

AIKIDO

The biggest weakness of our thinking is the overestimation of what is known in relation to what remains to be known.

WHY ARE WEAPONS NECESSARY IN AIKIDO ?

There are two schools of opinion: one considers that the study of weapons is not absolutely necessary, because Aikido has lost the martial character and became a rather philosophical discipline. Adepts of this idea believe that weapons are incompatible with the spirit of Aikido, and that is not necessary to study weapons techniques.

The second school states that Aikido is a martial art that seeks to determine people to understand the philosophy of harmony by practicing Aikido. According to this second school the philosophy of harmony is Aikido itself, and practicing represents the way this philosophy may be known, understood and spreaded.

If we take in consideration the testimony of those that knew Ueshiba, his biographers or the legends, we realise that his whole life was a continuous struggle. In his childhood and his young age he fought fiercely to stay alive, to defeat disease and physical weakness, to train and to overcome his condition.

In the Manchurian military campaign he fought to defeat enemies, and his fighting skills made him famous in his regiment. No doubt he had to kill people and often saw death with his own eyes.

Later, he engaged with his family in the Hokkaido island colonization adventure. Here he was forced to fight with nature and prejudices to build a community of pioneers who may live from agriculture.

Then, animated by the faith of his mentor, Onisaburo Deguci, he ventures in that utopian expedition in Mongolia, where he attempts to create a kingdom of peace on earth. Not only that he failed, but he was close to losing his life. The risks of this expedition were milling absurd, and only by his skills, faith and, of course, luck did he return home alive.

A period followed, before the war, in Tokyo, when he was called to train officers of the Military Academy and Police Academy, and where he had to persuade and command respect of those who looked up the effectiveness of his method.

All his life he was forced to accept the challenges of nature or people. With bare hands or weapons, he was confronted with various martial arts masters and experts who wanted to challenge the superiority of Aikido, and many of them have become his students.

After the war, with the ban of martial arts during the American occupation, he had to withdraw in the countryside to train, and continue to fight for his beliefs.

All this say with certainty that his life was a continuous battle, and it is undeniable that he was a warrior until the last day of his life.

Throughout his existence, there was no one moment of complacency, because, as I said, he had to win and especially to convince. If you think all this is clear that Ueshiba's Aikido was not a dance but an effective martial art and sometimes very tough. In time, after Ueshiba's death, his art's message was changed gradually reaching that today's Aikido ignores the fight, not taking into account the reality that is not subject to the rules of the human ideal.

The exaggeration of the "partnership" idea is emptying Aikido of his meaning and martial content. The unity that Ueshiba proposes is the union and harmonization of opposites, or for that there needs to be opposites.

When the Founder speaks of the non-resistance art he implies the existence of resistance, because the world is made up of opposites, whether we want it or not.

AIKIDO

Without opposition there is no Aikido and the other, Uke, should be the opposition, the resistance. Harmonisation with a false opposition is a false harmony.

If we were to give a different definition of Aikido, we can say that Aikido is a concrete way to achieve unity not by ignoring it but by solving it.

If Uke mimics the attacks and then reacts docile to everything I ask, and finally willingly falls because of my fantasy techniques, then we will both certainly move away from Aikido.

In the second part of his life, with diminishing physical resources, Uyeshiba's Aikido spiritualizes, it becomes fluid and ethereal, and the Founder feels particularly attracted to the spiritual side of art, his messages being deeply philosophical and mystical.

Many of his students, especially those who have been with him in the last part of his life, believed that this is the true Aikido, ignoring the road he went on so far.

ABOUT EFFICIENCY

I have noticed that many students prefer to talk and dream about Aikido, instead of trying to do. They lack patience and look to the instructor to tell them the secret how to become efficient within 24 hours.

Aikido is a martial art that aims to control one or more aggressors, and from this point of view we can discuss of efficiency as the frequency to achieve said purpose, without significant losses.

Attack and defence are elements of the same equation, an equation valid for any martial art and combat method, Japanese or not. These two elements, attack and defence are complementary, as In and Yang.

Because the reality is impossible to reproduce in controlled training conditions, the Dojo we train using diagrams of reality.

The teacher's talent lies in a gradual training, from simple to complex, as the experience and understanding of practitioners increases, taking care to always offer "surprises" his students, because life does the same.

In many dojos they are experiencing fantasy things, we talk more and sweat less, and students are much more interested in the social component of the training rather than the training itself.

Aikido is a martial art with a strong philosophical support. It can be effective or not (like any other martial art), to the extent that, who practice it understands its essence, and is sincerely committed to it.

In the beginning it depends on the instructor, in time it depends on you.

The Founders and elderly masters confessions support this idea:

*“When the enemy makes his appearance
Rushing to hit you
Step outside, avoid it,
Immediately attack and cut”.*

Master Saotome said:

“The founder was always concerned with the study of Budo, the correct understanding of the spirit of Aikido and not its particular forms.

He made no difference between fighting techniques with and without weapons, because he wanted to demonstrate the principles behind the techniques and the method of harmonizing them. Forms and techniques were only means by which one could know the essence of Aikido, and support of this idea was the concern of his entire life“

AIKIDO

Master Gozo Shioda - about training with O Sensei:

"The night training was about sword attacks. The Master put on a white cloth on his head to be easily observed. Three students armed with bokken (wooden sword) had to attack while Ueshiba had a true sword.

"Whenever Shioda raised the sword to strike, he found the tip of Sensei's sword in his sight."

Master Tadashi Abe about how O Sensei tested the level of his students:

"The Founder chose a group of us and we went to the port. There, he sat at a coffee shop in front of a massage parlor.

He order a beer for him and we were sent in the massage parlor to test our level against the sumo wrestlers who owned the parlor.

Of course, the fight was real being allowed any means and weapons such as sticks, knives and bottles. From there I have these scars."

Master Nishio said:

Some instructors claim the sword and staff training is not necessary. They are ridiculous: nothing is further from the truth. O-Sensei said: "Aikido is the expression of sword principles through the body." Therefore, to understand Aikido without understanding first the sword is weird. I think those who claim that there are no weapons techniques in Aikido did not understand the words of the founder.

O Sensei said: "If your hands hold a sword, then Aikido is a sword, and if your hands hold a staff, then Aikido is a staff."

To understand the nature of the sword and of the Aikido spirit, we must train realistically, as if to knock off your opponent when contact is made, stopping our weapon without destroying the opponent, using the training as an exercise of reflection and introspection.

ABOUT TECHNIQUE

The basic techniques described in this book are presented through my personal experience and understanding. It is possible that others masters to have different points of view from the ones presented in this book. It is their right and I respect it.

Because the technique is presented purely didactically and extremely brief, instructors will need to explain thoroughly these techniques, to find examples and suitable methods so that the students would understand the very meaning of the Aikido techniques.

Each Aikido technique will have to be deeply studied, analyzed and understood, the key elements must be clearly stated, the movements and their logics must be perfectly understood so that the entire technique would be elucidated and accepted by the subconscious of the students.

It is preferable that the process of learning to be done slowly and thoroughly. The exams must take place only when the Aikido student (Aikidoka) masters the techniques related to his next degree, when he is able to master properly the principles and when his instructor believes that he has exceeded the level required for the exam.

As we said before, the first level of practicing controlled Aikido it is considered to be the level of black belt – 1st Dan.

AIKIDO **ABOUT ATTACKS**

Basically, all Aikido techniques may be used in response to any attack, either grab, hit, from front or behind, attacks executed by one person or more, with or without weapons.

At the beginning of training, students will learn the techniques using those attacks that favor an easy assimilation of the techniques. I prefer my students to perform mostly the techniques in case of the strike attacks because these attacks are more powerful and are closer to the reality of a fight. In this way Aikidoka may understand directly (it is true that sometimes much too directly), what a real attack means. The very first thing that beginners should learn is the correct execution of strikes, and generally of any kind of attack, because not being forced to fight, people have lost the ability to do so.

Attacks can be extremely varied so, in order to simplify the study I will limit to the basic attacks, the ones that have the highest frequency in battle.

During training exercises, the instructors will have to organize the teaching process by following the ideas below:

1. from simple to complicated attacks
2. from soft to strong attacks
3. from grips to hits, then kicks and finally weapons attacks
4. from a single attack of one partner to the continuous attacks of the same partner, then from the sequential attacks of several partners to simultaneous attacks of more partners.

CLASSIFICATION OF TECHNIQUES

There are thousands of variations of Aikido techniques determined by the type of the attack, or by the type of the technique, on the left or right, from front or back, depending on the presence or absence of a weapon, the number of aggressors, the conditions in which the fight takes place, etc.

If you are a good Aikido student and have enough experience, it does not matter how many techniques you know, because you simply know AIKIDO.

Here are some ways to classify Aikido techniques:

DEPENDING ON THE DIRECTION OF THE ATTACK

MAE WAZA– frontal attack

USHIRO WAZA– attack from behind

DEPENDING ON PARTNER'S POSITION

TACHI WAZA – both standing

HANMI HANTACHI WAZA – UKE is standing, NAGE in Seiza

SUWARI WAZA – both in Seiza

DEPENDING ON THE TECHNIQUE

KATAME WAZA – locking techniques

NAGE WAZA – throwing techniques

ATEMI WAZA – striking techniques

DEPENDING ON THE ATTACK

TE WAZA – attacks without weapons

AIKIDO

BUKI WAZA – attacks with weapons

DEPENDING ON THE WEAPON USED FOR ATTACK

TANTO TORI – knife attack (Tanto)

TACHI TORI – Boken or Katana attack

JO TORI – staff attack (Jo)

TESSEN TORI – war fan attack (Tessen)

TAMBO TORI – short staff attack (Tambo)

DEPENDING ON THE WEAPON USED FOR DEFENSE

TANTO SABAKI – defense using the knife

TACHI SABAKI – defense using Boken or Katana

JO SABAKI – defense using the staff

TESSEN SABAKI – defense using the war fan

TAMBO SABAKI – defense using the short staff

In many Aikido schools, there is no teaching of the Aikido weapons techniques. I believe that studying the weapons techniques is something natural and I think that by lacking Aikido of this component means looking at things from an incomplete, artificial and unrealistic perspective.

Aikido techniques are divided on different categories only by educational reasons, in order to simplify things and Katame Waza, Nage Waza or Atemi Waza are just different ways of implementing the same principles of Aikido.

This idea may be a surprise to the modern Aikido, highly structured and formalized, but it is obvious that it complies with most of the Founder's principles, who had never spoken of techniques but of principles.

Here below, you can find the list of the techniques currently studied in Aikido Dojos. These techniques are called "basic techniques" and their knowledge is necessary to achieve the black belt in about 2-3 years.

This list may look different in the program of other Aikido schools.

KATAME WAZA – LOCKING TECHNIQUES

This group includes the main techniques that Nage can use to meet Uke's attack, to immobilize and control him. I have to point out that this control of the opponent takes place on the ground, usually with Uke lying face down. This position of Uke keeps Nage somehow safe from of a possible attack coming from Uke and it restricts considerably Uke's possibilities of movement and reaction.

The control and ground immobilization technique is done by using a particular joint technique, in which case if Uke does not give in it would cause him pain. Uke's obstinacy of not giving up to the control could cause the fracture of his limbs.

Here are the main locking methods:

1. UDE OSAE (IKKYO – 1st principle) – locking with lever on the elbow
2. KOTE MAWASHI (NIKYO – 2nd principle) – locking with lever and arm twist
3. KOTE HINERI (SANKYO – 3rd principle) – locking with lever and hand twist
4. TEKUBI OSAE (YONKYO – 4th principle) – locking with lever and arm press
5. UDE NOBASHI (GOKYO – 5th principle) – locking with arm lock
6. HIJI KIME OSAE – locking by forcing the elbow top-down

AIKIDO
NAGE WAZA – THROWING TECHNIQUES

This group includes a conventional number of basic techniques whose object is to avoid Uke's attack, to unbalance and throw him to the ground.

The throw can make Uke impact the ground in an uncontrolled way and with high impact speed thus may lead to his exclusion from the fight.

Although they say that Aikido is an art of gentleness, the reality is that if you do not know or are not ready to take a fall, the execution of a throwing technique may hurt you seriously, or even cause death.

I want to insist on this idea and seriously warn you that Aikido techniques could be extremely dangerous especially if they are executed on someone non-practicing Aikido, a common situation in a real fight. Here are the most common throws:

1. SHIHO NAGE – four directions throw
2. IRIMI NAGE – entering throw
3. SOKUMEN IRIMI NAGE – side-entering throw
4. KAITEN NAGE – rotary throw
5. UDE KIME NAGE – throwing by forcing the elbow bottom-up
6. KOTE GAESHI – forearm return throw
7. TENCHI NAGE – heaven-and-earth throw
8. KOSHI NAGE – hip throw
9. JUJI GARAMI – figure-ten throw
10. AIKI OTOSHI – double leg takedown throw
11. SUMI OTOSHI – corner throw
12. KOKYU NAGE – breath throw

ABOUT FIGHT

During a fight, the aggressor can attack us with the weapons of his body (hands, feet, head, etc.) and so we must be able to execute Aikido techniques to neutralize these attacks, when we will need to use effective not only our own body, but also the aggressor's.

The instructor will have to expose his students gradually and safely to various strikes and grips, to cultivate in the subconscious of the student the idea that he must be aware of strikes because they cause pain, to get him used with the pain so he will not be totally surprised when hit, and make him aware that the attack must be controlled as quickly as possible in order avoid being hit over and over again.

Due to civilized life, people lose their instinctive skills to avoid different troubles and hits. During training students are often hit without trying to guard or defend themselves, because it comes difficult to them to believe that they could be really hurt.

People have no fault in this because they are just a product of the society and its educational standards. They must be taught to regain natural skills to respond correctly without the need for rational involvement.

Lack of exercise, of regular sport, incorrect breathing, smoking, alcohol excess, and a life spent in a chair make most of us certain victims of any kind of aggression.

Therefore the first concern of any Aikido instructor is to understand quickly and accurately the level of control of his students, and to ensure that they, each at their own pace, advance to a normal state of self control.

The normal state of self-control means the ability to react instinctively to attack, the acquisition of the correct posture, the natural control of strength and balance and breathing adapted to the level and type effort.

To learn Aikido requires that each student, in turn, be Nage (one who is defending) and Uke (one who is attacking), that is to defend and attack.

AIKIDO

I met many instructors and students in Dojos in the country or abroad who practice a soft Aikido, with symbolic strikes, citing the argument that in Aikido there are no strikes. This misconception leads to learning a salon Aikido, which means that the fight is conducted according to rules established in advance.

Aikido is a martial art, so a method of fight and obviously Aikido training should be seen in this light. You cannot avoid the fight, you cannot control it if you don't know how to fight, and if you do not understand the laws that govern it.

I must remind those who see only the spiritual side of Aikido, that in order to reach the stage where Aikido is a philosophy of life, one must first practice Aikido as a way of fighting. Trying to skip this step leads to certain failure and disappointments.

When talking about fighting, many people think first of all about attack. They believe that the skill and strength necessary to have a strong and fast attack is enough, and often do not think about what could happen if they come across a more powerful aggressor.

Practicing a martial art involves a complex training that takes into account both components of the fight, attack and defence.

From this perspective, the natural development of a Aikido student can be divided into the following steps:

1. acquisition of natural defense instincts: 6 months -1 year
2. development of physical and mental capacity necessary to fight: 1-2 years
3. learning Aikido techniques: 5-8 years
4. understanding the fighting philosophy and accepting the idea of defeat: 7-12 years
5. physical and mental detachment: 5-10 years or never

In the first four steps, we see that Aikidoka is an element, an active part of the fight, and in the last stage he controls the fight, is placed outside, becoming an observer, an arbiter of the events.

Up to black belt – 1st Dan, the student will need to practice positive variants of techniques especially for the positive forms allow the student to confront directly the attack, to develop his physical skills and to gain an understanding of the fight.

The execution of Aikido techniques in the positive variants helps developing physical qualities, effort capacity, contributes directly to improving the breathing and ensures correct control and dosage of the effort. All this leads to a healthy body, accustomed to the rigors of training.

ADVICE ON TECHNIQUES EXECUTION

In the beginning, students have problems memorizing the positions and movements of the techniques. This is normal to happen because there is a lot of information to be assimilated, not for the mind of the student, but their bodies.

In the first year, students may not see the whole because of the details and this makes understanding difficult.

Basically, what a person who studies Aikido should understand, is that, regardless of the attack and the number of aggressors, the technique used or the fact that is day or night, summer or winter, his task is to harmonize as good as possible with the events and situations. Unfortunately, you cannot ask a man who walks in the dark to see the end of the road.

Although learning a martial art is fundamental based on repetition and then understanding, I think that is better to we give our students logical explanations and rational formulations whenever we can.

Aikido techniques should be performed with the shoulders down, relaxed, with elbows close to the body, with the movements organized around my center, Seika no Itten

AIKIDO

(center of the body). In the first years of training, Aikido students are interested in the movements necessary for executing the techniques and the effect of these techniques upon the partner.

In parallel with this, the instructor must reveal his students the movements of the two centers, Nage and Uke's, that are specific for each Aikido technique.

These movements are more important than arms or body movements and the right understanding of this dynamic leads certainly to a good execution of the techniques.

Unfortunately, verbal, logical explanations have not the desired effect, because even if the student understands logically the instructor's explanations, he cannot reproduce at physical level that which its logic accepted.

To overcome these drawbacks, specific methods of learning martial arts are used, apparently empirical methods, but with proven results. These methods use the imagination of students, inducing different moods and feelings that allow the practitioner to check if they are on track or not.

For example, I'll get my students used to the idea that they have in their hands an imaginary sword, and that they must perform the techniques using this weapon.

For this, they have to get used to the correct boken grip and will need to spend more time training with this weapon. The boken exercises will allow them to adopt a proper stance, to learn distance control and balance necessary for the execution of Aikido techniques.

The instructor must get his students used with the idea that attacks may come from any direction, including above or below. This means that during training the student should be careful to maintain visual control of the world around him to avoid unexpected attacks, even if inside the Dojo such things doesn't happen, at least initially.

The fact that the student learns to be careful about what is happening in the Dojo relieves us of unwanted accidents and strengthens the feeling of safety and control of the training.

One thing to remember, right from the beginning, is that most of the Aikido techniques have as favorite position KATATE TORI AI HANMI or KATATE TORI GYAKU HANMI and only a few techniques have as favorite position RYOTE TORI or KATATE RYOTE TORI.

This leads us to the idea that if we can turn any attack into one of those positions, we will be able to perform basic techniques that use mainly these grips or positions.

Here is a rough classification of techniques in this regard:

1. KATATE TORI AI HANMI Position – favours the techniques: UDE OSAE, KOTE MAWASHI, KOTE HINERI, TEKUBI OSAE, SHIHO NAGE, IRIMI NAGE, UDE KIME NAGE, UDE NOBASHI

2. KATATE TORI GYAKU HANMI Position - favours the techniques: HIJI KIME OSAE, KOTE GAESHI, KOSHI NAGE, TENCHI NAGE, SOKUMEN IRIMI NAGE, KAITEN NAGE, SUMI OTOSHI, AIKI OTOSHI

3. KATATE RYOTE TORI Position – favours the techniques: JUJI GARAMI

4. RYOTE TORI Position – favours the techniques: KOSHI NAGE, KOKYU NAGE

Another way of structuring the Aikido techniques is to split them in levels of knowledge, as they are required to belt exams (degrees).

This classification is specific to each school of Aikido, but in general, the requirements are almost identical.

AIKIDO

Many Aikido instructors and students say that belts are not important and important is just to practice Aikido. Most of them say that because they have heard it repeated by others.

Actually, most instructors and students are interested in degrees and belts and I think that generally this is a good thing. I think that being interested in something and saying that you are not is a proof that you are ashamed to admit that you may be interested in something that according to the general opinion, it does not matter.

This way to avoid reality is a prejudice to Aikido and the people involved in Aikido. On the other hand, I believe that the desire to publicize your progress is good and this shows that you are not indifferent to the opinion of others.

This will make you be careful and responsible for your actions.

And now a tip: if you are an instructor, you should know something very important, that you are the model of your students. However, you decide if your model is good or evil. They will try to imitate, not only in how you practice Aikido, but in all your public appearance in the Dojo or outside.

They will try to speak and act like you. Sure is nice to know this, but this means that you must be careful to control yourself at all times, to be balanced, impartial, fair and tolerant.

In the Dojo, the techniques will be taught following these principles:

- From simple to complicated attacks
- From soft to hard attacks
- From grips to hits than kicks and finally weapons
- From a single attack of a partner to continuous attacks of the same partner
- From sequential attacks of several partners to simultaneously attack of several partners.

HOW DO WE TEACH AIKIDO

Over time, I have found that beginners are progressing faster and the instructors are more productive if during the first year of practice they are using different schemes and classifications of attacks, techniques, methods and current situations encountered during Aikido training.

I've spoken with many students, instructors or just fans of Aikido and most of them told me that there is a huge difference between the feeling that you have watching others practicing Aikido and the surprise you have when you start to practice Aikido yourself.

If you are in the Dojo and watch those who practice Aikido you feel that this is extremely simple, that the movements shown are easy and you may wonder why the people on the mat find so hard to understand what they are required.

This is because the instructor's movements are natural, elegant, appealing and above all efficient. You look and you say: no big deal, I think I could do this thing! You are right, you could do it and anyone could do, all you have to do is train.

The instructor's movements that address the subconscious are difficult to remember consciously and so they must be stored by repeated physical training rather than by explanation.

The development of schemes or models of these movements or situations enable the student to understand consciously the movements and, because a sketch or a model of a situation is a logical element that addresses his understanding, his reason, and thus is likely to be stored and used later as reference for a similar situation.

I recommend to instructors to use a coherent teaching system with the information well systematized, with periodic repetition of the concepts taught because in our era, time is a very precious resource and people's patience is decreasing.

AIKIDO

The effort to encode and systematize the information provided to beginners may lead directly to a faster assimilation of basic knowledge, to an increased number of students, and thus to a rapid spread of Aikido, because such a method of study Aikido suits better European students.

KEY POINTS AND JOINTS TECHNIQUES

Aikido techniques are based on a good knowledge of the anatomy of the human body. I cannot perform a technique without knowing what to do and how I can make the aggressor who attacked me to execute my orders, and without knowing the effect of the technique upon him.

We must insist on this issue from the first day of training if we want to avoid unpleasant events later.

Generally, beginners are full of enthusiasm and are ready to execute any movement to reproduce what the instructor showed, or to show his partner that he already knows many things, and not once, I saw grownups on the mat, putting their life in danger, with a smile.

To avoid accidents students must be carefully monitored and any attempt to do something else than what the instructor shows must be firmly sanctioned. Any manifestation of evil, aggression or superiority towards the partner must be also discouraged.

Aikido students should understand that they need a partner to learn Aikido and they have an obligation to protect their partner, not to torment him needlessly and to give him equal opportunity to learn and progress.

Sure, that during training each student gets a certain amount of suffering because he does not know well enough to control his body and his force. Some students consider the pain caused by the partner's ignorance or haste as a personal affront and feel compelled to put things right.

Others oppose to any technique, considering that this may prove superiority, or to signal their partner that his technique is not good.

Most times, it happens that the defender insists with more force while the partner suddenly gives up and, in this case, the result is an accident.

Instructors must also be careful with students that are well build and have much force, or with those who have practiced other martial arts, which sometimes amuse themselves trying to put the instructor to the test.

In this case, I recommend the following solution: if you are an instructor and the student is clearly and intentionally oppose the execution of your technique, than use a sudden hit (atemi) or movement of off-balance and perform another safe technique to control him. Next, he will need to be explained that, if he opposes excessive, then he will have a hard time learning the technique and the instructor will have to use techniques that are more painful.

It is good for the student to feel the efficiency of the technique, and then you can explain that the technique to which he opposed is done in reality, in different conditions, in combat, and in this case, the instructor or the defender will not protect him from hits or painful techniques.

It is important that the order of actions to be the one mentioned and not vice versa because otherwise you will lose the element of surprise.

In any event, when showing something to a beginner, the instructor must be prepared to meet a fast, powerful or quite different attack from that requested.

If the instructor confuses the beginner with his assistant, he may have great surprises, and most important of them will be the loss of confidence and respect of students.

AIKIDO

Most of the Aikido techniques are based on the action at points from the partner's body, causing pain or the inability of motion. To escape the pain, Uke must move towards the direction I suggested his, and so I can immobilize him, control him or force him to give up the fight.

Usually these points or areas used in Aikido are located on the partner's arms but they are also found throughout his body. The arms points are commonly used, because they are not life threatening for the aggressor. Obviously, if the aggressor does not understand my painful message, then I have the liberty to defend my life as good as I know.

The key points of the arms may be used to force him to do what I want or to force him to release me from a grip.

The key points are associated with key movements and positions so that the whole position-motion-key point ensemble is known and used in Aikido as the joint technique.

During Aikido training, we practice different movements of the joints to warm them up and prepare them for use in various Aikido techniques.

Thus UDE OSAE technique has a specific joint technique, KOTE MAWASHI another one, KOTE HINERI also has a specific joint technique, TEKUBI OSAE also has one, and so KOTE GAESHI, UDE NOBASHI and HIJI KIME OSAE techniques.

We will see that there are Aikido techniques that are not based on certain joint techniques, but the technique is executed using off-balance or deviation and composition of forces, and may be finished with a joint technique to pin the partner on the ground. Most of the throwing techniques are part of this category.

ABOUT RANDORI

Randori or free fighting training is possible only after the Aikido student is able to defend instinctively, possess good technical knowledge, has a correct understanding of the laws of the fight, and is capable of self-control.

Randori training will be conducted under the strict control of the instructor who is responsible for the actions of his students. He will not allow unauthorized students to experience this form of training because they could not cope with it in terms of safety. This means that the instructor must determine for each student, when he will be able to participate in randori, the speed of execution, the number of Uke and the length of the training.

Randori training will be progressively, initially slow, with a small number of Uke and short (2-3 minutes) and continued with the gradual increase of the speed and the number of attackers, and with a controlled increase of the duration.

During this type of training, there is a danger of accidents, because of limited training space or because of the students who, in a fight frenzy, may unintentionally hit their partners quite bad.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Here are some recommendations for training in general and Randori in particular:

1. Do not work with tense muscles. If I am always tense, my muscles will get tired, I will consume energy unnecessarily and will not be capable of considerable effort when needed. The execution of Aikido techniques with a tense body breaks the balance and reduce flexibility and elasticity so necessary in Aikido.

2. It is preferable to defend with the position Gyaku Kamae, with the right foot and hand in front. I recommend Gyaku Kamae position, because it is favourable to the staff and knife techniques, and with the right side in front because it is favourable to the sword

AIKIDO

and bokken techniques. Thus we will adopt a position that is largely convenient to the execution of all Aikido techniques, with or without weapons. But this is only a recommendation.

3. You can largely determine the moment of the attack if you simulate a strike on Uke. When the attack is imminent I can simulate a hit to Uke's face or body forcing him to respond with a defense motion.

In 99% of the situations this defense motion is made instinctively by hand, and this will allow me to quickly execute a technique using that hand.

4. Get used to work with weapons. Working with weapons, inanimate objects, which must be integrated with our bodies, develops maneuver skills, increases the precision of strikes and the control of grip, leading ultimately to the ability to use weapons as body extensions.

This skill to handle weapons means that, when needed, I may successfully use anything around me as a weapon. Weapons training develops the Ki because it must be extended from my hands to the tip of my weapons.

5. Do not look at the hands and feet of the aggressor or into his eyes or at his weapons. Look at him as a whole, with your eyes fixed on no details.

Considering him as a whole, and you will see any intention or move. The attacker is like a drawing in motion. If you want to notice changes you should watch from a distance and as a whole.

6. Do not put your knees on the ground unless absolutely necessary. Returning to standing is difficult and takes time and effort.

7. Do not make long strides, unnecessary lunges, lift the soles off the ground as little as possible. All these deficiencies can influence the balance.

8. Do not try refined dodges or complicated movements. Simple movements are the best. They provide a good speed of execution and a stable balance.

9. Do not work with only one hand. Even if it is not necessary to use both hands you must get used to work with the whole body, not just part of it. Fail to comply to this recommendation may lead to dangerous habits.

10. Get ready to receive at least two hits from the aggressor. As I said in a previous chapter, even for a grab you have to expect an immediate strike. If you don't keep this in mind you will be hit and this will seriously decrease your ability to defend.

11. In case of simultaneous attack of multiple aggressors, try to get all of them on a single line. In this way you will have to do with one aggressor at a time.

12. During training and in everyday life, get used to observe everything around you. This habit will save you many troubles, both in life and in battle.

13. Control your nerves and do not get angry. Even if your partner misbehaves or is selfish and arrogant, do not get angry. Try to be calm and detached, both in training and in combat.

If you do not get emotionally involved, you may accurately assess a situation and you can more easily accept a hit or a defeat. Most times, in battle or in a difficult situation

AIKIDO

in life, the hits you get are exacerbated by frustration, pride and your fears that unduly amplifies the hits or the failure.

14. In case of an attack, your answer must be proportionate to the attack. Your reactions must be corrective rather than punitive. There is a certain economy of actions during the fight, that must be generally respected. If your response is not proportional with the attack, the fight will be unbalanced. If your answer is less, the aggressor will feel encouraged to attack again, and if you will answer with too much force the aggressor will fight desperately. It is obvious that in case of more aggressors, the balance refers to the whole situation. This means that you have to decisively remove from the battle by resolute actions and as quickly as possible as many aggressors to reach a balanced situation that you can solve by the principle: do not do more harm than necessary.

15. When you are on the mat and train, you must look at the actions of those around you as possible attacks, and you should count only on your forces and your ability to react. When you're on the mat and train with your partner, and around you are other pairs that do the same, the actions of those around you may seem attacks if they endanger you.

Sloppy falls, careless throws or indiscriminate weapons handling may be aggressive actions against you, that you have to consider and defend yourself (dodge them).

The habit of looking at things from such a perspective, helps you stay away from unpleasant surprises and troubles in both battle and in life. This is why I say it's students fault for the accidents they are involved into.

The excuse of undesignedly hit, does not ease the pain or makes an accident easier to bear. You have no excuse, that those around you were not careful and you got hit. This is not a martial attitude that you should expect to be protected by those around you.

If I can not take care of myself there is no hope that others will. Unfortunately, modern society encourages this passive attitude, making people increasingly less responsible for their own lives and for those around them.

They expect the government to take care of them, to schedule their life, to tell them how and what to eat, how to have fun, what is good and evil, why and how to think, and the government makes this better and better.

16. Do not use falls as a defense technique. They are just a necessary evil and you must understand that their goal is to bring you back as soon as possible in a defense position, not to massage your back or to impress the audience.

Remember that during a fall your defense capacity is zero, so this must happen seldom and take as little time as possible. For this we must practice falls constantly and from any position.

17. The most dangerous enemies are not those whose weapons and hostile intent are obvious. Those whose intentions and weapons are not obvious must be treated with reserve. A skilled fighter will not reveal the surprises he has prepared for you, only when it is too late.

18. Instructors will always have to repeat the idea that any attack should be seen as a weapon hit, and should be treated accordingly. A knife, a bat, a sword, a gun can be easily hidden by a skilled aggressor. It is better to learn this now, than later, or too late.