

Ai-ki-do

Harmony Spirit Path



By: Ben Dressel

When you think of martial arts, do you think of punching, kicking and flipping people on their backs? The practice of Aikido is a completely different way of doing martial arts. The word Aikido is formed by three Japanese characters or “kanji”. The first part “Ai” means meeting, coming together or being in harmony. The second part “Ki” means living energy, as in the mind, soul and spirit. The third part “Do” means The Way, to show that the study of Aikido is not only for self-defense but is also about learning positive qualities that can be used in everyday situations. The motto that we recite in the Ki Society is:

“Our motto, let us have a universal mind that loves and protects all creation and helps all things grow and develop. To unify mind and body and become one with the universe is the ultimate purpose of our study.

Four major principles to unify mind and body: 1) Keep one point 2) Relax completely 3) Keep weight underside 4) Extend Ki.” We recite this motto to remind us what Aikido is all about. In practicing Aikido, I have found that these principles help me in my daily life.

The character of Ai or Harmony is demonstrated when you keep one point. This is the center of your balance; physically, mentally and spiritually. By keeping one point your mind and body are coordinated. This helps you when you are learning throws or doing the exercises. Keeping one point also helps you in other situations in your life like helping you stay focused. The character of Ki or living energy is demonstrated when you keep one point, stayed relaxed and keep weight underside. When you are completely relaxed your weight settles underside. This is known as living calmness. The character Do or Way helps us to use these techniques in any situation that may occur. You can use the principles of Aikido at home, in school, with your friends or anytime you have a conflict. Aikido helps you stay focused and calm.

Aikido is a martial art that focuses on peace, harmony and respect for living things. The place where Aikido is practiced is called the dojo. The word dojo means “way place” or “place where one studies the way”. The teacher is called a sensei. In Aikido we begin by reciting the motto. It is important to stretch before you begin. The main stance in Aikido is called hanmi. In hanmi it is important to stand up straight with your head up. Your hands, feet and hips are centered with the body forming a triangle. This keeps your body stable and helps you move freely. Being centered helps with maximum strength and balance. To do this, focus on the area just below your naval. This is your one point. An important move in practicing Aikido is the “unbendable arm”. It isn’t a matter of strength but a matter of posture and extending ki. You hold your arm out straight and relax your muscles. When done correctly, your partner should not be able to bend your arm. Aikido focuses more on defense instead of attacks. In Aikido you do not kick

or punch, you roll away, grasp or throw your partner using the partner's energy. You also learn many ways to fall and roll.

While doing research I decided to interview Gilmore Sensei, who is my teacher at Orange County Ki Society. I asked him these questions: What made you decide to learn Aikido? How long have you been practicing Aikido? How does Aikido help you in your life? He told me that he decided to learn Aikido when he met a student in college who taught him about ki. The first move he learned was the unbendable arm. He has been practicing Aikido for 46 years. He said Aikido helps him stay calm, relieves stress and helps him in his job and in communicating with others. These are important skills that would help anybody anywhere.

Aikido is a great practice for anyone to learn. Children and adults will find that the main principles of the way of harmonizing the body and universal spirit will bring a positive change to their lives. Finding peaceful resolutions to conflicts and being aware of your potential are ideas that everyone should strive for.

I have really enjoyed learning Aikido and I have found that it has helped me stay focused, calm and happy. Give Aikido a try, you won't regret it!

