



ABUNDANT PEACE AIKIDO AND TAI CHI

Connections

Editorial

April 2009

Club Special



My fortune read *"seize from every moment its uniqueness, especially this week"*; especially appropriate, as these words were given to me on the final day that Sensei Brad and I spent in Missoula, in the aftermath of an absolutely amazing seminar, presented by Ikeda Shihan. We were enjoying a wonderful Thai lunch together, talking about our experiences and perspectives.

Most of you know that I have become very passionate about Aikido seminars; I have found each of these to be very useful, in terms of "progressing" my own skill development. More than that, there is a connection made to other students, and with our teachers, unique to each of these.

This seminar, however, stood out from many of my past experiences; it was only the second time I have received training from Ikeda Shihan, and this time I had much more experience...and was therefore able to understand, at least a little, what was taking place. The seminar was remarkable in many ways: the joy and sense of fun that our Shihan brought to the mats; the intensity with which he connects to a training partner; the power, described as "like being hit with a taser" when you experience his technique; and, as always, the wonderfully warm welcome given by Rasso Sensei and Aikido of Missoula.

Pressures at work kept us from lingering too long in Missoula, but we took part in all three classes on the Monday; these are extremely useful, in that they focus on seminar material, with the added benefit of Rasso Sensei's perspective, which certainly helped my level of comprehension!

I appreciated many things about this seminar, but especially Ikeda Sensei's description of himself as a student; he emphasized the need to practice, and that by doing so, "little by little, by little by little" promised each of us that we would find our way along the aiki path. The study of aikido is, after all, a journey... not a destination!

If you are inclined and able, I would strongly encourage you to attend a seminar with Ikeda Shihan; his unique and powerful message is truly an example to emulate.

Stuart Krause

The Ten Essentials

The seventh of the "Ten Essentials" of Tai Chi practice, as taught by Yang Cheng Fu, is "Synchronize Upper and Lower Body".



This principle was expressed as:

*In the taiji classics 'Synchronize Upper and Lower Body' is expressed as: "With its root in the foot, emitting from the leg, governed by the waist, manifesting in the hands and fingers - from feet to legs to waist - complete everything in one impulse." * When hands move, the waist moves and legs move, and the gaze moves along with them. Only then can we say upper and lower body are synchronized. If one part doesn't move then it is not coordinated with the rest.*

Reprinted from

www.yangfamilytaichi.com

Next month: "Match Up Inner and Outer".

The club special offered in January and February was so successful that we have decided to continue it; until further notice, Tai Chi students can try Aikido, and Aikido students can try Tai Chi, free for one month! This is to give those who are already a student at Abundant Peace School a chance to explore the similarities and differences of the other Art. Both are Internal or Soft-Style Martial Arts, and they are based on similar principles, even though their expression appears quite different. So, if you have had any interest or curiosity at all about the 'other' Art at our Club, now is the time to "expand your horizons"! Remember, classes for both are held back-to-back 3 times a week.

Spring Retreat

Abundant Peace offers a Meditation and Chi Gong every spring; this event is held at the Star of the North Retreat Centre, right here in St. Albert. Although my martial interest lies in aikido training, I am also very interested in exploring the internal studies; I therefore chose to attend the Retreat, despite having no prior tai chi experience... although I have studied chi gong before.

Studies at the Retreat focused on finding and working from our centre; full breathing; energy flow; and, how each of these can be used to manage both the stress of our daily lives, as well as to enhance our martial study, whether in tai chi or aikido.

The thing that really stood out for me were the clarity that comes from being internally referenced, rather than externally; Sifu Brad was able to guide me along this path, to the point that I was able to link a number of concepts together more effectively. By the end of the Retreat, I had been able to use this enhanced clarity to increase my own awareness of energy flow, both within myself as well as around us. This was a very powerful experience, and I encourage every member of Abundant Peace to at least consider attending this Retreat in the future... you will be happy you did!

-Joseph T-

Announcements



Our next aikido seminar opportunity at Aikido of Missoula will be with Saotome Sensei from 25 to 27 September, 2009.

We congratulate the "spring 2009" Tai Chi Class on successfully reaching the first "cross hands"; together with the "fall 2008" class, they will celebrate achieving this milestone with noodle night on April 4th!

Special congratulations to Ruth on her 10th year, and to Brian on his 11th year, as students of tai chi with Abundant Peace!

Aikido special training is on Friday, April 17th, from 6:30 to 9:30 PM; the theme is: "Review of Ikeda Sensei's spring seminar."

Finally, remember to keep an eye on our web site, www.abundantpeace.com for a detailed listing of workshops and seminars.

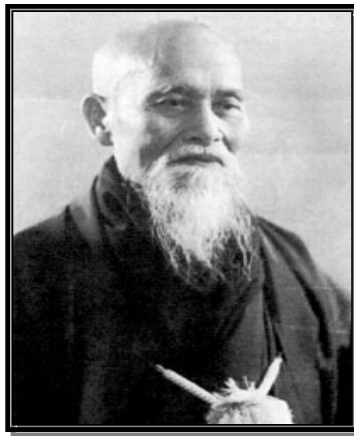
Dojo Etiquette

The Abundant Peace Aikido and Tai Chi School was founded in 1996, and from that time has maintained and promoted a philosophy of dignity, respect, and safety. Our goals are:

- 1) to promote the art of Aikido as an art of self defense, and as a spiritual and physical discipline created by Master Morihei Ueshiba, O Sensei;
- 2) to provide facilities for the proper instruction and study of the arts of Aikido and Tai Chi; and
- 3) to protect and foster the spirit of Aikido by promoting harmony within the Dojo, and by fostering an atmosphere of goodwill and fellowship among the students.

All members and guests of The Abundant Peace Aikido and Tai Chi School must adhere to our Dojo Code of Conduct, which is meant to foster a safe and positive training environment. We must all:

- 1) treat everyone equally, respect their rights, dignity, and individual worth;
- 2) display high standards of language, manner, punctuality, and preparation;
- 3) demonstrate personal control, courtesy, respect, honesty, and dignity at all times;
- 4) keep the spirit of BUDO, be willing to help others, be a person of peace;
- 5) focus on safety in training, and demonstrate care for injured members;
- 6) limit physical contact to that necessary for teaching or training purposes;
- 7) encourage and promote Aikido and Tai Chi as part of a healthy lifestyle;
- 8) respect the limitations of training partners, especially the very young and very old;
- 9) adhere to the Dojo rules of etiquette, and the principles of common courtesy; and
- 10) remember; we cannot learn without each other!



Quote from O Sensei

"Instructors can impart only a fraction of the teaching. It is through your own devoted practice that the mysteries of the Art of Peace are brought to life."

-Morihei Ueshiba, O Sensei-

The Judo Club will be holding a full-day training clinic on Saturday, May 2nd; they need the facility all day, which means both Tai Chi and Aikido classes will be moved to the Lions Park...weather permitting!

Find the Tiger Within

Now available: "**Finding the Tiger Within!**", a CD on personal safety and protection. This CD is filled with strategies and principles on the mental and preventive aspects of self defense, as well as physical techniques when confronted. This is a no-nonsense presentation, and contains information that everyone can benefit from: the "life skill" of personal protection. It also makes a thoughtful gift for loved ones! These are available from Sensei Brad, for only \$20.00, so get your copy today!

Dojo Care Session

Our next "mat maintenance and dojo care" session will take place on Saturday, April 25th; in order to ensure that everyone can take part, we are going to try something just a little bit different. Here is our schedule:

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM: regular aikido

3:15 PM – 4:15 PM: dojo care

4:30 PM – 5:30 PM: regular tai chi

This way, both aikido and tai chi students can help out, simply by arriving earlier than usual...as always, supplies and equipment will be provided, just bring your good attitude and willingness to work. Please make time to join us, and help look after our wonderful training facility!

Slow Down!

One of the many useful and powerful messages brought to the Missoula seminar by Ikeda Sensei was "slowly".



The focus of our seminar was on "breaking balance"; the intent of this is to point out that no technique can be truly effective unless you control the balance of your partner or, on the street, of your opponent.

The corollary to this message was simple as well; once you have broken the balance of your training partner, any technique can be devastatingly effective when properly applied. Simple enough in concept, but not so simple in application; we worked this idea from many directions, over several days, and yet most of us were only able to grasp small bits of what was presented.

Physically, the act of breaking or controlling the balance of your training partner needs many things... structure, connection, entry, all are essential. However, the truth is that most of us lack the sense of awareness needed to even perceive the balance of our partner, much less break it...unless we slow down, and by doing so learn to feel that connection on an energetic level.

Continually through our keiko, Ikeda Sensei used the phrases "slowly" and "little by little" to describe our training process. Implicit in his words was criticism of moving quickly. As we worked through a wide range of training exercises, I learned very quickly that speeding things up only covered the fact that I was doing it poorly, using muscle, and was missing the point of the exercise.

Having had time to consider this message, and how it applies to my training, I have come up with a few ideas. By slowing down, even when working with technique, I will give myself the opportunity to truly sense my partner; even more important, by working slowly I will become more aware of my own state, physical, mental, emotional.

As we move slowly through training drills, we can begin to alter our own state; we can change our posture, control our breathing, and channel our focus more effectively. Over time, these changes will be integrated into our "state of being" and become "the new normal". As time passes, we can begin to increase the tempo...and because we have given ourselves the chance to integrate these basic lessons, will not lose them to speed, as will happen so easily.

This was a great message, and applies just as strongly to tai chi practice, as it does to aikido training. I would encourage each of our students to bring a slower tempo, along with a higher degree of awareness, to their own training regimen. Moving quickly can lead to simply moving your body through a series of postures and motions, never really taking your practice deep enough to make it part of yourself.