SOKA SPIRIT
CHANTING SESSIONS

► PURPOSE

1) Chant Nam-myoho-rengyo-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.
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-renge-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)
August Curriculum: Week 1

**Intro:** The Buddha’s fundamental wish is to widely propagate the Mystic Law so that all people can attain genuine happiness. SGI members continue to engage in this essential practice of shakubuku, or sharing Buddhism with others, while the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood seems to be more focused on maintaining their religious authority. This August, one of the SGI’s traditional months of shakubuku, we will study this topic from different angles.

**Context:** On May 3, 1951, second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda declared his life’s mission to spread Nichiren Buddhism to 750,000 member households within his lifetime. Young Daisaku Ikeda made his mentor’s vision his own and led a series of propagation campaigns that made the impossible, possible. In December 1957, the goal was achieved, opening up the worldwide kosen-rufu movement we have today.

**Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance from *The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace***: At his inauguration as second Soka Gakkai president, Mr. Toda declared: “I will through my own efforts reach the goal of 750,000 member households. ... Should I fail to do so, don’t hold a funeral for me.”

The majority of his disciples at that time, however, dismissed this important declaration—giving voice to the great vow he would devote his life to fulfilling—as little more than a fantasy. ...

When Mr. Toda became president in May 1951, the monthly propagation goal of even the top chapters was a mere 50 member households. But I realized that the path of a disciple is to make the vision of one’s mentor a reality, no matter how challenging it might be. As Mr. Toda’s disciple, his vow became my vow, and achieving it became my personal mission.

But propagation efforts throughout the organization failed to advance. In fact, in their hearts, everyone had given up. The veteran leaders did nothing but lament and moan about the thick wall that loomed before them and blocked the way to growth.

I, however, saw it as a time ripe for action, and I leapt onto the main battlefield of kosen-rufu as the chapter advisor of Tokyo’s Kamata Chapter. ...

What was the main cause for my success in that struggle? In short, it was that my heart was always one with my mentor. ...

Day after day, I sternly reminded myself: “Buddhism is about winning, so defeat is unacceptable. If I fail, Mr. Toda’s vision for kosen-rufu will suffer a setback. I must not be defeated. I must be able to report victory to him.”

That firmly focused prayer in my heart became a source of strength and wisdom. My bold and vigorous efforts to fulfill my vow opened the way forward and set in motion the protective functions of the universe. ([www.worldtribune.org/article/three-founding-presidents-path-mentor-disciple-chapter-26-part-2/](http://www.worldtribune.org/article/three-founding-presidents-path-mentor-disciple-chapter-26-part-2/))

**Key Point:** By aligning our hearts with our mentor to achieve kosen-rufu, we break through our lesser selves and dispel any doubt or hesitation we may have about achieving our goals. Taking action with the determination to report victory to our mentor is how we can remain undefeated no matter the situation.

**Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes):** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation. For the presentation, please read all sections above and conclude with a determination or recent experience related to sharing Buddhism with others.

*Reminder:* The Soka Spirit curriculum can be found at [www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/monthly-downloads/)
August Curriculum: Week 2

**Intro:** The Buddha’s fundamental wish is to widely propagate the Mystic Law so that all people can attain genuine happiness. SGI members continue to engage in this essential practice of shakubuku, or sharing Buddhism with others, while the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood seems to be more focused on maintaining their religious authority. This August, one of the SGI’s traditional months of shakubuku, we will study this topic from different angles.

**Context:** Nichiren Daishonin faced criticism from the general public for his efforts in shakubuku—the practice of expounding the truth of Buddhism and challenging erroneous teachings that disempowered people. In his writing, “The Opening of the Eyes,” Nichiren clarifies that the heart of his actions is compassion and that Buddhism is a spiritual struggle to transform the hearts of people.

**Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance from The Opening of the Eyes: SGI President Ikeda’s Lecture Series, p. 160:**
Shakubuku, an act of supreme compassion, is a lion’s roar directed toward the goal of reviving the goodness in people’s hearts and bringing dynamic vitality and creativity to society for the benefit of all. It is a spiritual struggle of the loftiest dimension, one that seeks to conquer devilish functions, break through darkness and delusion and actualize true, lasting happiness for humankind. And it is powered by a fighting spirit that resembles that of a fearless lion king.

This struggle enables us to forge an indestructible, diamond-like state of life. Citing the Nirvana Sutra, the Daishonin notes that obtaining a ‘diamond-like body’ (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 285) is the benefit of practicing shakubuku.

By embarking on this compassionate struggle, we can rid our own lives of the rust of inertia, carelessness and cowardice—the dull patina that prevents our true brilliance from shining forth. Those who tap the depths of their wisdom and persevere in their efforts to lead even one person to happiness can break through the binding chains of all kinds of preconceived ideas and prejudices and defeat the alienating ignorance of disbelief and disrespect. Those who battle negativity and delusions can cleanse and polish their lives with a purifying stream that washes away spiritual decay; they can develop an infinitely vast and expansive state of life that desires the happiness of all humanity. Moreover, those who remain committed to this cause can create the most wonderful and everlasting memories of their lives in this human world.

**Key Point:** Shakubuku is the essence of Buddhist practice, which is: to overcome our lesser selves characterized by cowardice, prejudice and self-centeredness; to forge an indestructible and expansive state of life; and to revive the goodness in people’s hearts in a time of corruption and moral decay. Amid the various challenges facing society today, it is our mission to change the hearts of those around us, starting with our own through challenging shakubuku.

**Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes):** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation. For the presentation, please read all sections above and conclude with a determination or recent experience related to sharing Buddhism with others.

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**August Curriculum: Week 3**

**Intro:** The Buddha’s fundamental wish is to widely propagate the Mystic Law so that all people can attain genuine happiness. SGI members continue to engage in this essential practice of shakubuku, or sharing Buddhism with others, while the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood seems to be more focused on maintaining their religious authority. This August, one of the SGI’s traditional months of shakubuku, we will study this topic from different angles.

**Context:** As a youth, Daisaku Ikeda witnessed the devastation and horrors of war, and was told that he would not live past the age of 30 due to tuberculosis. In the following essay, Ikeda Sensei depicts how he was seeking for the best way to live, which ultimately, led to the beginning of his Buddhist practice.

**Ikeda Sensei from his essay “Encountering Josei Toda”:** For persons of my generation, who had had nationalism and absolute obedience to the Emperor drummed into them from the time they were old enough to understand anything, it seemed as though everything we had believed had suddenly been reduced to naught. We young people had nothing whatever to trust and believe in. It is hardly surprising that we found our bodies and minds tormented day after day by a sense of fretfulness and apprehension.

It was under such conditions that, almost as a matter of natural impulse, two or three of us got together in a group to exchange books. ... But although we would have endless debates on the significance of what we had read, when we faced the harsh realities of the times, the spiritual support and confidence we thought we had gained from our reading would suddenly melt away. In addition to this group, I had another friend from elementary school days who from time to time came to visit me. One day she invited me to attend a meeting, to be held at her house, on "The Philosophy of Life." It was then that I first heard the name Josei Toda. ...

I felt an impulse to take the opportunity to ask him about some of the doubts I had concerning life and society. What is the right kind of life? What does true patriotism mean? What do you think of the emperor system? What is Buddhism really all about?

I did ask him, and his replies were direct and without equivocation. ... I came away fully satisfied with his answers, realizing for the first time in my life that truth was after all something very close at hand. ([www.daisakuikeda.org/sub/resources/works/essays/bio-essays/encountering-josei-toda.html](http://www.daisakuikeda.org/sub/resources/works/essays/bio-essays/encountering-josei-toda.html))

**Key Points:** For Sensei, due to his friends’ persistent efforts, he was able to encounter the humanistic philosophy of Buddhism and a great mentor, which enabled him to overcome his doubts and transform the destiny of his own life, as well as that of countless others. Today, too, as society faces a plethora of challenges and mistrust, people are seeking genuine answers for their fundamental questions about life. Polishing our own lives, continuing to engage in dialogue with others and never giving up on them is how we, too, can open the way for another individual to transform their destiny as well.

**Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes):** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation. For the presentation, please read all sections above and conclude with a determination or recent experience related to sharing Buddhism with others.

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August Curriculum: Week 4

Intro: The Buddha’s fundamental wish is to widely propagate the Mystic Law so that all people can attain genuine happiness. SGI members continue to engage in this essential practice of shakubuku, or sharing Buddhism with others, while the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood seems to be more focused on maintaining their religious authority. This August, one of the SGI’s traditional months of shakubuku, we will study this topic from different angles.

Context: In 1997, Ikeda Sensei visited Soka University in Tokyo. During a discussion with student division members, a young man opened up about struggling to introduce Buddhism to his friends. Impressed by his seriousness, Sensei encouraged the young man by sharing his experiences as a youth.

Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance from the February 2020 Living Buddhism, pp. 18–19: When I was young, my efforts were really just trial and error, but they became the foundation for future success. The important thing is to be determined, positive and optimistic, and to never stop challenging ourselves, no matter what the circumstances. Let’s be invincible optimists! …

When I look back, the first person who began to practice Nichiren Buddhism through my introduction was a teacher at an elementary school in Ota Ward. This happened just a short while after I began working at Mr. Toda’s company. Until then, I had spoken about Buddhism with several of my friends. Mr. Toda had even met with one of them and talked to him about Buddhism. But so far none had taken faith and begun to practice.

I was so frustrated that I searched very hard for the best ways to talk about Buddhism to others. I prayed wholeheartedly, and I continued to propagate the Daishonin’s teachings, each time with the firm resolve to bring one more person to this faith. I can’t begin to measure what valuable experience and training this gave me.

And how overjoyed I was when I was finally able to successfully convince someone to embrace Nichiren Buddhism! I could never describe my elation in words. I decided that I would thoroughly look after them and make sure that they triumphed in life. I had the elementary school teacher come to my home every morning, and we did gongyo and read Nichiren’s writings together before going to work. I also remember fondly how I used to stop by after work to teach my friend gongyo.

The advance of kosen-rufu lies in the repetition of such patient, painstaking efforts to awaken one friend after another to faith in Nichiren Buddhism. This is true Buddhist practice.

Key Point: From a Soka Spirit standpoint, shakubuku is a fundamental struggle against the forces of negativity and doubt within us. By praying wholeheartedly and continuing to make efforts to engage in dialogue with others, we can win over our lesser selves. As Sensei shared, the advance of kosen-rufu and changing our current society “lies in the repetition of such patient, painstaking efforts to awaken one friend after another to faith in Nichiren Buddhism.”

Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes): Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation. For the presentation, please read all sections above. Conclude with a determination or recent experience related to sharing Buddhism with others.

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August Curriculum: Week 5

**Intro:** The Buddha’s fundamental wish is to widely propagate the Mystic Law so that all people can attain genuine happiness. SGI members continue to engage in this essential practice of shakubuku, or sharing Buddhism with others, while the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood seems to be more focused on maintaining their religious authority. This August, one of the SGI’s traditional months of shakubuku, we will study this topic from different angles.

**Context:** In March 2011, the Tohoku region, or Northeast Japan, was devastated by an earthquake and tsunami. In response, Ikeda Sensei began writing the “Light of Happiness” chapter in volume 25 of The New Human Revolution to encourage the members in the area suffering from the tremendous destruction and loss of loved ones. In this chapter, he covers the propagation efforts and invincible spirit of the pioneering members in Bunkyo chapter in Fukushima, a prefecture in Tohoku.

**Ikeda Sensei’s Guidance from The New Human Revolution, vol. 25, pp. 65–66:** When some members began earnestly exerting themselves for kosen-rufu, they were faced with many painful, sad, and bitter challenges. Time and again, many would shed tears while no one was looking. But each time they did so, they also felt that they were cutting off, one at a time, the chains of karma that bound them, and their entire beings were filled with courage and joy at not allowing their sufferings to completely overwhelm them.

Most of the members in those days had problems related to health, money, or family. When they awakened to their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and started to walk the great path of kosen-rufu, however, the problems that had previously disturbed them became as trifling as a hangnail.

The main concerns that troubled their hearts now were how to lead their friends to happiness and how to advance kosen-rufu in their communities. These are the concerns of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The fact that these members had reached such a state of life indicated that they had already climbed out of the sad valley of karmic suffering.

Life and its environment are not two separate things. They stand in an intimately interconnected and inseparable relationship. That’s why transforming our inner state of being will simultaneously change our external reality.

Members who were happily engaged in kosen-rufu activities were bringing flowers of happiness into profuse bloom; they were showing proof of their human revolution and how they had transformed their karma. The resulting joy and conviction then went on to be a tremendous driving force for propagation.

**Key Point:** Sharing Buddhism with others is the heart of Bodhisattvas of the Earth and the essence of Soka Spirit. Our pioneering members faced great difficulties and were ridiculed for their Buddhist practice. However, their spirit to do shakubuku enabled them to overcome their lesser self, bring forth the life state of Buddhahood and overcome their own karmic suffering. Shakubuku is not just for the sake of the other person’s happiness, it is a cause to transform our own karma and become absolutely happy.

**Preparation and Presentation (5 minutes):** Please read the material, seek from seniors in faith about it and chant abundantly throughout the preparation. For the presentation, please read all sections above. Conclude with a determination or recent experience related to sharing Buddhism with others.

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