



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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Furuya Sensei's 17th annual memorial service

Welcome to Spring!



Students of Aikido listen to their bodies. To listen to what our bodies are saying, we must have intuition. Intuition can be used to become aware of our bodies, our minds, and our divinity.

Obviously our bodies don't audibly talk. Thus to listen to our bodies requires intuition. In Japanese, "intuition" is referred to as *kan* (勘) and is defined as "a thing that one knows or considers likely from instinctive feeling rather than conscious reasoning." To most of us, intuition is some sort of *jintsuuriki* (神通力) or "supernatural power" that is only displayed by mystics or other spiritual beings like O'Sensei. However, every day people can teach themselves intuition up to a certain point.

In the martial arts, it is thought that there are three types of intuitions: body, mind, and spirit. All three of the intuitions are difficult to learn but body intuition is the easiest and is actually the base intuition for all the intuitions.

In Aikido training, body intuition begins with *kata* (型) or "pre-determined movement." *Kata* are designed to be done in repetition. Repetition drives the techniques into our subconscious and teaches us how to move our minds into a subconscious state. It is thought that our conscious minds can only take in about 50 bits of information per second while our subconscious minds can process up to 20,000,000 bits per second. Because the subconscious can process so quickly, the movements take on an almost intuitive sense and that's why the movements become *naraishou*

(習い性) or "second nature." The more we train at this level, the easier it is to learn new movements and to get our minds into a subconscious state.

Listen to Your Body



by David Ito
Aikido Chief Instructor

Once we can put ourselves into a subconscious state, we can learn to listen to our bodies. Listening to our bodies is being able to pay attention to the signs and signals it is sending us. In one sense, it teaches us to be aware of our bodies. For instance, pain is the signal that most of us hear the most from our bodies. Pain is a function of the activation of stretch and pain receptors that are firing to warn us that damage or injury is about to happen. This is also where we learn to notice when something in our bodies "feels weird" or that movement just doesn't feel right. In another sense it teaches us kinesthetic awareness and proprioception. Kinesthetic awareness is defined as "how we sense our body and the way it moves." Proprioception is "the awareness of posture, movement, and changes in equilibrium and the knowledge of position, weight, and resistance of objects in relation to the body." These intuitions teach us how to move our body in space and in reference to our surroundings.

Once we learn to listen to our bodies and our movements become second nature, we start to use that intuitive feeling mentally. The mental intuitive feeling is the same sense that we felt in our bodies previously. We can use this intuition to confront fear or engage our opponents.

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Listen to Your Body *continued from page 2...*

When we confront fear, we will either give in to it or overcome it. Someone once said, “The mind is an excellent servant but a terrible master.” Our minds need to be able to recognize whether something is an actual fear or story made up by our minds. Understanding this, former Navy Seal David Goggins created The 40% Rule. He states that “When our minds and bodies are starting to tire and we feel like giving up, we’re really only at 40 percent of what we are truly capable of achieving.” To counteract our desire to give up we use our intuitive sense to ascertain if we can go farther or if we should quit.

We use this same intuitive sense when engaging our opponents and are trying get a sense of not only their intentions but how they will attack us. In Japanese this is called *haragei* (腹芸) or “The ability to sense threats or anticipate an opponent’s movements.” In psychology, this is called Nonlocal Intuition. Nonlocal Intuition is “The perception of information about a distant or future event by the body’s psychophysiological systems, which is not based on reason or memories of prior experience.”

The hardest level to reach is spiritual intuition. Some say that the only way to get to this place is to have a natural gift. I would imagine that this is where for people like O’Sensei it becomes supernatural. Here they *kokoro wo yomu* (心を読む) or “read somebody’s thoughts” but it literally translates to “read someone’s heart.” Think about this, we hear many stories of O’Sensei supernaturally dodging bullets and reading his opponents so well it was as if he disappeared when he was attacked.

It is hard to say if O’Sensei was supernatural or not since most accounts of his exploits are secondhand. It is said that there is

only one *ki* (氣) in the universe and that we are all made up of the same *ki* but in different gradations. Understanding this, it is theorized that once we align our *ki* or unify the *ki* of our bodies and the *ki* of our minds then we are instantly united with the *ki* of the universe.

O’Sensei said, “The Art of Peace begins with you. Work on yourself and your appointed task in the Art of Peace. Everyone has a spirit that can be refined, a body that can be trained in some manner, a suitable path to follow. You are here to realize your inner divinity and manifest your innate enlightenment. Foster peace in your own life and then apply the Art to all that you encounter.” There might be some proof to help understand the unification of *ki* and O’Sensei’s quote. HeartMath Institute researchers located in Boulder Creek, California have identified a physiological state called Heart Coherence. Heart Coherence is “a type of coherence that occurs when our body’s systems, our breathing, heart rhythms, brain rhythms and hormonal response, are in sync with each other — that brings out the very best in us.”

Thinking about this, we do not become supernatural per se, but we find our own divinity. Therefore, in a sense, the power that we wield is mystical or divine. In Japanese this is called *reiken* (靈劍) or “the sword which possesses mystical powers.” Perhaps that is why O’Sensei advocates Aikido being the Art of Peace because the peace that we are creating is in gaining an intuitive sense of ourselves. This intuitive sense of ourselves brings about an inner peace in us and enables us to, as O’Sensei states, “apply the Art to all that you encounter.” Intuition can help us destroy others, or it can improve the quality of not only our lives but the lives of everyone around us. The best Aikidoists listen to their bodies because they know that their own divinity is just a few feelings away. •

The *shodan* test is a big milestone for the Aikido student. The *shodan* test demonstrates a student's competency in Aikido's basic techniques. Outwardly, the candidate simply has to get through the test. However, the *shodan* test isn't just an Aikido demonstration. When a student takes the *shodan* test, it also shows how a student thinks about Aikido.

Aikido has several main basic techniques. If we multiply that by the different attacks, then factor in any variations, reversals (*kaeshi-waza*), and change-ups (*henka-waza*), then Aikido can easily have hundreds of thousands of techniques. Therefore, where does one start?

Furuya Sensei used to tell us this quote, "Martial arts means bringing order to chaos." This includes the chaos in our heads. When I took my *shodan* exam, I mentally wrangled the basic techniques into groups. I didn't just look at each technique separately. I looked for the similarities. From here I was able to break up this big ball of Aikido into smaller, more manageable chunks.

I mentally attacked this mass of Aikido with this approach:

1. There are the two main families of techniques: *nage-waza* (throwing techniques) and *katame-waza* (pinning techniques)
2. There are the three main Aikido footwork movements shared by all the basic techniques - entering offline directly forward (or forward at an angle) with *irimi* movement; entering offline then turning with *tenkan* movement, and fading backwards offline with *tenshin* movement
3. The four basic pinning techniques are *ikkyo*, *nikyo*, *sankyo*, *yonkyo*
4. The four basic throwing techniques are *irimi-nage*, *shihonage*, *kotegaeshi*, and *kaiten-nage*
5. Two basic throwing techniques - *shinonage* and *kotegaeshi* - are throwing and pinning techniques, that is, they use a joint lock to throw and there is an option to pin the opponent
6. There are several basic *kokyunage* (non-joint lock timing throws) from each attack

The *shodan* test was administered to me like this: For the *katame waza* segment, Sensei called out the name of the attack and the names of all four pinning techniques. This section is pretty straightforward.

For the *nage waza* segment, sensei called out the name of the

attack, and requested five techniques. In this segment the candidate chooses any five techniques they want to demonstrate from each basic attack. This is where it gets perilous. One cannot simply demonstrate any old thing. I managed this segment by keeping it simple and straightforward.



First, the big three basic techniques:

1. *Kotegaeshi*
2. *Shihonage*
3. *Iriminage*

Three is already a big chunk out of five techniques – more than half. Thus, easy.

After the big three, then I would fit in the following:

1. *Kaiten-nage*, if it was *katate-tori-gyukuhanmi* (or *munetsuki*)
2. A *kokyunage* (or a *kokyu-ho* type technique)
3. Another *kokyunage*

After these five throwing techniques, I would have two or three back-up techniques.

By the time a student becomes first kyu or *ikkyu*, they should be solid – almost *shodan*-ready. They should already have the skills to demonstrate the basic techniques. However, the next level is more than just demonstrating correctly. It is about keeping oneself calm and collected, about how you organize the techniques in your head.

Shodan Approach



by Ken Watanabe
Shihan

Shodan is not mastery. When I passed my *shodan* exam I realized I did not "know" Aikido. Passing the *shodan* exam means that we have the basic tools to begin to learn Aikido in earnest. These basic tools are physical – doing the technique; mental – organizing the techniques in your head, and spiritual – not giving up.

Keeping the basics organized in our heads becomes very important when learning the advanced techniques. It becomes especially important when we begin teaching the techniques. I learned this method from Sensei – it was his approach to teaching classes.

In short, Aikido is a martial art. Thus the *shodan* exam should be approached like any other military operation. There should be a plan, rehearse the plan until it becomes second nature, provide contingency plans, and then trust the training.

O'Sensei said, "Face a single foe as if you are facing ten thousand enemies; face ten thousand enemies as a single foe." This applies to practicing Aikido and teaching it as well. •



What is fear and why is it important in your Aikido training? The first question is easier to answer: The first definition in the online Merriam Webster defines fear as “an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger. I will try to answer the second question.

I remember vividly the first few years of my Aikido training as a white belt, I was both afraid immediately before class and often in class too. I had that “strong emotion” of dreading being beaten up by my more senior Aikidoka, especially a coterie of aggressive highly skilled black belts. And in fact, I did get beat up regularly by my fellow students. No permanent damage but definitely at a minimum a bruised ego. The fear would lessen and dissipate during class to the extent that my mind emptied as I went through the warm up and then vigorous practice. I still, 30 years later, have a feeling of dark anticipation before each class.

Fear in martial arts practice I believe is essential to creating the training effect to face practiced violence and to repeatedly prepare oneself for the possible eventuality of having to use your Aikido in a real violent confrontation outside the dojo. That feeling of fear and the training effect from practice over many days over many years seasons us, teaches us to confront and overcome anxiety and fear. As we learn to confront fear, we learn to become calm, brave and competent.

I experienced a different kind of fear or perhaps a better word would be anxiety during class, and I still do. I fear that I might fail to learn and demonstrate the techniques being practiced in the class. Personally, I don't want to make a mistake or struggle to learn a specific technique. We all have stories of Furuya Sensei's strongly worded corrections, even to the point of being ridiculed. I tend to look back on that now, and interpret that mental harassment as another form of mental training. If you can perform sufficiently despite being under mental and emotional stress, then you will be competent and safer. It ends up being another version of the fear training effect.

You hear often about how Aikido is the art of peace and a moving meditation, but we rarely discuss the mechanics of that peace and meditation. I certainly don't feel like I am demonstrating moving meditation. The closest I think I have ever gotten to that experience are the times I was able to get into a flow state. Flow states can have many characteristics. For me, flow facilitates the spontaneous use of varied technique suited specifically to the particular attack or violent confrontation. One technique that our dojo uses to induce a flow state is to practice vigorously up to the point of exhaustion where your body just “acts and moves” without thinking.

The training effect of going until exhausted is a method that can be recalled in a moment of confrontation. As our bodies and our minds learn to respond to specific threatening actions through exhaustion, we build a memory pathway that allows us to tap that skill at a moment's notice. In essence we can create a training feedback loop.

Fear and Aikido



by **Bill D'Angelo**
Kyo kai President

I think there is also a further added personal benefit to fear and overcoming fear through training, and that is the development of resiliency. When we train ourselves to overcome our fears incrementally, over a long stretch of time, we develop the character traits of being able to overcome adversity. This physical skill directly contributes to our mental powers, and we then can use those mental powers in every aspect of our lives. We can handle greater stress and uncertainty in our personal relationships, in our work lives, and in the course of our lives. As we get older, certain uncomfortable experiences became harder, our physical bodies begin to fail us, even our mental agility slows down, our friends and family members pass away and ultimately we face our own deaths. As martial artists, we mold the clay of fear and violence into serenity, courage and the ability to accept what we cannot change. What's left is the developed spirit, forged from our fears. •

From my personal experience and after some years in charge of my own dojo, I am becoming more aware of the importance of promoting Aikido classes for children and young people.

I believe that the priority of Aikido is to keep the art alive. It is essential that we are aware that it is necessary to train and invest time and resources in the generational change of the dojo.

I recognize that not all dojos have the time, instructors, or opportunities to host classes for children or young people that I had. However, I would encourage anyone who can do it to try.

In my case, for many years I focused almost exclusively on adults and on creating a strong and stable group of practitioners in my area since Aikido was not known at all. The majority of those interested in Aikido were adults who had done or practiced other arts.

For me, Aikido classes for children started after I had been teaching adults for almost 15 years. Previously, when I was younger, I had already given classes to children in other martial disciplines in schools and associations, but only occasionally in Aikido.

As usual on my martial arts path, my inspiration to start these classes was Furuya Sensei. When I went to Los Angeles for the first time, I participated and helped in the children's classes. I was amazed at the seriousness and maturity that was practiced and taught in those classes.

Sensei had a good group of children and young people and some great instructors teaching. The program was well structured, including techniques and other variations to be able to work with children. The thing that inspired me the most was that the feeling of the class was like an actual adult Aikido class. It wasn't like gymnastics or some other form of structured play. I thought, "That's exactly what I want."

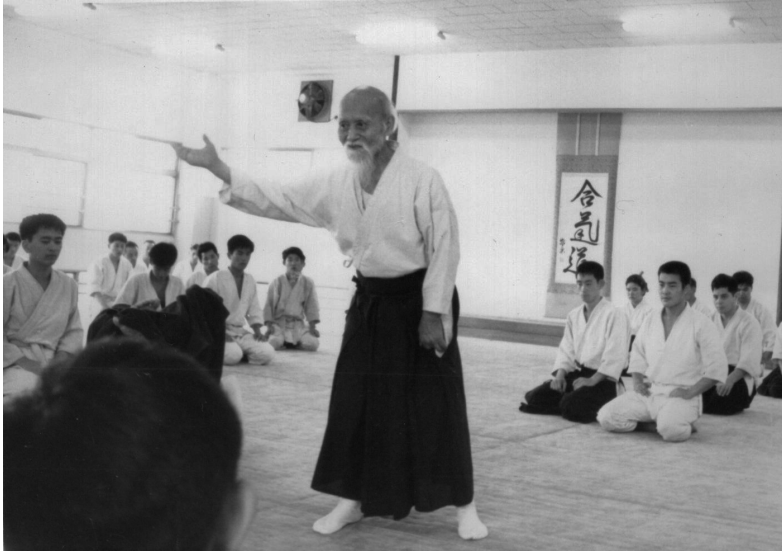
In 2004 I became a father for the first time, and I was clear that I would like to try to teach my children about this art and this life when they got older. So I began to consider starting a children's class more seriously.

The trigger to start a class was after the passing of Sensei. After that I realized that it was a priority to work for the future of not only Sensei's legacy but the legacy of Aikido.

I believe that most people who teach martial arts think that teaching children is something less important than teaching adults. I find that narrow and limited mentality very sad.

Aikido for children or young people takes a lot of work. I would say a lot more than adult classes.

Establishing a good program that combines technique, values, and tradition is difficult because you have to adapt all this to the



children's mentality, which takes time, study and many hours of practice. The other day at the regular meeting of the children's class instructors, we talked about various things: about how the classes work, the values that we want to promote in the children and the technical details that they should know before starting the adult class. During the meeting the instructors told me about the difficulty they had in assessing the technical evolution of the children in the classes for their belt promotion. Most said that many children have been practicing for several years and still do not know how to do certain techniques. They were frustrated that they should have known them, given how long they had been coming.

Perseverance, Attitude, and Practice



by **Santiago Garcia Almaraz**
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

Most of the children in our dojo start practicing when they are approximately six years old and move on to the adult class when they are around 15 years old. Most don't start to catch on until about eight years old. Understanding this, the technical part is obviously important, but it is not everything. Personally, I am in favor of the classes and the program focusing on the training of children at different levels and preparing them for older classes by laying some foundations at each age group.

I believe that perseverance, attitude, and practice constitute the bases for all of the classes. I do not expect children to know how to do the techniques perfectly or to know the entire Aikido program. I prefer to value other things for their promotion, such as being patient, respectful, consistent, and above all, cultivating the desire to want to learn and grow as human beings.

Working on the pillars of perseverance, attitude and practice will not only ensure children and young people a firm base to grow from in both Aikido and in life but also in their growth as human beings. Because, as a teacher, what is more important than helping to form good people?•



Why do I like Aikido? Why do you like Aikido? Why do you like to practice Aikido? Most people will say that it is fun, some people will say that it gives them some kind of awareness of themselves, and on and on. Most people do not give the real reason; some people do not know the real reason for themselves. I think this is something to think about seriously because without this, your direction in training will always be unclear. If you always try to make your motives and reasons for training clear to yourself, you will always find that your direction and focus in training will become clear at the same time.

Of course, we may not know “exactly” why, but we should have a very good idea for ourselves. Sometimes, if we become too honest with ourselves, we find that all we want is to “beat-up” the other guy, or that we only want a black belt and *hakama* to wear to impress our friends. If our motives are too low, maybe we need to re-think our goals for ourselves, or at least try to raise our goals to the next higher level.

What I have found about most students is that they do not know how far they can go. It always appears that my expectations of the student are too extreme, but it is only that I gauge them to the individual student and the student often does not realize how great his own potential is.

Some students appear very confident and aggressive in their training, but most of the time, it is to hide a great lack of confidence or apparent weakness. This is something we also must deal with ourselves and clear it up in our heads.

Finally, there are many students who practice and practice but are so confused about what they are going after that they just wander about much like the steel ball in a pinball machine, bounding back and forth and never doing anything but trying to grab as many points as possible before they eventually and inevitably fall into the hole.

Always make everything clear to yourself. When you meet con-

fusion and self-doubt, it only means that you are hitting the right spot and clarity will surely follow soon. It is like a vital point in shiatsu, when you first hit the right point, it really hurts – but the hurt quickly changes into relief.

On the other hand, when you think you are on the right path and doing well, watch out, you are the perfect victim for the great fall. This doesn't mean that you must always maintain a negative outlook on life, it means that that we should always seek clarity in what we do, especially in this confusing world in which we are so easily confused and distracted.

Clarity



by Rev. Kensho Furuya

In practice, never lose sight of the essentials. It is a lot like appraising a Samurai sword. You must know what to look for, how to see it, and not get distracted by the fluff and non-essentials. Sometimes, I see people get caught with a sword which is not very good but is disguised in fancy mountings. Sometimes, I see people miss a very good sword because they do not know how to recognize its quality, because it might be a little damaged by rust and mis-care. Finally, there is a method to look at a sword and the best way is to follow the masters and their techniques because there is an aesthetic and sense of beauty involved which we must learn and cultivate within ourselves.

I remember one collector liked swords with red scabbards. The red scabbard has nothing to do with the quality of the blade itself, but he only liked red scabbards because he had seen it in a movie – which also has nothing to do with looking at swords. I see this in Aikido as well. We are often distracted by the fluff and forget about the essential elements. We must be especially careful nowadays because we live in a world where everything must be converted into some kind of entertainment. We are so much in love with entertainment because there is no accountability, responsibility or inevitability. •

Editor's note: *Furuya Sensei published this article in a slightly different form to his Daily Message blog on February 12, 2002.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

IMPORTANT DATES

April 27th: O'Sensei Sensei Memorial service 11:45 AM
May 27th: Dojo Closed Memorial Day
June 21-22: Ito Sensei will be teaching at Northcoast Aikikai's 10th Anniversary in Willoughby Ohio
July 4th: Dojo Closed 4th of July
September 2nd: Dojo Closed Labor Day
October 18-20: 50th Anniversary seminar
October 19th: 50th Anniversary Party

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays		Wednesdays
10:15-11:15 AM	Advanced	6:30-7:30 PM Regular
11:30 AM-12:30 PM	Theory	8:30-9:30 PM Fundamentals @Budokan
Sundays		Thursdays
9:00-10:00 AM	Children's Class	6:30-7:30 PM Open
10:15-11:15 AM	Regular	
11:30 AM-12:30 PM	Fundamentals	
Mondays		Fridays
5:15-6:15 PM	Fundamentals	6:30-7:30 PM Regular Class
6:30-7:30 PM	Regular	
Tuesdays		<i>NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.</i>
5:15-6:15 PM	Fundamentals	
6:30-7:30 PM	Weapons	

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays	
9:00-10:00 AM	Regular Class
Tuesdays	
7:45-8:45 PM	Regular class
Thursdays	
7:45-8:45 PM	Regular class

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The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles (ACLA) admit students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender identification, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

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AIKIKAI.

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles has been awarded Official *Konin* recognition by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters.

Our dojos are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and to his legitimate successors, Nidai Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present Doshu, Moriteru Ueshiba and Hombu Dojo-Cho, Mitsuteru Ueshiba.

Affiliated Dojos of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles



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