

Martial Artists are Profound Advocates for Peace Budo Should Express a Profound Sprit of Loving Protection for All Beings

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What do people think of when they consider Japan? I suppose electronics, decent cars, and sushi come to mind. But the most important cultural export of the island nation must be its modern martial arts and the great social and civic mission of Budo. Dedicated to the transformation of ancient combative methods to a larger purpose of character development and societal advancement in ethics and morality, Budo arts and Ways are just beginning to make a mark on the world's consciousness. A famous martial arts teacher* once said that Budo martial arts is not about creating champions; rather, we seek to elevate the condition of all members of society. His point was well-taken, but I would say it differently: Budo is about creating champions of the human spirit who become beacons of light for a society and world desperately in need of a new paradigm for conflict resolution. At my school in Edmonds, WA, **AiShinKai Dojo**, we offer instruction emphasizing that real martial arts happen before we attempt to apply technique. Students of modern Budo should strive to harness their whole human ability in accordance with natural principles, act with their whole potential to negate the ability of opponents to inflict violence, then seek the most peaceful technical means to resolve conflict, and finally continue to exercise their full potential beyond the execution of technique and on into the remainder of our daily lives. **First harness your full potential; next, actively seek to build a stronger, more harmonious human family.**

This is the great social mission of modern Japanese martial arts and Ways. The founders of modern Budo were martial arts geniuses who sought to apply lessons culled from a violent past marked by a long adventure in human discord. They subscribed to a new and greater purpose: to build better citizens for a modern world and a new social order marked by peace between individuals and nations. They were deeply conscious individuals who envisioned comprehensive systems of training encompassing a uniquely compassionate world view in which personal empowerment need never come at other's expense. Their extraordinary martial arts abilities were applied to foster harmony among potential opponents and to help create one human family united by bonds of mutual respect and purpose. The founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, discovered his whole human ability, and a particularly elegant means to negate the violent actions of opponents. Nakayama Hakudo Sensei, the founder of modern Iaido, sought to use sword arts to foster personal dignity and unite the world in bonds of friendship. Jigaro Kano Sensei sought a new expression of Judo in which personal power was devoted to the creation of an ideal global village. Nakakura Kyoshi, Kendo champion, never had a bad word to say about

anyone and was always present to support the Budo practices of others. He wanted everyone to understand that real martial arts brought people together, bridging all boundaries and devices of separation. The challenge for all students of the martial arts is to pierce the metaphors of martial arts technique to discover what it means to be fully human, your place in and relationship to the world, and to give proper expression to all that is common and good in humanity. This leads to a "life worth living."

The **AiShinKai** is a martial arts organization located in Edmonds, WA and Shoreline, WA USA. Through appreciation and practice of Aikido, Iaido, Kyudo, Ikebana, Shodo, and Bonsai, we study the principles of Budo. Our kinship with all other wonderful Budo disciplines that subscribe to this most modern mission is a source of great pleasure and inspiration to the members of our community. To help our members fly a little higher, I have suggested some basic goals to help our students realize the true purpose of Budo. No matter what the technique, art, or life adventure confronting us, we recommend keeping these ideas in mind:

AiShinKai Basic Principles for Life

1. **Create a Calm Center**
2. **Be Comfortably Relaxed**
3. **Practice Dependable Posture**
4. **Unify Body, Mind & Spirit**

5. **Strive for Excellence**
6. **Be Loyal, Brave & Sincere**
7. **Seek the Simplest Solution**
8. **Smile and Be Natural**

When training in martial arts, we practice new habits of mind and body that support our best efforts in all aspects of daily life. Each individual should carefully consider his or her overarching goals and seek to turn them into concrete practices. By way of example, I awaken early each morning to engage in my personal practice; my first thought is a remembrance that I want to become that which I most admire. Here's how I approach my training:

First - **Harness Your Whole Human Ability**

Daily practice of Ki Breathing, Ki Meditation, and Ki Development Exercises develops an integrated mind, body, and spirit, develops a sense of calm centeredness, and leads to the experience of the presence of natural principles, even in mundane everyday activities.

Second - **Perform With Your Whole Potential**

Whether merely stretching, practicing Ki Development Exercises or Kata, or engaging a training partner or opponent in a self-defense technique, always move from your center and sincerely demonstrate your internal power and commitment to action. This will express itself in Iaido swordsmanship or Aikido movement as *kigurai*, a strength born of naturally centered, relaxed, and focused application of internal power.

Third - **Move to Compromise Your Opponent's Posture and Balance**

Over time, your training will help to develop a sixth sense so you will know when and how to move to avoid direct conflict. In the beginning, consider the importance of moving suddenly with your whole ability - from your center of course - in such a fashion that your attacker's movements are either jammed or overextended. Your instructors will show you different

strategic options for lunging outside (irimi), turning outside (tenkan), lunging inside (omote), turning inside (ura), or withdrawing/advancing using a following step (okuri ashi). Basic footwork is a key element of strategy integral to effective martial arts practice and expanding opportunities to realize your highest purposes.

Fourth - Apply the Least Violent Option to Affect a Resolution of the Conflict

Whether in weapons training, open-handed practice, or in meeting the actual challenges of negotiation or self-defense in daily life, selection of the simplest and most effective tools will greatly increase your odds of achieving a successful resolution to conflict. Regardless of your tool of choice, be determined to follow through with your whole heart in order to ensure success.

Fifth - Follow-Through the Technique with Your Full Human Potential Intact

Don't allow the sword, jo, or the technique to through you. You must remain calmly centered, in full control of yourself and aware of your posture and placement within your surroundings. In technique practice this is called "finishing," and is marked by the briefest of pauses following each performance to display *zanshin*, or continuing awareness. This pause provides an ideal moment to self-analyze posture and composure of mind, body, and spirit.

These essential criteria are used by the **AiShinKai** for assessment of martial arts performances. Note that if the practitioner is attentive only to the study of technique (the fourth aspect), 80% of Budo art – all that is concerned with self-improvement and character development – will be missing. This is what defines modern Budo as a unique approach to martial arts training. Because our primary methods of practice rely of accumulation of applied experiential knowledge rather than mere intellectual exercises, I strongly recommend that the bulk of practice by conducted in relative silence. Excessive talking erodes the quality of the training experience, and teaching (helping) should be left to the most senior practitioners. Only they can effectively guide individual and group practice. Committed practice shows in one's dedication to self-improvement.

I sincerely hope that these thoughts are helpful to all Budoka, regardless of your discipline of choice. Your spirited and sincere training will contribute to the achievement of Budo's highest purposes: to foster self-realization and the simultaneous elevation of the whole human family to a new and higher plane of social discourse.

Good Budo!

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