



# The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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Learn how to watch with intensity for every detail in Aikido.



# Back to School!



# THE SKILLED HAWK HIDES ITS TALONS

by David Ito Aikido Chief Instructor

What does a martial artist look like? To some, the stereotypical young strapping male character from a martial arts movie that can break a board with his face comes to mind. This might be the cinematic representation of what a martial artist “looks” like, but in reality, a real warrior of budo is nothing like this.

A true warrior of budo usually looks like any normal person but the difference is in their demeanor. To a true warrior of budo it is not what one has on the outside which counts. What is more important than muscle, speed, strength or youth is what one has in their heart. Anyone who is strong can break a brick with their bare hands, but only a person with true inner strength can accomplish a goal long past when their body has given out.

The problem is that we can never judge who the person is with true grit and indomitable character until that person is put up against a wall. I have seen many “strong” and able-bodied people fold like paper at the first hint of adversity.

Last month, many members of the dojo endured over 100-degree heat to donate their time to help cook and sell teriyaki beef and chicken

at Zenshuji’s Obon carnival. Everyone loves to eat festival food, but until we peek behind the scenes, we never know how much goes into making just one meal. The preparation can be grueling, and it is often times thankless. This gives the work an almost spiritual quality because nobody wants to be there, but those who do find themselves there can only be successful if they approach it like Aikido training. Because the work is done spiritually, the work can be approached from a whole different perspective.

Most of the students have little to no cooking experience. Even if they do, nobody is ready to endure the fast pace, extremely hot conditions, and having to learn on the go. This pace requires the students to rely on the traditional style of learning in the dojo called *mitori keiko* or to learn by watching. The work has to be done mindfully because there is no room for mistakes when sitting in front of a hot grill with people waiting for you to finish your step so that they can complete theirs. This requires one to have *kikubari* or attentiveness so that one can learn quickly and efficiently, while also being mindful of what is happening all around them. When we are mindful of others this almost automat-

ically creates this sense of concern for them and this is also where the people in the trenches become a team. People on a team, part of a family or in this case, members of the same dojo create a cycle of care for one another where we have to *amae* or “depend” on others’ kindness but at the same time have *kizukai* or “concern” for others’ well being. In short, we think of others while others think of us as we all work diligently toward our mutual goal.

If Japanese culture could be summed up, I would have to say that the crux of the culture is based upon being mindful of others. We see this as our group “cares” for one another as we all work toward a common goal, but also in the care of others around us, the customers buying the food, and the temple which will receive the benefit. Thinking of others is at the heart of Japanese culture, but it also can be the backbone of the way of budo.

This idea of being mindful of others is not something that is foreign to Aikido students as they practice every day in the dojo where they take ukemi for others, clean the dojo together and help each other with the daily chores. To train in Aikido is to become a little more selfless every day and the true victory is to become mindful of others without hesitation or prompting. When we understand this, we realize that “mastery” in Aikido is not about the subjugation of others but rather the pursuit of victory over one’s smaller self or selfish self.

In our Aikido training, we learn how to create harmony with our partners’ advances and as we do this at the same time come into balance as human beings. Budo might be an individual pursuit, but at its core it is a team effort. A team can only be successful if they have a high regard for others and the people they find themselves with. When we think of others, we can create a balance or harmony and thus we learn the concept of *ai* (合) or “to join” but in an Aikido sense it means “harmony.” Harmony can only be achieved when two or more things come into a mutually collaborative existence. Also, a team can also only be truly successful when it has the right *ki* or “energy” (氣). The right energy, in this sense, is something called *ikioi* (勢) or “spirited energy” which enables us to have the power to get the job done. The last thing which makes the team achieve its goal is that they all need to be doing it as a “Way” or *do* (道) so that “how” we do it matters just as much as achieving it or in this case going in the same direction to achieve the same goal.

Working outside of the dojo gives us a chance to see if we really have attained the level that we have been striving for in our daily training.

Aikido training teaches us to meet life’s difficulties with a sense of stillness or repose which makes us mindful of others. When we have a grasp on this calmness then we take this ability and test it. The easiest way to see if one has achieved this level is to demonstrate it innocuously in adverse circumstances in which one would normally succumb to anger, aggressiveness, confrontation, stress or the heat. The extent to which we are trained will come out when we find ourselves outside of our comfort zone, but that’s the test. Furuya Sensei once said, “the only proof that we have mastered Aikido or, at least, have begun to understand its principles, is the degree to which we have incorporated it into our lives.” This type of volunteer work helps us to see where we are in respect to our training.

Thus, we can see that a true warrior isn’t always the person who looks like the warriors we see on TV or in film. Those people we watch are always trying to imitate true warriors as they overcome adversity. However, being a true warrior means being able to overcome one’s self so that one can overcome the many adversities of life. Nowhere does it say that it must be done with six-pack abs or bulging muscles.

I am very proud of everyone who came to volunteer at Zenshuji’s Obon. Despite doing something as seemingly perfunctory as cooking or selling teriyaki and enduring the conditions, the pace, and the searing temperatures, the students exemplified what it means to be true martial artists. The dojo received quite a number of compliments. People were amazed at how quietly all the students worked and how selfless they were as they seamlessly jumped in where needed without being asked. Someone complimented me on how quiet, clean and orderly our booth was compared to others which is one of the highest compliments a teacher can receive.

What does a real warrior look like? They are humble, diligent, calm and well balanced, but most of all they can be seen acting for the benefit of others which is why they are commonly overlooked. The most powerful things in life are often mistaken for normal everyday things, but that is one of the secrets of budo—the skilled hawk hides its talons (*no aru taka wa tsume wo kakusu*). •





# Training with Sole

by **Ken Watanabe** Iaido Chief Instructor

To the uninitiated general public, men's dress shoes all look the same, yet they have a very wide price range. On one hand, dress shoes can be found for less than \$100.00, but on the other end of the spectrum a similar-looking shoe can cost over \$600.00!

To someone unfamiliar with shoes, there is very little difference between the shoes costing \$60.00 and the shoes costing \$600.00. To someone unfamiliar with Aikido techniques and proper training, there is the same lack of differentiation as well.

It's said that the difference between good dress shoes and the cheaper version isn't how they look when they are new, but how they look as they age. In Aikido practice, we might start off strong and practice hard, but after ten or twenty years of training, what do we have?

In Aikido, there is quality training, and then there is the cheaper version. Do we opt for the shortcut and think, "this is just as good!" or do we practice until we can do the technique correctly?

We might impatiently think, "I need this technique to work now!" and add some trick to make the technique more effective, but after a few years what happens? The technique stops working, or we might develop an injury from not training properly. Like a cheap pair of shoes, eventually everything just wears out and quickly falls apart.

Like opting for a cheaper pair of shoes, it's easy to want a quick fix, but this is why regular and consistent practicing is so important. Consistent and regular practice enables us to imbue the correctness of the movement into our bodies and as the technique develops outside of us, it also grows within us as well. No one wants to train for years only to discover that their Aikido stops working.

Although all dress shoes might look alike, to a knowledgeable enthusiast, a more expensive pair with the soles sewn on is far more desirable to the cost-cutting pair with the fake leather and the glued soles. How does the expert know? With the expert's knowledge and experience, they can literally "see" the difference in quality which is born out of the maker's knowledge and experience. A person of quality can recognize another person of quality.



## 2018 Toyota Raffle Tickets Are Now Available!

For every raffle ticket sold by the dojo, we will receive a \$4.00 donation. Email Gary Illiano at [illiano.gary@gmail.com](mailto:illiano.gary@gmail.com) or email the dojo if you want to purchase a ticket or if you want to sell them for us.

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Drawing of the winning ticket will be held on Monday, November 5, 2018 at Baldoria Restaurant in Little Tokyo, 243 S San Pedro Street, Los Angeles at 7 p.m. Winner need not be present.

Actual vehicle may differ from photo.

TOYOTA Let's Go Places

In our own training, it's important to hone our eyes and senses to recognize quality practice. As teachers, we ask ourselves how does this affect our students' training and how will this affect them years from now? Even as we advance in our practice, it is still easy to lose the correct path of training, so practicing correctly becomes even more important.

One of the most difficult aspects of training is doing away with our ego. The ego wants things fast and cheap. Good shoes like good practice will last a lifetime. When you think of your training, ask yourself if you want it to be good for a season or, like a good pair of shoes, something which you'll want to keep, cherish and build upon for a long, long time. Please continue to train hard. •



# To Know the Movements is not Enough

by **Santiago Garcia Almaraz** Aikido 5th Dan  
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

Today, information is readily available. With speed, we often only have time to “know” the movements with our minds. The art of Aikido is very different than what we think we know intellectually because we need to understand Aikido with our bodies.

This physical knowledge of understanding Aikido with our bodies is made up of solid foundational movements called *kihon-waza* (基本技). *Kihon-waza* are things like *irimi* or “entering,” *tenkan* or “turning” or *tai-sabaki* or “body movements.”

In Aikido, to build a technique it is necessary to know and understand the *kihon-waza* because they are the like a foundation of a house. A house must be built upon a solid tangible foundation and not just on intellectual concepts.

When we think of the actual physical movements of *irimi* or *tenkan*, it is easy to misunderstand what entering is or what turning might truly be.

Understanding *irimi* enables a person to understand timing and spacing. This happens because to move into the space of the attack enables us to “catch” the timing of our opponent and this can only happen when we maintain the proper spacing.

*Tenkan* teaches us to how to create harmony as we use *tenkan* to blend with our partners advances.

*Irimi* and *tenkan* can be thought of as the yin and yang of Aikido movement, but to understand this, one can only experience it.

*Tai-sabaki* is then the matrix which houses yin and yang. When we think of *tai-sabaki*, it is easy to think that it is just as a defensive move to dodge an attack. *Tai-sabaki* is how the movement is efficiently and precisely carried out. It enables the timing to be precise so that the movement is not carried out too soon or too late but just at the right moment to capitalize on the opponent’s energy, spacing and timing and direct it or change it to our advantage.

Thus, studying the movements with our bodies in daily practice help us to inculcate Aikido into our bodies so that we learn how to move with balance. If we are not able to move with balance, then it will be difficult to interact with our uke in a balanced and appropriate way. Focusing on *tai-sabaki* enables one to move with *kihon-waza* like *irimi* or *tenkan* so that we may be well positioned to execute the techniques resulting in a mutually beneficial outcome with our partner.

When we build a house, we can’t just understand that the house has a foundation from a plan. The most important thing is to make sure that the house is built on a solid foundation. What we have to “know” can only be understood within our bodies. This solid foundation is what makes everything possible. Building a house is no different than studying an Aikido technique—“knowing” Aikido is not enough. Aikido must be understood with the body and that can only be done with constant practice. •



# Catch Every Detail

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

In practicing the techniques, I notice that most students get a “general” overview of a technique but often miss the very fine points. When we are observing the teacher demonstrating the techniques in class, I think it is extremely important to catch every detail however fine or small.

We should watch very carefully and try not to miss anything and immediately burn it into our minds. Without distraction or pause, we should get up right away and try to duplicate what we’ve seen as we work with our partner.

It is extremely important in good practice not to be distracted or have our attention diverted. Sometimes I see students stand up, walk around a bit and chit-chat briefly or say something to their partner before they actually begin to practice the technique. I notice that these students often miss the important points or just go on doing what they think they saw or what they remember from before.

It is like witnessing a crime. In a bank robbery, for example, witnesses have to be immediately isolated and must write down everything they saw as soon as possible. If too much time lapses or if they talk too much or talk to other people, their memory will be distorted or faulty. Our memories are never as good as we would like to think! Police know this very well in dealing with witnesses.

In practice, as soon as the teacher finishes demonstrating the technique, we should get up right away without talking, grab a partner and begin to duplicate what we saw as soon as possible. What we will find is that once we try this once or twice, we will begin to remember what we saw much better and much more clearly.

I always hate it when I see students get up, walk around, talk, and when they finally get down to practice, they are doing the wrong technique.

If we cannot even remember what we are supposed to be doing at the moment, how can we remember the fine points or what was even said!

I have one friend who I find very hard to say anything to. It is always better just to let him talk and talk, going on and on. No matter what we say or how important it is, he is always occupied with what he wants to say and doesn’t care about what anyone else has to say. If we ask him something, he can never answer us directly because he is never paying attention to what we are saying, only what he is thinking himself. I sometimes see students like this. They are so pre-occupied with their own thoughts that can’t see or hear or be aware of anything else. When they practice, I can easily see that they haven’t listened to anything or haven’t paid attention to what was said. I think we all must have had this experience in real life and know how frustrating it is to talk to someone who doesn’t pay attention. I know we can feel like they don’t even care!

Pay attention closely and do not miss anything. In an older day, teachers only taught or said something once—if we weren’t paying attention, we missed it! It taught us to always be alert and on the ball.

This is good training for all students and teachers. When we face our opponent, in one split second, we should be able to see everything and know what to do. A martial artist’s focus and attention are extremely important skills to develop but it is something that is rarely spoken of.

Aikido practice is like having an interview with a Zen master in the olden days. If we weren’t paying attention, we may get hit on the head! Students shouldn’t be scared, but they should still pay attention and most of all, just enjoy training! •

*Editor’s Note* Furuya Sensei posted this article in a slightly different form to his Daily Message on December 7, 2002.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## 行事

### September 3

Special Holiday Practice  
*Joint locks from Traditional to Unorthodox*

### September 29 Intensive Seminar

### October 13-14th

Aikido Kodokai Dojo's 20th Anniversary Salamanca, Spain  
*Details to be announced.*

### October 27 Intensive Seminar

**October 28** Children's class  
Halloween Party

### November 22

Dojo Closed for Thanksgiving

### November 23

Special Black Friday class

## Aikido Training Schedule

### 合気道 時間割

#### Saturdays\*

8:00-9:00 AM Iaido  
9:30-10:30 AM Advanced class  
10:45-11:45 AM Weapons class

#### Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM Iaido  
9:00-10:00 AM Children's class  
10:15-11:15 AM Regular class  
11:30 AM-12:30 PM Fundamentals  
12:45-1:45 PM Open practice

#### Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Morning class  
6:30-7:30 PM Regular class

#### Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Advanced class  
7:45-8:45 PM Weapons class

#### Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Morning class  
5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals class  
6:30-7:30 PM Regular class

#### Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular class  
7:45-8:45 PM Open practice

#### Fridays

6:30-7:30 AM Morning class  
6:30-7:30 PM Fundamentals 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

#### Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

# The Aiki 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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We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.

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**Aikido Center of Los Angeles** | Telephone: (323) 225-1424  
1211 N. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 | E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

羅府合気道学院 古屋道場

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Aikido Salamanca Aikikai  
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Aikido Gomera Aikikai  
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