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When Things Got Really Good

As an undergraduate student, I was expelled twice from the University of Maryland because of my bad grades. Not because I couldn't do the work — I just didn't apply myself. Eventually, I changed my attitude, chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo a lot, was re-accepted into school and graduated on time. I even decided that I wanted to pursue a career in education.

Last summer, I had an internship in Los Angeles, working for an education-related video company. While in Los Angeles, I received the Gohonzon [objection of devotion in this Buddhism] — I had been practicing for 16 years without one. From that point, I really started to practice harder.

Two weeks before my internship ended, I was accepted to graduate school at Florida International University. I drove back to Maryland (my home), then to Miami. I felt as if nothing could stop my fortune. "Things are good," I thought.

Within two weeks of arriving in Miami, however, I found out that my acceptance to graduate school wasn't full acceptance — because of my poor grades as an undergrad.

When I heard that I wasn't fully accepted, I thought: "OK. I'll just chant about this. No problem." What I didn't realize: Without full acceptance, I couldn't receive financial aid! I was nervous, so I called my parents. They encouraged me to use my Buddhist practice to overcome this problem. I began chanting two hours a day, and, within a week, I got a job as a graduate assistant designing Web sites for the College of Education.

Then, I found out that I would have to take the GRE test all over again if I wanted to be fully accepted for the fall semester. "OK," I thought again, and started chanting three hours day. I studied extremely hard for the test. Since I took the test by computer, I got my scores immediately. I didn't pass! I was surprised, disappointed, but I knew there had to be some kind of mistake.

I've had so many benefits from this practice that I knew that I would overcome this problem. I simply increased my chanting. Two weeks after taking the test, I received a letter stating that there had been a mistake by the computer reporting my scores — I *had* passed!

This news, however, came too late. The deadline for full acceptance for the fall semester had passed. So I kept chanting to somehow make it through the semester.

My problems seemed to increase, as my classes were very difficult. I had so much anxiety, I often felt sick. I was chanting hard just to keep my mind focused on my studies, and most importantly, not to give up.

SGI President Ikeda, in his speech at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in 1996, stated: "Everything begins from the human revolution of one person. It is important first and foremost that each of you win in life and society. I also hope each of you, with your brilliant presence, will illuminate all around you — the people you encounter, your local community, your country, and all of humanity."

I'm proud to say I won. At the end of the semester, I had earned a 3.65 GPA. For this spring semester, I not only received financial aid but got an out-of-state tuition waiver and a scholarship. Through this experience, I mastered the "never give up" spirit. Through my efforts in chanting and taking the appropriate action, I created a big victory in my life.

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