

GET REAL

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President Ikeda writes in *Discussions on Youth* that “Friendship is the most beautiful, most powerful, and most valuable treasure in life. It is your true wealth. No matter how much status people may gain or how rich they may become, a life without friends is indeed sad and lonely. It also leads to an unbalanced, self-centered existence. There is nothing more wonderful or precious than the friendships of one’s youth.”

Since the Youth Grand Culture Festival last September, I really wanted to propagate this Buddhism. I was encouraged to chant so I could open up my life to those who are suffering. Then, naturally someone who was really searching for happiness would appear.

Recently, as I was thinking about what to write for “Get Real,” I received a phone call from one of my high school friends. I was totally shocked because we had not talked in about eight years. We ended up talking for over two hours. He has been through many struggles and has been suffering since graduation. He has fought an addiction to drugs and alcohol, and at times he was so depressed he even attempted suicide.

I really understood his struggle since I, too, have experienced depression. I said to him that he could definitely be happy. When he asked me how, I told him about my own life and how much I have been able to challenge and overcome because of my faith and friends in the SGI. I told him that I am very confident about my future and I encouraged him that he has a wonderful future too.

Since that first conversation, we have continued to talk. I shared with him a portion of *Discussions on Youth*, “Your lives will be enriched and deepened in proportion to the pain and grief you suffer, the degree to which you struggle and the amount of daimoku that you chant. The hardships you face now will all serve to nourish your growth into leaders of the twenty-first century.” Because he was encouraged by this, I told him that I would send *Discussions on Youth* to him.

It is no coincidence that my friend called me at the beginning of March while we were in full swing in preparation for our March 16th introductory meetings. Because I really want my friend to overcome his depression and become happy, I will continue to be his good friend and share with him everything that has helped me. There are so many young people suffering and struggling for a variety of reasons. I think it is so important to be good friends and help to bring hope to those around us. By caring about others in this way, I know I will grow into a better and more compassionate person.