

VOICES: How have you changed poison into medicine in your life?

Members from Los Angeles #4 Joint Territory respond:

My daughter and I did not get along for many years. I love her to death, but there was just such friction between us. After about four years of hell, I have changed that really, really poisonous aspect of our relationship into medicine. I focused on changing myself through my practice. Now she shares her life with me and even comes to me for advice. Through her practice and my practice, too, we now have a bond that I can't even put into words.

— LINDA MALONE, Redlands, Calif.

I teach storytelling (how to tell stories) to gradeschool children. There's a fifth grade class I taught that was just totally out of control. They were not kind to one another. I chanted and chanted to realize a solution to this problem, to no avail, I thought. At last, I received some wise and simple advice from a teacher at the school about how to engage the students and allow them to bond at the beginning of the lesson by participating in a story-reading. The situation has now completely turned around and the students' value and potential within the classroom has revealed itself.

— KAREN KRAUT, Riverside, Calif.

In 1984 I caused an automobile accident. The person I hit assured me that he was fine but later sued me for more than my insurance policy limits. I was not fluent in English at the time and didn't understand what was happening. For one year I chanted six hours a day. At the time, my husband did not support my practice and my altar was tucked away in a small corner. Finally, the lawsuit was dismissed because the man who sued me was discovered by my insurance company to be a fraud. Because of our victory, my husband changed completely and decided to completely support my practice and encouraged our son to begin practicing, too.

— TOSHIKO SHARPESON, San Bernardino, Calif.

One way that I've changed poison into medicine is in my relationship with my ex-wife. I was married for five years and must have chanted millions of daimoku about our relationship. When we were married, we really fought, and I'd continuously go to the Gohonzon and chant to understand. Finally, I reached a point where I felt a sense of appreciation for having such a catalyst in my life to send me to the Gohonzon. Today, though divorced, we get along really well, and there's a sense of completion in the relationship. The poison of the anger and the hostility in the relationship became my impetus to chant. I know now that I wouldn't have chanted quite as vigorously and changed that karma if it weren't for her.

— BEN HELFMAN, Redlands, Calif.

Recently I went to the Florida Nature & Culture Center, though I wondered why I had been chosen to go. I didn't recognize my own value — that I had the Buddha nature within me. Because I met so many people there who had the same types of feelings as me and we exchanged ideas, I came back awakened to the fact that my Buddha nature is just waiting to be energized and expressed. The poison was my own negativity — not realizing my own value. The medicine is the appreciation and positive nature I came back from Florida with and the reaffirmation that we all have the Buddha nature within us.

RICHARD NEWMAN, Riverside, Calif.

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