

Aikidosphere

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A Perspective on Aikido Training

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Editors' Note: This article on training was originally published in the Federation News, Spring 1981 issue.



Those who aspire and train in Aikido and who have become yudansha (of black belt rank) should acquire the spirit, aims and goals of Aikido. It is my earnest hope that you will make progress in your daily lives as well as in practice at the dojo. There may be some who think that attaining the rank of black belt means becoming a full-fledged Aikidoist, but this rank marks only a beginning.

There are four goals in Aikido:

- 1) ki training
- 2) moral training
- 3) physical training
- 4) cultivation of common (practical) sense

These points emphasize sustaining ki power, heightening natural virtue, increasing bodily strength, and becoming a person of practical sense.

Even in practice the strong person is not always right, and only through right movement comes true strength. The man who founded Aikido, the late Morihei Ueshiba, said before he died, "I have only now begun to train myself." We younger followers, if we are satisfied with whatever progress we may have made up to now, bring only shame upon ourselves.

In a short span of a few years, it is not possible for us human beings to truly grasp the way laid down for us by the Founder and his older disciples over many long years. If we do not set our training on a high level, we cannot see far into the distance.

In climbing a mountain when we are at the foot, the scenery may not seem much, but as we approach the summit, we are able to see the surroundings and to get a good view of everything. But together with this, we also feel ourselves tiring and having to take precautions lest dangers arise. In Aikido training too, the beginning may not seem very interesting and for some people may be only a series of bumps and bruises, but this is because we are positioned at the foot of the mountain. But as we near the midway point and later the top, the scenery becomes better, and also we realize we are bearing a burden of responsibility.

If yudansha members taste something which is good, they try to tell others to eat it too. In the same way, if they learn something they think is good, they should freely teach it to others. You will lose

nothing in teaching others, and this can be a good test of what you have learned.

Aikido is a "way" for man, and it will be rough going at times but our great task is to endeavor to conquer the seemingly insurmountable barriers along our path. "It is easier to preach than to practice" is a famous saying, but with mind and body as one and with our spirit and ki properly centered, I believe we can apply this to our Aikido techniques and all matters, and we can lead lives without regrets.

Those who practice for many years and who do not develop practical sense have little worth as Aikidoists. "The martial arts begin and end with courtesy" - in Aikido we must hold courtesy and respect in the highest position.