



The Aiki Dojo

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Ichī-yo ochite tenka no aki wo shiru

With the fall of one leaf, we know that autumn has come to the world.
Autumn is a time of new beginnings and sometimes just a single sign can foretell one's fate.

New Beginnings



The Need for Balance

by David Ito Aikido Chief Instructor

Recently, I was reading an interesting article titled “Are Smartphones Holding Back Tennis’s Next Generation?” written by Danielle Rossingh. In this article, the author points out that Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic are the last generation of tennis greats to grow up without smartphones and posits that smartphone usage could be to blame for the fact that none of the current Top 10 ATP men’s players younger than 24 years old has ever won a grand slam compared to the “Big Three” at the same age. I was intrigued by this tweet in the article by, performance physiologist and coach, Dr. Mark Kovacs, “Rafa, Roger, Novak were the last generation to grow up without cell phones as kids. Is this a possible reason why the new generation who are stronger, bigger, faster and younger still cannot find ways to beat them on a consistent basis?”

The fear that disruptive technologies like books, TV, radio or the Internet could be harmful to us is as old as time itself. Learned people have always cautioned against the use of that period’s technology and how its use would impact the youth of that time because they weren’t up to par with the people of the past.

Today is no different and as technology changes quickly and so frequently that sometimes we as humans have trouble keeping up and sometimes we suffer the consequences. There are numerous studies that demonstrate that too much smartphone use can cause us to have problems focusing and concentrating. This shortened attention span could be due to the impact that smartphone use has on the neurotransmitters in our brains which inhibit or energize our brain signals. There are also many studies which indicate that prolonged smartphone use can give a

person a sort of tunnel vision as their peripheral vision becomes impacted which in a sense gives them a narrower field of vision. Another disappointing unintended consequence of too much screen time or smartphone use is that it can harm us physically because using them is typically done sedentarily. Inactivity can contribute to lower or less developed motor skills, poor cardiovascular fitness and increases in incidences of diseases like obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, musculoskeletal symptoms and even premature death.

So why then, with all the possibly numerous negative consequences, would anyone ever want to use a smartphone? Basically, a smartphone is a tool which provides us with convenience, information, and helps us with connectedness. The reason to use a smartphone possibly lies in the definition of technology itself. Technology is defined as, “The methods, systems, and devices which are the result of scientific knowledge being used for practical purposes.” Technology is then a tool and like all good tools it’s supposed to improve our lives, create convenience and ease and speed up the processes of our lives.

The problem with all technology is when the user becomes the used. Being used instead of being the user means that we are not present, grounded, or balanced, or in other words we are not in our bodies. We become used by our tool when we become mindless to our actions and motivations. This mindlessness is where we see the lack of attention span, focus and concentration problems, or other physical effects like changes in vision, coordination or other health problems.



Congratulations, Jorge!

This year we have said goodbye to our friend, Steven Shaw and his passing reminds us of the tenuousness of life. On a different note, we are saddened that Jorge Martin will be moving and leaving our organization. Jorge has grown up literally before our eyes and now he is moving to another part of Spain for work and will likely not return to Salamanca. It is sad, but leaving is a part of life and if Steve's passing has taught us anything, it is that every moment is precious. The day Furuya Sensei passed away, he put this scroll up in our *tokonoma*. It is translated to mean:

Be Humble, Be Strong, Always Keep Going

These words, I hope, serve as a reminder for Jorge and hopefully inspire him to find his greatest heights. I am reluctant to say "goodbye" and my feeling is that we will see Jorge again. If his past gives us any clue he is destined for greatness and will make all of us proud. I wish Jorge all the best. –David Ito

"When we suffer bad times we always think that the world is somehow against us. Actually, we can look at it in another way. The bad times we suffer are actually blessings in disguise. Only the purest gold is tested in the hottest fire, lesser metals cannot take the heat. Dogen Zenji said, 'The greater the aspiration, the greater the enlightenment.' Aspiration is always tested and polished by hardship."

–Rev. Kensho Furuya



守愚不移志 黙黙養其神



When we are engaged mentally and physically then we are usually mindful and are more aware, healthier and ultimately happier. An interesting side note is that Sensei once told me that we should train ourselves to focus our concentration on one thing for at least 60 seconds without any distraction and that if we could do that then we could supposedly achieve anything in our lives. He also said that he knew a few famous Aikido instructors who could focus their minds without distraction for something like four minutes.

The good news is that there is an antidote and most of these mental and physical changes are reversible or rather our attention and focus can improve and our bodies can become healthier. The antidote to the negative effects of our smartphones is Aikido training.

Aikido is one of the few things today which can only be done experientially and must be done mindfully. Training in Aikido gets us out of our heads or out of the virtual world and brings us

back into our bodies. There are no apps, computer programs or internet searches which can make good at Aikido. Aikido helps us to "be" in our bodies and thus in turn we learn to be mindful. Nothing is more sobering than a person coming at us and trying to strike us on the head.

Aikido teaches us about being in balance. Being balanced means being mindful of ourselves and our actions. Thus the mindfulness of Aikido training helps us to create a balance between our technologically advanced cerebral lives which can easily be mindless and brings us back to being in our bodies and ultimately being mindful.

For the most part, there is no way to be completely unplugged in this 21st century where everything is either smartphone or internet driven. However, understanding how society works and what is necessary to be part of that society, we need to do something which ensures that we maintain a balance in our lives so the user does not become used. •



The Next Journey

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

With sadness and happiness, our dojo sees off one of its brightest stars. Jorge Gonzalez Martin leaves our dojo and our city and moves on to the next phase of his life.

There is an old Zen saying which is apropos, "The peach grows, matures on its own power, when it ripens, everyone will come to admire its beauty and taste."

When Jorge was 12 years old, his mother brought him into our dojo to join our Children's class. Now 13 years later, Jorge has grown up, graduated from college and is leaving to start a new chapter in his life.

As Jorge begins a new stage of his life, it is kind of a bittersweet sensation. Jorge has always been the quintessential "good" student that every teacher hopes for. Everyone who trained or interacted with Jorge has enjoyed his friendship, helpfulness, professionalism and enthusiasm.

For a teacher, there is nothing more rewarding than seeing a student grow and it is a pleasure to see how the students grow and start to live their lives their own way.

We have seen Jorge begin as a little kid and little by little transform from a child taking the Children's class into an adult who is teaching the class.

When Jorge first started I was impressed more with his perseverance and desire to learn than how quickly he progressed in

his skill and ability. What made Jorge special, as anyone who teaches knows, is that he brought these two qualities, which are essential in life to learning anything. They aren't teachable per se but part of something which one learns in Aikido.

As the years passed, Jorge started helping me with the children's classes. Furuya Sensei always said that one's journey in teaching begins with teaching children's class. That is because teaching Aikido to children is very complicated and requires a lot of patience and requires a lot of resources

to keep the children's attention let alone "teach" this art to children. Jorge's support and dedication as an assistant was very important and he was very influential on shaping the children's program that we have today.

As Jorge got older, he accompanied me to Los Angeles and to Japan and he always conducted himself professionally and eloquently which impressed me and everyone else and it is here that I began to see his evolution from a child into an adult.

It would be easy to think that Jorge's success as a human being was somehow my doing or came as a result of the 13 years of training in Aikido and Iaido. It would also be easy to think selfishly and want him to stay in our dojo and in Salamanca so that we can continue to benefit from his presence. However, that wouldn't be fair nor would it be healthy for our dojo.



Now after 13 years, it is time for Jorge to start down his own path. Jorge's own path won't be easy and some days it will even feel like the world is against him, but that is what training in Aikido and the dojo was all about. Jorge will get to fall down on his own – as he has always done in the past and continue onwards towards his destiny. Jorge's next step is a result of his hard work and so his leaving is a success for not only his family, but also for our dojo, our instructors, and, ultimately, Aikido as well.

A sad part of the life of the teacher is allowing students to grow and evolve only to see them leave in order to grow further. Sen-sei once wrote, "An average student admires their teacher, a

"An average student admires their teacher, a good student follows their teacher, a great student will surpass them."

– Rev. Kensho Furuya

good student follows their teacher, a great student will surpass them."

Jorge has trained assiduously and matured into a fine young man and although he leaves the dojo to continue his life, and pursue his dreams, he still carries in him a part of all of us, the dojo and the way of Aikido. Leaving is part of the natural flow of life and now we all get to see how high Jorge can truly go and ultimately how wonderful he can be.

Jorge - Congratulations, best of luck and see you soon! Please keep up your practice!•

How to Practice

by Ken Watanabe *Aikido Chief Instructor*

In Aikido we practice many different techniques. There are some techniques that seem to have a clear self defense purpose while other techniques don't seem useful at all. Then, there are some techniques we like and seem easy for us, while other techniques give us trouble.

My own teacher, Furuya Sensei, once told us that as a student, he hated practicing *ushiro-waza* or techniques defending against attacks from behind. Yet, because the skills learned from practicing *ushiro-waza* are a very important part of Aikido training, he practiced *ushiro-waza* until it became one of his best techniques.

In Aikido the number of techniques can number into the thousands. When we hear this, we might feel that getting good at, much less mastering, Aikido seems completely impossible. "Who can remember all of these techniques?"

When we begin practicing Aikido it's easy to see Aikido as many separate techniques. It can be quite overwhelming.

O'Sensei is famous for saying that when defending against a single opponent, see them as multiple opponents, when fighting a thousand opponents, see them as one. As when dealing with multiple opponents, it doesn't help us to see each technique as a separate opponent; in Aikido we treat them as one. In practice, when we are confronted by the hundreds of Aikido techniques, we should try to find what ties all of the techniques together rather than treat them all individually. It's said the purpose of martial arts technique is to bring order to chaos. In your Aikido practice, how do you organize the many hundreds of techniques in order to deal with them effectively?

All Aikido techniques share several underlying principles; principles that we practice mastering, yet each technique has its own special teaching that we are trying to understand. At first this is difficult to see as we are still trying to think of each technique as its own entity, but as we practice and gain experience, we begin to see how similar all the techniques are to each other.

It's easy to pick and choose what we like. We have the technique we like and the techniques we don't like. However, if we just practiced what we like, we would end up neglecting an important part of our training.



Even myself, there were several techniques I hated practicing simply because it was difficult to catch onto them. Sometimes I couldn't make the technique work or I would always find myself using too much muscle to throw down my partner. Other times I wondered, "Why do we practice this technique so much? This situation will never happen in real life!" Yet, after decades, I discovered that my teacher was right. Many techniques that I thought were "extra" or pointless warm-up techniques are actually very important to master, and mastering them imparts very important teachings. Finally, I realized why we do these basics every day. These techniques, as abstract and seemingly random as they may seem, were very important to my training and imparted important

pieces to this puzzle I was trying to assemble called "Aikido".



The funny (and frustrating) thing, was that these answers were in front of me all the time. Many of these teachings revealed themselves to me seemingly on their own. They seem to know when I was ready. No amount of instruction or watching videos did it for me. It was up to me to find them through my own practice.

When we begin to catch onto the technique, we stop seeing all of these techniques as separate and begin to see the similarities that tie them all together. In a way, all the techniques tell the same story but in a different way. Once we begin to understand this, then learning new techniques won't seem so daunting to us.

Aikido is designed so that when we start getting good at doing one technique, our other techniques also start getting better. Conversely, if you have a bad habit, or keep repeating the same mistake, that mistake affects your entire practice. This is very important to understand this and if it's not clear at

first, that's okay, too. Practice isn't just about doing the technique correctly. That is just the bare minimum. We also practice how to practice in a way that finally reveals this thing we do called Aikido. •

The Reality of Teaching

by Rev. Kensho Furuya



Editor's note: *Furuya Sensei would generously donate his time to answer inquiries about Japanese culture, Aikido, budo, etc. from people all over the world. We sometimes publish some of his correspondence in the hope that it assists others who find themselves wrestling with the same subjects.*

Question: For any teacher there is no talent in teaching a talented student (anybody could do that). The real talent is teaching the student who can't do anything.

Sensei's Reply: In my own experience, I feel this is not right or fair to say. It takes equal amounts of talent and skill to teach a so-called "talented student" as it does to teach someone "who can't do anything."

We rely on the wisdom of the form and spirit of the practice, but we do need very special care to teach those so-called talented students. I have often seen talent in a student destroyed by incorrect guidance by an instructor. And I have often seen talented students destroy themselves by becoming too self-confident or arrogant.

In my own dojo, I try and give all students the same special care. We work just as hard on beginning students with no knowledge or so-called talent at all - often these students are "easier" to teach because they are more receptive to the instruction. Many times, their success is only a case of time and devoted practice on their part. Of course, I can discuss this for days and days on how to teach and guide students here.

Talented students may expect "more" treatment, but they are treated the same as everyone else whether they like it or not. Everyone starts at the beginning and there is no exception to this rule.

The thing to remember is that each student has their own timing. Some students may pick up quickly at the beginning and appear talented but often slow down and get lazy. These people are often subject to whimsy and their interest jumps here and there too quickly. Students who come in with no special talents might appear slow at first, but if they stick to it, they often speed up once they begin to catch on and end up gaining a considerable amount of momentum. How can we fairly judge if a student has talent or not - only the student can know for themselves by

asking themselves how much they are willing to commit themselves to their training and learning.

The most important quality that I look for in a student is "aspiration." The greater the aspiration to learn, the greater the chances they will do well in training. It makes no difference if the students are young or old, strong or weak, skilled or unskilled, or whatever.

Finally, I must say that "talent" is a very bad word to use in any case in teaching. It is much too biased a term and destroys the proper outlook of the teacher in doing their job and it can handicap a student's potential.

The reality of this world is that some people appear stronger than others and some appear more skilled than others. A student may seem strong because they are young, and another student may appear weak because they are much older. Some students appear slow because they have never done anything like Aikido before while some students seem to catch on quickly or seem to have a knack for the technique or some amount of athleticism. However, in our dojo, I encourage people not to judge other people by such superficial standards.

At dinner after every practice, I discuss the students with my assistant instructors. Most students do not even realize how much time we spend thinking about them and thinking about how to teach them. Some students need to be pushed, some don't. Some students need a lot of attention, some need to be ignored. The learning problems of most students have nothing to do with Aikido itself, but more so with their attitude or state of mind and physical condition which they bring into the dojo. This is what makes teaching Aikido very tough. A teacher may see the symptoms of a problem on the mat in practice but must always realize that the source of the problem itself may exist outside of the dojo and outside of practice. Because of this, one needs to think very deeply about how to teach each student properly. Aikido can touch each student's life, so teaching is a great responsibility. If a teacher merely divides students by talent, then they cannot teach each student properly. This is not a theory; this is the reality of teaching. •

Editor's note: *Furuya Sensei published this in a slightly different form to his Daily Message blog on August 26, 2003.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

September 2 (Monday) Dojo Closed: Labor Day	October 26 (Saturday) Intensive seminar
September 6-8 Doshu seminar in San Mateo	October 27 (Sunday) Children's class Halloween party
September 28 (Saturday) Intensive seminar	November 27-28 Dojo Closed: Thanksgiving
	November 30 (Saturday) Intensive seminar

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, and national or ethnic origin 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 6:30-8:00 AM* 9:30-10:30 AM 10:45-11:45 AM	Intensive Advanced Class Regular Class	Wednesdays 6:30-7:30 AM 5:15-6:15 PM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Fundamentals Regular Class
Sundays 9:00-10:00 AM 10:15-11:15 AM 11:30 AM-12:30 PM 12:45-1:45 PM	Children's Class Regular Class Fundamentals Open Practice	Thursdays 6:30-7:30 PM 7:45-8:45 PM	Regular Class Open Practice
Mondays 6:30-7:30 AM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Regular Class	Fridays 6:30-7:30 AM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Fundamentals
Tuesdays 6:30-7:30 PM	Advanced 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	Sundays 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, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba and Hombu Dojo-Cho Mitsuteru Ueshiba.

Affiliated Dojos of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles



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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