

or even think of it as a religion," Jason said. Living the lifestyle of a Buddhist helps achieve complete awareness, clearing the mind to eventually reach enlightenment.

## "Everyday is a fresh start and that makes me determined."

Jason Takaki

"I was stubborn and denied doing the things I knew would benefit me," Jason said. "I preferred going out with friends and procrastinating." By applying simple Buddhist disciplines, Jason became more rational and level minded. "There are literally millions of people from different religions all around the world that practice Buddhism," Jason said. "The doctrines are similar and they feel completeness and comfort through it."

Even if you don't believe in divine intervention exercises like daily reflection, chanting, breathing techniques, practicing good karma and meditation are effective to relieve stress. These all are risk-free treatments. For a majority of Buddhists, the most important practice is chanting, specifically, NAM-MYO-RENGE-KYO, in front of a Gohonzon (a scroll used for prayer, usually on an altar). The chant alludes to a mystic law of life and is chanted to obtain clarity and as a form of prayer. Buddhists have immeasurable faith and believe all their goals are realistic and obtainable.

"Chanting repetitively puts your body in rhythm with the universe and propels your thoughts in the path to understanding your-

self," said SGI Buddhism club instructor, Naoko Yamagata. "I chant in front of my Gohonzon twice a day, in the morning and at night," Jason said. This spell-like chanting places him in a state of awareness in which he is able to focus his energy to envision his actions for that day.

An increasingly popular and widely practiced form of thought gathering is meditation. By sitting in a comfortable position for several minutes, you can focus your energy to rid thoughts that cause you discomfort. "Meditation is time for yourself where you calm down and ask yourself questions," Yamagata said. Mindful meditation is not a rigorous practice, it only requires the concentration to block out distractions and with patience, a student can reach equanimity by detaching themselves from what obstructs their happiness.

Breathing techniques can highly benefit a student's endurance, which is helpful for reducing anxiety, anger, fatigue, and muscular tension. Most people are shallow breathers, inhaling with the chest, not using the full capacity of their lungs by inhaling from the abdomen. An easy exercise is letting out the sound of a relaxing sigh, and then taking air in naturally from the belly. You must do at least a dozen repetitions before you start to feel the relaxation.

After any practice, remain still for a couple of minutes to allow your mind and body to recognize the feeling of complete relaxation. After this exercise you should be in a state of controlled equilibrium, resulting in a better mood.

