In America Today: Family Estrangement

**Family Estrangement:** the loss of a previously existing relationship between family members, through physical and/or emotional distancing, often to the extent that there is little or no communication between the individuals involved for a prolonged period.

*Chicago Tribune: “How Family Members Cope With Estrangement”*

Family: A Karmic Bond

“It is no doubt because of karmic forces that they became my parents, and I, their child.”

- Nichiren Daishonin, “Letter to Jakunichi-bo,” WND-1, 993
“This is not a matter of this life alone. A husband and wife are as close as a form and shadow, flowers and fruit, or roots and leaves, in every existence of life.”

- Nichiren Daishonin, “Letter to the Brothers,” WND-1, 501
Why Must We Overcome Estrangement?

“The family and the home are the foundation for prosperous communities and societies. The growth of each family member through mutual respect and encouragement, and the creation of a realm of harmony and cooperation in the home, the smallest social unit, is the starting point for peace.”

- October 2016 Living Buddhism, p. 43
Brief Experience in Faith
What does family mean to you?
“Hell is in the heart of a person who inwardly despises his father and disregards his mother.”

- Nichiren Daishonin “New Year’s Gosho,” WND-1, 1137

“A person who upholds the Lotus Sutra [the Gohonzon] is repaying the debt of gratitude owed to father and mother. Even if one does not feel in one’s own heart that one can do so, one can repay it through the power of this sutra.”

- Nichiren Daishonin, “Four Virtues and Four Debts of Gratitude,” WND-2, 638
“No matter what kind of people your parents are, they are your parents. If you did not have those parents, you would not be alive. It is important that you understand the deep significance of this point . . . It’s vital to recognize that, no matter how difficult your situation may be, you are alive now. There is no treasure more precious than life itself.”

- Daisaku Ikeda, *Discussions on Youth*, p. 16
“There are so many young people who are incapable of having compassion for their own parents. How can they be expected to care about perfect strangers? The effort to overcome the coldness and indifference in our own lives and attain the same state of compassion as the Buddha is the essence of human revolution.”

- January 2019 Living Buddhism, p 62
“Thank You”

“When we speak or hear the words thank you, the armor falls from our hearts and we communicate on a deep level. ‘Thank you’ is the essence of nonviolence. It contains respect for the other person, humility, and a profound affirmation of life. It possesses a positive, upbeat optimism. It has strength. A person who can sincerely say thank you has a healthy, vital spirit; each time we say those words, our hearts sparkle and life force wells up within us...
Having gratitude and appreciation for the countless people and things that support our lives—that awareness, that feeling, that joy—will invite even greater happiness. Rather than being thankful because we are happy, being thankful itself will make us happy. Also, chanting with gratitude puts us in rhythm with the universe, turning our lives in a positive direction.”

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever experienced estrangement with a family member or close friend?

2. Describe a time when you experienced a positive change in your family based on overcoming the coldness and indifference in your own life.

3. We just heard about the power of saying the words “thank you,” what are some other actions we can take to create a harmonious family?