

About the Book

In an era when the news is filled with shocking stories about schools and the actions of American youth, we are reminded that the issues and concerns of today's youth are many. Renowned author and spiritual leader Daisaku Ikeda provides a straightforward, no-nonsense approach as he connects the timeless wisdom of Buddhism to the growing problems facing young people in America.

Presented in an engaging question-and-answer format, *The Way of Youth* provides clear direction and a unique approach to an array of topics of particular interest to young people—from building character, the value of hard work, perseverance and education, family, friendship, tolerance and human rights to career, art and culture, preservation of the environment and world peace.

Young people and parents of all faiths will identify with Mr. Ikeda's optimistic yet grounded view of life as he guides us in discovering how to unlock ourselves from peer pressure and flourish as individuals, learn to live with and respect ourselves and others, contribute to a positive, free and peaceful society and to find true personal happiness.

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\$14.95 USA/\$22.95 CAN, 189 pp.

About the Author

Daisaku Ikeda is president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), one of the most important international Buddhist communities in the world today. With 12 million members in 181 countries, the SGI promotes education, international cultural exchange and the establishment of world peace.



For his more than 50 years, Mr. Ikeda has paid particular attention to encouraging youth as he has worked to spread the peaceful and compassionate teachings of Buddhism throughout the world.

A peace activist, Mr. Ikeda has traveled to more than 50 countries meeting and holding dialogues with people, including political and intellectual leaders, applying his

strong belief that international understanding and the realization of peace begins with people-to-people contacts. Among the hundreds of honors and commendations given him around the world, he received the United Nations Peace Award in 1983.

TOPICS TO CONSIDER

- 1 What does Ikeda mean by “the way of youth?” Discuss the concept of having a mission in life.
- 2 What is the difference between freedom and self-indulgence? Between license and liberty? (p. 11)
- 3 Buddhism explains that nothing happens by chance. How have adverse situations in your life turned out to be opportunities for growth? Are outward struggles a reflection of the inner life?
- 4 The longing to be popular can cloud judgment in social situations. How can you tell the difference between true friendships and friendships based on dependency or convenience? Have you ever struggled to maintain a negative relationship?
- 5 Ikeda refers to the Nichiren Buddhist chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo used by millions to reveal the Mystic Law of life and the universe. Has chanting helped you center your inner life? Or do you know someone who uses this method to positive effect?
- 6 Ikeda frequently uses the sun as a symbol in this book. How can holding this image in your heart and mind turn a discouraging situation around? Must you first experience the “dark clouds of despair” before you can advance “toward the sun, toward hope”?
- 7 Give examples of love as a guiding inspiration (p. 39-40). Do you have any examples of love being used as an escape? If our love mission is to contribute to the betterment of another, how can we best respond to the pressure to have casual sex?
- 8 Discuss the image of building a foundation of character as one would build the foundation of a house (p. 41). What are the basic components? How can we build a proper foundation when society pressures us to hurry and grow up?
- 9 Ikeda likens the teenage spirit to an unpolished gem (p. 122). How can this image of polishing the inner jewel keep one moving forward on a positive life path?
- 10 Ikeda urges teenagers to work hard toward their dreams and not lose sight of their goals (chapter 6). What role can adults play in helping teens set those goals? Is a mentor more effective in that role than a parent?
- 11 What is your understanding of courage? How are perseverance and compassion part of real courage? (p. 114)
- 12 How can studying history (from the Buddhist perspective of cause and effect) help us choose the right path? Can failure be part of the right path?
- 13 Ikeda gives examples from world literature throughout the book. How has a book, painting, or piece of music sustained you in a dark time? Can a work of art be a catalyst for change?
- 14 “Starting from the present moment is at the heart of Buddhist philosophy” (p. 119). Discuss the Buddhist concept of karma and the relationship between past choices and how to proceed from this moment forward.
- 15 How can kindness, empathy and compassion be signs of outstanding character? Give examples from your life, from history and from current events. Are those traits valued in your everyday world?
- 16 Discuss the three SGI-USA youth pledges to help put an end to violence (p. 151). How might the power of one person starting this path change the life of thousands?

5 Easy Steps for Leading Book Discussions

Excerpted from Reading Group Choices
(© 2002 Paz and Associates, www.readinggroupchoices.com)

1 Acknowledge your role as “facilitator”—not expert.

If it's your turn to lead the discussion, know that you are not expected to be an authority or expert on the chosen book. Your primary tasks are to open the discussion, keep it going, maintain a lively dialogue, and end the discussion on time. A great book discussion is the result of the thoughts and perceptions of a variety of different people.

2 Note your own response as you read.

Make notes as you read the book, highlighting or marking passages. What are your reactions, questions or insights? Add the personal touch to your discussion. Share your thoughts during your discussion and invite others to comment.

3 Lay some ground rules.

After you've introduced yourself to the group, remind members of the ways they can contribute to the discussion:

- Avoid “crosstalk” or talking over others.
- Be respectful. Keep an open mind.
- Try not to repeat what others have said. Speak up with something new or add to the previous comment.
- Acknowledge that there is no right or wrong, just differences of opinion.
- Be open to learn from others.
- If you are outgoing, be careful to allow space for others to share their thoughts.

4 Call the question.

If you feel the group has begun to repeat itself, acknowledge your observation, ask for agreement if necessary, and pose a new topic.

5 Balance the discussion.

Invite quiet members to share their thoughts. Watch for introverts who have something to say but are having a hard time getting in a word.

Praise for *The Way of Youth*

“Ikeda empowers youth. . . . This empowerment gives youth a sense of hope, purpose, and accomplishment and is a vital step in breaking the cycle of depression, hopelessness and violence. In a market best characterized by a paucity of such books, Ikeda's offering is extraordinary.”

— *MultiCultural Review*

“Ikeda, who's worked with teens all over the world, provides some realistic, common-sense advice that will help you build confidence, find happiness, and contribute to society—no matter what creed you follow.”

— *Seventeen.com*

“Teens interested in Buddhism will find Ikeda's caring commitment both inspiring and attractive.”

— *Booklist*

Host a Reading Group

Reading group discussions—in your home, at a bookstore or in a library—are great opportunities to learn something new, see things in a new way, examine deeply held beliefs or simply to enjoy the company of other book lovers. Middleway Press is happy to provide this discussion guide, which gives you everything you need to host a successful meeting: a descriptive summary, topics to consider, endorsements and hosting tips.

For more copies of this guide, or guides for other great Middleway Press books, contact us at:

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Way of Youth

Buddhist Common
Sense for Handling
Life's Questions

Daisaku Ikeda
Foreword by Duncan Sheik

The Way of Youth: Buddhist Common Sense for Handling Life's Questions

By Daisaku Ikeda

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