

Getting to the Heart of Guidance PERSPECTIVE

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One of the key points SGI-USA Vice General Director Masao Yokota emphasized in a recent lecture here was the importance of forging a strong personality. He noted that there are two essential factors in the development of one's personality.

The first is self-discipline, clearly represented in our movement by the daily practice of gongyo. Discipline is not usually something people like to hear about, Mr. Yokota mentioned lightheartedly. The second essential component is caring for others. This vital behavior, Mr. Yokota pointed out, is a two-way interaction.

We can see throughout the history of Buddhism the reciprocal caring demonstrated between mentor and disciple. Two of the most well-known examples come from episodes separated by 700 years. First is the bond between Nichiren Daishonin and his faithful samurai follower, Shijo Kingo. As described by the Daishonin in the Goshō, Kingo held the reins of the Daishonin's horse, accompanying his mentor to his scheduled execution site at Tatsunokuchi. Each cared for the other more than for life itself, revealing the beauty of shared destiny created as a free choice from the hearts of individuals awakened to their eternal mission.

In the 1940s, an unforgettable scene at Toyotama Prison (described in SGI President Ikeda's novel *The Human Revolution*) depicts the life-to-life bond between mentor and disciple: Josei Toda recognizes his teacher, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, being marched in the opposite direction from himself, wearing a basket over his head like all the other prisoners. Toda cries out: "Sensei! Take good care of yourself!"

Later, Toda would comment that his mentor cared for him so much that he allowed him even to go to prison with him. That's not an easy sentiment to grasp with the mind. But to the heart it makes deep sense and resonates with the texture of profound truth.

I recently attended a seminar and learned about the research and activities of the Institute of HeartMath® — a non-profit think tank specializing in innovative approaches to the problems of human stress, quality, creativity and effectiveness. In his book *Freeze Frame*, president, CEO and founder of the institute, Doc Lew Childre, describes a simple process that can be used to access more fully the natural healing frequencies of our hearts. Beyond a metaphor for our spirituality, research demonstrates that, as a physical organ, the heart emits a powerful electrical field of energy that permeates every cell of the body. The heart's frequencies, through an interactive "dialogue" with the brain's cortex via the hypothalamus, have a dramatic effect on our hormonal system, leading to tremendous reduction in stress and increased immune function levels.

Based on my experience of the power of these heart frequencies, I can see that my heart is the channel for feelings of care and appreciation. Guiding my every action, based on faith, my heart can connect with the heart of another and words come to my mind and flow out with a genuine, gentle quality. In the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, referring to the Buddha, it states, "His words are soft and gentle and can delight the hearts of the assembly."

So it would seem that words that can truly be called guidance are words spoken from the heart. By this it is meant that those giving guidance have first accessed the higher dimensions of the mind by going into their hearts — hearts filled with appreciation and caring. As the SGI

president says in his lecture on the “Expedient Means” chapter, “Words uttered with ardent prayer for someone’s happiness, even if they are strong, are ‘soft and gentle.’”

So it might be said that getting to the heart of guidance, in truth, may be the journey of getting to the guidance of the heart.

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