



Myohoji Temple

Did You Know? #6

HOW TO GIVE AN EXPERIENCE

One of the most important as well as the most difficult things we do in our practice is to give an experience. It is difficult because most of us have little or no training to speak in public and it is important because this is our opportunity to help shakubuku the guests that have come to find out about true Buddhism. We develop our own fortune through our efforts to help others understand and accept this practice, *keta*.

An experience should be based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, should be personal and based on our practice. When giving the experience our purpose and focus should be on the guests and new members. We SHOULD NOT use Buddhist terms without explaining them and SHOULD NOT give any type of guidance. Chant Daimoku that your experience will touch the hearts of the people attending the meeting and make them want to practice this true Buddhism.

When preparing your experience keep in mind that it is most important that the guest can easily follow the experience. The following three points will help the guests understand the benefit of practicing this Buddhism. These three points should be strictly observed.

1. Explain what your obstacle or problem was. State it very clearly. Example: "I was fired from 5 jobs in a row," or, "I was angry all the time."
2. Explain what you did, what action you took with the Gohonzon. What did you realize or see after you chanted Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo to the Gohonzon? What happened to your spirit, attitude or your thoughts? What was your realization?
3. What was the result of your challenging the problem through this practice. Be specific and accurately describe your benefit.

Here are some suggestions from Toastmasters International, an organization that was created for people who wish to improve their speaking. Prepare and rehearse so you're always ready when asked to speak. In deciding what to say, you should begin by asking yourself, "what's my purpose"? This question is key to all communication. You're asking, "what am I trying to accomplish by giving this particular message to this particular person or group"?

You want to move your audience from *Point A* (where they are before you start speaking) - to *Point B* (where they are afterward). *Point B* is what your listeners are supposed to think, feel, believe or do after they've listened to you. Therefore, purpose in your experience is fundamental.

We communicate to get things done or to bring about change in someone's thoughts or actions. Let's prepare, in advance so we can share our great experiences with this Gohonzon by becoming more attuned to our audience. Always keep in mind that the people we are trying to

reach with our experience are the GUESTS, not other members. They have taken the time to come and learn why they should try chanting. Also keep in mind that the guests don't know all the Buddhist terminology such as *sansho-shima* or *tozan*, so try to use words that they will understand.

Let's give a lot more thought and care to what we say so we can sincerely assist in the shakubuku of our valued guests. Write out your experience, following the guidelines outlined previously of beginning, middle and end as well as what you want to accomplish. Then refine it until it is no more than 3 to 5 minutes in length.

Once your speech is organized, practice in front of a mirror and ask a fellow member to listen and critique for you. In this way, we will be more effective in shakubuku. Remember, we usually have one opportunity to share the greatness of this Gohonzon with guests who come to the temple or to a meeting. It is important to prepare carefully.