LIFE

**Beth La Mure says her Buddhist practice was crucial in helping her learn to trust and ‘finally have a healthy, happy marriage, in addition to a great career, financial success and a happy family.’**

I moved to Los Angeles when I was 20 in search of fame and fortune. Instead, I found Buddhism, and my real journey toward true happiness began.

I grew up one of seven children in Roswell, New Mexico. My father was a doctor and my mother a housewife. On the surface, we were the perfect family—wealthy, healthy and fun. However, that was a complete façade. My father was an alcoholic and mentally, physically and sexually abusive to his children. My mother was emotionally unavailable to us and always stood behind my father and his authority. Being very religious, she thought that her prayers could change the family.

Most of my older siblings ran away from home. At 16, after a failed attempt at suicide, I had had enough and left home, too, and still graduated high school with honors. However, I had developed eating disorders— anorexia and bulimia. I went on to college but dropped out and moved around for a while before ending up in Los Angeles.

In 1986, determined to make a new start in L.A., I immediately got a job as a receptionist at a TV production company. However, when yet another boyfriend dumped me because I was too unstable, I ended up depressed and in the depths of my eating disorder. Seeing my suffering, a girl at work introduced me to Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Buddhism was very strange to me since I was raised in a very conservative Catholic home. The possibility of becoming happy sounded too good to be true, but I tried chanting anyway, never expecting it would help.

Within two weeks of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, I overcame my eating disorder. At first I didn’t believe it because I had struggled with it since age 15. I had gone to therapy, had friends intervene and prayed and prayed to overcome it but to no avail. But, through chanting, I never suffered from bulimia or anorexia again.

I continued to chant and was amazed at how much better I felt day to day, since I had been depressed with thoughts of suicide for the previous six months. Insomnia and panic attacks went away, too. Within two months, my best friend who had been worried about me becoming a Buddhist began chanting herself because of the changes she saw in my life.

My understanding of the profundity of this religion grew over time. I talked with someone who had more experience in the practice about my desire to develop a relationship. She asked me about my family and when I told her that I no longer spoke to my parents, she advised me to chant for their happiness. She said if I wanted a healthy relationship, I needed to resolve my feelings about my parents, in particular, my father. I wanted a boyfriend so badly that I began chanting for my father’s happiness. Quite honestly it made me sick. I hated this man. But slowly I began to feel compassion for him and my mother.

After a tremendous amount of planning and chanting, with the help of my six siblings, mother and a counselor, we all confronted my father about his alcoholism and abuse. He

agreed to receive treatment at a hospital for six weeks.

The process of rebuilding our family was just beginning when a young man filed a lawsuit against my father for sexual abuse.

I prayed for my father's happiness and protection because I felt he was truly changing, but the result of the trial was a 20-year sentence in a maximum-security prison with no parole. This did not seem like the answer to my prayers and I was extremely discouraged. I was sure he would be killed or at least badly hurt because he was a rich, older white man going to a hard-core prison, but I chanted for his protection anyway. I never thought that prison would be where my father would find happiness, but I persevered in my prayers and ultimately, this turned out to be the best thing for his life.

While in prison, my father helped revitalize an AA program and helped many people in the system. He went from being an arrogant, close-minded tyrant to a compassionate, concerned man. After seven-and-a-half-years, his sentence was overturned and he was released.

My father's change was remarkable to me and I have developed a new relationship with him.

After seven years of Buddhist practice, I felt that I had seen tremendous change, but I still wanted a healthy, happy relationship, financial success and the career of my dreams. I was chanting a lot, studying *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, introducing people to the practice and attending SGI activities; however, certain aspects of my life weren't changing. A senior in faith encouraged me to study SGI President Ikeda's guidance and about the mentor-disciple relationship. To say this was difficult for me was a huge understatement. I could not comprehend how understanding the mentor-disciple relationship or President Ikeda could help me achieve my goals, but I decided to chant about it.

Based on the following passage from President Ikeda, the importance of the mentor-disciple relationship became more clear to me: "Those who have a mentor in life are truly fortunate. The path of mentor and disciple is one that leads to personal development and growth. Those without a mentor may appear free and un beholden to anyone, but without a solid standard or model on which to base themselves, their lives become aimless and wandering" (*Faith into Action*, p. 234).

As I studied more, I could see what an amazing human being President Ikeda was, and how, since age 19, he had dedicated his whole life toward creating world peace. I realized that it was my own insecurities and trust issues that had made appreciating President Ikeda's greatness so difficult for me.

During this time, I began working for a music video production company as a representative. This was the kind of job I had always wanted. I was there for three short months, really enjoying my work, when the 1994 earthquake hit.

My place was ruined and I had to move out. Less than a month later, I was hit in a head-on collision by a guy who had no money or insurance. Because I was new to my job, I had no health insurance.

I was in the hospital for two weeks with multiple injuries and feeling completely defeated, but my seniors in faith insisted that I could absolutely win in this situation. It seemed impossible.

However, when I got out of the hospital, I made a strong determination to transform my life. I was living at my friend's house on her couch. I had no money, was \$60,000 in debt with medical bills and had lost my job. I felt hopeless, but I realized that this was another

opportunity to grow and challenge myself and to chant to find an answer. I couldn't see how there could be a solution but I had no other option. I prayed for hours on end.

After a few weeks and amazing support from people I had worked with in the past, I decided to start my own music video production company. Though I had no money, I had the contacts and directors needed to do this. It was a tremendous struggle at first, but over the past six years I have built a successful business and made many music videos for some of the biggest bands on MTV. I have paid all my debts and built a solid financial base.

A year after starting my company, I met a director through my work. I normally would not have been interested in him, but through challenging myself I had learned to recognize a person of quality. This was the man I wanted to marry.

On Oct. 3, 1997, Peyton, now my husband, proposed to me and we also closed on our home. I feel that once I really took on the challenge of understanding the mentor-disciple relationship, I made a fundamental step in my inner transformation. I broke through my ego and accepted that I could have a mentor in my life — someone I could trust and learn from. For me, given my upbringing, especially with issues related to men, learning to trust someone about how to live was crucial in being able to finally have a healthy, happy marriage, in addition to a great career, financial success, a lovely home and a happy family. I know that I built this fortune through my Buddhist practice, however, the most important thing I have in my life is a deep joy in living and the realization that in order to grow and receive benefit, I have to be willing to self-reflect and challenge my weaknesses.