

GET REAL
“LIVING WITH PASSION”
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“I triumphed. I achieved things that no one can rival—in every place that I worked for kosen-rufu. I hope all of you will do the same. I don’t care what it is, but do something. Achieve something that will make others express their admiration.” (SGI President Ikeda, Nov. 26, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 4)

Back in September, I happened to catch a TV special on adolescence and was struck by a few things: (1) according to the program, the area of the brain that is closely associated with creativity is more active in one's adolescence than in one's adulthood; (2) teens have more energy than adults—their blood cells are more efficient at transporting oxygen throughout the body; (3) many of the world's great artists and scientists experienced intense periods of creativity in their teens, and were often able to create works of lasting value by the time they reached adulthood.

After hearing this, I was both excited and a bit discouraged. I was excited because this program served to remind me of the good fortune I have in being able to work with the SGI-USA Jr. High/High School members at a period in their lives when they're full of creativity and energy, and are most capable of envisioning a new future. But I was also a little discouraged to learn that perhaps I'm past my creative peak.

Question: Can one retain the energy and creativity of one's adolescence throughout the rest of one's life?

I turned to SGI President Ikeda's guidance. In discussing the life of Nichiren Daishonin, he pointed out that at age 16 the Daishonin awoke to the great wish of leading all people to happiness (he determined to become the wisest man in Japan so as to be able to do this). This great dream led him to study tirelessly, and by the time he was 32 he was able to teach others how to chant daimoku and change suffering into joy. Even more amazing, the Daishonin kept the dreams and hopes of his teens alive throughout his tumultuous life, right up to the time of his death at 61. I felt like President Ikeda's guidance was an answer to my question. YES! With faith one can retain the energy and creativity of one's adolescence.

It seems to me that the key to living energetic and creative lives is to find something that we are passionate about. President Ikeda writes: “A life without passion is empty. Those who lack the passion to accomplish something, living their days by sheer force of habit, are not fully alive. Their hearts are dead. Passion is the proof that we are alive.” In the realm of learning, for example, it's clear that young people excel in their studies only when their passion for learning has been awakened. Study after study demonstrates that a student's performance in school varies according to the way in which material he/she is tested on is presented. Those who are visual learners, for instance, will not do well when they are taught in a way that calls for learning by hearing.

We are all geniuses waiting to be discovered. By moving our lives in the direction of our hidden passions, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is what helps us unlock our immense potential.