

Tips on Preparing an Experience

- An experience, or testimonial in faith, is your opportunity to share with others the story of how you've grown as a result of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Experiences share your feelings and thoughts — bad and good, positive and negative — and usually include a relevant quote from the Daishonin's writings and other words that have inspired you.

- What is the essence of your faith experience? Readers or listeners should be absolutely clear. They will be if you are.

- Many great experiences are dramatic. Be aware of how your story might follow a narrative line. Here are some questions that you can ask yourself to discover the narrative line of your story: What was the initial problem or difficulty? What strategies did you use to fix the problem? Did things get worse? How did you struggle? When did you become aware of the power of your Buddhist practice with regard to your problem? What was your crucial moment, your “do or die” situation? What breakthrough or realization did you have? How did this deepen your faith? Did you feel appreciation? What are you going to do now?

- Benefits are not miracles. External benefits result from internal changes. An overemphasis on conspicuous or miraculous benefits can give the wrong impression about Buddhism. Be careful to always explain the workings of Buddhism, how a person's internal change resulted in a benefit.

- It is a person's powers of faith and practice which bring forth the powers of the Buddha and the Law in the Gohonzon (the four powers). Therefore, rather than say the “power of the Gohonzon” or the “Gohonzon changed my life,” talk about the “power of my faith and practice to the Gohonzon” or how “my practice to the Gohonzon changed my life.” In this way the relationship between one's efforts in faith and practice and the power of the Gohonzon is made clear each time.

- There are many phrases we use in the SGI that can be understood only by us. In experiences especially, such phrases should be avoided or explained so anyone can understand them. For instance, what does “I fused with the Gohonzon” really mean? “I chanted abundant daimoku” doesn't really say anything, either. *Abundant* is a relative term. How much did you chant?

- Chanting sincere daimoku for your experience to encourage others is crucial. The purpose is not to congratulate yourself but to encourage others in their faith. A great experience comes from the heart to touch others' hearts.

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