



合気道

The Aiki Dojo

学 廃古屋道場
羅府合気道

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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Be Decisive

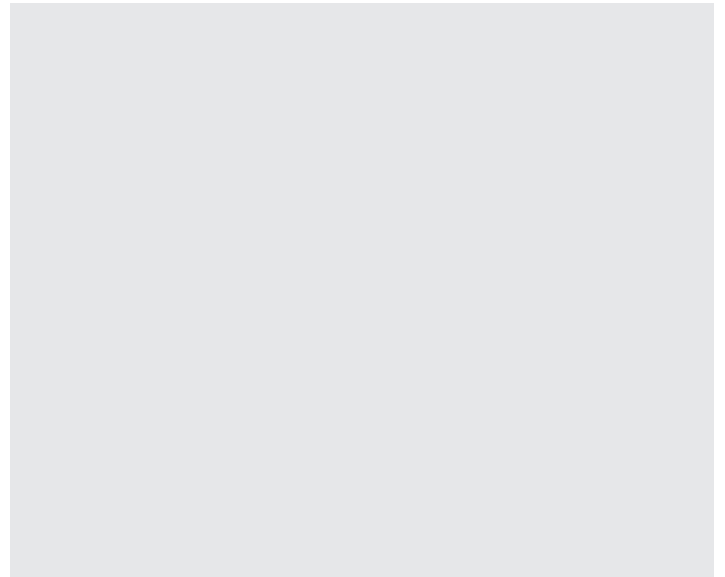
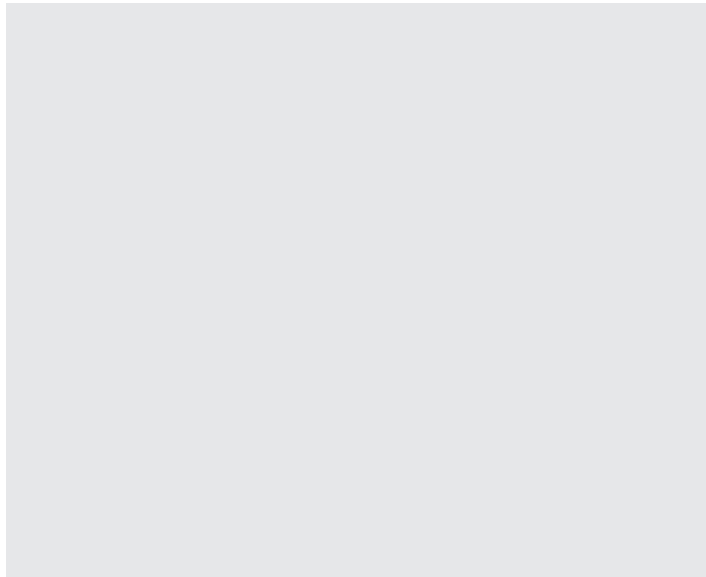
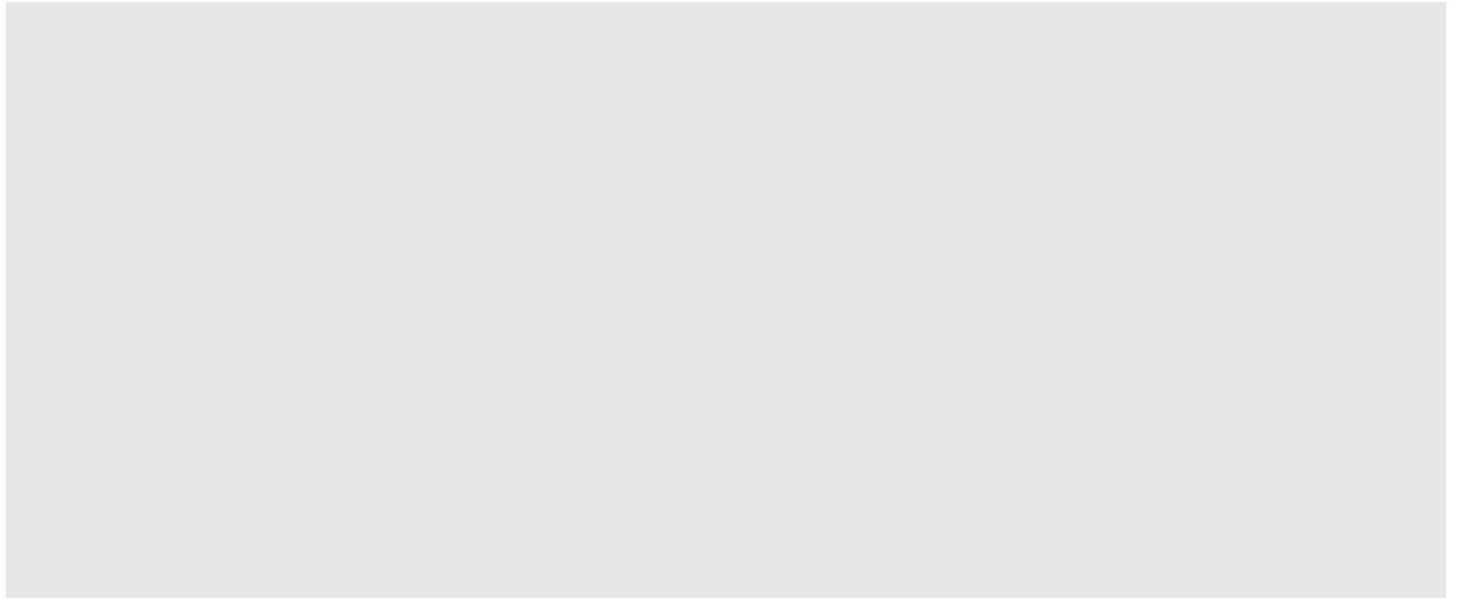
by **David Ito** Aikido Chief Instructor

Long ago, Furuya Sensei went to a local antique dealer and came upon a sword for sale. He looked at it and recognized the maker immediately. Sensei marveled at the beauty and craftsmanship of the blade, but it didn't quite stand out enough for him to buy it. So, Sensei decided not to buy it and left the shop. For the rest of the day, he couldn't get the sword out of his mind. The sword was fair priced and the sword itself was in good condition and of fine craftsmanship, but he just wasn't compelled to buy it. All night, Sensei wrestled with going back to buy that sword or just forgetting it. The next morning, he decided to go and buy it. When he arrived at the store, the sword was still there in the case and the dealer was still sitting behind the counter just as he was the day before. Sensei had purchased many antiques from this old Japanese man, so they were quite friendly. The dealer greeted Sensei at the counter and Sensei inquired about the sword again. The owner replied, "it's not for sale." Sensei was surprised as the sword was right there where the dealer laid it down the day before and there wasn't a sold tag on it. Sensei asked the dealer why it wasn't for sale. He said, "oh, it's for sale, but not to you." Sensei was aghast and said, "what do you mean?" With a stone face, the

dealer said, "you are a martial artist and so you must be able to make up your mind in an instant." Sensei just stood there with a quizzical look on his face. The man further elaborated, "a martial artist knows that there is sometimes only one opportunity and therefore they must train themselves to be decisive. So, the sword is not for sale." Knowing the man was right, Sensei just turned away and left.

What this old man was trying to teach Sensei was that a warrior must be decisive. This decisiveness comes in not only one's actions, one's speech, and in one's thoughts but also in one's understanding of time. Today, we live in the greatest time in the history of mankind. We are afforded every luxury, comfort and opportunity that our technologically advanced society can offer us. With this opulence sometimes comes a sense that we have the luxury of all the time in the world and with that we can wait for a better opportunity, more time, a better-looking mate, more money, etc.

Aikido training is *budo* and so not subject to the seemingly same lack of parameters that affects today's society. When our opponent moves against us, sometimes we only have one opportunity to seize the upper hand or suffer the consequence of getting hit. It is a sobering reality that indecisiveness leads to inaction and inaction gets us a nice knot on the top of our heads.



Sometimes, when there are too many choices or opportunities, we get greedy as we look for the best option or fit. The problem with inaction is that it doesn't take into account the fleetingness of time. We all, each and every person, are subject to the fate of time. With that understanding, we realize that there is no time left. The amount of time each of us lives in comparison to the grand scheme of time is but a teeny tiny blip akin to a flash of light. So, every moment that we squander is sacrilege.

Sensei put up this sign 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."

Today, we see so many students who come and go thinking that the opportunity to train and learn Aikido will always be there or that they can come back to it when they have more time, money, are in better shape, etc. The problem with that type of thinking is that we tend to

believe that there will be a tomorrow or that somehow our ability, health or skills are aging like fine wine. Time like skill is ephemeral.

In tea ceremony, they have this concept of *ichigo, ichie* which translates as, "one time, one meeting" but what it means is that this moment is a once in a lifetime occurrence and it shouldn't be wasted. The moments of life are fleeting and the fatalness of *budo* teaches us to appreciate what we have because this opportunity or this life may never arrive again.

A warrior realizes the shortness of their life and thus does not waste even a moment. So, they have to be decisive in order to live life fully. Wherever we find ourselves, whatever we find ourselves doing or who we find ourselves with, we must live life it to its fullest. If we have the opportunity to train, we shouldn't squander it thinking that there will be another opportunity right after it—we have to savor it. Please be decisive. •

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

by **Ken Watanabe**
Iaido Chief Instructor

Shortly after I began practicing in the dojo, a black belt candidate asked me to practice with him before class. The technique he wanted to practice was shomenuchi sankyo.

In this particular sankyo, the opponent is pinned halfway down then their wrist and forearm are twisted up and forward above their head keeping the opponent off balance. Next the defender executes a hand change, the opponent is cut down, swept to the ground, and finally pinned and immobilized.

I remember the technique so well because I don't think I ever experienced pain like that before! All I knew was that it hurt terribly so I tried moving, awkwardly and unsuccessfully, in a way to stop the pain.

That day, I learned something important; something that I use all the time in my practice: don't resist the technique. It's much better to move and go with it, and furthermore, we will learn more about the technique. It was my first lesson in non-resistance.

Some students, for one reason or another, become stiff when taking their partner's ukemi. Maybe they feel being thrown or pinned is the same as "losing." Maybe they want to seem strong or they feel they are trying to make a strong practice. Maybe they want to seem stronger to their juniors. What these students forget is that Aikido is not like lifting weights. Aikido is not like a tug-of-war. Aikido trains us to remove this stiffness and bring out our energy and our ability to move. In the practice, it's important to be able to move effectively not only to protect oneself, but to help our partner bring forth their own movement and energy.

It's important to learn how to move with the technique, not resist it or become more stiff. Generally speaking, the one being thrown in front of classes or demonstrations is the student with the best ukemi. Usually this person is the teacher's uke and it's also usually the case

that the teacher's uke is the one who will get good. In fact, the white belt kyu ranks are graded more on their ukemi ability rather than their technique. A requirement for shodan is good ukemi.

There are stories about students who made an error while taking O'Sensei's ukemi and how devastated they were knowing he would ignore them for about a year afterwards. That is how important good ukemi is.

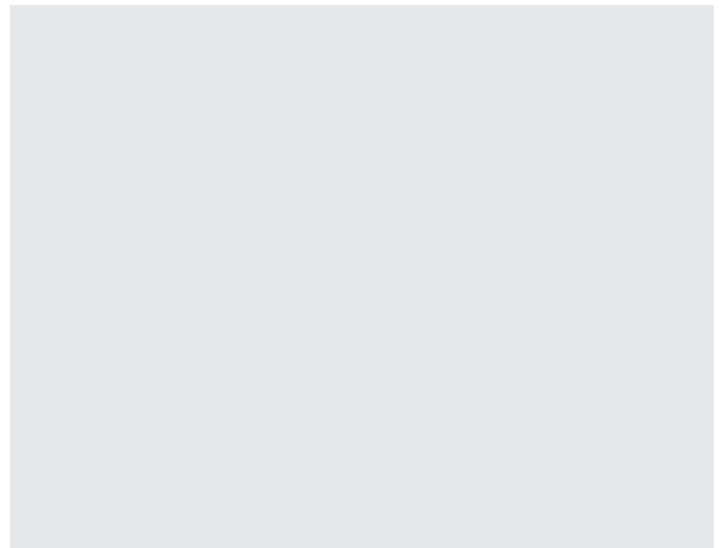
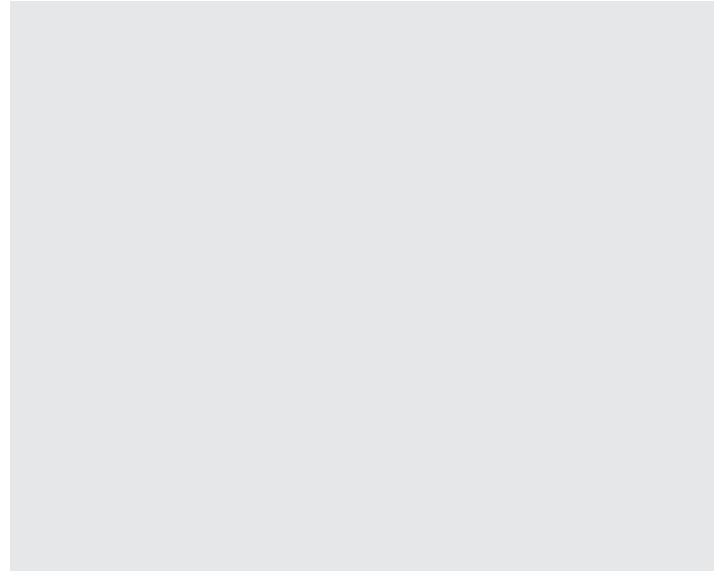
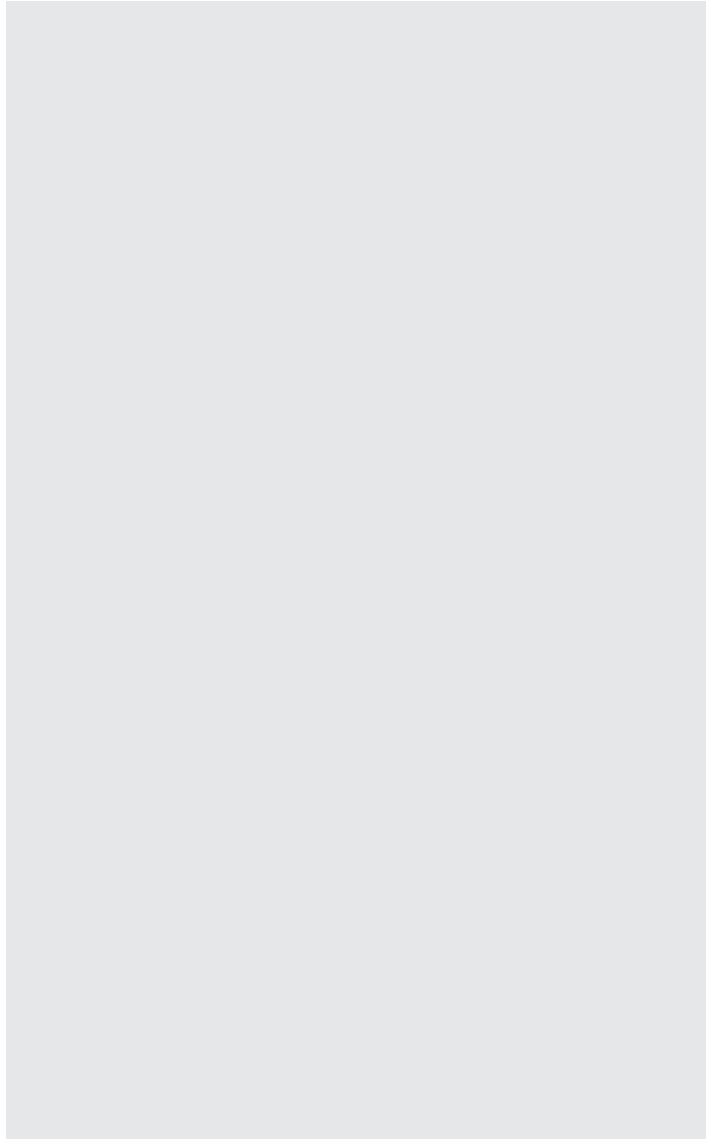
When being thrown or pinned it's important not to resist the technique. When we are too busy trying to be stiff showing how much better we are than our partner, we end up cheating ourselves.

Likewise, when we feel our partner get stiff or beginning to resist when it's our turn to throw, we start using our own strength to resist to overcome their resistance, so we can "win"; that is, throw or pin them. This is what Aikido calls "fighting."

Resisting our partner only makes their position stronger. For example, when we lean against something, our body's balance automatically gets stronger. Likewise, when we resist our opponent, their position and balance become stronger. If we leaned against a pole and it suddenly gives way, we would fall. It's the same with the technique.

In Aikido, we try to make our own circular movement completely stable without resisting against our opponent so whether our opponent pushes or pulls, it doesn't matter. The key is not to resist our opponent but to allow them to continue their own movement as we maintain the integrity of our own movement, drawing their attack into our own movement, taking over the attack, and in doing so, bringing their movement into our own movement.

Resisting or stopping the attack will only give the attacker a reason to change into a different, and more unpredictable attack. Stop their attack and another one will appear, escalating the situation instead of



controlling it. Allowing the opponent to attack without resisting it and their attacking mind will disappear, like bank robbers breaking into an empty vault.

We learn more from movement than from being stiff. When taking somebody's ukemi, the nage, or the one throwing or pinning, benefits more from good ukemi, than stiffness and resisting. This ability to move when taking ukemi is important when it's our turn to throw or pin. Aikido's power springs forth from movement, so students who are stiff when taking ukemi will never understand the kind of dynamic power used in Aikido. Being stiff means using too much strength inappropriately; movement means using energy.

In western thinking, we want to understand things intellectually; we want to know "how" and "why," but in Eastern thought, the student always asks, "what does it feel like?" They want to experience the technique for themselves. When we feel the correct technique, when we go with the movement without resisting it, we try to duplicate that same feeling in our own practice.

If we resist the technique, we'll never experience what it feels like and it will be hard to do it correctly. If we resist the movement, we'll never feel the movement. If we never feel the movement, we'll never get to know the movement. If we never get to know the movement, then how will we master it? This is the burning question for most Aikido students today.

The fear I had, especially when taking my teacher's ukemi, disappeared once I finally learned the value of non-resistance. Not resisting the technique is the first step to understanding how the technique works and eventually how to harmonize with our opponent and how to bring out the energy in the technique, and even by doing that, it still takes years of practice and refinement to finally scratch a tiny bit off the surface of Aikido.

In a culture where competition and winning is prized, and often rewarded, this idea of non-resistance seems counter-intuitive, yet this is the genius of both O'Sensei and Aikido. Please don't fight me on this. Just practice hard with this in mind. •

Healthy Teaching

by **Santiago Garcia Almaraz** Aikido 5th Dan
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

In the first century BC, Saint Timoteo wrote:

Erit enim tempus cum sanam doctrinam non sustinebunt sed ad sua desideria coacervabunt sibi magistros prurientes auribus. 2 Timoteo 4:3

Translated, this means: “For there shall be a time when people will not endure healthy teaching; rather according to their own whims, they will look for teachers who only teach them what they want to hear.”

From these words we can see that teaching students has been a problem as far back as the first century. Although many centuries have past, it seems as if those words are still apropos today. This sentiment is something Furuya Sensei struggled with and so I know I am not alone in my struggles.

Saint Timoteo’s words unfortunately reflect an underlying truth of teaching. Most people would rather be entertained than taught. The world may be more evolved, but the mind of the student remains the same. Today, it seems as if only a few students come to the dojo with an open mind and are willing to be taught what is necessary instead of what they want. The problem is that only a student with an open mind and a willingness to learn can truly master something.

The hardest part of teaching is to remove the consumerism from learning. It seems as if students today want their expectations met as soon as possible and if that doesn’t happen they move on to something else, looking for someone to make it easier or cheaper because society accustoms us to this attitude. Students should be patient and not think that they are wasting their time or that they are somehow losing time because they are not doing something more entertaining, complex, sophisticated or “effective.” Receiving a black belt or attaining mastery is not like acquiring one’s driver’s license such that one can be free and liberated to “do” what they like. Learning or mastering Aikido and training in the dojo is a process of one’s development.

Teaching is a delicate balance of doing what is right and what is wanted, but this is difficult for students to understand. No matter what

our goals or objectives are when we start training, the reality of the experience of training will not be in line with them. That is because we cannot conceive of something that we have no real understanding of. Students come to the dojo looking for “something” that their minds have conjured up. They have an objective for their Aikido training and often this “plan” is very well organized and directed. This is not how learning a traditional art works. In a traditional Japanese style of learning the student changes to embrace the art and not the other way around. No matter what we are trying to learn, the art will change us and will come to influence every facet of our lives.

However, it is the teacher’s job to teach with the understanding that the students do not know and that is why there is a delicate balance of giving a student what they want and enticing them to do what they need to do. A good teacher must keep in mind the frustrations of the student and that that frustration is part of learning but at the same time staying firm to the principles of the art regardless if the student stays or leaves. No matter what, the students who will stay will stay and the students who will want something more will leave motivated by looking for something “more.”

A good dojo is based upon etiquette and protocol that is repeated over and over again. This repetition of the same basic techniques, protocols and etiquette is because the teachers of old knew that every student has the possibility of becoming a good student someday and that some students, who come in with their own agendas, need to keep hearing and doing the same thing over and over until it pervades their consciousness.

The words of Saint Timoteo are just as true today as they were in the first century. The question is, “have we as human beings changed?” It is hard to say and even harder to prove one way or another. What is true is that the path of mastery is not paved with doing what we want, but in doing what is necessary. The path of Aikido can be fraught with frustrations and the real training is being patient and working hard despite what we “think” we should be doing. The path of Aikido is sometimes not so clearly illuminated, and we then must walk slowly and carefully so as not to get lost in the darkness. If a student wants to attain mastery, they must trust that their teacher will guide them on the right path even if they are not able to see the end clearly. •

Studying Tenkan Kokyu-ho

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Tenkan kokyu-ho is one of the basic techniques of Aikido so I believe that it must not be discounted as a simple exercise but studied very deeply and seriously.

For most of us, it is simply a turning or “tenkan” exercise. At the beginning, I think it takes a lot of effort to develop a smooth complete turning movement without losing one’s balance or breaking one’s flow. Generally, most people have trouble with their feet—usually swinging out the feet in a circular motion, instead of pivoting well and stepping back in a straight line which is a stronger movement with the hips. Swinging the foot in wide circular arch in order to step back throws off one’s balance greatly and causes an unnatural and very slow awkward movement. Movement of the feet should be kept as natural as possible but with greater awareness and a greater sense of balance and stability—than in normal walking.

When *tenkan kokyu-ho* is done with a partner, students, at the beginning, have a tendency to keep the weight on their back foot. Although the other person is grabbing our hand, our center of balance should always be kept slightly to the front or on the lead foot. In other words, our center of gravity should be 60% to the front foot and 40% to the back foot approximately. Some people prefer to say, “55-45%.”

Starting from a static position with the person already grabbing our hand is a good beginning level method to practice this technique. One should develop good movement of the hips while moving in and turning deeply into the opponent’s space. At this level, one should be aware not to keep one’s hand too flimsy nor too stiff. In other words, one’s hand should not collapse against the opponent’s grip nor should one be pushing against the opponent’s hand as well. This must be studied very deeply, over and over again.

The 180 degree turn will allow us to be perfectly aligned with our opponent’s body and the direction of their energy and attention. Please do not practice making incomplete turns, or turning widely so that we are too far from our opponent’s body.

I think as one advances in their *tenkan kokyu-ho* movement, after mastering these various general levels of practice, one must begin to study this movement, not as an exercise, but as a martial arts movement.

I notice with most students, especially after they have been practicing for a while, they begin to lose their awareness of this practice and lazily hold out their hand waiting for the partner to grab in order to “begin” their *tenkan* movement.

From the standpoint of a martial arts technique, no one will grab our hand if we simply leave it out there for someone to grab. We assume too much and take too much for granted and this turns *tenkan* into a lazy, meaningless exercise. •

UPCOMING EVENTS



近日開催予定

May

October 13–14th
Aikido Kodokai Dojo's
20th Anniversary
Salamanca, Spain
Details to be announced.

June

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays

6:30 – 8:00 AM * Intensive
9:30 – 10:30 AM Advanced Class
10:45 – 11:45 AM Regular Class

Sundays

9:00 – 10:00 AM Children's Class
10:15 – 11:15 AM Regular Class
11:45 AM – 12:45 PM Fundamentals
1:00 – 2:00 PM Open Class

Mondays

6:30 – 7:30 AM Morning Practice
5:15 – 6:15 PM Regular Class
6:30 – 7:30 PM Advanced Class

Tuesdays

6:00 – 7:30 PM Advanced Class
8:00 – 9:00 PM Open Class

Wednesdays

6:30 – 7:30 AM Morning Practice
5:15 – 6:15 PM Fundamentals
6:30 – 7:30 PM Regular Class

Thursdays

6:00 – 7:30 PM Regular Class
8:00 – 9:00 PM Fundamentals

Fridays

6:30 – 7:30 AM Morning Practice
6:30 – 7:30 PM Regular 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



居道 時間割

Saturdays

8:00–9:00 AM

Sundays

7:45–8:45 AM

The Aiki Dojo



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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

Aikido World Headquarters



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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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Aikido Center of Los Angeles | Telephone: (323) 225-1424
1211 N. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 | E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

羅府合気道学 古屋道場

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