

**Questions and Answers on Faith:  
What Is ‘Consistency From Beginning to End’?  
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**Q: What does *consistency from beginning to end* mean? How does it apply to my practice?**

A: You have probably heard many times that your determination (*ichinen*) can change everything. The tenth of the ten factors, consistency from beginning to end sheds further light on this Buddhist teaching.

Consistency from beginning to end links the other nine factors: appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation (auxiliary cause), latent effect and manifest effect. All of these are elements that make up life in general — and your individual life. And all of them are interrelated.

The point of consistency from beginning to end is that your will can influence all the elements of your life, every aspect of your life.

Consistency from beginning to end explains that the first three factors, appearance through entity (representing phenomena, like a person’s physical characteristics), and the remaining six factors (functions, like a person’s behavior) affect one another. They constitute a whole.

“Each of us lives within the framework of the ten factors,” SGI President Ikeda explains in *Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, volume 1. “There is consistency among all factors, and together they make up the irreplaceable totality of your being,” he adds (p. 136).

The well-known concept of the ten worlds is related to the ten factors: Each of the ten worlds embodies the ten factors. Four factors in particular — internal cause, relation (auxiliary cause), latent effect and manifest effect — are the mechanisms by which your life winds up in one of the ten worlds. When Nichiren Daishonin says that rage is the cause of Hell, greed is the cause of Hunger, foolishness is the cause of Animality and belligerence is the cause of Anger, he is pointing to the factors in your life that add up to you being in one life-condition or another.

It’s important to understand that however the factors are at work in your life or whatever the life-condition you are manifesting, it’s all temporary. There is nothing fixed about your life, nothing set in stone.

And the ten factors and ten worlds all come from you. When your life-condition changes, they all change as well. Every aspect of your life depends on the actions you take, on the state of mind you can develop.

The practitioners of T’ien-t’ai’s Buddhism aimed to correctly observe life: This was the ultimate purpose behind their practice. In contrast, the Daishonin’s Buddhism is not merely interested in observation of the truth but in allowing people to change the core of their existences — we strive to make all aspects of our lives shine by polishing our innate Buddhahood.

The bottom line with consistency from beginning is that changing our lives — every aspect of them — is *always* possible. And since the ten factors are components of every human life, consistency from beginning to end also teaches, as does the concept of the ten worlds, that everybody equally has this opportunity to better their lives.

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