

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

The Unwelcome Drama of Chronic Illness

Thank you, Tamara Jenkins, for your “Perspective” (“Turning Point,” Oct. 31 *World Tribune*).

I know the unwelcome drama of chronic illness and its devastating toll: loss of self-esteem, loss of identity, loss of occupation, even loss of friends. Society views illness as a lessening of productivity. People take health for granted, yet fear illness because we are all vulnerable to it.

People tell us we are weak or that we have a weak practice. They don’t know the battle waged to get up each morning, confronting despair; chanting when it’s hard to breathe; summoning willpower to accomplish the smallest task. They don’t know the feelings of powerlessness, inadequacy and isolation, physical pain and debilitation.

These last three-and-a-half weeks I’ve been stuck inside these four walls, chanting to somehow create value. What I’m learning is that illness is a disconnectedness from the earth, a break in the flow of life force. That is why our world is ill, alienated, suffering, and in need of sustenance.

Thank you, Tamara, for your courage and tenacity. I want to tell you what I must tell myself: You don’t need “a new identity.” This is the only one you have, the only one you need to be happy and healthy. Your life is indeed the Gohonzon, a cluster of blessings that will flow beyond itself to enrich other lives.

Think like a river. Trust life. Love yourself unconditionally. Let illness teach you to live fully, deeply, inexhaustibly. Draw from the earth and then give back to it the cool, clear waters of our daimoku, helping our ailing planet to heal.

— JODIE APPELL, Berkeley, Calif.

Our Friends in Canada

I just faxed a couple of articles from the *World Tribune* to a member in western Canada. We both work on the Canadian SGI magazine *New Century*. Your paper is an inspiration to me, and I marvel once again as I re-read Sony Niethammer’s experience (Aug. 15 *World Tribune*). The recovery article (Oct. 3 *World Tribune*) boldly addressed a couple of issues, that of interest groups and the role of therapy, that concern members here as well. Thanks for your efforts — I know the kind of work that goes into that newspaper.

— LYNNE HUSSEY, Toronto

More Shrubs

I am a landscape professional practicing with Virginia Headquarters. I am writing to give suggestions about shrubs that provide the greenery for the altar in Zone 6 (Richmond area). Upon research, I found the best shrubs are Aucuba (japonica “serratifolia” — glossy evergreen shrub with serrated margins on leaves; average 4 feet tall and 4 feet wide) and Euonymus (japonica “silver king” — evergreen variety with creamy green leaves growing upright, average 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide).

When you take care of your cuttings from the shrubbery, I suggest that you use sharp hand pruners. Cut at a 45-degree angle. By doing so, you will increase the surface area of the cutting to draw water, keeping it looking good on your altar for longer periods of time.

— DENNIS BROGDON, Chesapeake, Va.

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