

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

On Speaking Out

In response to Kevin Higgins' letter (Feb. 29 *World Tribune*) on speaking out, sure, speaking out is fine, to a point. But what happens when you have spoken out several times and that leader still doesn't get the point? You can speak out till you are blue in the face, but if that leader doesn't hear, what is the point? I think the leaders that I have had in my organizations were never trained in speaking to members. Just recently I heard a song from Tina Turner's latest CD titled "Twenty Four Seven"—one song title that talks to my heart and that's the attitude we should have, whether a leader or not.

—LYNN MARTIN,
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Chinese Adoptions

Thank you for the article on the adoption of two beautiful children. Congratulations to both families. Pat, it was especially exciting to see your picture after all these years. I wonder if you remember Manhattan, upper Westside, 75th Street, Empire Chapter and your roommates Pauline Sklar and me. Love to hear from you!

—JESSICA SHORT,
(Carol Duffy)
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Aloha

Aloha from Honolulu! I've been practicing in SGI since 1966! I have to say that everyone involved with SGI publications should be very proud of the tremendous strides that have been made over the past three decades! It is an honor and joy to read your publications and I am constantly encouraged by all of our magazines, newspapers and now the WT E-mail Express! Please keep up your awesome mission to spread the Mystic Law all across the U.S. through pen and computer and I will do the same through voice and smile! Looking forward to many more encouraging articles! Best wishes to all!

—SHAREN L. TRUEX NAKASHIMA,
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On Depression

Lori McDaniel's article in the Jan. 28 issue and Stu Clarke's reply in the March 3 *World Tribune* are part of a continuing debate on the absolute merits of Buddhist practice versus the very relative merits of psychotherapy and medication.

There comes a point, I believe, in a person's treatment when the question that needs to be

addressed is: Am I depending more on my practice or on my treatment? Am I using my treatment as a comfort zone?

I have many experiences with depression and other illnesses, as well as a vast experience with medication and psychotherapy. I spent a year without medication (1994) and wound up in the hospital and back on it. This in no way implies that I did the wrong thing. I consider that year to be one of the most significant of my life because I observed the full extent of my disorder. I even found it fascinating at times. We should try not to approach any situation with dread. Everything is a chance to learn.

What I have found is that a strong Buddhist practice will make any treatment more successful. At the same time, it behooves us to seek out alternate therapies if we believe them to be more effective.

Simply being on medication is no cure for anything. I would have to say that the only difference between myself and the other psychiatric patients I know is my practice of Buddhism. I believe I have made progress that would have been unfeasible had I totally relied on hospital treatments.

Don't whip yourselves. Medication and therapy can be helpful. The old idea that "Buddhists don't need medication" is not only impractical but dangerous. Being on medication has helped me to maintain my practice, especially since 1994–95, when it was slipping. I have no qualms about saying that. At the same time, by symbiosis, my practice has enabled me to maintain everything positive in my life and has kept me from sinking into a tiny circumscribed existence that so many medication patients, unfortunately, are too apt to do.

Although it is desirable to find out truly whether or not one indeed needs medication, it is just as desirable to maintain one's regimen. Abuse or misuse, or sporadic use of these medications creates no value either. If the side effects are considerable and the benefits few, however, it is best to seek other remedies.

To tell someone "It's your karma to be on medication" is over simplistic and lacking in mercy. It can be just as bad to have the kind of karma where you can't get the medical help you need. Getting what we "need," as we know, is a big part of our practice.

As far as correct diagnosis is concerned, there is obviously no substitute for that. It makes no sense to take medicine for a condition one doesn't have, or the wrong medicine for the wrong condition, and so on. Perhaps if our powers of diagnosis are enhanced through Buddhist practice, we can avoid some of the more egregious practices of our psychiatrists and mental hospitals, e.g., the knee-jerk reaction of "medication for everything." In this regard, Mr. Stu Clarke's points are well taken.

—STEVEN STONE,
New York City

About the Environment

I have followed with interest the readers' comments on Frank Hotchkiss' perspective about the environment (Oct. 1, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 2). Although Hotchkiss' perspective may be an extremist's view, it contains elements of truth and was of value in presenting another side to help balance the environmentally extremist view.

Focusing on the debate of global warming, caution is needed on both sides before claiming a consensus of opinion or lashing out about "false statements." This is a complex issue requiring a multidisciplinary approach to search for and hopefully find ourselves

closer to the truth. I will risk saying that there appears to be a consensus or at least a majority opinion that the burning of fossil fuels and human production of carbon dioxide has contributed to global warming. But whether that activity is the single cause or even a major contributor is still being debated. There is still too much controversy and too few facts on the subject to say that there is a consensus regarding a single causal relationship. For example, geologists know that global warming has occurred in the distant past and that the warming was not related to human activity. If these events happened earlier in our Earth's history, such an event could be happening again.

Global warming was the topic in a recent issue of *Geo-times*, a magazine published by the American Geological Institute (AGI). Seeking to bridge the gap between the science and policy of climate change, AGI issued a policy statement on the subject. The statement began by saying that policy decisions must be based on the best available scientific information and that education is a key element. One of the main points is the importance of realizing that uncertainty is inherent to our understanding of complex natural systems and the need for further research. The policy statement does not say that uncertainty justifies action in the mitigation of our production of greenhouse gases and possible human influences.

This awareness of inherent uncertainty should result in a more balanced approach and help avoid the temptation to side with extremists' viewpoints. I agree with Mikhail Gorbachev that all extremes are the same.

—KENNETH C. SCHULTE,
Barstow, Calif.

Use of the Passive Voice

In response to David McGirr's criticism of Ted Morino's use of the passive voice (Feb. 11 *World Tribune*): David, before you criticize Mr. Morino, you need to learn the difference between "inference" and "implication."

In response to Eileen McGruder (Jan. 21 *World Tribune*): English is full of words adopted from other languages (in lieu of, blase, salsa, oy vey, to cite a few examples). This enriches a language and the minds of the people who speak that language. Many people find Japanese words and terminology delightful and appealing. Just remember, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is practiced in lots of countries, not just English-speaking ones! Sharing words is a good thing, not a bad thing.

—ELIZABETH COELLO,
New York City

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