

**TRAILBLAZERS!
HAVING BALANCE IN MY LIFE
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Members of San Francisco were busy planning for our Oct. 7 event commemorating SGI President Ikeda's 40th anniversary of worldwide kosen-rufu. Indeed, such celebrations keep us busy and on top of our daily struggles. We spend so much time planning the meeting and yet it is over in a day without us even noticing.

It's a good sign if you have a sense of accomplishment, but oftentimes we wonder, "Is there something missing?" When things don't go just as we would have liked, we get upset. We may be mad about things such as guests not showing up, or hold a grudge against someone, saying to ourselves "So-and-so didn't do the job right," etc. Once we're trapped in this mindset, we're easily caught up in the routine of activities and lose sight of their real purpose. Why do we spend so much energy and time on SGI activities, anyway? Here are my own thoughts on how to create meaningful, value-creating activities.

Northwestern Zone Leader Richard Yoshimachi once explained: "We celebrate special days in the SGI in order to refresh our faith and practice. It's the time for us to make new determinations, overcome struggles and change our karma. If we forget to grow through these activities, we're missing the important point of our practice."

His comment really hit me as I had been struggling to find a balance between my school studies and SGI activities throughout my college life. I also doubted my ability to fulfill my mission as a student division leader. Then I started to think and chant about the purpose of my practice.

Mystically, one day, I received the testing permit for the CBEST (California Basic Educational Skills Test). I must admit that this was my third time taking the test. The last time I took it, I failed it only by three points. The next test was scheduled for Oct. 7, which was the very day of our celebration.

I knew that this is exactly the wisdom I gained from chanting to the Gohonzon. I understood that this is my opportunity to really learn how to balance my studies and SGI activities. So, what I decided to do is to make my studies a priority rather than taking a part in the planning committees. I believe that if I spend the same amount of energy and time on the CBEST as I do for SGI activities, then I'm sure that I'll successfully pass the test, and I can also report to President Ikeda that I finally have won.

However, not taking part in SGI activities is not the solution, either. I decided to support the Oct. 7 event in my own way. I promoted the meeting to non-active members and especially students.

In short, Buddhism equals daily life. If I'm miserable and unsuccessful with what I do, whether it's SGI activities or not, I'd be completely missing the point and purpose of my faith. Unless I can say that I'm putting 100 percent effort in both my daily life and SGI activities, I cannot win over my weaknesses nor accomplish any goals, no matter what I do. Determination first! Daimoku first! My studies first!