



The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace

Selected Excerpts of SGI President Ikeda's Guidance

Part 2: Human Revolution

Chapter 17: Message for Youth [Part 4 of 4]

Personal Relationships

Introduction:

Responding to questions from high school students, President Ikeda discusses friendship and relationships from various perspectives.

Adapted from the dialogue Discussions on Youth, published in Japanese in March 1999.

Friendship is the most beautiful, powerful and precious thing in life. It is your greatest treasure. No matter how successful or wealthy a person is, without friends life is sad and lonely. A lack of friends can also lead to a narrow, self-centred existence.

In this vast universe, we have been born together at the same time on this tiny planet. And how rare is it to find, among the 5.8 billion¹ members of the human race, truly caring and honest friends who understand our thoughts and feelings without the need for a lot of words and with whom we can relax and be ourselves.

Even being in the same class at school with someone is the result of a profound connection. Some of you may have found genuine friends among your classmates. If you have, please treasure them. But if you feel you don't have

any close friends right now, please don't worry. Just decide that the reason you don't have any now is so you'll be able to make the most wonderful friends later on. Concentrate your energies now on becoming the best person you can. In the future, you might even make friends all over the world.

In any event, friendship is up to you, not the other person. It all depends on you. I hope you will be loyal and true friends, not fair-weather friends who are there when all is well, but disappear when something bad happens.

And when you graduate from school, I hope you will have grown to be generous, warm-hearted people who can say to your friends with all honesty: "I will never forget you. If you ever have a problem or something you want to talk about, don't hesitate to come to me. And I hope I can go to you, too."

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What kind of advice would you give someone who feels that a friend has suddenly started to treat them coldly, but has no idea why?

I think the best thing to do at such times is gather your courage and ask what's wrong. In many cases, you'll probably be surprised to find that what you imagined wasn't your friend's intention at all. Quite often, when you

distance yourself from a friend because you're too afraid to ask what's wrong, the other person may in fact also be feeling hurt and lonely.

Human relationships are like a mirror. Often when you are thinking, "If my friend were only a bit nicer to me, I'd be more open with her," your friend may well be thinking, "If only she were more open with me, I'd be nicer to her."

That's why it's important to be the one who starts the conversation. If you still get a cold response, then you know that the problem lies with your friend, not with you.

Sometimes, there's nothing we can do about the way others feel. People's hearts change. What do you do when that happens? Adopt the attitude, "Though others may change, I never will." If you are treated coldly or someone lets you down, resolve not to do the same to others. Those who betray others' trust only hurt themselves, as if they are driving a spike into their own hearts, without even being aware of it.

Shakyamuni is described as a person who always made the effort to reach out and speak to others—something that you need to be strong in order to do.

There may be times in life when others let you down or disappoint you. Nichiren Daishonin was betrayed by many of his followers, even though he was the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. I've had people turn against me, too, people for whom I'd done a great deal. But I was never surprised at all; rather, it's something I came to expect.

At such times, you need to be brave. You haven't done anything wrong, so just go on living with self-confidence and assurance. Those who betray or bully others are in the wrong. They are to be pitied.

If a friend betrays your trust, just forge new friendships. Don't lose your trust in everyone just because someone has hurt you. If you don't trust anyone you may avoid being hurt or disappointed, but you'll become a closed, narrow person. In truth, those who have suffered deeply are able to be kinder to others. You have to be strong.

Be like the sun. Not all of the light of the sun falls on planets that will reflect it back. The sun's rays also spread



Spencer West (left) and Andrew Foerster at the 2016 Young Men's Caledon Conference

out into empty space, seemingly wasted. Yet, the sun still goes on shining brightly.

You may find that those who reject the radiant light of your friendship will naturally fade out of your lives. But the more you shine your light, the more brilliant your own lives will become. Follow the path that you believe in, no matter what others think or do. If you remain constant and stay true to yourselves, others will definitely one day come to understand your sincere intent.

You are also fortunate in that you can chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. I know of many people who suffered from bullying, but when they challenged their situations through earnestly chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, they suddenly found one day that the bullying had stopped. Through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo when you are suffering, you can quite naturally overcome that suffering, almost without being aware of it. Often it's only when you look back that you realize it.

I hope you will also chant for your friends. That is the greatest expression of friendship.

You may have friends who are sick, who cannot attend school, or are struggling to cope with problems at home.

Love as a Source of Growth

President Ikeda explains that the ideal love relationship is one where both parties inspire each other to realize vibrant growth and develop as human beings.

Adapted from the dialogue Discussions on Youth, published in Japanese in March 1999.

Just as naturally as spring brings flowers and winter brings snow, youth is a time of awakening to feelings of love and attraction. This is one of the stages of life. You are entering a new period in your life, just as the sun marks a new day by rising brightly at dawn.

Everyone's concerns about love and relationships are different. It depends on your personality, your situation and your environment. There is no one single approach that will solve everyone's problems. In addition, everyone is perfectly free to fall in love or be attracted to someone. Who you decide to go out with or have a relationship with is your own choice, and it's not really anyone else's business.

The only advice I would like to give you on this subject, as an older friend, is not to let your relationship make you lose sight of pursuing your all-important personal development.

The purpose of your studies and after-school activities, such as team sports and clubs, is to build a foundation for your life, to make you a strong person. Worries about your personality and your relations with

friends are also nutrients for building a strong self.

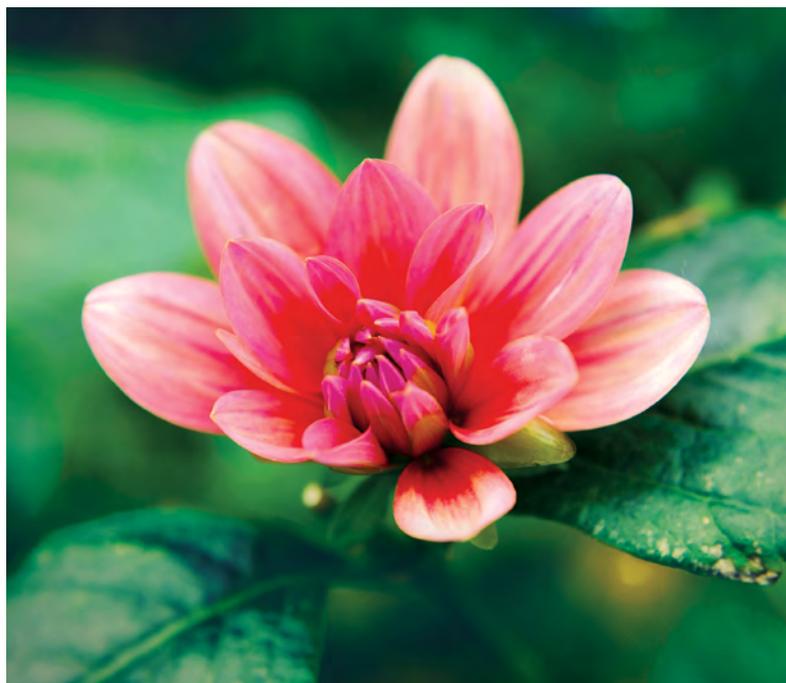
The same is true of love. Love should help you grow as a person; it should invigorate you and help you realize your full potential. This is the basic premise. But as the saying "Love is blind" suggests, when people are in love they often lose the ability to see themselves objectively.

If you allow your new relationship to worry your parents, to lead you into bad behaviour, or to stop you from studying, then you and your partner are acting as negative influences on, or hindrances to, each other. Neither of you will be happy if you just end up hurting one another.

The question is: Does the person you like inspire you to work harder at your studies or distract you from them? Does their presence make you more determined to devote

Whatever the case may be, the best thing you can do is to chant for them. Your prayers, like radio waves, though invisible, will definitely reach them.

It is also important to chant for those you don't like, find hard to get along with, or feel resentful toward. It may be difficult and perhaps even impossible for you to do so at first. But if you keep trying and chant for them, the situation will change. Perhaps you will change, or they will change. Either way, the situation will move in a more positive direction. Many people have experienced this first hand. Above all, becoming a person who is able to chant for the happiness of such challenging individuals will be your greatest fortune.



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The influence of friends is sometimes stronger than that of parents or anyone else. If you have good friends, friends who are trying to improve and develop themselves, you'll improve and grow, too. Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919), the American steel magnate, modestly attributed his success to having gathered around him people who were far more talented and capable than he. This was his philosophy of life. The only way to make good friends is to be a good friend yourself. Good people gather around other good people.

I hope you will be accepting and supportive of others. Please become people with hearts as broad as a great river, as wide as the ocean, and as vast as the blue sky. Wonderful friendships will unfold from such big hearts.