

For Women
The Practice of Compassion and Courage
By BETH POPPER, New Jersey Region Women's Leader

Beth Popper considers the importance of propagation and what 'I will do it' means to her.

Nichiren Daishonin in "The True Entity of Life" explains what it means to be a Buddhist: "Believe in the Gohonzon.... Forge strong faith...and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 94-95).

In the beginning of my practice, it was difficult for me to introduce others to the practice because I was intensely shy, and because I had grown up with a strong feeling about the importance of respecting other people's beliefs.

For a long time, I either avoided or forced myself reluctantly to "teach others to the best of my ability." Because I loved to chant, however, I changed dramatically and felt happy for the first time.

Gradually, it became easy to talk to people and natural to bring up my Buddhist practice in conversation. Within a month I had many people interested in practicing and attending meetings. And within two months three of them had received the Gohonzon. By the end of the three months, my personal problems became so insignificant that I wondered, "What is the big deal?" I started to challenge my problems courageously.

SGI President Ikeda encouraged us in his New Year's message to "forge a courageous practice, lead a courageous life." The key to accomplishing this is powerful daimoku, chanting with the awareness that courage already exists in our lives. And that sharing Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with others is the most compassionate thing we can do for them.

In a lecture on "The True Object of Worship," President Ikeda explains the relationship between courage and compassion: "Of course, the spirit of Buddhism is basically compassion, but the late President Toda used to say: 'We are common mortals. Even though you talk about practicing compassion, it is easier said than done. Courage goes hand in hand with compassion. Courage leads to compassion.' Your courageous and imperturbable work for propagation, in the face of the rough waves which may assail you, is itself the practice of compassion."

To me, this is the "I will do it" spirit.

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