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The Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA) exists to support the practice and propagation of Nichiren Buddhism by its members—to deepen the faith of all members, thus enabling them to realize individual happiness; contribute to the development and prosperity of our country and the world; realize world peace; and advance human culture based on the Buddhist humanism taught by the Soka Gakkai International. Recognizing that increasing the number of happy Bodhisattvas of the Earth in America is the foundation of our worldwide movement for peace, our organization works to support each member in achieving absolute happiness through faith in the Gohonzon.

Our organization is structured and leaders are appointed with the intention of accomplishing these objectives, especially those dealing with the members’ faith and happiness. As the Mystic Law, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, is the foundation of Buddhism, Nichiren Daishonin explains, “The Buddha has left us those golden words, ‘Rely on the Law and not upon persons’” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 105). At the same time, it is through people who correctly embrace the Law that we learn about the Law. Guiding people to develop faith in the Gohonzon is therefore the noblest mission in life.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda says: “You can accumulate good fortune here in this land of the United States. Confident that the area where you live and make your home is itself the Land of Tranquil Light, you should strive to make it shine as such. This is the correct way of practicing Nichiren Buddhism, which is truly a world religion . . . The mission of a leader is to guide all people, both individually and as a group, to victory . . . I hope you will lead others with wisdom, all the while praying for their happiness with the spirit of compassion. One who can win the heart of even a single person can win the hearts of ten thousand. Cultivating such humanity is the essence of Buddhism. (My Dear Friends in America, third edition, pp. 111–12).

The three treasures in Nichiren Buddhism are the Buddha, the Law (the Buddha’s teachings or the Dharma) and the Buddhist Order (community of believers or sangha). The SGI-USA, as the community of believers, is a precious treasure—its care is entrusted to the leaders. This Leadership Manual offers practical procedures, policies and objectives to aid our volunteer leaders in meeting the needs of our membership with confidence and with a clear and common understanding of their responsibilities.

On behalf of the Central Executive Committee, we hope that this information will be helpful. This Leadership Manual is part of our ongoing response to SGI President Ikeda’s request in 1992 that we set down in writing our procedures and policies. As our organization continues to develop, so will our policies.

Please feel free to send your comments or suggestions regarding this Leadership Manual and the policies outlined herein to:

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This Leadership Manual is effective as of January 2019 and supersedes any previous editions.
**Build a Solid Foundation**

- In the first place, please advance steadily with the awareness that you are now building a foundation for the next thousand years of the kosen-rufu movement in the United States.
- The second point that I want to make is that capable people are the greatest treasure. Without capable people, neither the eternal establishment of the Law nor world peace can be achieved.
- The third point concerns holding joyful meetings and conducting dialogue that is imbued with joy and wisdom.
- Fourth, you must respect those who are fighting for world peace, irrespective of their race or nationality.
- Fifth, I would like you to forge ahead, always taking good care of your health.  

(My Dear Friends in America, third edition, pp. 6–9)

**Sincere Communication Is the Key To Raising Youth**

To foster youth is to foster the future . . . Only when leaders have a strong inner determination to find and raise people, to sow seeds for the future, will talented and capable individuals emerge and develop. The important thing is to maintain contact and communication with people. The warmth and sincerity of our interactions will caress others like a gentle rain and warming sunlight, nurturing their growth and development. For that reason, I avail myself of every opportunity to meet with young people and personally strive to foster their growth and ability.

(My Dear Friends in America, third edition, p. 394)

**On Guidance**

I hope all of you will attain excellence in giving individual guidance and become “excellent doctors” of human existence and of life’s inner dynamics. The human heart is very vulnerable. You should continually ask yourself: How can I give others confidence and enable them to advance with courage and strong determination?

Problems that arise are many and diverse, varying from person to person and from one situation to the next. Furthermore, people have greatly differing characters. For this reason, to give effective guidance, you yourselves must accumulate rich experience, develop your understanding of Buddhism and polish your faith.

(My Dear Friends in America, third edition, p. 112)

**Fulfilling One’s Duty**

People will follow a leader who is always victorious—about whom they feel that if they advance together with that person, they can definitely win. To be such a leader, you must be unmatched in earnestness, consideration for others, eloquence and action.

(My Dear Friends in America, third edition, p. 113)

**Those Free of Complaint Possess Wisdom and Abundant Good Fortune**

In another writing, the Daishonin states: “Do not go around lamenting to others how hard it is for you to live in this world. To do so is an act utterly unbecoming to a worthy man” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 850).
If you practice faith yet have an attitude of complaint, you will destroy your good fortune in direct proportion. Those who are full of complaint are not respected by others. From both Buddhist and secular perspectives, their behavior does not befit a wise or worthy person.

Of course, we must be strict and uncompromising when it comes to fighting evil. Other than that, I hope you will be generous toward your friends and fellow members and have room in your hearts to think about the happiness of other people.

“Such-and-such is sick. So-and-so is suffering financially. I must do my best to give them encouragement.” To think in this way, to offer prayers and take action for others’ happiness—this is the behavior of a Buddhist.

(Treasuring Others’ Hearts Is the Key to Growth)

The SGI organization is a gathering of people. So it is essential that we mix and interact with others, that our hearts are united and in rhythm with one another. As the Daishonin says, “It is the heart that is important” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 949).

Orders do not make an organization strong. Far from it. The spirit to treasure each person is what touches and moves people. Behaving with a spirit of genuine concern, respect and courtesy toward each person is the greatest driving force for the organization’s development.

Leaders must study continually. Once a leader stops growing, those who look to him or her for guidance and support will suffer . . .

A person of wisdom, possessing good sense and reason, is never perplexed. A humane person, having abundant compassion for others and few personal desires or ambitions, is never anxious. A brave person, possessing boldness, is never afraid.

Leaders need to have immense wisdom, compassion and courage. Nonetheless, each person is different. There are some who may have an outstanding intellect, others who may possess deep compassion for others, and still others who are filled with courage. Through the Mystic Law, the different strong points of each person are used to the fullest to create the greatest possible value.

(Become People With Big Hearts)

Big-hearted people are happy people. Faith enables us to become this kind of person. I hope all of you will become people who are generous and broad-minded.

The vast ocean is capable of encompassing anything; a small pond can only contain so much. The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is as all-encompassing as the universe itself. We are its practitioners. Let us cherish those around us—family, friends and fellow members—embracing all with our big hearts and enjoying life together. Let us live truly great and wonderful lives.
A Genuine Leader Rejoices in People’s Happiness

Mencius, another great Confucian philosopher, observes: “The people will delight in the joy of him who delights in their joy.” That is, if a leader rejoices in the happiness of the people, the people, in turn, will rejoice in the leader’s happiness.

To strive not only for one’s own happiness but to constantly think and pray about how you can contribute to the happiness of others and to take joy in doing so — this is the SGI spirit. This also parallels the spirit of American democracy. In our organization, there is no one above or below; everyone is equal. The higher our leadership position, the more humbly we must work for the happiness of the members. This is how genuine Buddhist leaders behave.

In *The Analects*, Confucius says: “Where solid qualities outweigh refinement, you have rusticity. Where refinement outweighs solid qualities, you have the clerkly study. Refinement and solid qualities beautifully balanced — then you have the gentleman.”

“Solid qualities” refer to a person’s unadorned inherent qualities, while “refinement” refers to the learning and cultural polish that a person acquires. Confucius declares that an outstanding leader possesses a harmonious balance of both those attributes.

I hope that, as leaders, you will study ceaselessly and strive to deepen your character and refinement. At the same time, I would like you to be brimming with a genuine and unpretentious humanity.

( *My Dear Friends in America*, third edition, p. 402)