

Any Moment Can Be A Crucial One

What makes a “crucial moment” crucial?

The answer: You. Your attitude. Your actions.

Webster’s New World Dictionary calls a crisis a turning point that can lead to a condition that is either better or worse. Unfortunately, the dictionary offers no advice about how to get to that better place. To be in a crisis implies that we have no control; we are at its mercy and will wind up wherever it chooses to dump us.

But when we employ Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism — the strategy of the Lotus Sutra — we don’t have to be at the whim of a crisis or crucial moment. We can take the reins of any situation and steer it in the direction we choose — in the direction that brings us closer to our victory, to our enlightenment.

In other words, we can choose to turn any moment into a crucial moment. The transformation may involve many steps, but there are at least three points to keep in mind.

The first is to recognize the moment for what it is. And you might be surprised — it doesn’t have to be a dramatic event like a major illness or a plane crash. A turning point can come at our most benign moments — washing dishes, talking with friends, taking a walk — any moment in which we can envision a new future.

And then we make a decision.

What kind of decision? A decision to change something. A decision to take action. A decision to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Does this all sound simple so far? Don’t be fooled. At moments of well-being, of a sense of strength, it’s easy to make a determination. “Oh, sure,” some might say, “if I were facing a crisis, I would never forget the steel-hard determination I feel right now.” Easier said than done.

One defining aspect of a crisis is that our normal thought processes may go out the proverbial window. Perhaps you’re on a diet when someone hands you a plate of chocolate-covered goodies. Suddenly your diet becomes a dim memory. What happened to your decision? What if you’re facing a far more serious crucial moment? Like a moment when you doubt the practice and wonder if you should quit.

Nichiren Daishonin tells us, “Foolish men are likely to forget the promises they have made when the crucial moment comes” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [rev. ed.], 180). Foolish, he says. To forget our determination is to be foolish.

One way to cement our determination is to take every opportunity to remind ourselves. Like having fire drills or rehearsing for a play, we can renew our determination frequently and repeatedly — reminding ourselves of our goals for self-development and the happiness of others. Constantly “rehearsing” can make us less likely to forget in a moment of stress.

The third point to keep in mind is our action. Any decision we make is worthless without expressing it in action. This requires courage, and courage arises from chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. As SGI President Ikeda tells us: “Those who stand up at a crucial moment demonstrate genuine greatness. They are people who leave behind an immortal history” (June 28, 1996, *World Tribune*).

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