

**IMPRESSION OF THE RAISING OUR CHILDREN CONFERENCE
LISTEN TO OUR CHILDREN
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As a participant in the recent Raising Our Children Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, I gained so much insight into my role as a parent. On one level, we were taught practical everyday tools to motivate our children to do such things as homework and chores without complaining. On a more profound level, we were propelled forward in our journey toward an inner revolution, looking at our own deep-seated thoughts, feelings and behaviors—the true keys to discerning why we relate to our children the way we do.

I found myself realizing that I was going to have to work hard, dig deep and look at how I felt and saw myself—a necessary first step toward accomplishing my own personal goals that I had written down on my alter at home. Soon I began asking myself questions. How did I feel about my own parenting skills? Am I a good mother? Am I a good daughter? What baggage do I hold? I needed to discover the answers to these questions because, as was revealed within the workshops at the conference, parenting and raising children starts with me.

On the topic of developing children, SGI President Ikeda has expressed many times that in order for children to become great leaders for the future of our world, parents must first learn to respect and listen to children as individuals. I found myself questioning if I was really listening. Am I just taking the parenting path of least resistance? In the different workshops, I had a chance to think about that.

The workshops were given by SGI-USA members who are professionals, (such as counselors, educators), fellow parents and others who work with children on a daily basis. Many of them have received high acclaim for their efforts in their communities.

During the conference, an open discussion was facilitated by SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck, who began by sharing her personal experience as a parent. Everyone was truly touched by her openness, and reciprocated by revealing their personal struggles in raising children. Visions for creating environments conducive to the well-being of children within our districts, as well as a child-friendly atmosphere at SGI-USA community centers, were emphatically set forth by the group.

“Let's create a warm and inviting atmosphere for the children, a place where they can be heard, nurtured and encouraged.” This became the anthem of the conference participants, who voiced a desire to see the shining faces of children participating within SGI meetings—not simply performing a song for other members and leaving the room, but becoming integral players in SGI's world peace movement. We as members need to learn patience and discard the tendency to “shush” when kids are too loud. Instead, we should recognize their voices as part of the great symphony of diversity within SGI-USA. Let's listen to our children and watch them blossom into dynamic young people—the hope of the future!