

## EXPERIENCE—AMY SCHOR FERRIS, DINGMANS FERRY, PA. CHOOSING TO HONOR AND LOVE MYSELF

**Even though you chant and believe in Myoho-rence-kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but some inferior teaching. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 3)**

For most of my life, feelings of low self-worth and self-doubt have plagued me — not feeling good enough, caring too much what others think, wanting to be accepted. I think for many people, artists in particular, tend to suffer from these issues. Having dropped out of high school when I was 15, I never went to college, and never took any courses in writing. At 19, I learned of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism from a friend. As I began to chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, my desire to write emerged. That was 25 years ago, and I have fulfilled my dream. I have everything I ever wanted. All the externals—a great husband, a great career, great friends, tremendous financial fortune. What I never had was confidence in myself. I had mistaken my determination to win for feelings of self-worth, and about a year ago, I had to face that full force.

I was in Los Angeles where I had been fired from a project. I had been hired to write a film and after handing in the second draft, I was informed that the producers were going to hire someone else to do the remaining draft. I was devastated. I had been working non-stop as a screenwriter for years, and while I had seen projects fall to the wayside, I had never been fired. I was alone in my hotel room and the tears were pouring out of me, along with all the feelings of not being good enough, of not being wanted, and deep feelings of rejection. It took me hours to finally do gongyo.

My fortune is that I have always sought out guidance when I was suffering. I called a senior in faith, someone I respect and trust deeply. I was encouraged to chant to manifest my Buddhahood, that I needed to appreciate and love my own life. If I merely continued to suffer from self-doubt, that in and of itself was slander. This was a turning point in having faith in MYSELF. He asked me what kind of writer I wanted to be — someone who is swayed by the environment or someone who would have an amazing impact on it.

I've been chanting for close to 25 years and just assumed that because I had been practicing for so long, I would be protected from my own internal demons. Even though doubts would arise, because I was working consistently, I managed to keep them pushed down. I had incredible faith in the Gohonzon — wasn't that enough?

I returned home from L.A., and for a few days I wallowed in the mud. I felt so defeated, and so powerless. Finally I decided to take this guidance to heart. I started chanting to manifest my Buddhahood. That's when the floodgates opened. The more I chanted to manifest my Buddhahood, the worse I felt. Every bit of negativity that I felt about myself poured out.

To my relief, I was offered to write a movie. I chanted to manifest my Buddhahood, and I got a benefit. Not a project I was overjoyed about, but it certainly eased the pain from having been fired. I felt wanted.

Living in the woods in Pennsylvania, I have come to depend on and deeply appreciate my friends in the SGI and on the publications, the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*. The minute I receive them, I read them cover to cover. In *Living Buddhism*, I read "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," which is all about changing our fundamental life-condi-

tion. This particular dialogue I read was about the world of Anger. SGI President Ikeda said the world of Anger is the state of trying to win over others rather than ourselves, that anger was filled with desperation. He went on to say “that nothing was more powerful than joy, and that joy was a manifestation of Buddhahood.” Joy was not what I was feeling when I chanted to manifest my Buddhahood.

Within 15 minutes of reading this article, I received a phone call from Randy, the executive from Universal who had hired me to write this other project. He had a movie, *Funny Valentines*, in which the script had to be rewritten within two weeks. Normally, when you’re hired to do a page-one rewrite, you usually get at least six weeks.

Although I loved the story, the problem was that it needed a tremendous amount of work in order for it to become a full-length film. It seemed utterly impossible. I was going out of the country. My husband’s film was in the Cannes Film Festival and I would not be able to write while I was gone.

I chanted to have the wisdom to know what to do. I decided to do this project, that it was tremendously important. I promised Randy that he would have a script within two weeks.

While in Paris, every morning and evening I chanted with tremendous appreciation and to write the best script possible. Toward the end of the trip, an overwhelming feeling of self-doubt emerged. I thought, ‘I can’t write this, who am I kidding?’ I was going to call Randy from Paris and tell him that he should hire someone else, that I couldn’t do it.

Fortunately, I always carry with me copies of the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*. After doing evening gongyo, I picked up *Living Buddhism*, the very same one I had read previously. I reread the piece on “Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra.” This time, I felt as if President Ikeda was speaking directly to me. I had this incredible realization that whenever I have a problem or a desire, I chant out of desperation, in a state of fear. Just as our environment reflects our life-condition, the life-condition with which we pray becomes manifest in the result. I realized how frightened I was of being happy, genuinely happy. To me, feeling happy, feeling joy meant I didn’t need anyone to make me feel good about myself, which somehow I equated with being alone. I was afraid if I was happy, I wouldn’t be needed. So, of course I didn’t dare feel good about myself.

In the article, President Ikeda talks about fundamental darkness. He says that human revolution is a constant battle between the lower worlds and Buddhahood, and that battle determines whether we win or lose. I decided that I needed to seriously chant to manifest my Buddhahood, right there in Paris. I sat down and with every bone in my body, I chanted.

A feeling of greatness, a deep feeling of absolute confidence that had nothing to do with anyone or anything in my environment, emerged. I felt a sense of freedom that took my breath away. I promised myself I would never slander my life again, to believe in myself and to have faith in the power of my life. I was selling myself short, and the environment was reflecting that completely. I promised myself that I would bring into my life the fortune which matched a joyous life-condition.

Having returned from Paris, I started to write the screenplay. Every morning and evening, I chanted with absolute confidence in myself, in my Buddhahood. The joy I felt writing this script was indescribable. I had written it in four days. The director, Randy and another executive, called and told me that the script was exceptional; they couldn’t believe what I had accomplished in such a short period of time. The movie was green lit that after-

noon. I had won over myself, over the doubt and self-slander and lack of self-worth.

While *Funny Valentines* was being shot, I started a project that I had been hired to do previously. I wrote one draft and everyone loved it but me. I couldn't help thinking that I had taken the job out of fear, out of desperation. I realized that being a writer, being an artist, I had to be true to myself, to create from my heart. I had spent 12 years desperately trying to please the people who had hired me, and now I knew that I had to please myself first and foremost. Because I had transformed my fundamental life-condition, and was now chanting with appreciation and confidence, the most incredible thing happened. I was told that the studio didn't want to make this movie any longer, but they were going to pay me for the remaining drafts that were left on my contract. This was a manifestation of my life-condition. In "On Attaining Buddhahood," the Daishonin says, "If the minds of the people are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land" (MW-1, 4).

In the 25 years that I have practiced, my life has changed in ways that are extraordinary to me. I have experienced a profound change of fortune based on a fierce determination to see actual proof of the power of the Gohonzon. I can say that every single prayer has been answered.

What started off as an experience that showed me what little self-confidence I had was the very experience I needed to transform my life, to believe in my own Buddhahood. Now I am determined to create from that life-condition. My roots are in writing books, and I subsequently finished my second novel, *A Greater Goode*, another manifestation of my Buddhahood.

When doubts arise — and they do — I choose to trust the greatness I feel inside myself. I choose to trust the power inside my life. I choose to trust that I, with all my imperfections, will have an impact on this world as a bodhisattva. Now for me, when I say that I truly love and honor the Gohonzon, I am also saying that I love and honor myself.

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