



ABUNDANT PEACE AIKIDO AND TAI CHI

Connections

Editorial

July, 2009

Dan Tian Breathing:

Connecting to the Center



I missed it, but the June issue was our twelfth Newsletter; that makes this our "first anniversary", a major personal milestone for me, and hopefully at least a bit significant for all of you! Over the past year, I have attempted to share my personal perspective and philosophy, as well as the results of my research.

I have enjoyed putting these together, and have been amply rewarded for my efforts. Aside from the thanks and tremendous feedback from each of you, in the course of my researches I have learned a great deal about both Aikido and Tai Chi studies; these lessons I have been able to take onto the mats with me, and my own training journey has been enriched as a result.

This anniversary is also a great opportunity to express thanks to many of you, for help in my research, for those who have written articles for publication, and for all the great feedback I have received. Remember, this is our Newsletter, not mine; contributions are always welcome, and will be gratefully published under your name!

Our school, and our community, have never been healthier; aikido classes are larger than ever, and on the tai chi side we enjoyed our first ever "non-noodle-night", a purely social BBQ hosted by a student and her husband at their home. These both point to the positive energy we enjoy sharing, and to a great future, training and learning together.

I would also like to mention once again the re-opening of Autumn Hollow, the animal shelter operated by Brad and his family. This is an ambitious venture, done solely for the good of the creatures they take in, and they are always in need of help and support; this can take a number of forms, so if you are able to help in any way, please talk to Sensei Brad.

Stuart



The Ten Essentials

The final of the "Ten Essentials" of Tai Chi practice, as taught by Yang Cheng Fu, is "Seek Quiescence Within Movement."

"External martial artists prize leaping and stopping as a skill, and they do this till breath (chi) and strength are exhausted, so that after practice they are all out of breath. In taiji we use quiescence to overcome movement, and even in movement, still have quiescence. So when you practice the form, the slower the better! When you do it slowly your breath becomes deep and long, the chi sinks to the cinnabar field (dan 1 tian 2) and naturally there is no deleterious constriction or enlargement of the blood vessels. If the student tries carefully, he may be able to comprehend the meaning behind these words."

Reprinted from www.yangfamilytaichi.com

What does it mean to be centered? In Qi Gong terms, it signifies having energy in the center of the body. The center is called Dan Tian, which means "elixir field" and a place to store energy. Think of the Dan Tian as a reservoir and a place of inner strength. The Dan Tian, located in the lower abdomen between the navel and the pubic bone, corresponds to the physical functions of digestion, elimination, and reproduction. Psychologically, it functions by giving us a sense of stability and balance. It is also a source of power for physical energy, sexual vitality, and inner power.

When a person is connected to their center, not only do they have more physical energy and vitality, but they are more stable emotionally. Imagine if stress and life's continual ups and downs, didn't affect you or throw you off. Imagine not feeling pushed and pulled off balance by the people in your life, from work relationships to family relationships. When you are centered, these challenges don't negatively affect you. By having energy in the center, we become much more resourceful.

Written by Lee Holden, L.Ac.

Reprinted from www.acufinder.com

Next Month: Deep Abdominal Breathing

Morning 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 you can!

Announcements



Our next aikido seminar opportunity at Aikido of Missoula will be with Saotome Sensei from 25 to 27 September, 2009. Any students planning to go should book their hotel rooms early, as this is a busy weekend in Missoula.

Aikido special training is on Friday, 17th July, from 6:30 to 9:30 PM; the theme is: "Kokyu & Musubi". Kokyu is the art of combining all of your forces together for a unified action, and musubi is to join with another force, dissolving the conflict through unification, leading to resolution.

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, you will continue to work on your individual training programs; 5th Kyu and higher will take part in more advanced "Shugyo" practice. Weapons training will continue after regular practice, for all students.

We had so much fun at the paintball games for our anniversary that some of you have suggested that we could do it again... and not wait until our next anniversary! Why not? If you would be interested in another such event, sometime during the summer, let Malcolm, Shawn, or Sensei Brad know!

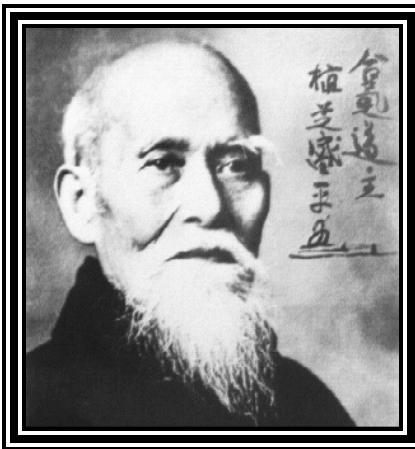
Just a gentle reminder to all students that training supplies, such as uniforms, hakama and training weapons are available through the school; see Sensei Brad for details!

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

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!



Quote from O Sensei

"Opponents confront us continually, but actually there is no opponent there. Enter deeply into an attack and neutralize it as you draw that misdirected force into your own sphere."

-Morihei Ueshiba, O Sensei-

Promotions



Kids

- Paige O. Jr. 14th Kyu
- Cassandra J. Jr. 14th Kyu
- Alexander T. Jr. 14th Kyu
- Patrick F. 14th Kyu
- Darien W. 14th Kyu
- Ethan T. Jr. 13th Kyu
- Nikola K. Jr. 13th Kyu
- Thea D. Jr. 13th Kyu
- Devon D. Jr. 13th Kyu
- Airk M. Jr. 13th Kyu

- Julia S. Jr. 10th Kyu
- Stephanie T. 10th Kyu

Adults

- David J. 6th Kyu

CONGRATULATIONS!

Auction & Bake Sale

Autumn Hollow Animal Sanctuary will hold a bake sale and crafts auction on 4 and 5 2009, beginning at 11:00 am each day. This will raise funds for the care of their animal clients; it provides a great chance to check out their operation, and to purchase some of Paula's outstanding baked goods! For further details, information is available at the Dojo, any time that classes are held.

Shugyo

For more advanced students, Friday evenings will now consist of "Shugyo" training; as with all things Japanese, the precise meaning of this term is open to some interpretation, but two definitions that I appreciate are "determined training that fosters enlightenment" and "conducting oneself in a way that inspires mastery".

The Founder wrote: "Progress comes to those who train and train; reliance on secret techniques will get you nowhere."

This principle will guide the advanced students, during their shugyo practice. We will train together, working not on our program, but on advanced principles and technique. Shugyo demands a higher degree of focus and intensity, intended to foster a deeper understanding of the art.

We can expect to be challenged, both physically and mentally; we may spend an entire class, or even a series of classes, training in one very specific principle; breaks from training will be minimal; and, in the tradition of Shugyo, movement will be continuous, with talk kept to a minimum.

This is the old way; the traditional method of Aikido practice; Saotome Shihan wrote:

"Many students would go to other places to do Zen training or to learn some other keiko. O-Sensei was not happy with them. But he never said anything publicly about it. Still, he said that Aikido was misogi, and so if a student wanted to train hard, they didn't need to run around learning many different things. This would be to miss the point of Aikido. "This is a shugyo (severe training)." O-Sensei always said, "I give you all things. Why are people always looking for other things?"

Reprinted from: Remembering O Sensei
Written by Mitsugi Saotome Shihan

Shugyo will give the advanced student the opportunity to focus on and polish their skills; like a fine blade, the spirit attains mastery through repeated efforts alone. On the Shugyo path we will have the chance to touch the teaching method of our Founder, to polish our technique, our connection with the principles of Aikido, and our spirits.

All advanced students are encouraged to attend these practices, as they will be very valuable to each of us; the school will benefit, because as our understanding and skills improve, we will be better equipped to share that knowledge with less experienced students. See you on the mats!

-Stuart-