

SIGNIFICANT DATE: July 3, Day of Mentor and Disciple
My Mentor, My Friend
By CRYSTAL CUNNINGHAM, Atlanta Correspondent

In Buddhism, the roles mentor and disciple fulfill are crucial. Were it not for mentors like Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin, we'd have no Buddhism; and without great disciples like Ananda and Nikko Shonin, the teachings wouldn't spread to future generations. This mentor-disciple relationship between two people can manifest itself in many different ways for different people.

Fifty-three years ago, on July 3, 1945, Josei Toda was released from prison after being unjustly incarcerated for two years. He held in him the stand-alone spirit to move Japan toward a better way of life for the Japanese people based on the Daishonin's Buddhism. In 1957, again on July 3, President Ikeda was likewise unjustly incarcerated. He went to jail in order to protect his mentor, Toda, and the sincere members of Kansai. July 3 thus commemorates the relationship between Toda and Ikeda. And it calls on each of us to discover the mentor-and-disciple relationship for ourselves, in our own way.

On July 3, 1996, President Ikeda spoke on the Day of Mentor and Disciple in Los Angeles. He shared that Dr. Alfred Balitzer, an honorary president of Soka University of America, had sent him a congratulatory message to celebrate May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, which said that "this unique bond [between mentor and disciple] adds to the learning process motivation, commitment and loyalty, thus making education a transforming experience, completing the purposes of nature in man."

At this point in my life, education is very important to me, and, as a university student, I consider my professors to be my mentors. I believe that education is a necessary foundation for youth, and my professors, then, are essential in order for me to develop my foundation.

I don't always have close contact with my professors, but I study their lectures and behavior closely during class. I would one day like to be the master in my chosen career path just as they are. The only way to become the best is to study the best and do what the best do!

Professors make such a great impact on many students' lives. There are times when I sit in a big lecture hall with 500 other students and watch those amazing professors from Yale, Harvard, and Brown universities. Listening to their lectures and presentations is encouraging to me, because I can sense that they want their students to be successful in their lives as well.

I appreciate their efforts, and I try my best in school, so that I can reach my educational goal. Every semester, I feel that I gain five more mentors, one from each class. How fortunate to have them as my mentors and guides in education!

Looking back on my life, I can remember that my greatest mentors have helped me at the most opportune times. They have all taught me lessons and have guided me toward the correct way to live or behave.

I also believe it important to have a lifelong mentor who is a dedicated partner, a friend, and one who teaches and guides you in all ways that he or she knows how. I feel such a mentor to be a teacher not limited to teaching a disciple or student about just one aspect of life — like the training you need for a job or how to reach your education goal — but a teacher who helps you in all areas of your life.

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