

**PERSPECTIVE
LEARNING FROM LOSS
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I knew my ex-husband for 26 years before he died in February 1999. For 10 of those years, we worked side by side for kosen-rufu as youth leaders. For another 13 years, we were married and continued to strive side by side. For the majority of our marriage, we did everything based on mutual respect, love, trust and the Gohonzon as our foundation. Those things turned out not to be enough to sustain us. Even though I did everything based on solid faith, after a two-year separation and further two-year failed reunion, much to my dismay and embarrassment, we were divorced in 1995. I'd like to talk to you in terms of what I lost, and more importantly, what I gained through these challenges.

In a move from one apartment to another, I lost original manuscripts given to me from my mentor in music. These original classical piano pieces were handwritten by Rudolph Ganz—for whom Ganz Hall at Roosevelt University is named. It was the first time in my life that I had allowed myself to trust someone else with my possessions. But with one child in tow and one literally on the breast, I thought all would be fine because I had strong faith. These manuscripts were my most prized and valuable possessions. With 14 years of classical piano training under my belt, I was so crushed that my mate had left them and my piano, that I silently vowed never to play again.

Not only did I lose the family structure I always wanted, I was also confronted with the loss of two close friends to cancer. To add to the stress, I also had to readjust my friendship with my very best friend who was at a crossroads in her own life.

As a result of my situation, for 11 years I lost the ability to contribute to kosen-rufu via financial contribution. I even lost confidence that I was a valuable person for kosen-rufu. I was near eviction on at least two occasions. And even though I was complimented on looking so slim after having two children, it was because I literally had no food. All I had during this time was my relationship with the Gohonzon and compassionate leaders who kept encouraging me.

It is with much delight that I can say because of these challenges many amazing things happened to me. I lost my shallow understanding of the power of chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo. I realized I am a much, much better member than leader for kosen-rufu. I was able to solidify my passion to contribute to this organization until I die. I lost the false persona of who I thought I was and what I showed everyone I met. I became a true fighter for other's happiness in a way most natural for me. I became a woman truly worth knowing. My talents for writing and parenting came to the forefront. I was able to transform myself into someone who only said and did things based on sincere prayer to the Gohonzon. I became, through a very, very long and painful process the Veronica people know today.

As I reflect on the anniversary of my ex-husband's death, I am so grateful, so very, very grateful to those people who consistently encouraged me with guidance, kind words and shared my tears. I am so grateful to my mentor, SGI President Ikeda, and to Nichiren Daishonin for their examples of how to live.

I see a bright future for myself, my daughter, Laural, and my son, Zack, as we pray for the enlightenment of their father, William. I did and continue to do my human revolution without any hesitation or fear.

I believe if you maintain your gaze toward the Gohonzon and commit to doing your own human revolution, understanding that all your problems are truly of your own making, you can not only survive, you can absolutely blossom into what you are meant to be. You can truly thank the other person for being the conduit that brings your problems close so you can overcome them. What more could anyone ask for?