

Aikido: Harmony, Spirit, and Way

Aikido is an art of discipline, movement, and strength. When I began taking Aikido nearly thirteen years ago, I was intrigued and excited to explore these parts of the art form. Now, I know that Aikido is much more than just physical skill and knowledge of the art. Aikido is about people; people learning from one another, teaching each other, learning how to cooperate and how to enjoy each other. The Japanese kanji writing of the word “Aikido” is made up of three characters, the first character meaning Harmony, the second character Spirit, and the last Way. Each character represents exactly what Aikido has come to mean to me.

Harmony

An Aikido class is a coming together of our community of students, a group of people who practice the art together. An Aikido technique is just a movement until another person is brought in; a student and his uke together create harmony. Each person is unique and has his own special talents and flaws. Aikido teaches students to be sensitive to each person’s abilities and traits and to work in a way to make each technique as perfect as possible. I have learned a lot over the years watching people learn to work cooperatively with each other. Aikido teaches how to be aware of other people and how to blend harmoniously with others around us. I see students learn from each other how to improve themselves both on and off the mat. By watching and interacting with all of the different people who have or are part of our Aikido community I have realized how essential understanding and cooperation are to peaceful co-existence.

Spirit

An Aikido technique would just be a series of calculated steps without the spirit and the energy of the participants. One of the things that I love best about my participation in Aikido is the people with whom I train. The mat is just a mat until these people come to learn, to laugh, and to together create beautiful techniques. I (and I am sure that I am not the only one) come to class to train and exercise, but I also come to have fun and enjoy the company of the other students. I like to use different and creative

ways to explain Aikido techniques to people, using visual metaphors etc. as fun and interesting ways to convey concepts. Our students like to smile, and when I can help someone improve something and make him smile it reminds me why I like coming to class. I like seeing the spirit of the dojo, the personalities and humor of the people that bring life to my training.

道 *Way*

One of the many reasons that I have become so passionate about Aikido is that I have realized that Aikido is much more than going on a mat and studying techniques; Aikido is a way of life. Everything that I have learned at the dojo about myself and my relationships with other people I have been able to take off the mat and apply to aspects of my everyday life. I can watch how a student expresses himself in his Aikido techniques and interacts with other students and I can see how he must comport himself throughout his day. If a person is impatient and likes to always have his way, chances are he will bring these values to his interactions at the dojo. But if he follows the disciplines of Aikido and learns to be patient and to blend with other students, he will take those skills and apply them to the real world.

I appreciate and value the strength, physically and spiritually, that I have gained from Aikido. I enjoy learning from the other students and learning to appreciate each person for his special talents, using what I know about each person and applying it to my techniques to make them as perfect as possible for both people involved. I especially love going to the dojo and seeing the smiling faces of my friends who are there. I am always ready to do what I can to help members of our Aikido community and I know that they are there for me too. For me, that kind of cooperation, love, and understanding is what Aikido is all about.

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