



ABUNDANT PEACE AIKIDO AND TAI CHI

Connections

Editorial

August 2009

Deep Abdominal Breathing



How was your July? Mine began with a brief vacation to Saskatchewan, on my Harley; unfortunately, during this adventure my old back injury resurfaced, which kept me off the mats for most of the month. The absence has once again forced me to recall the accident that led to this condition; although in and of itself not a good thing, it has become a positive and life altering experience.

Perspective is the thing; my accident was very serious, but might have been much worse...all that was needed to have this become a positive experience was to understand it from a healthier perspective. From this experience I learned a great deal about myself, and about the real meaning of good fortune, lessons that have served me well for many years.

Thus, I view my back trouble as the "price tag" that life exacted for those lessons; and, because they proved so valuable, and so enriching, I am forced to acknowledge that, even if I could, I would not change the circumstances that led me here. That said, I was very happy to be back on the mats before the end of July!

I continue to be excited by the growth in our Aikido community; on Wednesday, July 29th we saw twenty-two students on the mats, the largest number I can recall, at least for the past three years. More noteworthy than the number is the enthusiastic attitude and positive energy that is created by these students, as they train and learn together.

August will be another busy month; check this newsletter for details of the Tai Chi Retreat, and the Aikido Gasshuku, just two of our events. The last month of summer is always busy, as we try to "cram in" as much activity as possible...remember to set some time aside to train, as this is a great way to keep physical and spiritual balance!

Stuart



- WCR photo by Ramon Gonzalez
The Star of the North sits on beautiful, landscaped site.

Tai Chi Retreat

Our annual summer Tai Chi retreat will be held on the weekend of 8th and 9th August, at the beautiful Star of the North Retreat Centre in St. Albert.

This year, the theme of this weekend will be focused on the study of Yin and Yang, both as they apply to Tai Chi study, and how these principles work in every day life. That makes this Retreat valuable to anyone, whether or not you are a Tai Chi Student!

Please check our flyer for more information and details on this rejuvenating "tai chi getaway", and make the time to attend if your circumstances permit.

Morning aikido classes continue, every Monday and Thursday, from 6:00 to 7:30 AM. Nothing feels as good as early morning misogi outside and under the sun; the mat fee is only \$10.00, so join us if your schedule permits!

The following is reprinted from the web site <http://www.geocities.com/bgaughr/qgbreathing.htm>. By thorough and regular practice of these techniques, each of us may learn to integrate deep abdominal breathing into our daily lives...which will gradually remove the need for such focused practice.

Preparation: Relax (whether sitting or standing) - take a deep breath, hold that breath for a few seconds, release the breath and mentally tell yourself to relax. Repeat this three or four times.

Inhaling: First and foremost, become mindfully aware of your breathing. Gently inhale (slowly and quietly) guiding your breath into the abdomen (Lower Dan Tian). Feel your abdomen expand as the Qi fills up your stomach. Visualize and feel Vital Energy (Kun Yen Qi) being transported into your body cleansing and healing it. If you have a health issue, visualize your breath transporting the energy (Qi) into your body - traveling to the targeted area. See the healing Qi replacing the sick cells, killing the virus, or repairing the injured bones or tissue.

Exhale: Gently exhale (slowly and quietly) using your abdominal muscles to guide the air out of your Lower Dan Tian. As you exhale, be mindful that you are ridding the body of old, negative and sick energy (Qi). If you have a particular disease, gently focus your mind on pushing out the sick energy. Use your mind and breath to transport it into the surrounding environment. Sometimes it is helpful to visualize the exhaled breath as a dark cloud.

As you exhale, sense tension, stress, fear, anxiety, frustration, anger, pain, sickness and disease leaving your mind and body.

Feel your mind become calm and your body more relaxed. Sense your spirit begin to soar as the Vital Energy expands outward from the Lower Dan Tian to fill the entire body. Understand that all 75 trillion cells are now energized and the entire body is being healed.

Announcements



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

wish to attend must book their hotel rooms immediately, or you risk finding yourself with nowhere to stay. As well, consider remaining for a few days after the seminar, to attend regular classes; Raso Sensei is a long time student of Saotome Sensei, and her perspective on his seminar material is always very valuable.

Aikido special training is "Gasshuku", and will be held on Sunday, 16th August 2009 from 0930 AM to 09:00 PM. Gasshuku means "living together", and as the name implies involves a full day of aikido training and education. The theme of this "Summer Intensive" will be Kuzushi and Awase. "Kuzushi" means to take the other persons balance, and to maintain control of their balance through the entire interaction; awase refers to connected, unified movement. We will study these principles, and practice affecting our partners balance from the instant of contact, and maintaining that control through continuous connection. In the spirit of "living together" we will also share meals on this special training day.

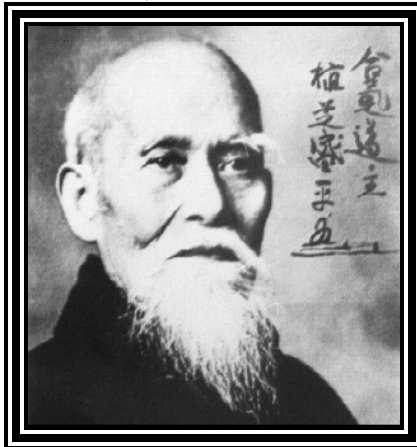
Aikido weapons training will continue through the summer months, following our regular classes on Tuesdays and Fridays. Presently, we are studying the jo. All students are encouraged to attend, as the weapons training is designed to foster and reinforce a strong understanding of the basic principles of aikido... and, they're fun!

Friday evening aikido classes will continue to be open to students of all ranks; however, the format of these classes will change. Students of 6th Kyu and below will continue to work on your individual training programs; 5th Kyu and higher will take part in "Shugyo" practice. Weapons training will continue for all students.

Just a gentle reminder to all students that training supplies, such as uniforms, hakama and training weapons are available through the school; see Sensei Brad for details!

Finally, remember to keep an eye on www.abundantpeace.com for a list of upcoming workshops and seminars.

Quote from O Sensei



"It is necessary to develop a strategy that utilizes all the physical conditions and elements that are directly at hand. The best strategy relies upon an unlimited set of responses."

-Morihei Ueshiba, O Sensei-

Promotions



Kids

Patrick F. Jr. 13th Kyu
Darien W. Jr. 13th Kyu

Adults

Randy N. 9th Kyu
Leo W. 9th Kyu
Joel A. 9th Kyu
Bobby S. 5th Kyu

CONGRATULATIONS!

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!

Leadership

The relationships that develop within a Budo Community such as ours are unique, and critical to the training process. The most basic of these is that of Sensei to student. For most of our recent history, our community has been small enough that this single relationship has provided enough guidance and leadership; however, our recent growth has altered this dynamic.

As our community grows at all levels, but most especially the large increase in the number of junior students the challenge of providing leadership demands more work than any one person can handle. This in turn presents us with an opportunity, which is to give our Senior Belts the opportunity to take a larger leadership and teaching role within the School.

The best expression of this ideal is found in the Japanese relationship of senpai to kohai; the senpai are the mentors, while the kohai are the trainees. This relationship already exists within our Dojo, as at every rank we are given the special task of coaching those junior in rank to our own. It is our opportunity today to expand this idea to encompass a wider range.

To Sensei falls the duty to plan and prepare the lessons; to supervise the mats during training; to ensure that training is conducted safely and effectively; to review the progress of training, offering specific guidance as necessary; and, to review our individual progress, to ready us for testing. As classes grow larger, and with a larger number of junior students, these tasks take all of Sensei's attention; it then must fall to the Senior Belts to handle other leadership tasks.

Senior belts can be defined as all students 6th Kyu and above; with our hakama come the additional duties and opportunities that leadership and seniority entail. These tasks include ensuring beginners are made welcome; instructing junior students in basic dojo etiquette; issuing training weapons from the Dojo supply; correcting errors made by junior students, in a manner that is respectful and courteous; and, other routine tasks needed to ensure the smooth running of our classes.

The relationship of senpai to kohai exists without any need for formal structure. In the Dojo, anyone junior to you may be considered kohai, while those senior to you are senpai. Those of us in hakama should naturally assume these leadership and coaching responsibilities, treating them as an opportunity to develop our leadership ability, and freeing Sensei's valuable time to ensure that our time on the mats is utilized to maximum value for every student.

To learn more, ask one of your senpai; and, remember that the chance to teach in any situation is a rare privilege. Focus on this relationship within our school, and add another dimension to your martial study!

-Stuart-