

What is Soka Spirit?

Maybe one day you felt sad all day. You forgot your spelling homework, you messed up in your math test and someone you thought was your friend called you stupid. You're walking home and there are clouds. It looks like it's going to rain. You think, "Could a day get any worse than this?" Finally you start to run and you trip on something and fall. You look back to see what you tripped on and to your amazement you see that it is a beautiful jewel, like a diamond. You have found a magic jewel! (This is a *what if* story. There probably aren't a lot of magic jewels lying around, but hey, you never know.) You pick up the jewel and wish really hard that you want to be happy. In a little bit, you start to feel different. Suddenly the clouds look much smaller and you notice the sun in between them. You realize that it's only the first homework you missed and you determine to do double tonight. You really understand what you got wrong on the math test and you know you need to study harder, and you know you will. The friend who called you stupid walks by and you bring up the courage to tell him that your feelings were hurt, that you're not stupid and that he had no right to call you that. He apologizes, really means it and offers to walk with you to your house. Suddenly, you feel great. "Must be that magic jewel," you think to yourself.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like that magic jewel, but that jewel is not lying on the ground like in the story. It's actually in your life and everybody's life. It's also not magic. We bring out that great feeling and make changes in our lives through our own determined chanting.

Ok, back to the story. So, you and your friend are still walking home and you're realizing how amazing this jewel is. You feel like you have to tell your friend and anyone else you see because they have to be able to use this jewel too. "Maybe," you think, "he's going to call me stupid again if I tell him." But you don't care. You know you're not stupid and, anyway, you realize your friend called you that because he got an even lower grade than you and he was feeling bad, so you just have to tell him, it's your mission; you made a promise. You tell your friend and he uses the jewel too. You're both so happy.

Then, you see someone coming down the street looking very sad. You decide to tell her too. But, as soon as you show her the jewel she tries to take it and keep it for her own. You hold on to it with all you've got, but she keeps trying to get it. She doesn't understand that this jewel is for everyone. She says that some really important person told her it's only hers and that if you want to use the jewel you have to ask her permission and only she knows how it works and she has to make wishes for you. What do you do? You've just met a bully who is trying to take away your power.

What is *Soka Spirit*? Well, when that bully in the story tried to take away your jewel and keep you and everyone else from using it, you tried to protect it as hard as you could. That spirit to protect the jewel so that everyone can use it is Soka Spirit.

Sometimes, though, it's hard to believe that you have a Buddha nature. Sometimes it's even harder to believe that other people (yes, even that bully) have it. Trying to believe in our Buddha nature and treating all people with respect for their Buddha nature is the soka spirit too. Helping other people understand this, even bullies, is also the soka spirit.

One way that bullies get power over other people is by trying to make them feel that they are not good enough; that they are weak or that they can't take care of themselves or make their own decisions. We don't ever have to feel that way.

Nichiren Daishonin taught that the jewel of our Buddha nature is inside our lives and everyone has it. It is not a secret that only some people can know about or that we have to go through someone else to use. We can become happy through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, sharing it with others and taking action toward our goals. No one has the right to try to take that ability away from us. And, no one has the power to do that either.