



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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The 2022 O'Sensei Memorial Service and Seminar

Getting Back to Normal



The best Aikidoists know how to properly make mistakes.

There was a Nike commercial many years ago in which Michael Jordan illustrated the value of failure. In the commercial, he says, "I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

In today's high stakes society, mistakes or failures are often looked down upon. What most people seem to remember is that none of us are born perfect and so failures or mistakes are just the building blocks to success. All growth is a function of *shikosakugo* (試行錯誤) or "trial and error."

Someone once said, "There are only two types of people who don't make mistakes – gods and liars." Therefore, no matter how hard we try, none of us will ever be immune to failure or making mistakes. In order to grow, we need to do things which are outside of our comfort zone. When we do things for the first time or things that we are not "good at" then there is a likelihood that we will fail or make a mistake.

Mistakes are only bad if we approach them as such. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Hamlet says, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Mistakes aren't personal - they are just part of the process. Most times, they are errors in judgment that we can learn from. Therefore, how we view a mistake

determines if it is good or bad, right or wrong.

A mistake is only bad if we either continue to repeat it or if we don't learn from it. We shouldn't externalize mistakes. What that means is that sometimes we blame or are quick with an excuse as to why the mistake isn't our fault. This thinking disables us from internalizing the mistake and learning from it. If we attempt to blame, justify, or get angry when we make a mistake then we can never understand it or learn from it.

Wise Mistakes



by **David Ito**
Aikido Chief Instructor

Mistakes and failures can be good because they can help guide us towards mastery. Remember, learning is trial and error and so mistakes are not personal. When we make a mistake, we should own up to it, try to understand it and try and find a solution to it. The solution to the mistake that we discover becomes a building block toward our success.

We want to get to a mindset in which we can quickly recover from a mistake before the mistake gets too out of hand or causes too much damage. Thus, the only true test of whether a mistake is right or wrong is if we repeat it again.

With that being said, sometimes we need to repeat a mistake a few times in order for us to truly learn the lesson that it is trying to teach us. This can be a bit painful or frustrating, but life is sometimes like this.



Someone once said, “We don’t change until our perception changes.” When our perception on making mistakes changes, that’s when the door to learning really opens up. With this mindset, we actually invite mistakes and value them because we know that their arrival is to help us.

Learning Aikido is like learning the language of movement. When we are learning a language, we first learn the alphabet, then we learn to form words, later those words become sentences and eventually we can have conversations or write books. Along the way, we need to be corrected as to what is the right word, grammar or sentence that is appropriate at that moment. Aikido is the same. We learn the elements to movement like footwork, breathing or body positioning. From these components, we learn to put them together within a technique. In class, the teacher demonstrates a specific technique and the students practice that technique the best they can. While the students are practicing, the teacher goes around giving out corrections to improve upon the technique. At this point, we can make the correction personal and get upset or we can view it as impersonal and as an opportunity to improve.

When we can learn to not take corrections personally, we can

begin to steal other people’s corrections. In Japanese, this is called *tazannoishi* (他山の石) or “learning lessons from someone’s else mistake.” In class, the best students will hear someone else being corrected and pretend that they are being corrected so that they can learn that lesson as well without having to make the mistake. With this mindset, we can speed up our learning without having to suffer making the mistake.



A good Aikidoist realizes that if they are not making mistakes, then they are not growing. They realize that mistakes or failures are the building blocks to success. No person is immune to making mistakes nor are mistakes personal - a good student realizes this.

In the *Hagakure*, Yamamoto Tsunetomo wrote, “It is said that one should not hesitate to correct himself when he has made a mistake. If he corrects himself without the least bit of delay, his mistakes will disappear.” Thus, mistakes are not good or bad nor are they personal. Mistakes are just a part of learning and a guide towards our mastery.

Whenever I make a mistake, I try to remember a quote I read in a book on tea ceremony: “Be rebuked, stand corrected and learn. This is the basis of a successful life.” Everyone makes mistakes, but only a good Aikidoist knows how to make them properly. •



This week I had a visitor who was a teacher at another gym where he taught other martial arts and he was interested in the practice of Aikido. Apart from the practice, he was curious about the environment, and one of the things that surprised him the most was how the students cleaned up after class.

In all his years of practicing a traditional martial art, he had never done anything similar to our clean up after class. He told me that it was something that seemed very gratifying to him to finish the class by cleaning the room where he had just finish practicing.

It is partly pride and partly astonishment that we feel when someone from the outside has a good reaction and values those things like cleaning up after class. For us, something like cleaning up is just our normal day-to-day chore. Like every morning, we have a ritual of acts like washing our face, taking a shower, brushing our teeth, combing our hair, having breakfast, etc. Most of these duties are not necessary to our day-to-day life, but we still have to create a reminder in our daily agenda or to-do list to accomplish them because they are essential to having a healthy quality of life.

However, there are days when we get up in a hurry, arrive late for work or that day when we did not have time to wash ourselves properly. Those days, probably nothing will happen, but if we do not take regular good care of ourselves every day for several days, weeks or months in the end this lack of essential tasks becomes uncomfortable. Perhaps we do not notice it, but it can be a bit

Every Little Detail



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

unpleasant when we have to deal with others who do not take care of themselves. On the other hand, although we are not aware, most of the time this lack of cleanliness and care of these small tasks will also end up having repercussions on our health, physically and mentally.

In our practice, we clean the dojo before practice and we clean the dojo after practice. This is not a benefit or gain to me, but it is part of the quality of our lives and how we live our lives.

Cleaning, or how we take care of ourselves and the dojo, is how we express the true level of our training. When we do something that requires special care, we might wash our hands or use a clean cloth to hold something, or maybe we put on gloves so as not to damage it or dirty it. Thus we try to do our best to take care of the things we have and at the same time it is the best way to express what is truly in our hearts.

Most people enter the dojo as if they entered a supermarket or restaurant and never even see what it takes to maintain a dojo. Some might think that they do not have to take care or clean anything because they are a guest or that they already pay for that service.

In some people's lives, if they mess something up, someone else will come clean it up for them. If something is broken, they don't have to fix it, because it will "magically" appear repaired a few days later. It is easy to think that if the trash is full, someone will surely empty it, since all these kinds of everyday "situations" don't seem to be their problem.



This is how our current society works and it is easy to get used to living this way, but this way of living is not in harmony with our Aikido practice. The “rules” in the dojo teach us how to live a better way. To us in a dojo, taking care of it is just ordinary.

Maybe some people don’t mind if we don’t shower or wash our face. Maybe our co-workers don’t care if our hair isn’t combed. Maybe our lack of cleanliness is off-putting to our friends and co-workers when they see us like this. Perhaps, we allow ourselves to be unkempt because we do not feel good about ourselves. We keep ourselves presentable not only to ourselves but to others as well as a form of personal pride.

The appearance of our dojo is our “face” to others and we take care of ourselves because it is part of us. It is not a duty nor is it not an obligation; cleaning up and taking pride in our appearance is part of our health as a martial artist. Keeping our dojo up is one more daily act that represents us and represents our standards. Our appearance gives others an insight to quality of not only our training but our lives as well.

In the old days, some dojos used to put out a sign with the pictographs of a sickle or “kama,” a bowl to symbolize “wa” and the Japanese character *nu* (ぬ). Together the three pictographs

mean *kama wa nu* or “I don’t care.” “I don’t care” was a warning to people coming to the dojo. The warning is supposed to mean that “I don’t care because the practice here is strong, hard and strict.” We do not care because we train to deal with it. Writer Emily Dickinson once said, “If you take care of the small things, the big things take care of themselves.”



practiced the same way.

In class the practice must always be perfect, but not perfect in the sense of perfection, perfect in the sense of striving toward. While training, one should try and adjust to the practice; don’t be too soft or too hard because for each partner we practice with, there is a totally different standard, although the requirements are the same. With each partner on the mat, each one has a totally different form and a unique standard. It is part of our training to discover who we are practicing with in each case and how we can give them the best practice. In the end in cleaning is the same as Aikido practice. They both should be ap-

Whether we are cleaning or practicing with our partner, we should always be thinking about others - not thinking about ourselves. Do not practice without thinking about others. Don’t be like an insensitive and thoughtless machine, but practice like a true human being. Take care of the small details, like taking care of the dojo and everything else will fix itself. In training and in life, we take care of ourselves by taking care of others. •

Leading the Aikido *taiso* or “warm-up” in the beginning of an Aikido class is just as important as teaching the Aikido techniques in class. When we teach an Aikido class, we try to teach so the students can learn to do Aikido skillfully and correctly. This means that we need to know which techniques to teach, be able to demonstrate the techniques clearly and consistently, and teach these techniques in an appropriate sequence.

Likewise, when we lead the class in the warm-up exercises, we should try to take the same care as when we teach the class. We should lead the warm-up with the appropriate exercises, demonstrate the exercises clearly and correctly, and perform them in the appropriate sequence. Although it is just a “warm-up,” why is this important?

In our dojo, the Aikido warm-up for an hour-long class should not be more than eight to ten minutes in duration. It is not a long warm-up. Because this warm-up is so short, it is not enough to get the body fully warmed up. Furuya Sensei used to say that the student should already be warmed up before the warm-up starts! He would often admonish us for finally getting our bodies warmed up when the class was halfway over. So why even bother to warm-up as a group in the first place? Why not just jump right into the meat and potatoes of the technique?

The warm-up is considered a transition space between the outside world and training. When the warm-up is led correctly, it should put the students into the correct mindset for training and set up their bodies to move in a manner appropriate for the Aikido technique. The warm-up isn't just pure physical stretching randomly done haphazardly and carelessly. It should quiet our minds and prepare them to receive instruction. The last thing we need in our brains as we prepare it to practice a martial art as sophisticated as Aikido is, “Uh, what's going on here?”

Although all Aikido warm-ups have many of the same exercises, the content and sequence vary from school to school. However, each school's warm-up sequence has a basic standard that should be followed. Why is this so important? The reason why it's so important is that the warm-up demands the same kind of standard as teaching.

Although the chief instructor may lead the warm-up, many times an assistant instructor will lead the exercises. Occasionally a senior student may be chosen to lead the warm-up. The is to see the level of their training. The way a student leads the warm-up can reveal important aspects of their level of training.

In my own case, if I were observing a student leading the class warm-up, the main thing I'd look for is how closely they follow what is already practiced in the dojo. Learning the warm-up is just like learning the technique; we watch and copy, and hopefully the student demonstrating the movements is doing them correctly, in the right order and with the proper mental focus.

Like a style guide for a publishing company, the exercises should follow a house standard. This makes the instruction in a dojo consistent. When the instruction is consistent, it is easy to see if something is out of place. As an instructor or a teacher, this consistency is very important to the student's progress.

When the warm-up is consistent, an observant student can begin to discern different aspects and details of the warm-up exercises such as the sequence of the different movements and stretches, the pace of the warm-up, and applying the correct energy and focus to the exercises' movements. It is the same way they begin to see and understand the Aikido technique.



Warming-up



by **Ken Watanabe**
Technical Director

As stated before, a good litmus test for an instructor in training is how well they lead the warm-up exercises and how closely they stick to the standard of the dojo. Later, as the student gets experience, the warm-up movements can become smoother and more focused; the warm-up pace is energetic but not hurried, the sequence of the exercises flows into the next exercise naturally and appropriately, but the important thing is consistency. This mindset is a very important quality for any aspiring instructor to possess. Without this consistency, the art could change the tiniest bit with each generation until it becomes something completely different.

This inconsistency is already happening in Aikido. One teacher unintentionally changes a little movement, and a student observing, changes it a tiny little bit more until that movement has lost its original purpose and meaning. The original teaching is now lost. This is the last thing we want to happen to Aikido; for it to forget itself.

The warm-up might seem like a formality; a speed bump to actually learning the technique, but the warm-up, and leading it correctly, is actually a very important component of the class.

The same kind of care we give to the warm-up is the same kind of care we give to our own training and how we teach the class. The Aikido class and the Aikido instruction both begin with the warm-up in more ways than we realize. •



I must confess that my office is always a mess – it’s a small narrow space on the 2nd floor filled with papers, books and all kinds of artifacts laying around. Every time I need something, it is always a frustrating search. Sometimes, I find things I needed a week ago but not anything I need at the moment, but probably I will see some things I will need in the near future.

Whenever I start a new project however, there is always, before I do anything, a clean-up and straightening-up process. It is always nice to start off in a clean and ordered environment. Have you ever noticed this?

There is a tiny cafe I like to go to. It is not very chic, famous or ritzy in any way and quite humble by most people’s standards. Sometimes, I wonder why it is always so comfortable for me and then I noticed that everything in the restaurant is so very clean. Sometimes, when I go to a restaurant, and the salt and pepper shakers are greasy or the top of the table is very sticky from never being cleaned – although not a matter for comment or commotion, it is always a little unsettling and uncomfortable. When I come to this one cafe, I never feel like I have to wipe the table down or wipe the fork and spoon real hard or examine the coffee cup for lip-prints before I take a sip.

Whenever I go to the supermarket, the pharmacy or the dentist office, the first thing that catches my eye is how clean and nicely placed everything is. If the restaurant, or any space for that matter, is dirty, unkempt or messy, it is always uncomfortable and hard to relax. I also would worry if I went to my doctor’s office and did not find it absolute immaculate and in perfect order. Even the place where I take my car for maintenance is always very clean – and somehow this gives me confidence and make me feel comfortable.

The dojo is the same way. Some students might misunderstand that cleaning up the dojo is only grunt work or menial house-keeping. Some might even think that it is some sort of feudalis-

tic servitude. No – that is not it at all. Part of traditional discipline and practice is to take care of and clean everything we use. However, when the dojo is clean and orderly when we leave, isn’t it nice to come back the next day and find everything in order and very clean? Although we may not notice it in our busy lives, the clean and ordered atmosphere of the dojo is always relaxing and comfortable – for the mind. A neat and freshly watered garden is also very spiritually calming and centering.

Finding Order



by Rev. Kensho Furuya

Much of this preparation is done for the sake of practice and to direct one’s mental focus. If one day we came to the dojo and it was all in disarray and unclean, I think we would find it disturbing, and in the back of our minds we would be thinking, “What’s wrong?”

As much as it is with the dojo and with every space in our lives, so it is with our relationships and everything we do and think, too.

We often speak of “freedom” but we don’t appreciate what this involves. More than anything - cleanliness and order – “order” is what many think is the opposite of “free” but this is not necessarily so. Freedom only comes to us when the mind becomes quiet and centered and focused with purpose and forgotten within itself.

In some respects, I think this is a little of what O’Sensei means by *misogi*. We purify our thoughts and actions through Aikido practice and the clean and ordered state it creates within us brings us to true freedom.

We must always seek out the true meaning of our practice and not interpret it so conveniently and easily thru untrained eyes which can only see and judge everything in terms of politics, money, and power. •

Editor’s note: *Furuya Sensei published this in a slightly different form to his Daily Message blog on February 4, 2005.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

Dojo Coronavirus update:

Currently, the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles has lifted the face mask mandate for all persons vaccinated or not. Anyone who still wants to wear a face covering in class is welcome to do so. There is also no vaccination requirement to attend classes.

IMPORTANT DATES

May 14th: Little Tokyo Sparkle volunteering

May 28th: Intensive Seminar

June 1st: New class schedule begins

June 25th: Intensive Seminar

July 4th: Dojo closed for 4th of July

July 30th: Intensive Seminar

October 10-20: Spain trip

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.

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays

10:15-11:15 AM Regular Class
11:30 AM-12:30 PM Regular Class

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class
10:15-11:15 AM Regular Class
11:30 AM-12:30 PM Regular Class

Mondays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular Class

Tuesdays

No Class

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular Class

Thursdays

No Class

Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular Class

NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Morning, Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.

**Last Saturday of the month is Intensive Seminar by Invitation only.*

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM Regular Class

Wednesdays

7:45-8:45 Regular Class

Saturdays

7:45-8:45 AM Regular class



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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 his legitimate successors, Nidai Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present Doshu, Moriteru Ueshiba and Hombu Dojo-Cho, Mitsuteru Ueshiba.

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Aikido La Gomera Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido
Salamanca Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido Valladolid Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



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We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

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