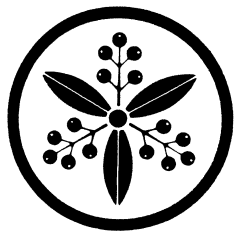


The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



道の為、
世の為、
人の為
合気道

The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: Aikido World Headquarters, 17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

October 2014

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Letter From the Editor

by Mark Ehrlich
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

Fall has arrived at the dojo, but it still feels like summer, with temperatures easily reaching towards 90 F every week. Despite the heat, it pleases me very much to say that many of our students keep coming to train regularly. Coming to the dojo to train when we'd rather stay home or do something – anything – else can pay big dividends down the line as we develop our strength of will and character to put into our training what we hope to get out of it: a way to develop into our best selves.

In this issue of *The Aiki Dojo*, we turn our attention to training writ large, and also on the finer aspects within training that prove essential to proper development as a martial artist. David Ito gets things going by sharing some of the secrets that regular practice will reveal to us, as well as giving some examples of martial artists who achieved greatness in

their art by relentless focus on training. Ken Watanabe examines the crucial study of *ukemi* and how learning to fall not only becomes helpful when it comes time to learn to throw, but also how proper *ukemi* can reveal nuances of our technical understanding – provided, of course, that we give proper time and attention to our training. And as we always do, we have Sensei pay us a visit from the archives, this time to field a question and discuss the term *shugyo* from historical, religious, and martial arts perspectives. Additionally, we bring news of a book by Morito Sukanuma Shihan (recently translated into English) that promises to raise its readers' awareness as it simultaneously lifts their spirits. This issue promises to have something for every Aikido practitioner. I hope you find it as illuminating as I did.

On a final note, many thank to our students for their generosity lately. Your kindness reminded me once again of what a special community we've created. Take care until next time. I'll see you on the mat!

Upcoming Events

October 25th

Instructor's intensive

October 26th

Children's Class Halloween Party

November 27-28th

Dojo Closed
Thanksgiving

November 29th

Instructor's intensive

December 6th:

Dojo Christmas Party

December 20th

Osoji: Year end clean-up

The Secret of (Our) Success

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

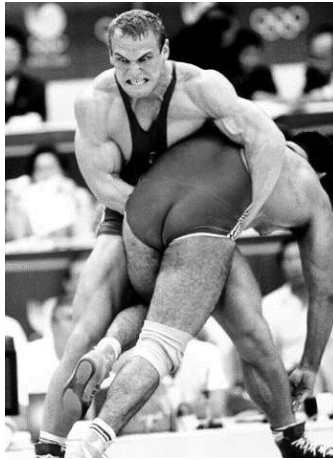
The fact of the matter is that everyone wants to get good at what-ever it is we do, whether it's Aikido or lawn bowling. Recently I read an article which basically argued that in order to become an expert in an art, we must devote our entire life to that art and give up everything else. This isn't an uncommon practice, especially in Japan. In Japan, it is almost unheard of that someone would study more than one *do* and most teachers wouldn't even accept a student who did so. The theory is that serious students needed to focus all of their energies into learning the given art and that effort or sacrifice was necessary in order to grow. I truly believe that in order to become good at something, we need to make sacrifices. Maybe "sacrifice" is the wrong word because it has somewhat of a bad connotation and perhaps "exertion" or "effort" might seem euphemistically a little bit more palatable.

Thus, in order to get good at something we must place our efforts in the right endeavors or as Sensei used to say, "You have to dig in the right places." In order to dig in the right place we first need to have something we wish to accomplish. Once we have the goal in mind, then we can implement a strategy toward achieving it. That strategy almost always entails putting forth some serious effort, and sometimes even giving up some things, to achieve our ends.

Let's say, hypothetically, that we wanted to get good at something like Aikido. We might begin by asking the teacher, "How do I get good at Aikido?" The teacher may respond with some famously apt quote of Sensei's like, "Just do more Aikido." From there we would start to formulate a plan by first comparing our work and life schedules with the class schedule. After much research and analysis, we conclude that we can successfully come to class four times a week, but could make it a fifth time if we woke up one hour earlier on Saturdays. Then we might set about diligently going to class on those five days regularly and consistently. (As a side note, the fifth day actually serves as the most important day, because on that day we had to put forth the most effort and had to sacrifice the most. On that fifth day we learn the secret of every great martial artist who has ever lived: in order to get good at something we have to put in the effort and sometimes, dare I say it, even sacrifice some.)

Once we start to put forth that sweat and determination we join the ranks of some of the greatest martial artists of all time. I've shared some stories here about successful people who put in some sweat

equity in order to get what they wanted.



Alexander Karelin

Long ago during the Cold War the Soviet Union produced the most dominant Greco-Roman super heavyweight wrestler that had ever lived named **Alexander Karelin**, or "The Russian Bear". During the course of his competitive career he accumulated a record of 887 wins and two losses. He won gold medals at the 1988, 1992, and 1996 Olympic Games and a silver medal at the 2000 Olympic Games. At 15 years old Karelin snapped his femur in half during a wrestling match and his parents tried to force him to quit wrestling; he responded, "I couldn't leave the sport to which I'd given my leg." His regular workout included running for two hours in the Siberian woods in thigh-deep snow and rowing a boat until his hands bled. Karelin's signature move, the "Karelin slam", involved him picking up his squirming 300-pound opponents (who were lying face down) and slam them to the ground. When asked to name his toughest opponent, he responded, "my refrigerator" then went on to explain that he bought a refrigerator and bear hugged it up eight flights of stairs to his apartment. His quote about training reveals much about his spirit: "I train every day of my life as they have never trained a day in theirs." This fighting spirit made Karelin the most successful Greco-Roman wrestler in Olympic history.



Masahiko Kimura

Masahiko Kimura was one of the most famous *Judoka* of all time and he racked up a streak of impressive Judo championships as well as winning the All Japan Judo Championship three times from 1937-1939. Kimura was renowned for his training regimen: after winning the All Japan Judo Championship for the first time in 1937, he resolved to keep the title for at least 10 more years. In order to do this, Kimura concluded that he needed to work harder than any other *Judoka*. To outwork his opponents he came up with the mantra, *sanbai ro rioku*, or "triple your effort". He trained up to nine hours a day and did 1,000 push-ups because he believed that his opponents trained four hours a day and did 300 push-ups. Kimura trained daily at the Kodokan and with the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department. Apparently they asked him to refrain from employing one of his strongest moves, *osoto-gari* or outside leg sweep, during training because so many people suffered concussions from it. Because of his renowned ability and success a Japanese writer named Tsuneo Tomita coined the popular phrase, *Kimura no mae ni Kimura naku, Kimura no ato ni Kimura nashi*. which means *nobody before Kimura and nobody since*. Supposedly, even in retirement he still trained eight hours a day.

Continued on page 5...

In The Community...



Our student **Andrew Loviska** is in a show.
Please come out to support him.

Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty

October 11, 2014 - April 26, 2015



The Japanese American National Museum and Sanrio present *Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty*, the world's first large-scale Hello Kitty museum retrospective.

Organized as part of the global icon's 40th-anniversary celebrations, the exhibition examines the colorful history of Hello Kitty and her influence on popular culture. *Hello!* includes an extensive product survey, with rare and unique items from the Sanrio archives, alongside a selection of innovative contemporary artworks inspired by Hello Kitty and her world.

Hello!, the first exhibition of its kind in the world, is curated by Christine Yano, Ph.D., author of *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific*, and Jamie Rivadeneira, founder and owner of pop culture-inspired boutique JapanLA.

Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty will be a specially ticketed exhibition. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$10 for ages 6-17, free for ages 5 and under. All admissions based on timed entry. Obtaining tickets in advance is strongly encouraged. Tickets on sale September 29, 2014.

For more information: <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/hellokitty/>

Samurai Armor on Display at the Resnick Pavilion at LACMA

October 19, 2014 – February 1, 2015



and other battle gear.

During the centuries covered by the exhibition, warfare evolved from combat between small bands of equestrian archers to the clash of vast armies of infantry and cavalry equipped with swords, spears, and even matchlock guns. Arms and armor were needed in unprecedented quantities, and craftsmen responded with an astonishingly varied array of armor that was both functional and visually spectacular, a celebration of the warrior's prowess. Even after 1615, when the Tokugawa military dictatorship brought an end to battle, samurai families continued to commission splendid arms and armor for ceremonial purposes. Because the social rank, income, and prestige of a samurai family were strictly determined by the battlefield valor of their ancestors, armor became ever more sumptuous as the embodiment of an elite warrior family's heritage. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue with essays by some of the leading Japanese samurai armor experts.

General admission tickets go on sale now!

<http://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/samurai-japanese-armor-ann-and-gabriel-barbier-mueller-collection>

Giving and Receiving

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

As Aikido students, we know that practice consists of taking turns being the *nage* (the one doing the throwing and pinning) and the *uke* (the one being thrown or pinned). Many beginners, and even intermediate students, mistakenly categorize *ukemi* as simply the act of falling, but *ukemi* is much more than simply taking a nice break fall.

In Japanese martial arts, the concept of *uke*, or the one receiving the technique, and the *nage* or *tori*, the one executing the technique, is an idea that is used in many styles other than Aikido. In Judo and Jujutsu, their forms also feature an *uke* and a *nage* (or *tori*). Swordsmanship shares this concept as well, the receiver of the technique being the *uketachi* and the swordsman executing the technique, the *uchitachi*.

Traditionally, when demonstrating martial arts techniques, the *uke* is always the senior partner, usually the teacher. The reason for this is because successfully demonstrating the proper technique will be impossible unless the *uke* has a thorough understanding of the technique. With this understanding, experience, and expertise, the *uke* can control the speed and timing of the partner, insuring a successful demonstration.

The *ukemi* in Aikido training is so important that we expect students to demonstrate good ability in *ukemi* before earning their *shodan*, or first-degree black belt. In fact, more than emphasizing the *nage* side of practice, we judge beginners more on their skill in taking *ukemi* rather than accumulating lots of techniques. In proper Aikido training, *ukemi* skill directly correlates and contributes to the skill level of the student. That is, if the student's *ukemi* feels stiff, heavy, and unenergetic, the student's technique will mirror these qualities. In short, getting good at *ukemi* lays a very strong foundation for doing the technique properly and effectively. For this reason, many teachers are very strict regarding their student's skill level.

I heard stories from my own teacher that the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, was very strict regarding *ukemi*. If students could take O Sensei's *shiho-nage ukemi* without letting their head touch the ground, they were awarded *yodan*, or fourth degree black belt. Taking *ukemi* for O Sensei was not just a point of pride, but an important part of training. But should the student make a misstep while taking *ukemi*, that student would not be called upon to take O Sensei's *ukemi* again for at least six months. The student, knowing this, would become despondent, not from shame, but because all of O Sensei's students knew that

the only real way to catch on to their teacher's technique was to experience it firsthand.

In the Western style of learning, students want to know "Why?", but in the Eastern tradition of learning, the student always asks, "How does it feel?" For this reason, practicing to have first-rate *ukemi* skills is so important. It's safe to say that without the proper *ukemi*, it will be very difficult to have a good practice. During practice, students need to execute the technique correctly and effectively without worrying about injuring their partners. *Uke* who get too stiff fall in danger of becoming injured, but the lack of flexibility and inability to move effectively prevents students



from experiencing the flavor of technique and what makes the technique work. Eventually, the technique should work on any opponent regardless of their skill, but to reach that level, we need to practice at a consistently correct level; without students who have developed good *ukemi*, that consistently will be almost impossible to achieve.

We must realize that *ukemi* doesn't mean simply the act of rolling backwards, forwards, and sideways, but how we receive or negotiate the entire technique from beginning to end; that is, from how we establish spacing, attack correctly, move and follow the technique, to getting into the proper position to receive the technique's power without serious injury, then springing back up to do it again. In short, the basics of *ukemi* hold the fundamentals of self-defense and awareness. Proper *ukemi* contributes to proper practice and trains us to move properly in order to protect ourselves from the technique, not only for our own

sake as *uke*, but also so the *nage* can execute the technique as correctly and effectively as possible. Without good *ukemi*, progress in Aikido will become impossible not only for the student taking *ukemi* but for everybody else in the class, as well.

How might we gauge our *ukemi* level? A simple way to determine if our *ukemi* is any good is if other students enjoy practicing with us in class. Proper *ukemi* is selfless. Although the word *uke* means "to receive", the spirit of proper *ukemi* is giving; that is, giving oneself to our partners so they can practice the technique to the best of their ability.

Students who train with their ego might interpret taking proper *ukemi* – giving themselves to their partner's technique – as "losing", but nothing could be further from the truth. A student with good *ukemi* is the person everyone wants to throw around in demonstrations or partner with for a black belt exam. More *ukemi* always translates to faster progress.

Continued on page 6...

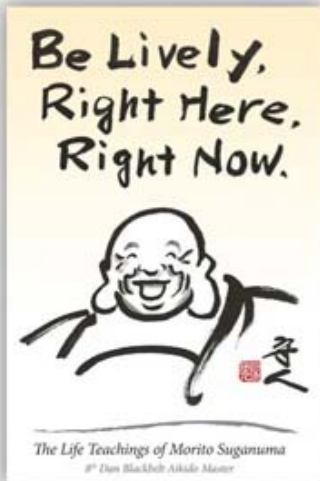
The Secret of (Our) Success *continued from page 2...*

Before **Morihei Ueshiba** earned the title *O Sensei* he was a gifted martial arts practitioner who struggled to get into the army because he was too short. In 1903 he was drafted into the military but later rejected because he only stood 1.52 meters, or just under five feet, tall. This rejection came as a serious blow to his self-esteem even though (or perhaps because) he was so celebrated as a martial artist. Ueshiba resolved to get admitted into the military and so he exercised every day and even went to the extremes of hanging from branches with weights attached to his legs to stretch his spine. Every day he exercised and trained in the martial arts and by the end of the year he grew to 1.57 meters or 5 feet 2 inches and was inducted into the Wakayama 61st Infantry Regiment. From that point on he studied several different martial arts and even became the regimental champion in *sumo* and bayonet fighting. Nine years later young Ueshiba would meet Sokaku Takeda and from there the seeds of what would later become Aikido were sown.

Can we learn Aikido if we are old? Can we learn Aikido if we have a family? Can we learn Aikido and still have a life? Of course. Sensei's admonishment that we dig in the right place implies that success results from science or art rather than by accident. Becoming successful means placing our efforts in the right things as well as in the right ways. Buddhists have a saying, "If we are facing in the right direction, all we have to do is keep on walking." So if we want something, let's put forth all our energies towards acquiring that goal, and, over time, we will find success. The stories above illustrate that like us, martial artists like O Sensei, Masahiko Kimura, or Alexander Karelin were just normal people before they grew into giants. Where they differ, perhaps, is that they understood and accepted that the secret to success is great effort and sometimes maybe even great sacrifice. Once we decide what we want, let's go out and get it. Please study hard.

Book Review

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor



Be Lively, Right Here, Right Now

by Morito Sukanuma Shihan

Published by Tamami Nakashimada

Very few books on the market today have moved me as profoundly as Morito Sukanuma's book, *Be Lively, Right Here, Right Now*. This book serves as a manual on how to live life better. Each chapter is dedicated to a teaching or lesson about life that is explained by Sukanuma Shihan in both written form and by his own hand using Japanese brush calligraphy, or shodo. This is one of those books like *Kodo: Ancient Ways* that readers can pick up at any time and just turn to a random page and find inspiration. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all Aikido students or anyone who has an interest in living their life in a better way.

To purchase the book by email, please email: sjacanada@gmail.com.

To purchase the book via the Internet, please go to: <http://www.shoheijuku.ca/book.html>

The Furuya Foundation and The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles (ACLA) admit students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.





Giving and Receiving *continued from page 4...*

When taking *ukemi* for the teacher, we must realize that while the teacher is demonstrating the technique to the class, the *uke* is also demonstrating how to successfully negotiate the technique without injury. Without the correct *ukemi*, the teacher will find it difficult to demonstrate the technique correctly to the class and in very strict dojos where verbal instruction is rare, good *ukemi* becomes extremely important. The students in the class will not be able to see the technique being done properly with mediocre *ukemi*.

Aikido technique is very interesting in that taking the proper *ukemi* – that is, moving efficiently with the technique and putting oneself in the most protected and proper position possible – creates the most favorable conditions for the *nage* to do the technique correctly. An improper, stiff *ukemi* that resists the technique, although it might “feel” strong, creates an unfavorable condition from which to do the technique, but at the same time creates openings in the *uke*’s defense for the *nage* to escalate the situation instead of simply performing a gentle throw or a pin. That is one facet of O Sensei’s genius. In proper practice, the benefit a good *uke* gives equals the benefits a good *ukemi* receives.

LET’S STUDY JAPANESE!



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Save the Date

Dojo Christmas Party



Smokehouse in Burbank

Saturday
 December 6, 2014



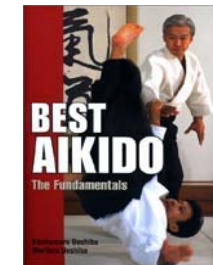
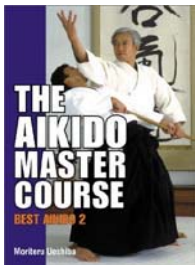
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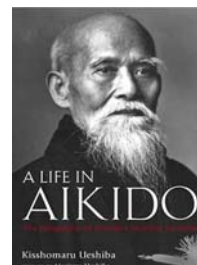
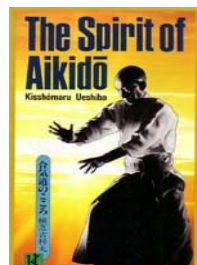
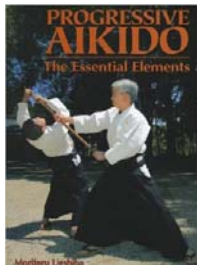
Tuesday-Friday: 5AM-3PM
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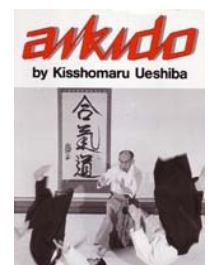
Recommended Readings:



by Ueshiba Moriteru



by Ueshiba Kisshomaru



On Shugyo

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

We've received a question from an Internet reader of the Daily Message:

"I have a request, and am hoping when you have the time, to write about your understanding of the word *shugyo*. I have seen it used by many people and have heard definitions that leave me still confused. I have heard this defined as austere training. I am not sure what separates it from everyday training. I would love to hear what this word means to you."

This is a very difficult question to ask; at the same time, it is very easy. I have thought about your question all day today and still do not know how to answer you in the best way. For now, I will just give you present thoughts on this question and hope that I don't confuse you any more!

Simply put, *shugyo* means "training" or "practice". More specifically, nowadays we like to say, "spiritual training", but what does this really mean?

In ancient times, a young warrior would go on a long journey called *musha shugyo* or "warrior training". He would go on a long journey across the country to find a teacher under whom to train. Sometimes he could find the right teacher right away; sometimes this took many years. Part of this delay fell to the reality of traveling back then. The hard nights and long days of walking here to there, meeting new people, experiencing the hardships of the road, no shelter, no food sometimes, getting caught in the rain, losing his way, getting robbed, spending nights in the cold, and on and on, gave the young warrior the experiences of real life as well as the lessons of his teacher. This type of training not only developed his skill as a swordsman, but also developed him as a mature human being experienced in the realities of life.

In Buddhism, some priests would enter "special" periods of training in addition to their regular training. I know one teacher who did 100 days of fasting, in complete silence, without a word. The idea was to reach the highest level of spiritual awakening through subjecting the body to harsh practice or conditions. Long terms of meditation, fasting, going off into the mountains, and living alone in solitude, reading the sacred texts, etc. all became methods of special training called *shugyo*.

Today, *shugyo* means regular physical practice taken to an intense level in order to transcend the body and reach a high state of spiritual awakening or awareness. *Gyo* is the important word here: it takes its inspiration from Buddhism, meaning intense spiritual training. In addition, we have a well-used term in Buddhism, called *bosatsu-gyo*. In this case, *gyo* means a pledge or promise one makes to oneself to fulfill a particular goal or purpose. In

bosatsu-gyo, which all priests must pledge, a priest will forgo complete enlightenment until he can save all sentient, living beings. In other words, it is a promise to save all living creatures in the world – the ultimate of spiritual practice in Buddhism.



Shugyo

In very, very ancient times, there was a legendary person of amazing powers known as *En no Gyoja*, or literally, "Master of Practice". He is considered to be the founder of *yamabushi* or mountain warriors who practice in the deep, cold, snowy mountains called Haguro (Black Feather Mountain) and Gassan (Moon Mountain), two very sacred mountains in Dewa Province in northern Japan. They run through the mountains without stopping for miles and miles, stand under waterfalls in meditation, conduct sacred esoteric ceremonies with water and fire, and undergo fasting and meditation and chanting sacred incantations as part of their practice. Some get periodically suspended by their feet off the cliff of a very high mountain! They practice many types of "extreme" disciplines to achieve super powers. This practice is known as *gyo*, which is, more specifically, *shugyo*.

When I was very young, my grandfather explained to me that *shugyo* was "silent" practice, to practice with whatever hardships or obstacles or disappointments came with the art and in life, without quitting or giving up, in silence, without any complaints. I have always used this as my definition of *shugyo* as it came from my dear grandfather.

definition of *shugyo* as it came from my dear grandfather.

Shugyo is intense spiritual training, often at the expense of the body. It is also a pledge one makes to oneself to achieve a special goal or to purify oneself in body and soul. *Shugyo* also means "silent" practice – meaning to bear all hardships without complaint. Finally, *shugyo* comes from *bosatsu-gyo* – a vow to save all sentient beings. *Shugyo* is not for personal strength or to achieve personal or selfish goals; it is the realization and materialization of the highest goodness through spiritual awakening.

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on October 2, 2003.

Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class

10:15-11:15 AM Open

Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

7:45-8:45 PM Weapons*

Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

9:30-10:30 AM Open

10:45-11:45 AM Advanced*

6:30 AM Instructor's Intensive:

*last Saturday of the month by invitation only.**

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

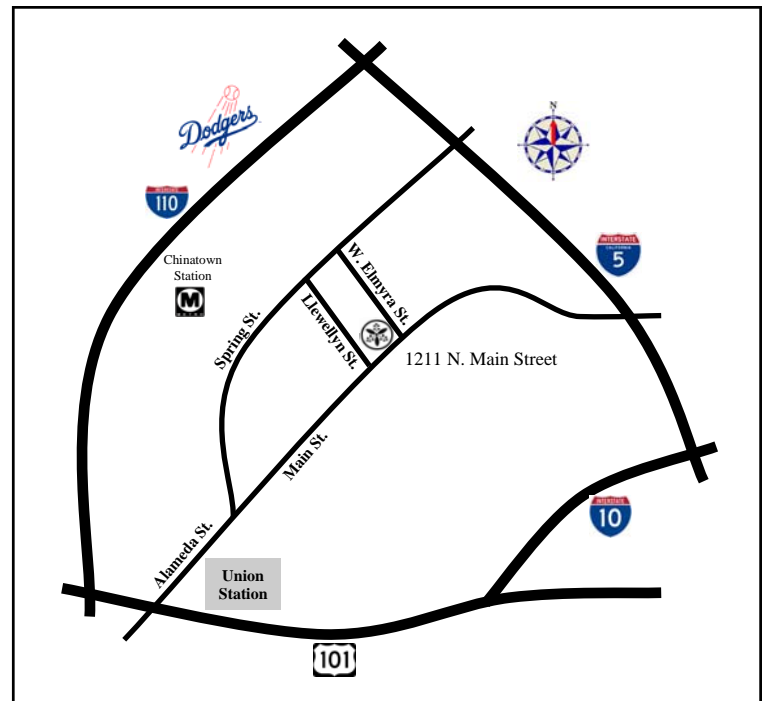
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM

No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.



We are directly affiliated with:

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Aikido Hombu Dojo - Aikikai

17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN

We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.



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The Aiki Dojo
Official publication of
the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido Dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you also will dedicate yourself to your training and to enjoying all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido can offer.

Publisher: David Ito
Editor-in-Chief: Mark Ehrlich

Finding Our Dojo

We are located at

1211 N. Main Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Telephone: (323) 225-1424

E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

We are across the street and one block northwest from the Chinatown Metro Station.

The entrance is on Elmyra Street.

No appointment necessary to watch classes or join:

You are welcome to visit us any time during any of our Open or Fundamentals classes. Please come early.