

SGI-USA
ORGANIZATION MEMO

DATE: SEPTEMBER 6, 2019

MEMO: 2019-ORG-050

THE YEAR OF
2019 Soka Victory
TOWARD OUR 90TH ANNIVERSARY

DISTRIBUTE TO: Region Through Territory Leaders, Zone and Territory Offices
FROM: National Youth Leaders
SUBJECT: Soka Spirit Tosos

Dear Region – Territory Leaders,

Thank you all so much again for all of your amazing efforts this August! September is now upon us, and with the start of this month, we would like to implement something new and exciting nationwide.

Based on recent feedback about the weekly Soka Spirit tosos throughout the country, moving forward we would like to provide a curriculum of Soka Spirit related material for youth who are conducting the study presentations at these meetings. The curriculum will include information about the roles that should be fulfilled by the youth division (MC, fukudoshi and study presentation) at these weekly tosos, as well as weekly topics for the speakers to base their study presentation on. The Soka Spirit study topics will be pulled from current and past *World Tribune* articles, *The New Human Revolution*, and Ikeda Wisdom Academy lectures. The aim of this effort is to provide youth division members with an outline to create an informative and encouraging study presentation. We have attached September's curriculum to this email and will send out monthly curriculum that will have study topics for every week of that month.

Thank you all again so much for all of your efforts!

Thank you,
National Youth Leaders

SOKA SPIRIT TOSO

► PURPOSE

- 1) Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to establish the correct teaching for the peace of the land.
- 2) Hone our abilities to recognize devilish functions internally and externally.
- 3) Learn the essential spirit of President Ikeda and the SGI.
- 4) Unite around the current SGI-USA direction and focus.

► SUGGESTED AGENDA

- Daimoku and gongyo led by central figure (1 hour)
- Study presentation by youth member (5 min)
- Encouragement by region–national line leader (7–10 min)

► RESPONSIBILITIES

• Fukudoshi

Two–three youth should be assigned to support daimoku as fukudoshi for 20–30 minutes each. For tips on being fukudoshi, please see p. 2.

• MC

One youth emcee, with the support of seniors in faith, should be assigned to welcome the members and move the meeting along. For tips on being emcee, please see p. 2.

• Study Presentation

One youth, with the support of seniors in faith, should give a well-prepared study presentation (5 min) based on the Soka Spirit curriculum. Please see the Soka Spirit study guide.

• Encouragement

A region–national line leader of any division should share encouragement related to the current organizational focus and convey the spirit of the week or month.

Note: The Soka Spirit toso is a wonderful training opportunity for the youth. If there are no youth for the responsibilities above, please work with the region or zone to find youth support.



Victor Golden

► TIPS ON BEING EMCEE

- **The emcee's voice should be stirring, powerful and brimming with life force.**
"Emcees must have the determination to bear full responsibility for the meeting and use their voices to transform the atmosphere into a place of joy in seeking the Law, a true Buddhist assembly" (The New Human Revolution, vol. 25, p. 187).
- **Get a good night's sleep and eat a proper meal.**
"An emcee needs to enunciate, so that everyone can hear and understand what is said. Facial expressions are also important. An emcee mustn't look tired or unwell. When you're going to take on the crucial role of emcee, you need to get a good night's sleep the day before" (NHR-25, 189–90).
- **Pay special attention to timing during the meeting and be able to respond quickly.**
"There are times when you need to jump right in and speak to keep the tempo upbeat, and times when you need to take a breath and pause. If you lack that crucial sense of timing, you can possibly ruin the meeting's mood" (NHR-25, 191).
- **Chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo prior to the meeting.**
"It's vital that you chant with strong determination to make the meeting you're moderating a success. The purpose of Soka Gakkai meetings is to advance kosen-rufu, and they are the contemporary versions of the assembly of the Lotus Sutra. As such, serving as an emcee at a meeting is to carry out the noble work of the Buddha" (NHR-25, 192).

► TIPS ON BEING FUKUDOSHI

- **Maintain a consistent and dynamic rhythm together with the person leading.**
"You must first listen carefully to the voice of the person leading gongyo and stay in rhythm with it. It's important to neither get ahead nor fall behind. In addition, you should try to ensure that the rhythm of gongyo is dynamic and exhilarating like a fine steed galloping across the open plains" (The New Human Revolution, vol. 25, pp. 192–93).
- **Avoid slowing down.**
"When a large number of people are participating, both the sutra recitation and chanting tend to gradually slow down, but you mustn't allow yourself to be dragged along. You should try to lead everyone at a lively tempo" (NHR-25, 193).
- **Pronounce the words in the sutra clearly.**
"It's also necessary to pronounce the words in the sutra recitation clearly. You should strive during your own daily gongyo to do your very best at all times, making sure you aren't slipping into sloppy pronunciation habits, and that you're breathing in the appropriate places" (NHR-25, 193).
- **Strive for a resonant, clear, powerful, refreshing gongyo.** (NHR-25, 193)

September Curriculum: Week 1

Material: Whether Clergy or Laity, All People Can Become Buddhas

<https://www.worldtribune.org/article/whether-clergy-or-laity-all-people-can-become-buddhas>

Background: In the following excerpts from volume 24 of *The New Human Revolution*, Shin'ichi Yamamoto (depicting SGI President Ikeda) talks about the original role of priests in Buddhism and how the Soka Gakkai today is fulfilling both the role of priests and laity.

Key Excerpts:

- **A true teacher in Buddhism is one who leads kosen-rufu:** “Great teachers of the Law are those who lead the movement for kosen-rufu, preach the Law and stir great waves of practice for the benefit of self and others.” (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 24, p. 159)
- **The role of priests and lay believers is to propagate the Law:** “Historically, the role of priests is to concentrate on sharing Buddhism with others, fighting against the three powerful enemies and engaging in kosen-rufu. The role of lay believers, in contrast, is to focus on chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, making offerings and speaking to others about Buddhism to the best of their ability. The laity are entrusted with the role of supporting the priests.” (NHR-24, 160)
- **The spirit and practice of the Soka Gakkai fulfill both the roles:** “Who has advanced kosen-rufu in the present? Who has been the target of persecution? It is none other than the Soka Gakkai. Therefore, we could say that the spirit and practice of the Soka Gakkai are fulfilling both the roles of the priesthood and the teacher of the Law.” (NHR-24, 161)

Key Point: The SGI is the community of practitioners carrying out the Buddha’s intent faithfully and harmoniously.

Preparing the Presentation (5 min):

- Read the article and source material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Share the key points based on the excerpts.
- Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku before your presentation.

September Curriculum: Week 2

Material: *On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime: SGI President Ikeda's Lecture Series*, pp. 4–5

Gosho Passage: Nevertheless, even though you chant and believe in Myoho-rence-kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but an inferior teaching. (“On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 3)

Key Excerpt:

The human heart is sensitive, multifaceted and rich; it has the capacity for magnificent achievement . . .

As evidenced in many of his writings, Nichiren repeatedly stresses the crucial importance of the heart, or mind. In this inner realm of life, the potential resides for dramatic shifts from evil to good or from good to evil. That is why Nichiren’s teaching of enlightenment can be viewed as a process that begins with inner change. In other words, through the power of faith, we can defeat the negative functions inside us that are governed by the fundamental darkness in all human hearts and manifest the positive functions of life that are one with the Dharma nature—our Buddhahood. (*Lecture Series*, 4–5)

Explanation:

Because both Buddha nature and fundamental darkness exist within our lives, it requires consistent effort to challenge our inner weaknesses and bring forth our boundless potential.

- *Buddha nature* = The internal cause or potential for attaining Buddhahood which all people possess.
- *Fundamental darkness* = The most deeply rooted illusion inherent in life and the inability to see or recognize the truth, particularly the true nature of one’s life.

Key Point: The heart is most important. Our Buddhist practice enables us to combat our fundamental darkness and bring forth our own and others’ Buddha nature.

Preparing the Presentation (5 min):

- Read the reference material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Relate the key point to a personal experience.
- Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku before your presentation.

September Curriculum: Week 3

Material: *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, pp. 118–19

Context: SGI President Ikeda gives guidance to the newly appointed leaders in San Francisco using the Golden Gate Bridge as a metaphor for unity.

Key Excerpt:

As they headed away from the city, San Francisco Bay unfolded off to their right. Soon, the Golden Gate Bridge with its magnificent red towers came into view. As they approached, its soaring structure seemed to loom above them.

The group decided to stop for a short break at a small park near the bridge. Stepping out of their cars, they saw on display a section of the suspension cable used in the bridge. A sign explained that the cable was thirty-seven inches in diameter and comprised 27,572 separate strands of wire. Shin'ichi and the others stood in a circle around the display . . .

“It’s true that the individual wires are not very thick, but when bunched together in great numbers, they display incredible strength. This resembles the unity of many in body, one in mind. In the Soka Gakkai, too, though each person’s strength may be small, when that strength is combined and the members are firmly united, they can display unimaginable power. Unity is strength.

“From now on, you must play a central role in unifying the members’ efforts to support the kosen-rufu movement and the happiness of the people of San Francisco.” (NHR-1, 118–19)

Key Point: Striving with the spirit of “many in body, one in mind” is the key to bringing forth our fullest strengths.

Preparing the Presentation (5 min):

- Read the reference material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Share context of scene and key excerpts.
- Relate the key point to a personal experience.
- Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku before your presentation.

September Curriculum: Week 4

Material: The Oneness of Good and Evil

<https://www.worldtribune.org/2017/04/oneness-good-evil>

Background: At first, Devadatta earnestly strove in Buddhist practice, but as he gained distinction in the Buddhist order due to his great abilities, he increasingly became driven by jealousy and ambition. Shakyamuni, perceiving Devadatta's true nature, rebuked him in front of others. Unable to deal with his injured pride, Devadatta left the order, plotted to gain control and devised schemes to harm the Buddha.

Key Excerpts:

- **Shakyamuni turned Devadatta into a good friend:** "The fact that I have attained impartial and correct enlightenment and can save living beings on a broad scale is all due to Devadatta, who was a good friend." (*The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, p. 223)
- **Evil must be challenged and conquered:** "If evil functions to reveal good, then evil in its entirety becomes good. This is truly the oneness of good and evil. But if evil is simply allowed to run its course, then it does not become good. Only when evil is thoroughly challenged and conquered does it become an entity of the oneness of good and evil." (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 3, p. 83)
- **Human revolution is the path of struggling against evil:** "If we perceive our inner evil but neglect efforts to conquer it, then our lives are instantaneously stained with evil. In that sense, a good person is someone who struggles against evil. It is by fighting the evil around us that we eradicate evil within our lives and so purify them. That is the path of human revolution." (WLS-3, 76)

Key Point: Evil becomes an entity of the oneness of good and evil only when we challenge and conquer it.

Preparing the Presentation (5 min):

- Read the reference material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Share background and key points based on the excerpts.
- Pick one excerpt and relate it to a personal experience.
- Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku before your presentation.

September Curriculum: Week 5

Material: *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, pp. 217–19

Context: During a Q&A, a woman’s division member asks SGI President Ikeda if babysitting her neighbor’s children while the parents attended church was going against the spirit of *shakubuku*.

Key Excerpt:

“Let’s suppose, for example, that someone eats poisonous mushrooms and is rushed to a doctor. Irrespective of who the patient may be, the doctor naturally exhausts all possible means to save the person and also offers sincere words of encouragement. This, we might say, is an example of ‘generosity toward others.’

“It is also likely, however, that the doctor will warn the patient not to eat harmful mushrooms in the future. I am sure there is no doctor who would stand by indifferently while the patient declares, ‘But poisonous mushrooms are delicious; I want to eat them again.’ This corresponds to ‘taking a strict stance toward the Law.’

“In both these instances, the doctor is motivated by his compassion and commitment to removing the patient’s suffering. This is also the behavior of a Buddhist . . .

“For that reason, there is no contradiction between the spirit of *shakubuku*—that of ‘refuting the erroneous and revealing the true’—and true friendship. The spirit of compassion is fundamental to both. Consequently, it is the Buddhist ideal that the more we exert ourselves in faith, the greater the generosity with which we can embrace our friends and deepen our friendships. Because *shakubuku* is an endeavor to touch others’ lives through dialogue, trust, and friendship are essential.

“Please become a person who transcends differences of religion and prays for the happiness of her fellow human beings, who forges deep ties of friendship with many people . . .” (NHR-1, 219)

Key Point: There is no contradiction between *shakubuku* and true friendship—both require compassion.

Preparing the Presentation (5 min):

- Read the reference material.
- Seek from seniors in faith about the study material.
- Share context of scene and key excerpts.
- Relate the key point to a personal experience.
- Conclude with how we can apply this guidance in our lives.

Note: Please chant abundant daimoku before your presentation.