1. REFRAIN from eating meals, as an SGI Zoom meeting constitutes a faith activity.

2. TURN CAMERA ON DURING ACTIVITIES which involve discussion and engagement.

3. MUTE WHEN NOT SPEAKING.

4. OTHER DISTRACTIVE BEHAVIORS: COOKING/CLEANING
Practice for Oneself and Others

SGI-USA August 2021 Discussion Meeting
“Making others happy is more meaningful for people than just socializing with them or doing something to improve our own happiness.

“When we aim to make others happier, we feel connected to them ... which is important for us.”

- Milla Titova, lead researcher of the study “Happiness Comes From Trying to Make Others Feel Good, Rather Than Oneself.” (greatergood.berkeley.edu)
Key Points

1. Our Buddhist practice enables us to realize happiness for ourselves and others.
2. When we do something for others, we also benefit ourselves.
3. Sharing Buddhism is the most direct way to overcome our negativity and help others.
True Buddhist Practice

While there is no dispute that someone who believes [in the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] will have their prayers answered and realize benefit, this alone does not constitute bodhisattva practice. There is no such thing as a self-centered Buddha who simply accumulates personal benefit and does not work for the well-being of others. Unless we carry out bodhisattva practice, we cannot attain Buddhahood.

- First Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, For Our Wonderful New Members, p. 19 (also found in the June 2019 Living Buddhism, p. 50)
Benefitting Others Benefits Ourselves

“Joy” means that oneself and others together experience joy.

- Nichiren Daishonin, *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 146
Overcoming Our Negativity Through Sharing Buddhism

[Sharing Buddhism is] a struggle to break down the icy walls of darkness or ignorance in our own lives, which take the forms of apathy, passivity, and other negative emotions.

When we talk with others about Buddhism, we are grappling with our own ignorance and earthly desires. That’s why it gives us the strength to surmount our own problems, enabling us to transform our state of life and change our karma ... thus enabling us to dispel the darkness or ignorance in our own lives and in the lives of others.

- Ikeda Sensei, For Our Wonderful New Members, pp. 22–23 (also found in the June 2019 Living Buddhism, p. 53)
Brief Example of Practicing for Others
Discussion Questions

1. Please share a situation in your life in which helping others made you happier and enabled you to advance past your problems.

2. How can this concept of “practicing for oneself and others” contribute to a change in society?
August 2021 Discussion Meeting Script

Topic: "Practice for Oneself and Others"

Slide 1:

**This slide is NOT part of the discussion meeting presentation. This slide is to outline basic Zoom etiquette. This slide can be shown at the beginning of a discussion meeting as members/guests join the meeting. The presentation starts from slide 2.

Slide 2:

- Thank you for allowing me to share today’s presentation.
- Today we will be studying the topic of practicing for oneself and others.
- Now, let’s begin!

Slide 3:

- In a moment, we will study the Nichiren Buddhist view on practicing for oneself and others, but before that, let’s look at what the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley discovered relating to this topic.
- Dr. Milla Titova and other researchers there conducted an experiment on what makes people happy.
- In the experiment, college students reported on their happiness as well as on their basic psychological needs for their well-being.
- The students were randomly put into three groups that focused on one of three things: do something to make themselves happy, do something to make someone else happy, or socialize with others.
- The results show that those who did something to make someone else happy were happier than students in the other two groups.
- Speaking on this, Dr. Titova says: “Making others happy is more meaningful for people than just socializing with them or doing something to improve our own happiness. When we aim to make others happier, we feel connected to them—which is important for us.”
- The study also shows that people tend to feel happier when what they did for someone actually made that person feel better.
- Rather than feeling satisfied in doing something for another person, the focus should be on whether what we did really helped someone.
- Now let’s study the Buddhist ideal of practicing for others!

Slide 4:

- We will cover three key points today:
  1. Our Buddhist practice enables us to realize happiness for ourselves and others.
2. When we do something for others, we also benefit ourselves.
3. Sharing Buddhism is the most direct way to help others and overcome our negativity.

Slide 5:
- Getting into our first key point today, true Buddhist practice is working for the happiness of others and ourselves.
- Explaining this, founding Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi says: “While there is no dispute that someone who believes [in the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] will have their prayers answered and realize benefit, this alone does not constitute bodhisattva practice. There is no such thing as a self-centered Buddha who simply accumulates personal benefit and does not work for the well-being of others. Unless we carry out bodhisattva practice, we cannot attain Buddhahood.”
- A bodhisattva is someone who actively works for the happiness of oneself and others. Nichiren Buddhism teaches that bodhisattva practice is essential to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime, or becoming absolutely happy, because it enables us to expand our capacity to genuinely respect and care for all those around us.

Slide 6:
- The basis of our practice is believing in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and chanting on a daily basis.
- In addition to this, as President Makiguchi explained, taking action for the sake of others is key.
- But why should we take action for others?
- This brings us to our second key point: When we help others gain benefit, we also benefit ourselves.
- Nichiren Daishonin says that “Joy” means that oneself and others together experience joy.
- Ikeda Sensei has also said that when we share victories with others our joy doubles.
- We cannot be truly happy if those around us are suffering.
- On the other hand, when people work together to help each other, the happiness gained from one person seeing benefit in their life is multiplied and shared by all who support that person.

Slide 7:
- Knowing that taking action for others not only helps them but enriches our lives, too, what’s a practical action we can take? We can share Buddhism with others.
- Nichiren Buddhism teaches that all people possess the Buddha nature. In other words, all people possess limitless courage, wisdom and compassion within their lives.
- By sharing Buddhism with others, we can help many others realize the incredible potential they inherently possess. That’s why one of the greatest causes we can make is to share Buddhism with them.
• However, when we have a lot of problems or are feeling very negative, reaching out to others may seem like a burden. Or we might think we should fix our own problems first before trying to encourage someone else.
• This brings us into our final key point today: that we can actually overcome our negativity by sharing Buddhism with others.
• Sensei says: “[Sharing Buddhism is] a struggle to break down the icy walls of darkness or ignorance in our own lives, which take the forms of apathy, passivity, and other negative emotions. When we talk with others about Buddhism, we are grappling with our own ignorance and earthly desires. That’s why it gives us the strength to surmount our own problems, enabling us to transform our state of life and change our karma … thus enabling us to dispel the darkness or ignorance in our own lives and in the lives of others.”
• This ties back to how benefitting others benefits ourselves. Especially when we are dealing with tremendous obstacles, sharing Buddhism with others can be a powerful catalyst to victory.
• As we overcome the mountain of our own negativity, we can encourage others to do the same. As others do so, they also can help their friends and family do the same. This ideal of practicing for or helping others creates a ripple effect of one person after another overcoming the challenges within their lives, which leads to transforming our society.
• All it take is one person dedicated to working for the happiness of others.

Slide 8:
**Optional slide: please provide a brief example of practicing for others and any benefits/victories you accomplished in doing so.**

Slide 9:
• Now, let’s discuss! Here are the questions we can use as a starting point:
  1. Please share a situation in your life where helping others made you happier and enabled you to advance past your problems.
  2. How does this concept of “practicing for oneself and others” lead to transforming society? (Presenter’s note: Let’s encourage everyone during the discussion to think about how they can implement this idea into our daily lives. What does practicing Buddhism for oneself and others look like in your personal life?)