



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

2

Bend Don't Break

By David Ito

Ito Sensei reminisces about the hardships of 2019 brought us.

3

Time Flies

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz

Almaraz Sensei discusses the heart of true friendships.

7

Good Relationships

by Rev. Kensho Furuya

Sensei writes about how important mutual respect is in Aikido.



Red Shinto Shrine
by Unknown

2019: The Winter of the Decade



Bend Don't Break by David Ito Aikido Chief Instructor

The other day, one of my Japanese relatives commented that “The nine year in each decade is always the most difficult.” She was right and 2019 did not disappoint and if I am not mistaken, this year really did seem to be much harder and was filled with a lot more adversity.

The winters in Japan are typically very harsh. In the past, Japan was mainly an agrarian society and so they needed to have a prosperous harvest in order to make it through the grueling winters. In December, a commonly heard word is *yukiore* (雪折れ). *Yukiore* means “snow bent” and is sometimes used to describe something which “breaks under the weight of heavy snow.”

When confronted with an insurmountable obstacle, the fight or flight model dictates that there is one of three responses to a threat to our survival: fight, flight or freeze. We can resist and fight or we can run away or cower in fear when our opposition is seemingly too strong.

In Aikido, there is a fourth option which we will call “harmony.” Harmony means that we actually move toward our threat and instead of resisting it, we align with it. When we align with it, we are able to take control over it. When we can take control over it then we get to choose how we wish to respond. To fight, run away or freeze is to react mindlessly. To harmonize allows us to act mindfully and thus appropriately. The *tenkan* movement typifies harmony as we “blend” with our challenger’s advances rather than resist or recoil when we are attacked.

The word *yukiore* can be looked at another way. The use of verb *oreru* (折れる) in *yukiore* can be translated as “to break or to be broken” but it also can be translated to mean “to yield.” The usage of “to yield” can be seen in the phrase *oreru yori magare* (折れるより曲がれ). *Oreru yori magare* is an idiom which means, “It is better to bend than to break.”

It is easy for us to see the strife of life as personal with its hardships somehow divinely designed to break us and then the heavy snow of life might be a little too difficult for us to shoulder. However, under the heavy snowfall of winter, the patient bamboo yields to the weight of the snow knowing that its weight will not last once spring returns.

As Aikidoists, we do not resist, we blend or harmonize because we know that nothing lasts forever and that all things have a season. Training in Aikido, we develop a sense of calmness within ourselves by practicing being calm and harmonizing with our opponent’s attacks in class. With time, we can then “use” that calmed that we practices in our daily lives and meet life’s challenges with grace and harmony.

There is an old Japanese proverb or *kotowaza* that pertains to farming which enables us to see the snow of life in a different way. Farmer often say, *Yuki wa honen no cho* which means “heavy snow is an indication of a bountiful harvest.” One can then extrapolate that the “snow” can either be something which has come to break us or something that has come to help us – it is all a matter of perspective.

Continued on page 6...



The years seem to go by so fast nowadays. It seems like only yesterday it was the beginning of 2019. Reflecting back on the year, I look back on all the ups and downs and it seems to go by so quickly and that reminds me of the Japanese proverb *kohin yanogotoshi* or “time flies like an arrow.” As we run around living our lives, time can seem like one of the most important things, but in reality time is very fleeting. More and more, I feel that relationships are much more important than time.

The fleetingness of time reminds me of a sign Furuya Sensei posted in the men’s dressing room that reads, “It is said that one million dollars cannot buy back one minute of your Life. Use your time wisely and carefully.” With Sensei’s assertion, we can see that time is not something that we can buy back nor is it something we can save either. Time is then ephemeral – it is fleeting. So instead of having “more” time in our lives, we should focus on having more meaningful relationships which, of course, takes more care and cultivation.

Now that the holidays are here with all the decorations and holiday cheer comes the feeling of “family.” For me, spending time with loved ones, sharing, and family reunions creates a sense of happiness. On the other hand, for some it is more of a difficult time because some of those relatives or friends are not near us or are no longer with us.

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

Not being with some of our friends or family members can be difficult but that doesn’t mean that they stop being with us nor does it mean that we have to forget them. When someone is far away or passes away, sometimes the best gift we can give them is to remember them. I feel this way about my teachers and many of my friends who I don’t get to see often or are no longer living. I try my best to remember them not just in words but in spirit. I think about the times we shared and how they made me feel.

Then they become close to me not only in my thoughts but in my heart as well. I remember them in how I teach class, the stories I tell and how I live my life. Each time I share them with others they are with me, maybe not physically close, but close to me in

“It is said that one million dollars cannot buy back one minute of your Life. Use your time wisely and carefully.”

my heart.

23 years ago, I became part of a family. The moment I walked into Sensei’s dojo in Los Angeles, he welcomed me with open arms, and I became part of the dojo and his student. Year after year, I feel closer and closer to Sensei, Ito Sensei, Watanabe Sensei, Doi Sensei and all of the other students at the Los Angeles dojo because I keep their memory in my heart. As a result, I feel that I became part of their family and they also have become part of my family.

Continued on page 6...



Good Ukemi by Ken Watanabe Iaido Chief Instructor

When I first began taking *ukemi* for Furuya Sensei, one of the things he always said was, “Too stiff! Too stiff!” At the time, I didn’t know what he meant. Did Sensei mean I wasn’t flexible enough? I was barely 21 years old and I could touch my toes and everything! It wasn’t until thousands of break falls later that I understood what Sensei meant by “stiff.”

In the beginning, I interpreted *ukemi* to mean “falling.” Back then, I never really understood the importance of *ukemi* in Aikido training. Why is *ukemi* emphasized in Aikido? When O’Sensei was alive, his students considered it an honor to be able to receive a throw from him or take his *ukemi*. It was said that if you could keep your head from hitting the mat when O’Sensei threw you down with *shiho-nage* then you were at least a 4th degree black belt!

Taking *ukemi* is more than just being a practice dummy who is just there to be slammed by the other person. The word *uke* means “to receive” and *mi* means “body”, so *ukemi* literally translates to “the receiving body.” The *uke* is the one who “receives” the technique.

When we take *ukemi*, we receive the power of the throw or pin, but that does not mean we simply become an inanimate punching bag. When we take good *ukemi*, we are learning how to blend

with our opponent as they practice the technique on us. It might seem that fighting against the technique would make our partner and ourselves stronger. On a certain level, yes, resisting our partner would make them physically stronger, but then we would both lose the meaning of training and no one would understand what makes this martial art truly “Aikido.”

So, how would being flexible and yielding in our movement help when it’s our turn to do the throwing and pinning? After all, we’re doing half the work aren’t we? How does going with the technique help our partner? How does it help us?

In Aikido, when we learn to take *ukemi*, we are learning how to blend with our opponent’s power, while protecting our centerline as we try to establish a superior position against our opponent. Both the *uke* and the *nage* are doing their best to move with the other person’s movements while trying to blend and align with the power of the movement. A good *uke* then strives for their footwork to be light, quick, and efficient and their bodies to be centered and in alignment. This ability to move and be centered enables us to stay connected with our partner’s technique but also with their power.

Continued on page 5...



Good Ukemi *continued from page 4...*

Taking good *ukemi* means practicing how to keep our body flexible and relaxed, yet focused and strong all while trying to move ourselves into the safest position from which to fall or to be pinned. *Ukemi* actually teaches us the basics of self-defense; how to protect ourselves against the technique by using our bodies in the best way possible.

When a person is usually the person with whom everybody seeks to practice with, it probably means their *ukemi* is pretty good. When the teacher regularly uses them to demonstrate the technique, it probably means their *ukemi* is very good.

Our *ukemi* level shows our true level of training and our understanding of the technique. A good *uke* moves with the technique enabling its proper form to be demonstrated and thus they can be thrown or pinned very strongly without the worry of injury. In fact, good *ukemi* skills are so important to the understanding of Aikido that it is a major prerequisite in one's training to become an instructor.

Ukemi isn't only being thrown or pinned. Attacking powerfully and effectively is also a very important part of *ukemi*. Attacking with the right power or spirit brings out the power in the technique. It means more than simply being able to take a break fall; it gives our partner the right tools with which to master the art. A good *uke* allows their partner to practice projecting their energy rather than relying on physical strength.

Sure, an Aikido student can resist their partner, and maybe the training will somehow feel stronger, and maybe their partner will fall hard, but what are they learning? Just how to struggle

with others, and how to inflict pain. That type of training can make someone physically stronger, but it doesn't make us become better at Aikido, or any other martial art for that matter.

When our partner throws or pins us, we aren't moving with it to make it "fake," but to enable our partner to learn to project their energy and to extend their power as opposed to simply pushing and pulling us with their strength. When we understand this as an *uke*, then we begin understanding blending, timing, connection, and aligning with our partner in terms of martial arts.

Anyone can throw someone down sloppily, but it's said that the most effective technique is also the most beautiful to watch. This is why *ukemi* is so important; everything that makes a good *uke* is also what makes a person a good at Aikido.

Good *ukemi* embodies the definition of every martial art: Being at the right place and taking the appropriate action at the right time. *Ukemi* is about maintaining a sense of balance and control in a situation that is out of control, bringing order to the chaos of being taken off balance and moved all over the mat. This is the reason I was admonished for being "too stiff." I wasn't moving my body enough and I wasn't moving like a martial artist – I was simply out of control and hanging on for dear life!

When we take the best *ukemi* we can, we are allowing our partner to show their best Aikido possible. This means we have to move our body in the best way so as to be in harmony with the movement and the power of the technique. Aspiring to this will not only make you a good *uke*, but also a good Aikidoist. Please understand this idea of *ukemi* in your practice, both for yourself and for your partner. •

IMPORTANT DATES

December 7 (Saturday): Dojo Holiday Party **6:30 PM**

December 14 (Saturday): Osoji - Year end clean up at **8:00 AM**

December 21 (Sunday): Children's class Christmas party **9:00 AM**

December 23-27 (Monday - Wednesday): Dojo Closed Christmas

December 29 (Sunday): Mochitsuki at Zenshuji **6:30 AM**

December 30 (Monday): Osame keiko - Last practice of the year **6:30 PM**

December 30 (Monday): End of the year party **8:00 PM**

December 31-January 3: Dojo Closed New Year's

January 4 (Saturday): Kagami Biraki - Dojo opening class 9:30 AM and party afterwards

Bend Don't Break *continued from page 2...*

Aikido teaches us that we get to choose how we live our lives. There is a famous poem by Kenji Miyazawa that became popular after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami which typifies the philosophy of harmonizing with one's circumstances:

Be not defeated by the rain
 nor let the wind prove you better
 not to the snows of winter
 nor be bested by the heat of summer
 be strong in body
 unfettered by desire
 not enticed to anger
 cultivate a quiet joy
 everyday eat 4 bowls of brown rice and
 miso and some vegetables
 in everything
 count yourself last and put others before you
 watch, listen and listen
 and never forget
 in the shade of the pine trees in the woods
 in a thatch-roof house
 if there is a sick child to the east
 go and nurse them
 if there is a tired mother to the west
 go and relieve her burden
 if there is someone near death in the south
 go and tell them not to be afraid
 if there is a quarrel in the north
 go and tell them to stop wasting their efforts
 in times of drought, shed tears of sympathy
 in the summer's coldness, walk with concern
 called a nobody by everyone
 not being praised by anyone
 not being blamed by anyone
 such a person
 is what I want to become

The trials and tribulations of life can really add up and it is easy to let them bring us down. Life is all about how we bounce back from adversity. 2019 is the "winter" of this decade and if its heaviness is any indication then 2020 has the potential to be our greatest year yet. The choice is yours – bend but don't break and thus don't let the snow of life defeat you.

Thank you all for a wonderful 2019 and I wish everyone a healthy and happy 2020 filled with prosperity. •

Time Flies *continued from page 3...*

Over the years, I have started to notice that Aikido goes far beyond merely throwing a person on the ground – it is much deeper than that. When we look at the kanji for the word Aikido (合気道), we can see that Aikido is more than something used to destroy the world. The kanji *ai* (合) can be translated as "together" and *ki* as (氣) as "spirit, energy or feeling." We can then generalize that the word Aikido can be translated to mean "the way of two or more energies coming together." These feelings or energies can go both ways and can span great distances. Thus, Aikido is more than just a fighting art; it is a way for people to come together and to learn to care about each other.

Caring for others is something that I learned 23 years ago when I first came to Sensei's dojo. Sensei treated me so graciously for seemingly no reason other than that I came a great distance to learn. I didn't know anything nor did I know how to be a student, but that didn't matter and they accepted me with open arms. Sensei and the students became family to me and now I am grateful that my students have been able to experience the shared experience of family with the students from Los Angeles and with those whom we have met from Japan as well. I have come to truly enjoy the friendship aspect of training and the opportunity to establish and strengthen those ties of friendship with everyone. Aikido has gone beyond the shared experience of a few hours of practice on the *tatami* mat and throwing each other down. Aikido training has risen to the creation of a "great family." This family is kept together not by being physically close or each others presence but by keeping those who are in our family close in our hearts.

Time does fly like an arrow but with the fleetingness of time, relationships become even more important. For me, Aikido and the holidays are both about family and it is important to me that I keep those who are with me and those who have passed away in my heart. This is what we really celebrate during the holidays and this is also what we are really doing when we train.

I feel that I have received the best gift from all of you – your friendship – and I am truly grateful. I am thankful for all the kindness and friendships that I have in my life. This holiday season, I offer you a gift from my heart – my friendship.

I wish you all the best. Happy Holidays! •



Good Relationships by Rev. Kensho Furuya

One of the things I rarely see nowadays is something that I should be seeing wherever I go! What is it? Well, it is a good relationship. A good relationship between two or more people. Of course, I see a lot of people together as mates, friends, lovers, etc., but rarely do I see a relationship based upon real trust and mutual respect.

I think one basic problem is that most relationships are based on “calculation.” We calculate how much time together and away, how much money given and taken, how many hours of this and that, how many things we do together and separately and on and on. Everything must be calculated or it will never be a “fair” relationship, we think! It is said that most relationships are based on money and this is why most relationships break up. However, most relationships go bad because a strong bond of trust and respect are never established.

We know what friendship is and we know what trust and respect is but we have not really mastered them in our lives, have we? If we cannot establish a good relationship with those who are very good friends, how can we expect to establish any kind of rapport or interaction with other people we meet every day?

It is the same on the mat in practice too. We are always going back and forth between people we like and dislike. I like him and he is not good. She is nice and she is no good. Back and forth, back and forth. One day this person and the next day someone else. It is so difficult to get along with everyone! I see some people go down the line of their friends like they are in a shooting gallery!

In the dojo, we have many, many rules to help us create a sense of harmony and order. These rules are important to help us all get on the same “wavelength” or become of the “same mind.” In practice, these rules of etiquette must be mastered first. Most people do not and this is why a dojo can have so many problems. In ancient times, these rules were also observed in society, but

nowadays we do not have such clear, hard and fast, ethical or moral standards.

As strong as we get and as much time as we spend in Aikido training, if we do not master these rules to help us understand how to give and take or learn respect and trust then we can never truly master Aikido and we can never master human relationships. Despite our modern society today, I see how these old rules still hold true for us.

Aikido people always speak of harmony and peace, yet Aikido people do not get along at all with each other like everyone else - this indicates to me, improper training. Of course, everyone will say it means that we are only human but it also means that we still do not understand what Aikido is. It is not an excuse.

Trust and respect are the basis of our society and how we live in this world, yet, we ignore them and cannot rely on them at all in our lives today - very sad! Very sad indeed!

We must understand Aikido techniques first of all, but we must also understand the form of Aikido, and also its spirit. Technique, form and spirit must all be understood as one, not one over the other and not one in place of the other and certainly not one without the others. To understand these we need to understand relationships.

Everyone wants love and to get along with others, but without mutual trust and respect, it will never happen. If we can't learn it in our lives then we must first practice it in the dojo and then apply it to our daily lives. This is what Aikido is all about, I think, anyways. Ultimately, without this mutual respect and trust, even love cannot happen which is supposed to be the most natural thing in the whole world!•

Editor's note: *Furuya Sensei published this in a slightly different form to his Daily Message blog on December 14, 2002.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

December 7 (Saturday) Dojo Christmas Party	December 23-27 Dojo Closed: Christmas
December 8 (Sunday) Michael Stinson Memorial	December 30 (Monday) Osame Keiko – Last practice of the year
December 14 (Saturday) Osoji Year-end clean-up	December 30 (Monday) Bonenkai Party – Forget the year party
December 22 (Sunday) Children's Class Christmas Party	December 31– January 3 Dojo Closed: New Year's
December 28 (Saturday) Last Intensive Seminar	

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.

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays 6:30-8:00 AM* 9:30-10:30 AM 10:45-11:45 AM	Intensive Advanced Class Regular Class	Wednesdays 6:30-7:30 AM 5:15-6:15 PM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Fundamentals Regular Class
Sundays 9:00-10:00 AM 10:15-11:15 AM 11:30 AM-12:30 PM 12:45-1:45 PM	Children's Class Regular Class Fundamentals Open Practice	Thursdays 6:30-7:30 PM 7:45-8:45 PM	Regular Class Open Practice
Mondays 6:30-7:30 AM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Regular Class	Fridays 6:30-7:30 AM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Fundamentals
Tuesdays 6:30-7:30 PM	Advanced Class		

NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Morning, Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.

*Last Saturday of the month is Intensive Seminar by Invitation only.

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays 8:00-9:00 AM	Regular Class	Sundays 7:45-8:45 AM	Regular Class
----------------------------------	---------------	--------------------------------	---------------



The Aiki Dojo

is the Official publication of the

Aikido Center of Los Angeles

Copyright © 2019. All Rights Reserved. Published by the Aikido Center of Los Angeles. No portion of this publication may be copied or reproduced without written permission from the Publisher.

The names, symbols, logos, and photographs and all other intellectual property of the company, brands, and people appearing in this publication are the exclusive property of their respective owners and should not be interpreted as an endorsement of or by the Aikido Center of Los Angeles. Any legal and equitable rights in their intellectual property are exclusively reserved to those owners.



Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters

公益財団法人 合気会 合気道本部道場

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

Contact: 03-3203-9236 | aikido@aikikai.or.jp | www.aikikai.or.jp

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

has been awarded Official *Konin* recognition by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters.

Our dojos are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba and Hombu Dojo-Cho Mitsuteru Ueshiba.

Affiliated Dojos of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles



Aikido La Gomera Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido
Salamanca Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido Valladolid Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

羅府合気道学院古屋道場

1211 N. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

(323) 225-1424 | aikidocenterla@gmail.com | aikidocenterla.com

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 will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

FOLLOW THE US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Ito Sensei
@teacher.Aikido

Aikido Center of Los Angeles
@Aikidocenterla