

Life
in Three
Easy Lessons

Aikido, Harmony and
the Business of Living

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FIRST, I WISH to acknowledge the founder of Aikido: Morihei Ueshiba O Sensei. Next, I am deeply grateful to Robert Nadeau, a personal student of O Sensei and my instructor.

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The Way of Harmony & The Business of Living:

A Mind-Body Approach to Extraordinarily Effective Human Action.

Did you ever wish you had a prescription, a formula, a way of functioning with greater authenticity and effectiveness? I believe everyone wants to contribute something to the world, whether it's our ideas, our energy or our listening. It is a human desire to contribute and receive value. We would like to do it well. No one wants to do it poorly. Every one of us would like our contribution to count. Our desire to be effective is in service of that aspiration.

Fundamentally people experience creativity as enjoyable and conflict as stressful. The art of Aikido means aligning with, and tapping into, the creativity of the universe. The founder of Aikido also called it the Art of Peace. Peace describes a time when our attention is focused on what we are drawn to, on what interests us, on what we want. When we fight we are resisting something. War describes a state where we fight against what we do not want. Our energies go to opposing that which we fear.

Our interests make it apparent where we would like to focus our energies. Yet somehow we get caught up in wars and fighting. Without realizing how we got there, we use our energies to attack and defend rather than to create. Fear and aggression are so pervasive we struggle within ourselves as well as fighting with each other. Not just the big fears but also the small fears like not having enough time for ourselves and each other color our daily lives. This happens without our noticing the power of these subtle influences on how we expend our energy.

We need a technology to resolve the war within so that we can stop projecting our inner struggles outward. It must be simple so everyone can use it. If this technology were effective, it would resolve the inner conflict and the external struggles as well. Such a technology would enable us to use all the energy available to create a beautiful world.

What if we were to pursue peace as intensely as we wage war?

The three easy lessons for the business of living are the most essential principles that I have distilled from my study of Aikido. The lessons are based on three distinctions. The first is how we participate in creating our state of being, the attitude through which we approach our life. The second is how our attitude participates in creating our relationships, which in turn affect our ability to contribute to situations and other people. The third is how our contribution participates in creating the world.

The study and practice of these distinctions enhances one's ability to contribute what each of us brings to the world to produce the greatest benefit. I have stated them as simply as I am able. You must translate them into your own understanding for them to have meaning in your life. You must practice them for them to have value. Paying attention to distinctions develops awareness, as exercising muscles develops physical strength. Skill is developed through the practice of applying these distinctions to how we create our lives. The lessons give us techniques to help us in that study.

In a world of diversity, complexity and distraction, the ability to operate authentically becomes increasingly valuable. The power of Aikido enables us to connect with what is essential and true for our growth and development while contributing the uniqueness of our gifts to the world. The principles of Aikido, when practiced, empower each of us to complete our bestowed mission.

We live in the world but understand so little of the effects of our participation in creating what we experience? The three easy lessons offer basic distinctions and fundamental skills that powerfully influence the business of living. I use the term the 'business of living' to imply all the realms that matter to us in our lives, commerce, science, education, spiritual development, family and personal relationships.

Mind and body are a system, each affecting the other. They combine to create a field we define as our spirit, the attitude with which we engage in the

world. Our effectiveness and our state of being are interdependent. Our reactions physical, mental and emotional affect each other. When we are upset emotionally it affects our thinking and shows up in the body. When the body is sick or hurt it affects our thoughts and emotional state. The combination of how we think and feel affects how we interact. The fragmentation of being produces ineffective perception, strategy and interaction. When mind and body are unified we experience a level of power and possibility unimaginable to a system in conflict.

When we are under pressure the intensity of the energy flowing through our bodies increases. A rush of energy happens in response to any challenge large or small, from a physical attack to the phone ringing. Stress results from resistance to the increase of energy we experience in response to the pressures of life. Under stress, whether that stress is internal or external, physical or emotional, real or imagined, the aspects of our system get knocked out of alignment. When what we do is not in harmony with what we think and feel we are not very effective. The inevitable outcome is conflict, internal, external or both. Conflict implies not only blocked communication but also more importantly, blocked creativity. Internal conflict causes resistance to the flow of our vitality.

Medical science has identified over two hundred symptoms of stress, notably increased heart rate, long muscle tension, narrowed peripheral vision and shallow breathing. When our muscles tighten so does our perception. When peripheral vision narrows it limits what we can see. Correspondingly stress also causes a narrowing of the range of our thoughts, our emotional options and the possibility of creative solutions.

Aikido develops the art of utilizing the energy of life, rather than resisting it. Aligning our thoughts, feelings and actions, allows energy to flow freely and creatively. Unifying mind and body is a simple, subtle and powerful practice. It is a meta-skill that we can apply to every pressure we face in life. Resistance uses our limited power against the divine power. Harmony allows us to join with it, draw on it and utilize it.

Change as a Source of Power

Aikido translates as, “the way of harmony with the spirit/energy of the universe.” The art of Aikido is based on more than non-resistance, although that is a good start. It is based on harmony. An Aikido master by using the energy of an attack and by working with it can influence an otherwise dangerous situation to create peaceful reconciliation. Translating our metaphor from the realm of the martial arts to the business of living, an attack represents the force of change. Resistance to the energy of change creates stress. A master in the business of living works in harmony with the force of change and can influence an otherwise stressful situation to produce positive outcomes.

Aikido produces maximum effectiveness with minimal effort through harmonious relationship. A master in the art of Aikido or in the business of living uses the energy in any situation to attain their desired goal, as a sailor uses the wind. By harmonizing or aligning their sails with changes in the wind, a sailor reaches their desired destination regardless of the direction the wind is blowing. When we harmonize with it, the energy that might have distressed us becomes a source of power. When we can align properly energies that might have blown us off course help us accomplish our bestowed mission.

When we harmonize with the energy of change it increases our power and ability. The somatic disturbances that become visible as symptoms of stress can be reversed through the application of Aikido principles. When our energy flows freely in harmony with the winds of change, the sense of stress diminishes and the mind and emotions open to an increasingly perceptive and creative state.

The ability to generate high performance presence is an ability, a learned skill. The human system is a combination of mind, body and spirit. Through heightened awareness of how the aspects of our being interact, we can learn to influence our state of being consciously. Although emotional upset can be subtle to control, the physical reactions of muscle tension and especially the

process of the breath are tangible and relatively easy to access and affect. These in turn affect the mental and emotional state. By practicing with the most tangible physical aspects of breathing and muscle tension, we can influence the subtler aspects of feeling and thought. By relaxing the body we relax the emotional charge. By breathing deeply and slowly we deepen and calm our thinking allowing us to connect an increasingly complex web of neurons and creative possibilities.

Mastering the connection of mind and body engenders a state of confidence, courage and clarity that allows us to function with increasing precision. The freedom engendered evolves creative solutions that are unavailable when we are in conflict within our own system. An open mind can perceive and resolve conflict in ways that would be impossible from a defensive state of being. When we are attentive to our state of being and our relationship to the world, our contribution is naturally aligned with a larger whole. Aikido as a way of development brings our experience and action into harmony with the whole of creation.

The power of harmony resolves conflict. We create harmony internally by unifying mind, body and spirit. This is the first principle. It is accomplished by centering, connecting attention with sensory experience. The process of inner harmony producing harmonious relationship with the external universe is the essence of the practice and is the second principle of The Three Easy Lessons. When our spirit operates in harmony with itself, we resonantly operate in harmony with our environment. In a spirit of harmonious relationship, energy otherwise wasted in resistance can be fully utilized for contribution.

The first step in learning Aikido is developing an awareness that the relationship of mind-body exists and can be influenced. With that knowledge, instead of living as a victim to the stress created by the effects of one aspect of the system -- mental, physical, emotional -- on the others; we can consciously create a unified state of being. Once this process is begun, it becomes the seed of an ongoing life practice.

It is only when we lack creative spirit that we default to the defensive mind-set that produces and reinforces fixed thinking and feeds ongoing conflict. Conflict without creativity breeds a sense of powerlessness. A lack of options breeds despair and violence. The founder of Aikido said, “the true spirit of a warrior is that of loving protection.” A spirit of loving protection resolves challenges creatively rather than avoiding or attacking them out of a sense of hopelessness and fear.

When our power is sufficient we can look beyond our personal survival to a larger, more encompassing view of how we might contribute in the world. Our perception of what is possible changes. Aikido unifies the individual with the universe. The sense of personal power and personal mastery that emerges from the knowledge and practice of Aikido principles, manifests as the divine spirit of creativity and serves for the completion of the universe.

Rely on harmony to activate your manifold powers and create a beautiful world.

Morihei Ueshiba, O Sensei

This book is dedicated to those who want to “Create a beautiful world.”

In the vast
emptiness
of eternity

flows
the energy
of
the universal
intelligence;

one system
of
divine
creation ensues.

In the emptiness,
energy and perception

is
the formation
of
our
lives.

PREFACE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE ART

AIKIDO IS A MODERN martial art developed in Japan during the twentieth century. Though based on ancient martial practices dating back to the 15th century, Aikido is a new and unique form. The founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, also called O Sensei, lived from 1883 to 1969. Sensei, in Japanese, means teacher and implies “one who has gone before, one who has walked the path.” O Sensei means great teacher or teacher’s teacher.

Aikido emphasizes the concept of blending with rather than opposing the KI (energy or force) of an attacker or situation. Aikido is based on the principle of reconciliation. That is, the reuniting of what may seem to be opposing forces, i.e., “the mind and body, the material and the spiritual realms or the opponents in a conflict.” It differs from other martial arts because it espouses the spirit of loving protection, demonstrated through its emphasis on neutralizing the attack rather than the attacker.

Aikido emphasizes unifying the forces of the individual with the forces of the universal, the alignment of what we know with forces beyond our present level of understanding. This movement beyond the known, this entry into the unknown is in my understanding the essence of the study.

The Work

This book has grown out of my Aikido teaching, corporate consulting and international peace work. Since 1974, I have headed an Aikido dojo (school) in Marin county, California. Since 1987, I have been a partner in an Aikido-based consulting firm. Our work is built on the principles of Aikido and Dialogue. We see Aikido as kinesthetic listening and Dialogue as verbal Aikido.

In the business domain, we coach executives and their teams to develop dynamic presence, inspired leadership and intuitional decision-making. We also facilitate team communication and mediate conflicts. In International work we teach the principles of peaceful reconciliation. Taking Aikido principles into the world of business and international peace building has helped me translate the fundamental philosophy of Aikido to the business of living.

In the role of teacher I am committed first to my growth, as any leader should be, and then to the growth and development of my students. In the role of an executive coach the focus is more on effective execution rather than personal development. From a larger perspective they are the same thing. Developing a higher degree of self-awareness enables modifying our actions to account for the inevitable changes that occur. As we develop self-awareness we continually mediate our strategy during execution, effectively making

ongoing corrections mid-stream. On-going realignment as opposed to blind commitment is an infinitely more effective mode of operating.

Negotiating a changing universe requires Aikido. We all use its principles, often unconsciously. Through practice in paying attention the principles of Aikido become conscious and one's skill at negotiating change increases to a level of mastery.

The practices of The Three Easy Lessons develop infinite creativity rather than prescribing specific techniques as solutions. A state of creativity is generated through intention. The focus of our intent forms the creation of our lives. Energy follows attention.

Simply practice applying Aikido's principles to the best of your ability. Your ability will grow and your understanding will deepen, making possible enhanced ability and broader understandings. This is the path to learning. Do not let the voice that says, "I don't know," drown out the voice that says, "I want to learn." Rather, train to perceive the unknown with a spirit of wonder. We develop wonder as we would any muscle or ability, by exercising it. Listen to the whisperings.

A Unique Approach

The power of harmony, the art of peace applies in all our relationships and interactions. The real benefit of Aikido derives from applying the underlying principles of the techniques in our daily lives off the mat. The cost of doing so is our attention. To integrate Aikido into our lives we must pay attention to how we are doing, what we are doing.

Aikido is a profound art. Taught in the traditional approach the essential understanding assembles over many years. In trying to learn Aikido people often get lost in its depth and miss its essence. We may learn the moves of the physical, self-defense techniques but fail to change our identities. Unless we have a conscious intent to practice the art, we may only learn techniques. When we defend ourselves rather than transform ourselves we reinforce our defensiveness. We may get stronger and more capable of defending a belief or perception instead of learning, instead of aligning a harmonious relationship with a constantly changing universe.

After many years of training I distilled the essence of my practice into what I have come to call the three easy lessons, easy to say but a lifetime of study does not exhaust the practices. This simplified map represents a doorway into the study.

A book cannot begin to convey the beauty of the art. For all of you, I hope deeper study will follow. In this work my intention is to convey the power of Aikido's principles in the simplest way to make its gifts available to a wide audience. It only represents the beginning of what can be a lifelong journey. Life in Three Easy Lessons as a learning system introduces the art of Aikido. It does not contain it. Whether you apply the art in daily life or engage in the physical practice of Aikido techniques on the exercise mat, this book offers a

window to expand your view of the art and the power of its application to life. The lessons are easy. The practice may be another matter.

My view is just a view. This is how it looks to me at this moment. As we explore this window into the art of Aikido, I hope what you see here will enhance your life and work in creative and renewing ways. Thank you for your openness and willingness to share in this exploration of learning without end.

The best compliment I ever received was when a student once said to me, “You’re not teaching. You’re learning out loud.”

The Book

The content is presented in layers. The ideas are first presented in outline form to give an overview. Next the ideas are each expanded briefly. The concepts are then discussed in greater depth. As it evolves the presentation becomes more exploratory.

The ideas are repeated and renamed. They may seem repetitive but that is how we practice Aikido. We learn a technique or principle and then practice it over and over, gradually deepening the skill and understanding through repeated practice. This is a teaching method done so the reader may absorb Aikido principles through several doorways. Hopefully the multiple descriptions of the Three Easy Lessons will harmonize with one another and enrich a deeper understanding.

The language like the art is in constant evolution. It evolves in connection with consciousness. Rather than choose He or She or alternate or use s/he . . . I choose to refer to an individual as they, implying he or she or both or neither or something else. I am aware that it is not the old approved method but neither is anything else in my approach to the Aiki Dialogues.

As to the use of terminology if you are familiar with looking at the world as a field of energy these ideas will seem familiar. If not please be willing to consider the ideas the best you are able as your vocabulary grows to include new meaning.

Begin in the spirit of pure science, learning for its own sake. Then move on to applied science, making use of what is learned to improve our lives.

Say one word, hear ten words.

Japanese Proverb

Teachings of Morihei Ueshiba, O Sensei

“MARTIAL ARTS MUST undergo constant change. Budo (the way of the warrior) develops in an evolutionary manner together with the movements of the heavenly bodies and must not stop even for an instant. The first stage of my Budo has come to an end and serves as the stepping stone for the second stage. Its form must be continuously renewed.

There are no kata (set forms—fixed techniques) in Aiki Budo. All phenomena of this world vary constantly according to the particular circumstances and no two situations are exactly alike. It is illogical to train using only a single kata, thereby limiting oneself.

Techniques which are visible to the eye are useless. Your body and the kami (deity) become one through the accumulation of training. It is for this very reason that you stop your opponent's movements with rapid techniques that are invisible to the eye without allowing him to touch your body and without leaving any openings.”

From Aiki News, Winter 1992, reprinted from a 1942
article by Morihei Ueshiba in Shin Budo magazine

I. Presence

Substance / Rhythm / Center

You can't get there from not here

II. Harmony

Fluidity / Adaptability / Blend

The only constant in the universe is change

III. Creativity

Listening / Melody / Lead

The mystery is infinite

1. Presence - Feel Where You Are

THE FIRST LESSON OF LIFE OR principle of Aikido refers to a state of presence, being centered and fully aware. The practice that produces it can be stated as Feel Where You Are.

Feeling where you are refines awareness into attention. When your attention connects with your experience you are present to your life.

As a starting point bring your attention to your physical body and listen to the feedback. Feel where you are as if every detail mattered. Then expand this awareness into the whole of your life.

Feel where you are can be practiced a number of different ways. Notice your physical balance. Locate your center of gravity. Feel where you are in relation to your life energy. Feel where you are tight and resisting the flow of energy through your body. Feel where you are relaxed and where the energy flows freely. Feel where you are in space. Feel where you are emotionally. Feel where you are in relationship to other people. Feel where you are in relation to the attitudes and emotions of others.

The first principle extends to feeling where you are on the mental, emotional, and spiritual planes as well. Pay attention to your attitude and extend this awareness into your relationship in-and-with the world at large.

Feeling where you are includes subtler dimensions, such as feeling where you are in your life's journey, feeling where you are in the whole of Creation.

Paying attention to feeling where you are makes it possible to know where you need to go and what you need to accomplish. Focusing awareness into attention in the physical domain allows us to walk through a doorway and not into a wall. The same focus of attention is equally vital in our mental, emotional, and spiritual domains, moving us through the abstract doorways of life with equal ease.

You can't get there from not-here.

FEEL * SENSE * EXPERIENCE

2. Harmony – Harmonize in Relationship

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE of life is adaptability. Being fluid and adaptable allows us to align the next lesson of Aikido, a harmonious relationship. Harmonious relationship means adapting to change by aligning with each situation as it unfolds. This is a state of engaged non-resistance. Non-resistance means moving in concert with experience, accepting your feelings and the feelings of others.

In the physical practice of Aikido, when someone attacks, representing the force of change, we don't resist the force. We don't hold a position that was based in the past. We don't stay on the line of the attack in opposition to the energy, limited to being pushed or pushing back. Instead, we enter in next to the attacker, turn and face the same direction and try to understand their point of view. In life don't oppose the force of change, either being pushed around by it or pushing back against it. In the face of change, don't resist. Move in harmony with the direction of change.

Emotionally harmonious relationship encompasses entering into an inquiry that allows the emotional energy to change us. Whatever emotions arise, whether excitement or anger, frustration or enthusiasm, sadness or joy, sense the feelings deeply and receive their guidance.

If another person reacts negatively to a suggestion, don't oppose their reaction or try to convince them otherwise. Enter into an inquiry together. Understand why they feel the way they do and seek to understand where they perceive value. Receive their reaction as guidance towards a creative solution. Work with them to improve the suggestion.

Harmonious relationship allows us to work together creatively. When energy isn't lost to friction or opposition, all our attention is free to generate solutions and positive action. This is difficult when we are opposed to that which is, just as it is difficult to be heard by someone who is talking. Harmonious relationship opens the doorway to the third principle: Creativity - Share Who You Are.

HARMONIZE* BLEND*LISTEN

3. Creativity - Share Who You Are

THE THIRD PRINCIPLE is to contribute your creativity, Share Who You Are. Aikido is not passive and harmony does not imply giving up. They imply creating new possibility by contributing your note to the chord and your tone to the symphony. Make your contribution. Each of us has a unique view of the world and something special to share. All of us value making a contribution and having our contribution valued by others.

Your contribution is of unique value. No one else can make the contribution you would. It is critical to focus attention and respond to situations without resistance. Operating from a state of conscious awareness and non-resistance, life is imbued with authenticity and spontaneity.

Fearful of resistance or rejection we often avoid contributing or sharing who we are. Or perhaps we try to impose ideas, increasing resistance and creating resentment. Often people want to jump to the third step without doing the first two.

The first two principles are prerequisite to the third. You need to be (1) Present, feeling where you are, in a self-aware or self-reflexive state, focusing attention on being fully present, centered, and grounded; and (2) Adaptable, aligning in harmonious relationship with the force of change, in a state of being non-resistant to the situation which needs to be handled. When you operate without resistance or resentment, all your energy is available to (3) Creatively contribute in a positive spirit, share who you are.

Once we are centered and blending with the moment the possibility to lead change opens to us. When creativity flows, dreams become reality and what was once impossible becomes what is so. Get present with what is, adapt to change and create what you envision. Create a beautiful world.

Feel where you are; generate a harmonious relationship and share who you are.

CONTRIBUTE * CREATE * LEAD

Life In Three Easy Lessons In One Easy Page

I. Center

Presence / Rhythm / Focus

Be here now

II. Blend

Adaptability / Harmony / Confluence

Go with the flow.

III. Lead

Creativity / Melody / Radiance

Let your self be seen

1

FEEL WHERE YOU ARE

Feel where you are tight.

Feel where you are relaxed.

Feel where you are in your life.

Feel where you are in Creation.

Presence / Rhythm

2

HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP

The essence of Aikido is non-resistance.

Align with the situation as it unfolds.

Move in concert.

Adaptability / Harmony

3

SHARE WHO YOU ARE

Express your energy.

Make your contribution.

Lead.

Sing your song

Creativity / Melody

1. Feel Where You Are

THE FIRST LESSON, Feel Where You Are, when practiced creates a centered state of creative presence. Feeling where you are, although deceptively simple, is a powerful exercise that generates a state of dynamic capability. Presence, centering, functioning out of the essence of who you are fosters intelligent action.

Feeling where you are develops awareness into attention. Paying attention to how you feel, changes how you feel. When you feel, what you feel is change, differential.

Feeling where you are, simply put, causes the unity of mind and body. Then the unified field of mental and somatic awareness, becomes the ground of experience. Otherwise we operate out of fragmented consciousness. When thinking and feeling, sensing and knowing come into harmony, a new and exquisite level of intelligence arises.

In focusing our awareness on how we feel, by paying attention, we come to know ourselves more intimately. The intimacy introduces us to ourselves in new ways. Our power is enhanced as new possibilities appear.

Feel Where You Are. Notice what you have not yet noticed.

Centering connects us to the source of our being. Apprehending our physical experience opens a doorway to our “felt sense” of being. Sensory awareness extended to infinity and received completely suggests the possibility of experiencing the connection of the here and now with the totality of time-space; of who you are, with all that is.

Center engenders a state that balances being in touch with our essence and our connection to the world. It means a continual entering into experience. It is seeking to understand reality as fully as possible. Centering opens the door to receiving knowledge beyond understanding. It establishes connection with the whole of creation as an intimate and immediate presence.

The first step in presence is focusing attention, bringing your conscious awareness to your immediate experience. Thought can focus in the past or the future. Feeling occurs in the present. Paying attention to experience is always in the moment. Feeling where you are, causes you to function out of who you are becoming, rather than based on habituation from the past. Feeling dissolves history. Feeling where you are connects you with the forces that guide your life

Everything you think and know and believe came from your interaction with someone else. Feeling is your experience alone. It is truly original and the essential expression of your uniqueness. Feel where you are is the process of creating the life that you dream for yourself.

EXPLORATIONS - Simple exercises in presence that draw attention to feeling connecting awareness with experience.

You may want to take a quiet moment to settle yourself. Put the book aside if you like for a moment as you explore each exercise. Taking simple notes about your experience may help you see the changes in your perceptions over time.

The Breath

Begin by bringing your attention to your breathing.

Feel the breath moving in and out of your lungs. This is called “external” breathing. Notice if through this simple act of attention the rhythm and depth of your breathing changes.

Next using the imagination, (imagine, pretend that you) feel the breath moving through your lungs into the blood stream and through the bloodstream into the tissue of your body. Sense the oxygen being absorbed at a cellular level. This is called “internal breathing.” Feel where the absorption of oxygen becomes a glow of energy. Notice the areas where it doesn’t. Maintain this focus of attention for a few moments. See what you notice.

As you notice your breathing feel how much effort you are exerting to breathe.

Now sense into how connected your attention is with the impulse that activates your breath. If the impulse that activates your breath is vague for you, hold your breath a moment. It becomes very obvious.

Centering Through Physical Experience

Notice if your weight is more to the left or right, more forward or backward.

Noticing your weight, rock slightly left and right, forwards and back. Gradually reduce the movement to smaller and smaller motions. Continuing to notice until your weight rests at a central point of balance that's neither left nor right forward or back. Notice the sensations that tell you when you are centered.

Feel yourself. Notice everything you can about how you feel.

Feel where you are

Focus your attention on your physical sensation. Feel where you are tight; feel where you are relaxed. Now feel where you are emotionally. Notice the quality and tone of your thinking. Feel where your energy is flowing freely and where there is resistance to the flow of life energy.

Expand this awareness into the whole of your life. Feel the state of your vitality. Feel the quality and tone of your relationships, with people, your work and your involvement in the world. Notice the areas of your life where you have passion and enthusiasm. Notice those where you don't.

Continually increase your attention on where you are. Notice your experience of everything that is going on around you. Sense into your relationship to everything that you are aware of. Notice the subtlest sense of how you feel about any individual thing. Then notice similarly how you feel about everything. Feel where you are in the whole of Creation. Though this directive challenges the linear mind, the exercise is a simple one for the imagination. Start there. Approach the practice in a playful spirit.

Simple exercises like these are practices that center you. They can be repeated anytime that you feel the need to increase being centered and present. Practicing this kind of exercise distills diffuse awareness into attention focused in the moment.

Attending to feeling the breath along with feeling the state of tension in the body allows the system to self-organize continually. The absence of feeling inhibits the process. Feeling gives birth to movement. In feeling is the guidance that leads us through change to growth and development.

The practice of feeling where you are is easy. What makes it a challenge is continuing to do it in the face of life's distractions, pressures and disturbances. That requires discipline and training. Exploring the practice to its infinite degrees of subtlety requires commitment. Commitment comes from valuing the outcome.

“I'm calm, however, and whenever I'm attacked, not only when I am attacked physically on the mat but in my daily life as well - because I leave everything as it is to the divine force of creation. “

O Sensei

Ground Is Connection to More

When we describe a person as having their feet on the ground we imply they are in the reality of the here and now. When we say someone is grounded we are saying they are connected to a larger more encompassing reality than their own thoughts. Centering allows the muscles to relax. Relaxing connects us to the ground. Grounding connects us to our substance, that which we stand on. This means more than the ground that supports us physically. In the realm of the spirit it means the ground of our beings. Grounding connects us with that which supports our existence, the original source of life.

Grounding frees awareness and allows us to use energy intelligently. In connecting with the earth is the recognition that we are part of a larger system. We do not exist in isolation. We don't float in empty space because the support and gravity of the earth holds us in place. This support signifies the expansive field of sustenance the universe offers. It includes the energy of sunlight and the vitality of our biosphere, the oxygen we breathe and the food we eat. Though we forget to remember it, we are interacting with the energy of the whole of creation. We are interacting with the force of creation that is creating us. We are inexorably entwined with the whole Creation. Remembering that interconnection changes the context of our lives.

Grounding ourselves awakens us as active participants in the unfolding of Creation. In the process of grounding, the practice of relaxing, of opening to and allowing our connection with everything that is, the universal power flows through and into our lives. With practice, grounding increases our ability to consciously draw on this power.

When we are startled we get up-tight, our shoulders come up and our muscles tighten down. We disconnect from the earth and resist the flow of energy through our system. As soon as we focus attention on feeling where we are, the natural intelligence of the living system begins to correct without effort.

AN EXPLORATION

As you focus your attention on feeling where you are, shift attention from your thoughts to feeling your body. The simple exercise of tightening and releasing, the muscles of the body draws attention to feeling in a simple and tangible way. As you continue to pay attention to feeling sensitivity increases. Feeling becomes increasingly accessible and easier to apprehend.

Straighten your posture and take several slow deep breaths. As you exhale softly settle into yourself. Sense the pull of gravity drawing the weight of your physical mass down into the earth. Notice where you resist gravity by holding your weight up through the tension of your muscles. Inhale and feel the tension in your muscles. Exhale slowly and feel your muscles relax. Feel your weight sink down into your hips or feet. Sense the weight of your body ‘pouring’ through your bones. Imagine it settling through the floor into the earth, dispersing throughout the earth’s mass. Feel the support of the ground, of being connected deeply to the earth. The next dimension of grounding might be how the earth is interdependent with a yet larger system. Feel, sense, imagine through the earth, to your connection with the universe.

Standing or sitting, repeat the exercise of rocking gently left and right, diminishing the movement gradually until you come to rest at Center. Let the centering reconnect you to a grounded feeling. How do you recognize Center? How do you know where to stop?

- A. It felt right.
- B. I relaxed.
- C. My breath released.
- D. I felt more stable.
- E. I had more energy.
- F. My attention became clear and sharp/ vague and diffuse.
- G. I felt a sense of readiness or capability.
- H. I felt lighter / heavier.
- I. All of the above.

Can you tell when you are grounded? Can you tell when you are not? Again and again, when you practice centering notice how your weight is transferred naturally and effortlessly through your bones, to the earth, increasing your connection to Ground. This focus of attention changes your state and deepens your experience of Center and Ground. This in turn changes your relationship to the universe.

Centering and grounding are like breathing. Once in the morning is not enough. If you practice on a regular basis you will be able to use this exercise as a technique to achieve increased effectiveness anytime you are in a pressure situation. Train yourself the second you start to panic to 'Feel where you are'. Instead of reacting by trying to stop or get away from a disturbance notice everything you can about what is going on for you. As your attention focuses on experiencing your essential self, you connect to the vitality of life. This brings you in touch with what is going on in the present moment and enhances your capacity for action that is both elegant and effective. Centered you naturally know what to do next. Feeling guides our lives. It is why the first question whenever two people meet is, "how are you?" meaning how are you feeling

Your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energies inform and shape events that become history. In feeling where you are, the essence of who you are awakens. Attention effortlessly connects to the whole of existence and senses what you need to do and what needs to change in your life.

“Should you first know yourself, you
will come to understand all. Everything
in the Universe is, in other words,
included in the Self.

There is no time or space before Ueshiba of Aikido.
Only the universe as it is.”

Morihei Ueshiba O Sensei

KI The Flow Of Life Energy

We are alive because of the life force flowing through our bodies and minds. This force, referred to as Élan Vital - (vital force) in the west, is called Ki in Japan, chi in China and prana in Sanskrit. The Japanese term 'Ki', the second Kanji (pictograph) or syllable in the word Ai-ki-do, comes from an ancient root meaning steam, implying potential power. The word power comes from the Latin verb 'poder' which means 'to be able'. Power implies ability, possibility, capability.

Ki might translate as energy, spirit, mind intent, intelligence, the energy that sources creation. Ki also implies adaptability and common sense. The teachings around this principle are subtle, mysterious and powerful. The original concept includes a view of our personal energy as a part of the Ki of the universe.

Ki is the source of energy that generates our ability to adapt to and to create change. A light bulb gives off more light as the flow of electricity increases. Our beings have more power when the flow of Ki is strong. When the flow diminishes our ability diminishes. If we learn to increase our Ki, we can increase what is possible. The founder, because of the ability to effect and direct his Ki, did things many people would consider impossible. (See The Thalamic Discourses: Aikido, Energy and Possibility, Zanshin Press)

The Kanji 'Ki' implies Aikido takes place in the domain of energy that activates and manifests the physical realm. Without Ki nothing exists. I do not claim to understand the concept of Ki. I can only say I have studied it. To me it remains a mystery like life itself. I'll leave you to your own exploration of its mysteries and share with you a little of what I have come to sense about the study.

When we experience stimulus our energy system responds. The movement of physical energy – muscle tension, hormones breathing; mental-emotional energy, the flood of thoughts and feelings, are all the result of the subtle energy of Ki. We experience each wave of energy through our beings as a rush, an increase, a charge. Intention for action increases the energy flowing through the system. We get a 'rush' of energy every time we are required to negotiate change. The size and intensity of the energy rush matches the perceived requirements to handle a situation. A small rush happens every time the phone rings. Bigger situations produce a bigger rush like a close call on the freeway, but the process is the same. We typically only notice the larger more intense rushes of energy but the process occurs with every stimulus, no matter the level of intensity.

Here's an example:

Introducing yourself to a stranger usually produces an experience of this energy flow. There is a "job" to do, albeit a small one, in saying, "Hi, I'm So and So, how are you today?" In doing this "job" you may experience this energy as excitement or fear, pleasure or discomfort. In the case of introducing yourself to only one new person it would most likely be an amount of energy that you are familiar with and handle relatively easily.

Now, what happens if you have to introduce yourself, in exactly the same words to an audience of 10,000 people from a stage and with a microphone? The amount of energy required for this "job" is considerably more since it is a larger "job"! Your system of energy increases to make you equal to the "job".

In this situation many people experience this increase of energy as 'stage fright'. They may feel shaky, scared, choked up, etc. The intensity of the rush increases the effect of the 'fight/ flight/ freeze continuum. This 'stage fright' is not the true intent of the energy. However, if we misunderstand this intent and resist this energy increase, it can have the opposite effect of its true intent. Its real purpose, in this case, is to increase our capability, to expand us to a size equal to the "job" at hand. To open to this larger rush of Ki, to harmonize with it, we have to recognize and open to the helpful intent of the energy. Then we have to be willing to be affected, expanded and charged by it. Finally we must let it flow through our system to accomplish our mission rather than get caught in resistance to it. This is the art of Aikido.

To adapt to this change may indeed take a moment or a day or a year! It all depends on the size of the "job", our attitude toward this increased energy and our skill in harmonizing with it. Your skills in doing this can be developed quickly through the practice of Aikido. Aikido means harmonizing with the energy. The natural effect of Centering and Grounding achieves balance and a sense of support. All the energy we unconsciously expend in resistance can be used intentionally.

When the energy flows through to the job we are effective. When we resist the energy we feel the resistance as tension. Over time this becomes stress. Stress in turn diminishes relaxation, creativity, health, and our body's ability to assimilate nutrients and release toxins. This debilitation becomes a vicious cycle further limiting our ability causing further stress in the face of life's challenges.

There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through you into action. And because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how valuable, nor how it compares to other expressions. It is your business to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that activate you. Keep the channel open.

Martha Graham

In the same way lifting weights develops muscles, feeling where you are develops attention through the process of continuously refining awareness. The developmental process of focusing attention on feeling applies to all dimensions of being: body, mind which includes thought and emotions, and spirit.

Center doesn't just mean a place in the physical body. It is a process. The practice is not being centered. It is centering. The practice of centering starts with continually re-connecting feeling with the center of your body and develops to include the center of your being, the center of your life, the center of the earth and the center of Creation.

The first principle of presence in the moment is accomplished by practicing the first lesson, Feel Where You Are. It includes experiencing yourself mentally and emotionally. It includes paying attention to your attitude and extends to your relationship in-and-with the world. Feel where you are emotionally so you can begin to chart a course to an emotional location you would rather live in and operate from. Feel where you are in relationship to other people and their attitudes and emotions.

Awareness empowers volition. Without awareness there is no intention. Our emotional filters sometimes referred to as moods and also the innate affects, are the translators of our life force. Failing to pay full attention to them during our life journey is analogous to driving without watching the road. That is how important they are to our destiny.

What clues help you decide the direction to take at any given moment? Feeling where you are means being present in the moment. Presence connects you with the past and the future. Focusing your attention on where you are in the present moment makes it possible to know how to get to where you need to go and what you need to accomplish. Columbus could not have 'known' where he was in the universe but he had a feeling about it. He listened to that feeling, he followed the call of what I call the whisperings. Based on the subtle messages that he could not confirm only explore, he created his destiny.

. . . all experience hath shown, that
mankind are more disposed to suffer,
while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms
to which they are accustomed.

The Declaration of Independence

If you invest your attention, feeling where you are includes subtler dimensions. Feel where you are in your life. Are you on your path? Are you accomplishing your bestowed mission? Feel where you are in the Creation. How connected is your life to the larger forces that sustain the universe and make existence possible?

Being aware of feelings and emotions and the whisperings of yet subtler forces leads us to the guidance of our lives and the understanding of others. Understanding ourselves and others positions us to apply the second principle of harmonious relationship. Perception is fundamental to our ability to harmonize.

Moving from a centered state is important beyond the physical domain. It is a perceiving, a listening for the forces that guide you in living your life. It is the focus of awareness into attention that allows us to drive a car or follow a conversation. The power of focused attention is as essential in our mental, emotional and spiritual growth as it is in the physical realm when we move through space from one place to the next. Without attention we miss the doorways and walk into the walls. If you are not centered, whose life is it?

Your willingness to deeply experience your own life gives you power, the ability to create and to choose. When we avoid, resist or repress experience, doing so dissipates our power. We all know how capably we can do our jobs when we invest our heart and spirit. For example, which would you generally prefer to hire an enthusiastic beginner or an experienced, uninspired time-clock puncher? In life, you either intend a process of ongoing attentiveness and renewal or you repeat what you know. You either choose growth; development and learning without end, or you calcify and default to stagnation and entropy.

He who is not
busy being born
is busy dying.

Bob Dylan

Life In Three Easy Lessons In One Easy Page

I. Perceive

Breathe, Sense and Feel

Open your Attention

II. Align

Adjust To Changes In The Wind

Unify with the situation as it unfolds.

III. Discover

Learning without end

Share in growing and learning together.

2. Harmonious Relationship

THE SECOND LESSON is practiced through the exercise of aligning a Harmonious Relationship. Harmonious relationship is developed through the principles of adaptability and blending. It implies fluidity with the ceaseless change that is life. Harmonious relationship means non-resistance to the unfolding universe, accepting and receiving what is, rather than opposing it. “Harmonious” and “arm” both derive from a Greek root meaning “fitting” or “joining,” as an arm fits or joins into the shoulder. Musically a harmonious relationship is one that enriches the overtone series of two or more notes increasing the power of their effect. A choir sings different parts in a harmonious relationship. As we harmonize with differing aspects the overtones produced create possibilities that echo into infinity.

Harmonious relationship experiences the power of a coherent, unified whole. An interconnected state of being participating in the universe is at the heart of Aikido. When we are non-resistant to experience our field of perception is expanded. The more we open ourselves, the more we perceive. We can see our actions in relationship to the whole. Non-resistance produces a field of energy which has the potential for self-organization. The forces in a self-organizing system naturally seek a relationship of harmony. Science calls this tendency entrainment. - Lit. to get on board. The natural harmony between centripetal and centrifugal forces keeps planets in their orbits. Harmony between the individual and the universal keeps our lives in balance.

Everything in the universe exists in relationship. Nothing exists in isolation. Everything is connected to everything. We exist in relationship to the planet, to each other, to our thoughts, values and perceptions, creating a universe of complexity and possibility. Harmonizing with the universe takes us beyond the limits of our perception.

Our state of being is the fundamental tone out of which we create our life and our world. Rigid thought will conflict with the flow of change. Freedom of thought opens the possibility of resolving conflict within a system. When we perceive with an open mind, we create the possibility to design a harmonious relationship. Once we are paying attention we can align a tone that harmonizes with what is unfolding. Aikido aligns awareness, perception and action into relationship of harmony. Our refinement of that harmony generates a reciprocating process in others. Moving in harmony, without resistance, reveals our inter-relatedness and reconciles our differences.

Harmony with another begins with the first lesson. Feeling where you are means being present and grounded, aware of and in harmony with your own experience. Coming into an inner coherence, unified in body, mind, and spirit, affects the tone and quality of any relationship. Harmony within creates a reciprocating echo producing harmony in the external world as a natural outcome. When you live in a state of dynamic presence, the second principle of harmonious relationship emerges.

The Power of Harmony

The science of physics teaches that resistance means the loss of energy to friction. When electricity is used to create light, resistance to the flow of current reduces electrical potential. The potential is diminished as some of the energy is used up in the creation of heat (an unintended consequence) instead of light (the intended purpose). The lower the resistance the more effective the system. In an effective system a brighter light is produced with less energy. In electronic communications researchers seek superconductors to create systems with less resistance. This allows computers to process more data at faster speeds with less wasted energy. This is what we must do within our own systems to handle an increasingly complex world.

This dynamic of energy lost to friction is visible in the world of human relationships—among individuals and within and between companies and countries. Discord means we use our energy to make each other's lives worse. The power of harmony means our power can be used for positive ends. Harmony in human interaction like a super conductor in electronic transmission diminishes the energy lost to friction, conflict, arguments and war. Harmonious relationship allows all the energy available to be focused on creating a beautiful world. When there is harmony between people wealth is created through our interactions. Peace and prosperity go together.

Life energy allowed to flow generates ability. When resisted it creates stress. Our efficiency and effectiveness diminish under stress. Tightness in the muscles inhibits the range and power of an athlete's motion just as tightness in the mind impedes an executive's ability to organize information and develop strategy. Rigidity in a parent's mind blocks their ability to hear and work in harmony with their child. It inhibits their ability to help the child develop effectively. Resistance to one's own feelings and intentions constrains personal power and impedes the leadership ability needed to guide and motivate ourselves and others.

When we are open and non-resistant to the flow of our own power we generate an indomitable spirit. The word "spirit" defines the power of our intentions and the power of our attitudes. It refers to the indefinable energy that activates the forces of intent and determination. When a leader or parent has a strong spirit the team or family feels energized and empowered by it. When a leader, teacher or parent succumbs to the stress and overwhelm it becomes ever more likely so will the people in their charge,

The power of Aikido emanates from the principle of non-resistance. Non-resistance allows all available resources to be used to create harmonious relationship and effective action. In the midst of change, do not oppose your feelings or the feelings of others. Start by accepting experience as it is, including your desire to change it.

Water by its nature shows us non-resistance, effortlessly taking the shape of the container into which it is poured. In an effective Aikido response one aligns in a harmonious relationship with the shape of an attack. Rather than opposing the incoming energy Aikido moves with and responds to the unfolding situation. Using the energy present towards reconciliation of conflict achieves any goal with less loss of energy to friction and conflict. Aikido accomplishes more and more with less and less.

Using Aikido as a metaphor for the business of living, the attack represents the force of change. We learn not to oppose the inevitable. We learn to work with change in a spirit of harmony. In that attitude the force of change and the seeming chaos that ensues becomes a source of creativity.

Albert Einstein and David Bohm, also a prominent physicist, belonged to a community of scientists whose most valuable capital was the ability to share in a common pool of intelligence and knowledge. The scientific community, when it works well, exemplifies the value of harmonious relationship in the search for knowledge.

The story has it that the head of the team developing the atomic bomb for Nazi Germany was domineering. He ridiculed those who did not agree with him diminishing their collective intelligence and creative effectiveness. The military general who controlled the American team for the Manhattan Project wanted each scientist kept separate to maintain secrecy. Dr. Oppenheimer, who headed the team of scientists on the project, fought to create an open exchange of information, which was key to their creativity and ultimate success. When great minds harmonize it shows us the power unleashed in the ability to think together. A spirit of harmony and cooperation rather than one of dominance and fear creates an environment where learning and creative thought flourish.

The secret of Aikido is to harmonize ourselves with the movement of the universe and bring ourselves into accord with the universe itself.

Aiki is not a technique to fight with or defeat the enemy. It is a way to reconcile the world and make human beings one family.”

Morihei Ueshiba, O Sensei

Getting off the line of attack is a powerful technique. Though it looks like inaction it is a movement into a harmonious relationship. Especially when someone intends to cause you harm—physically, politically, or socially allowing them to complete their mission is both disarming and the beginning of reconciliation.

In Aikido, when someone attacks us, we do not resist the force. From the point where the attack is initiated to the point where the attack is aimed there is a line of intent, what we might call the line of attack or the line of fire. “Getting off the line” means we do not stay on the line of the attack in opposition to its movement. Getting off the line means we do not engage in a power struggle. In the physical domain we enter in beside the attacker turning and facing the same direction. This action symbolizes an intention to listen. All our effort is used to learn and understand, to enter into harmonious relationship. We try to understand their point of view. By doing so we chose not to dissipate the divine power of creation that we have been given. We choose to use our energy for reconciliation rather than to use it increasing defensiveness and resistance.

Getting “off the line” is the first step in developing harmonious relationship. In the physical practice of Aikido, the term describes getting out of the way of an attack, a sword strike, a physical push, or a grab. When we are dealing with hostile energy we never want to be in the line of fire, on that line of attack. Moving off the line is what allows us to deal with someone’s hostility without taking it on or returning it in kind. Physically if we do not get hit we do not have such a strong urge to hit back. When we hit back, even if we win the fight we increase future resentment.

Most people, if they had the awareness to see it coming and the power to move in time, would move out of the way of any oncoming threat. For instance if we see it coming, we get out of the way of an oncoming car and naturally adopt a harmonious relationship rather than one of opposition. If we applied the same response to verbal attacks we would be better off. Defensiveness means we have not moved off the line and instead are defending ourselves against the force of change. If we get off the line, the energy we would have expended defending ourselves is available for the creative process.

Principles of interaction can be translated from the movements and applied to our lives. As mentioned above, the attack serves as a metaphor for any change or pressure in daily life, whether the intent is hostile or benevolent. The pressure of the attack represents the pressures of daily life; time pressures, psychological and emotional stress, etc.

Getting off the line of attack is a remarkably powerful technique, especially when someone intends to cause you harm—physically, politically, or socially. If you are “not

there” to receive the attack and your adversary can’t land the punch they cannot harm you.

Moving out of the way of an attack rather than blocking its force keeps us from being entangled or run over by the force and frees us to make use of it. Moving off the line allows us to lead the attacker’s intent. In our life metaphor non-resistance represents staying on the leading edge of change. It is fundamental to leadership and the doorway to creative response.

Moving off the line of attack can be described in an emotional context as “not taking it personally’. If we don’t receive a statement personally we are less likely to return hostility which usually escalates violent behavior. In the mental realm this translates as not opposing a statement verbally. Your integrity increases by choosing to learn rather than defending your position. It allows you to listen and deepens your ability to understand their intent. The spirit of non-resistance models a harmonious relationship with change and opens you to the whisperings of the divine within you. In the realm of the spirit it means allowing our energy to flow without resistance from our limited identity. Harmonious relationship means living in harmony with, not in opposition to, the flowing energy of the unfolding of the universe.

Get off the line. Don’t let another’s interaction with you become a personal matter. Choose to listen and understand their meaning as an expression of how they are feeling. Acceptance doesn’t necessarily mean agreement. We can accept their expression of their feelings as a valid description of their experience, without having to believe that what they are saying is right. If we get off the line we can listen. We can empathize. Perhaps we can even help. If we take what they say personally defensiveness ensues. We tend to hear our own reactions louder than the meaning they intend.

If you don’t take another’s response as an affront, you are free to engage in a genuine dialogue. You can seek creative solutions together instead of becoming entangled in negative exchanges or defensive arguments that leave you drained rather than vitalized and that diminish the quality of relationship.

We may have an idea of harmony but if we are not present we can’t actualize it. ‘Going with’ implies you are present, involved and engaged and contributing energy to the unfolding experience. Getting present with what’s going on allows a non-resistant relationship. We can’t be absent and non-resistant. Getting off the line does not mean avoiding experience. An unwillingness to engage inevitably diminishes effectiveness.

Going with the flow does not mean hanging out around the flow. ‘Going with’ the flow is not a passive ‘giving up’ to the flow. Going with does not mean that we do not participate. The opposite, going with’ implies a spirit of active engagement. Go with, don’t hang out around the flow or wait to be taken.

The Power of Inquiry

Harmonious relationship can be described as the willingness to enter into an inquiry. Inquiry is the spirit that transforms confusion, misunderstanding and the opposing opinions of another into a quest for learning. The process of inquiry requires entering the unknown. If we remain in the domain of the known we gain only additive knowledge that does not disturb our present descriptions nor change our existing view.

Don't oppose your feelings or the feelings of others. Explore the origin of these feelings and receive the subtler differences as something to investigate. Listen for a message, a sense of guidance from the collective wisdom behind the differences.

Inquiry is the doorway to greater knowledge in all things. Inquiry through non-resistance, through subtle listening to what I call the "whisperings of the kami" (guidance of the divine spirit), accesses knowledge beyond conscious knowing, beyond intuition. When the kami whispers, it takes an inner quiet to hear. O Sensei said Aikido transcended human limitations because he received it from the divine wisdom that he called the Aiki kami, 'the divine spirit of harmonious energy'. In a state of harmony, your inner feelings echo the whisperings of the Aiki-kami, the voice of inspiration. Experiencing this knowledge produces creativity and leadership. The whisperings of wisdom are of no use to us if we are not listening.

Feeling where you are could be described as listening to your own experience. Harmonious relationship includes listening to and blending with others as you sing your part. Aikido creates an open spirit, non-resistant to new information, what science calls an open system. The universal intelligence, the kami, the voice of wisdom within our deepest self, is always speaking to us. The issue is whether we are listening..

David Bohm was a major proponent of the "discipline of Dialogue." He described similar characteristics speaking about Albert Einstein and Jiddu Krishnamurti, a contemporary eastern philosopher. "They both showed an intense energy of listening and a freedom from self-protective reservations and barriers." (From On Dialogue by David Bohm). That is the quality from which we should seek to engage in the world. That is the spirit Aikido cultivates. Listening to ourselves, each other and the universe without resistance is the process of Aikido. Allowing our lives to be guided by that listening is the practice of the art.

Harmonious relationship positions us to work creatively with another person, with a situation, or a problem. When energy is not lost to the resistance of defensiveness, all our attentiveness and awareness can be focused on generating solutions and creative action. If another person reacts negatively to a suggestion, don't challenge the correctness of their reaction or try to change their point of view. Listen! Learn why they feel the way they do. Understand the criteria they are basing their judgement on. Then enter into an inquiry together. Draw on their energy and passion by appreciating their contribution. Use their input as guidance to move towards a creative solution. Work with them to improve the suggestion and create a beautiful world.

This is the power of harmony—the essence of Aikido.

“Aikido is non-resistance. As it is non-resistance it is always victorious.

Never defeated means never fighting.

There is no discord in love. There is no enemy of love. Love is the guardian deity of everything. Nothing can exist without it.”

Morihei Ueshiba O Sensei

The Power of Training

Imagine a hillside of soft dirt. When it rains, gullies form. Once they are formed, during future rains the water repeatedly runs along the gullies it previously created. Early on in our learning we created pathways of thought and action in response to specific stimuli. When we experience a rush of energy, we tend to habitually act in a response programmed from the past. We are conditioned at the most formative time of our lives to behave according to the rules of our family and our culture.

Society's expectations often combine with our fear of the unknown to bridle our sense of wonder. If we have habituated to resisting change that will seem to be our innate response. Although resistance can be so strongly conditioned as to almost seem innate, proper training can transform habituated tendencies in our personalities. Conditioning causes us to act unconsciously, unless we consciously train a new response. Training offers the possibility of consciously creating new pathways. Training can go far beyond simply establishing new behavior. It can develop the ability to spontaneously create new pathways of thought and options that were previously non-existent. Developing the ability of creating new pathways is the source of creative process. This underlies the study of Aikido in its highest form.

The attitude of non-resistance is natural for the flow of life energy. As a behavior, non-resistance can be developed. Easier said than done, it is a learned skill. Through repeatedly awakening to the possibility of choosing a positive, creative response, a new way of relating ultimately develops.

Aikido mirrors life and reflects our styles and patterns of behavior. Our relationship with the outer world reflects our relationship with our energy, our spirit. The person "attacking" us can be used as a metaphor to reflect our relationship with external forces we encounter as well as the internal forces we experience emotionally and psychologically. Harmonizing with the attacker's energy implies aligning ourselves to our own Ki, energy or spirit. In physical training, our response to the energy of the person attacking us reveals how we respond to our own life energy. Presence implies seeing and choosing our relationship to the energy of change rather than being condemned to react out of previous patterning.

It is irrelevant whether the pressures we face are a physical attack, the rent, taxes, old age, or death. As our energy increases to help us deal with the pressures we face in life, if we resist our vitality becomes stress. If we train non-resistance our energy becomes an ally. Harmonious relationship transforms energy that could become the source of stress into a source of power.

Training, if we choose to use it this way, allows us to develop a willing exploration of the unknown. We can learn to integrate aspects of ourselves, which may at first seem foreign and uncomfortable. In training we learn to align with Ki and open to it instead of resisting it. Harmony enhances our ability to draw on and utilize energy as potential. Aikido practice opens up channels for universal Ki and allows this energy to flow through our system making it available for the creation of our lives.

Initially we practice harmonious relationship with our life energy. Eventually we learn that what we experience as our life force is part of a larger universal field. As that awareness increases, our ability to experience the harmony of the universe grows and with it our ability to draw on that universal power. When we learn to handle the Ki within our own system effectively, we handle the Ki in the world effectively. In a state of non-resistance to the power of the universe it naturally flows into our lives producing creative response at any given moment. By refining awareness into attention, perception can be brought to focus on a greater field of potential, infinitely increasing our options. Attention increases potential. Refining awareness into attention is a developed skill. Skill is developed through the power of training.

Traditionally, we bow at the beginning of Aikido training sessions. We bow to acknowledge a desire to learn more about ourselves. The ritual should reinforce going beyond our conditioned patterns. Training non-resistance evokes the mystery of who we are at the deepest level. Harmony means embracing the life force, not fighting against it. In consciously developing the spirit of harmonious relationship we invoke the expression of mystery and wonder. Harmonious relationship develops a spirit of learning without end.

Feel where you are and align a non-resistant, harmonious relationship with the universe as it is. This opens a doorway to the third principle: Creativity. Share Who You Are.

“Winning means winning over the mind of discord in yourself. It is to accomplish your bestowed mission.”

Morihei Ueshiba O Sensei

Life In Three Easy Lessons In One Easy Page

I. Attention

Be here now

Notice

Sense

Awaken

II. Connection

“Don’t need no ticket, you just get on board’

Entrain

Synthesize

Conjoin

III. Influence

Being responsible to authenticity

Affect

Change

Transform

3. Share Who You Are

THE THIRD PRINCIPLE, Creativity is practiced through the third lesson which is share who you are. Make your contribution. Accomplish your bestowed mission. Each of us has a unique view of the world. Each of us brings something special to share. I believe it is in our natures to value making a contribution and having our contribution valued by others. Conversely, the pain of having our contribution rejected or worse ridiculed can be so agonizing that we may learn never to take the risk. How many possible contributions have you held back? How many times in a meeting or a simple conversation with someone have you had something of potential value to say and withheld it or said it under your breath? When we allow our creativity to express into the world we contribute. To complete your bestowed mission it is imperative that you, Share who you are.

Every innovation in business and government, every breakthrough in science, and every major transformation in art enriches the whole world; and yet virtually every new idea has had its detractors. I love the part in Martha Graham's quote where she says: "It is not your business to determine how good (your expression) is, nor how valuable, nor how it compares to other expressions. It is your business to keep the channel open."

The opportunity of sharing who you are means not only to being aware of "the urges that activate you" but manifesting them, contributing them. Life is not satisfied by simply having the idea of something. Creativity, sharing who you are, implies bringing the idea into form, to fruition. Make your contribution. Keeping the channel open allows action. Going with the flow doesn't mean passively hanging out around it. It does not even stop with appreciating the flow. It means leading change by expressing the spirit of creativity.

During the early years of Aikido's birth, O Sensei's teacher told O Sensei that his traditional Daito-Ryu Aiki-jujitsu practice was getting weird. O Sensei's teacher was implying that O Sensei was out of line by changing the art. Listening to his growing connection with the Aiki-kami, O Sensei did Aikido. He obeyed his teacher but maintained his convictions. "Yes, teacher it is as you wish," he said, "I will no longer call my practice Daito-Ryu Aiki-jujitsu."

Aikido is not about receiving support or accolades; it means becoming who you are. It means actualizing and sharing who you are becoming. It is about being authentic and spontaneous; being who you are and sharing who you are.

“To act without attachment
to the fruits of one’s action
is the path to liberation.”

Sri Krishna, The Baghavad Gita

“Whatever you can do or think you can, begin it;
boldness has genius and magic and power in it.”

Goethe

“This is not mere theory. You practice it.
Then you will realize the great power
of oneness with nature.”

Morihei Ueshiba O Sensei

Authenticity and Spontaneity

Life is not only about handling pressure; it is about being who we are. Success is discovering our truth and expressing it in the world. When our spirit gets lost in the all of the myriad entanglements of daily life – when pressure steals our enthusiasm and diminishes our flow -- we lose touch with our bestowed mission. Before we know it, our lives are consumed with handling the pressures of life and we no longer know who we are. We cease becoming. We share who we were, if we share at all.

If you ask me who I am, at first I would not know what to say. I could not tell you what my special mission is or why am I on this earth. As I slow down, and breathe and feel, a deeper experience of myself comes to the fore. As I feel where I am and harmonize with, what seem at first indistinguishable whispers, I recognize a sense of something unknown yet familiar. When I tap into a connection deeper than my conscious knowing, I get a sense of who I am at this time, what I'd like to do, and what needs to happen in my life. If this practice is left undone these flows of energy show up as vague or unconscious urges that drive us subliminally. When we pay attention, feel deeper parts of ourselves and connect to more than the known, we invite the intelligence of spirit, the invisible, the universal, the whisperings of the kami.

An unfathomable wisdom exists in the universe. It flows through us as energy. Listening to the whisperings of our awareness allows us to be moved by this internal voice. If we are centered, grounded and non-resistant, the natural essence of who we are will manifest itself. Then we find ourselves drawn to the right partner, connecting with the right work and moving towards personal completion and a larger contribution.

I don't think the purpose of life boils down to paying the rent. I don't think it is about how well known you are or what deeds you accomplish. I think it's about being true to yourself. It's about manifesting your own experience and living with integrity, living authentically, sharing who you are. And yes, while you're here, you will pay some rent, earn some money and make your personal contributions for better or for worse. But in the larger scheme of things, these are incidental. The practice in this lifetime is about staying true to your connection. "Keep the channel open."

When you sense and connect with something larger than yourself, a rush of energy floods your individual awareness. If you engage and align yourself in a state of fluid non-resistance, your bestowed mission moves towards natural completion as if of its own volition. When you move with your forces in a way that is harmonious other forces align themselves. They are influenced by the field of energy you have activated. This in turn

opens the possibility for you to lead others in the completion of their bestowed mission. When you are aligned with your bestowed mission you generate a reciprocating echo. You naturally lead people to find where they belong rather than requiring them to be where habit or precedent thinks they should.

Sharing who you are means being authentic with people. Contemplate the word “authenticity”. It begins with being honest with yourself about whatever is going on. It means sharing who you are, at least with yourself, in each moment. It doesn’t mean you have to shout the news, make proclamations, confessions or put advertisements in the newspaper. You only need to be in touch with your own experience, be willing to feel it, and let it flow.

Don’t get into an argument with yourself about who you are. Through the practice of non-resistance, relaxing and allowing, return to the essence of who you are and let that feeling guide the movement of your life. Awareness flowing freely and harmoniously becomes power itself. Creativity unfolds out of the totality of awareness. This is the core of leadership.

AN EXPLORATION

You may find it easier to access sharing who you are through visualization. Close your eyes and picture yourself in a recent challenging situation or conflict. As you watch the scene, pay attention to your state of being in the visualization. Notice your muscle tension, your posture, your breathing and your feelings.

Now rerun the scene. This time, Feel where you are. Imagine yourself centering, and your breath flowing freely. Picture yourself relaxing in the situation. Pay attention to the flow of your life energy. Imagine being filled with a sense of power and capability. See yourself moving into a harmonious relationship with the situation. From this state of being, notice how you interact in your visualization. What changes?

The ability to shift your state of engagement allows you to go from being locked in, to (a) knowing that you're locked in, to (b) dissolving the tension into free energy, to (c) something new emerging. Once you're willing to enter the unknown, infinite creative possibilities appear. Life is your experiment. You make it up. Share who you are.

Life In Three Easy Lessons In One Easy Page

I. Focus

Presence / Rhythm / Center

Awareness into Attention

See one

II. Listen

Adaptability / Harmony / Blend

Align into Connection

Do one

III. Learn

Creativity / Melody/ Lead

Evolve into Innovation

Teach one

The Process as a Whole

The Three Easy Lessons revisited as one unified process of harmony:

ONE, *feeling where you are*, a state of centered, grounded, flowing awareness, - harmonize with your self. *Feeling where you are* means non-resistance to "being where you are", deepening felt sense (your feeling experience of the moment) and heightening awareness (paying more attention to the moment). *Feeling where you are* produces a natural state of presence. TWO, *harmonious relationship*, which means moving in non-resistance with the power or energy of the situation. Harmonize with what is. And THREE, '*share who you are*', participating fully in the unfolding universe, harmonize with the becoming. Harmonize with what is changing.

Harmonize, internally, externally & with change.

Aikido in one easy lesson: Harmonize

Healing into Wholeness

Healing comes from the root meaning to make whole.

THE UNIVERSE IS ONE system, a unified field of energy in which we are participants. When we feel ourselves as part of the universe, we sense where we are in the flow of Creation; we naturally experience a connectedness with the earth. Feeling this connection heals the isolation that characterizes modern life. We experience life's interconnectedness. We find ourselves in empowered alignment with the universe as it unfolds. Coming into alignment with the essential core of your being echoes a sense of connection with creation. Experiencing a harmonious relationship with the universe and contributing to the unfolding—is the experience of Aikido.

3-in-1 Oil: The Mystery of the Holy Trinity

THE THREE EASY LESSONS offers the simplest way I have found of talking about the art of Aikido. It distills a simple way of practicing in emotional and verbal situations as well as physical ones. To effectively apply the three easy lessons, it's critical that we complete all three steps.

As mentioned earlier the first two principles are prerequisite to the third. You need to (1) feel where you are, meaning that you are maintaining a self-reflexive state, self-aware, paying attention to feeling centered and grounded in the present. Then you can (2) align a non-resistant, harmonious relationship, a state of congruence with the situation at hand. Once you are present and non-resistant, all your energy is available to (3) make a creative contribution, sharing who you are.

Feel where you are so you know when you are in a *harmonious relationship*; then it becomes appropriate to *share who you are*. If we get involved “out there” and lose step one, *feeling where you are*, we lose presence. Then step two, *harmonious relationship*, becomes an abstraction. And, step three *sharing who you are*, is a miss or a clash.

Paradoxically the Three Easy Lessons occur both sequentially and concurrently. The first step, grounding and feeling where you are, happens during the second step, harmonious (non-resistant) relationship, as well as while you are doing the third step, sharing who you are. In the performance of the art of Aikido, they aren't linear - one, two, three. They are all happening at once. We may break them down to study and practice them, but to effectively utilize them they must be practiced simultaneously. Being present, centered and grounded in your experience gives you the power to enter into a relationship. Working in harmony allows you to contribute.

In the physical practice of Aikido our relationship with a partner produces a physical technique that (neutralizes the attack and) resolves the conflict. In the business and personal domain the quality of our presence influences the relationships that describe our personal and business lives. Instead of losing presence when the quality of the relationship starts to change, flow with the change in a positive spirit. From a state of presence and non-resistance, you can lead, guide, explore and create.

Often people, especially leaders and parents operating out of a command and control mentality, want to skip to the third step—lead, tell, do something to take charge, fix the

situation, or help someone—without doing the first two. However, it is critical that you operate from a centered and grounded state. You can't get there from not-here. It is also crucial that you operate from a state of non-resistance. Any resistance you feel coming into a situation will generate counter-resistance in the situation.

Once you are in a state of dynamic presence and harmonious non-resistance, you can make a contribution of unique value. No one else can make the contribution you would make. Again I return to Martha Graham's quote: "You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that activate you."

In Aikido when we speak of "blending with an attack," it means non-resistant, harmonious movement that allows us to neutralize the threat of the attack and transform the force into potential. Once we are centered and blending with the reality of the moment we become a vehicle for the flow of Ki and open the possibility to lead change. The beauty of O Sensei's art teaches us to naturally and effortlessly participate in and contribute to, with the unfolding universe. Feel where you are, move into harmonious relationship, and share who you are.

Life In Three Easy Lessons In One Easy Page

I. Vitality

Presence / Rhythm / Center

Relax into the moment

II. Non-Resistance

Adaptability / Harmony / Blend

Allow and appreciate

III. Contribution

Creativity / Melody / Lead

Envision Unfolding Creation

Social Change: Leadership of the Spirit

Changing the Structures of Business and Community

FRAGMENTED INDIVIDUALS inevitably produce a fragmented society. The process we are exploring in this book—is a process of continuous development and renewal. The commitment to self-development is basic to the development of our society.

Aikido is about developing self-directed individuals who give attention to, and take responsibility for, the creation of society. The process starts by healing the fragmentation within ourselves. With that commitment we naturally spread the spirit of harmony into the world.

There is an innate human drive to learn. When learning is supported it is a natural outcome of doing. Then focusing on perfecting our work and helping each other improve becomes a reciprocating cycle of continuous growth and development. Societal leaders from all walks of life who have made the greatest contributions have focused on developing themselves and rewarded learning in those who follow them. By modeling their commitment to learn they motivate their people to grow.

“A mind to serve the peace of all human beings is needed in Aikido, and not the mind of one who wishes only to be strong or who practices to fell an opponent.”

O Sensei

The above statement translated the business of living might sound something like: A mind to serve for the completion (growth, development, and satisfaction) of all human beings is needed in the leadership of education and business, and not the mind of one who teaches to convince others of their beliefs or who works only to benefit one's self.

The majority of marriages, mergers, re-engineering and recovery processes fail. For a company to be successful there must be an alignment of mission - values, leadership - workers and contribution to a larger field of society. The unification of mind, emotions, body, and spirit is the beginning of the process. Three Easy Lessons represents a simple and accessible way to begin.

If an individual desires to transform a relationship, a team, a company or a nation, the process must begin with self-transformation. Transformation won't work with employers who want "others" to change without leading, seeking change within themselves. It is ineffective to drive a car from the outside. It is ineffective to lead a team or develop a family or society seeing yourself as separate from the whole. If you wish to lead, you must commit all your forces.

“You must be the change you want to see in the world.” Gandhi

Everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die. Everybody wants things to be better yet resistance to change seems as common as change itself. Resistance to change keeps us mired in social and personal conflict. If we resist change our self-protective behavior drains our energy. We must learn to embrace the cycle of change to foster transformation and welcome the death of the habits and the mental structures that bind us.

Who we are is constantly changing. Listening to the whisperings of the kami means allowing the way we think to transform, to grow anew. We come to think differently by differentiating our experience more clearly. Changing the structures of thought allows meaning to form in ways that are beyond our present understanding.

Hindu mythology teaches the divinity of three forces: creation, preservation and destruction. The God of destruction and transformation was called Shiva, the destroyer of worlds. Where as death in the west was seen as the grim reaper, Shiva was revered because the rishis (wise men) of Hindu mythology recognized everything is part of an indivisible cycle.

The Buddha taught, “Everything we are is a result of what we have thought.

Einstein said, “We will not solve the problems we face with the same thinking that created them.”

David Bohm concluded, “Fragmented thought will produce fragmented results.”

Solutions generated from incoherent thinking will yield only divisiveness and conflict. Thought needs to be “at one” with feeling, action, and spirit to develop coherent being. The first order of business is to challenge and recreate our own thinking.

“Aikido is not for correcting others; it is for correcting your own mind.”

Morihei Ueshiba O Sensei

Folk wisdom asserts two certainties: death and taxes. We may joke about taxes but facing the fact that life is temporary may not seem as funny for some people. Although the concept of death has negative connotations for many, it can paradoxically be used to engender positive change as it represents a pressure we cannot defeat.

The Buddha said, “there is no place, not the heights of the mountains nor the depths of the sea, where death cannot find you.” There is no outwitting the temporal imperative of life. The presence of death brings our vitality to the fore.

Aikido does not resist death. An attitude of non-resistance allows us to incorporate death’s guidance gracefully into our living.

The awareness of death enlivens the creation of life! Recognizing that our own death is stalking us, we don’t have to wait until we’re on our deathbeds to start being honest with ourselves or to hold anything back from accomplishing our bestowed missions. Listen to death’s wise and implacable advice: “Live life to the fullest. It’s always later than you think.”

We live differently with change through the power of non-resistance. Change accepted is a source of creativity. Embracing change means rebirth and renewal. Instead of worrying about death, focus attention on living. Someone said, “My greatest fear would be to get to the end of my life only to find out it was somebody else’s!” Aikido teaches us to live our time here in a positive spirit rather than spend our life worrying about its end.

Learning causes our picture of the world to change. Seeing the world through new eyes causes our sense of ourselves to change. A state of being without depth produces shallow thinking and irresponsible action. We cannot share who we are effectively without “deepening” our state. When we calm the waters of our being we can receive messages from deeper levels of knowing.

Quantum Possibilities

THESE PRINCIPLES OPEN the doorway to another world. In Aikido, the Japanese word Kokyu describes a state in which the spirit infuses and empowers the physical, mental and emotional dimensions of life. When these dimensions cohere into wholeness, when there is harmony between the parts, life expresses Kokyu. When people are good friends or when singers' voices blend together well that state of interpenetration is described with the term Kokyu. Kokyu is a quintessential concept behind the principles of Aikido.

Understanding that we should “go with the flow” is meaningless unless we actualize it in our lives. In a state of dynamic presence and harmony with the moment, the fears that block the expression of our essence seem to melt away. We are free to complete our bestowed mission. Something beyond imagination happens when we individually and collectively tap into becoming part of the ultimate force that gives rise to all creation. A state of grace arises.

In business or sports, when mind, body, emotions, and spirit are unified, when the mental power and physical skills of the team members synchronize into a unified force, the dynamic power of Kokyu is unstoppable.

Sports champions speak about “peak experiences” or “being in the zone” where they seemingly enter into another dimension and produce exceptional results. In the business world the appearance of this Kokyu State is called inspired leadership, intuitional decision-making, or creative problem solving.

Some problems will always remain, but the creative development of one's strength and courage remains fundamental. The universe is a unified field of infinite intelligence. Problems arise out of poorly aligned relationship to the universal force, out of misunderstanding its principles. Listen to the whisperings of your deepest sense and your highest aspirations. When the intelligence of the universe whispers to you, respond without resistance.

“When you bow to the universe it bows back to you.

When you call out the name of the divine it echoes inside of you.”

Morihei Ueshiba O Sensei

I. Substance

Presence / Rhythm / Center

**Feel what supports you weight
Feel what supports your beliefs and ideas
Feel what supports your life.**

II. Fluidity

Adaptability / Harmonize / Blend

**Non-resistance in yourself.
Non-resistance in relationship
Non-resistance as the situation unfolds.**

III. Listening

Creativity / Melody / Lead

**Receive the changing
Of experience, thoughts
And the whisperings of the spirit**

One System

MASTERY PRACTICE IS simple. If you are feeling where you are, you are in a process of feeling the universe. The universe is not something separate you have to learn to relate to. You are the universe. The creation of the universe is a process in which you are fully enfolded. You are Creation.

“There are neither opponents nor enemies for true Budo.

True Budo is to be one with the universe;

that is, to be united with the center of the universe.”

Morihei Ueshiba O Sensei

The challenge lies in developing the focus of our attention. Through the focus of attention we develop an awareness of how our internal processes influence the unfolding patterns of energy that make up our lives. This awareness enhances the ability to influence the protean energy that creates experience. All things change. If all things change, you can change. If you can change, your changing changes the changing.

Life changes when we perceive ourselves actively creating the universe, including family, society, culture, the world in which we live. When we claim responsibility for our lives we shift from a victimized state, a state of feeling powerless, to a state of feeling access to the resources of the universe.

Larger forces are at play in the unfolding of our lives. Feeling where we are in relation to these forces changes our relationship to them and our ability to lead creatively. We are transformed from fragile leaves buffeted by the winds of change into pilots of our destiny navigating through the unfolding journey of our lives.

Simply imagining you have this power begins to awaken latent powers you may not have known existed. In the best of worlds increased power means the ability to dream, to imagine life anew. The dream is the first step on the journey to a beautiful world.

The journey of a thousand miles
begins with a single step.

Lao-Tzu

I. Emptiness

**Nothing no thought no expectation
Consciousness without form
Unknown possibility**

II. Energy

**Ability
Vision
Unlimited possibility**

III. Form

**Unfolding Creation
Unending possibility**

ADVICE

Someone dancing inside us
has learned only a few steps:
The “Do-your-work” in 4/4 time,
the “What-do-you-expect?” waltz.
He hasn’t noticed yet the woman
standing away from the lamp.
The one with black eyes
who knows the rumba
and strange steps in jumpy rhythms
from the mountains of Bulgaria
If they dance together
something unexpected will happen;
If they don’t, the next world
will be a lot like this one.

Bill Holm

I. Continuous Attention

Expanding awareness

Mindfulness

II. Harmonious Relationship

Listening to the unknown

Responsiveness

III. Engaged Participation

Learning without end

Willingness.

Exquisite presence

Connection beyond the senses

Exploration into the unknown

Enter the emptying

Allow the vastness

Become the unfolding

The Birth of the Three Easy Lessons

TEACHING IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES IN PARTICULAR NEW ZEALAND stimulated a new approach to my understanding of Aikido—an insight I now call “Aiki-land.” describing a way of being, not simply practicing skills. I was dreaming about it when a student came into class distracted or upset. I took her aside and asked, “What’s going on?” Close to tears she replied, “My brother has a tumor. The doctors think he has cancer. I don’t know what to do.” In my experience, when confronted with a life crisis, a common reaction is to avoid the situation, deny it, or to put on a brave face. The options seem to be flee, freeze, or fight your experience. Aikido should open a doorway to something more.

After a quiet moment, a vague sensation formed into feeling and eventually the words formed and expressed themselves. I won’t say it wasn’t me, yet I wouldn’t say it was. I responded, “You can react to your discomfort with denial or avoidance, or you can simply be with where you are and feel what’s going on for you. In other words, you can painfully resist the situation, including what you are feeling and thinking, or you can accept the situation as it is, feeling where you are. By simply being present and non-resistant, you can assist your brother and yourself by just sharing who you are.”

This experience is how I got into the articulation and practice of the “Three Easy Lessons.” I teach it to my clients in the business realm and to Aikido students wherever I go. I use it in mediations, including international peace-building work. The Three Easy Lessons keeps deepening and the applications keep getting broader, revealing power beyond my expectations.

Two months later I was with this same student after we finished a demonstration. I was on my way to my car when she caught up with me and said, “I want you to know that my brother is okay.” We cannot know whether her practice affected her brother’s healing. Maybe, maybe not. What I would say is that with the practice, during the period of her brother’s illness, she lived in a different reality invented out of the way she responded to the crisis.

Whatever you encounter in life there is the opportunity to apply the principles of Aikido. I feel the three easy lessons were offered as a gift to me for simplifying the application of those principles. I offer this book in the hope your life will be enriched through the experience of Aikido.

Life In One Easy Lesson

**Continually
Harmonize
Creatively**

**Continually Realign
Harmonious Participation**

Aikido in one easy lesson: Unify

Unify the experiencer - breathing and feeling / equal and even / opening and settling /
whole and total
Emptiness / Suspension

Unify the experience - one system / harmonize / align with / blend
Energy / Inquiry

Unify the unfolding - become the unknown / everything is connected with everything /
lead / expression unifies experience / unlimited creativity
Form / Relevation / Revelation

More Threes

Here

Now

With

Into

Explore

Mystery

Get present

Get it together

Get it going

Get into it

Get with it

Get on it

Listen to it

Learn from it

Grow into it

See it

Be it

Do it

3 easy in life

feel your desire to contribute
find a way to contribute
do it

3 easy in business

desire
design
deliver

3 easy in healing

examine
diagnose
prescribe

3 easy in negotiation

identify the conflicting needs
identify options for solution
explore possibilities for resolutions

3 easy in diplomacy

know where you stand
meet the other
see what we can do together

(Courtesy of Louise Diamond)

About The Listening Institute & The Quantum Edge

The Listening Institute & The Quantum Edge are dedicated to increase human wealth through extraordinary communication. Aikido of Marin is the dojo –the school where we practice

We are a network of consultants specializing in executive coaching, leadership and team development, mastery training and mediation. Our training and process work are drawn from and explore the disciplines of Aikido and Dialogue. Our coaching and training has been delivered primarily in high-change environments. We have worked with fast-paced start-ups within the telecommunications industry, large utility firms, the banking industry, and a number of high-tech corporations. We also contribute in the arena of international peace building, having worked with the Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy, Harvard Negotiation Project, Conflict Management Group and the Fulbright Commission.

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Glossary

Aiki News: a magazine on Aikido

Shin Budo magazine: a magazine on Aikido

Aiki-kami: the divine spirit to whom O Sensei attributed the creation of the art of Aikido

Aiki-land: a term I coined to describe the quality of being in an Aiki state

Aikido: the way of harmony with the spirit of the universe. O Sensei called it the Art of Peace - sometimes understood as the warrior techniques and practices derived from the way of harmony

Attention: the developed ability to concentrate and fix awareness that allows us to use it as a tool

Awareness: the power of perception, the ability to perceive

Bestowed mission: a term used by O Sensei to describe one's path of contribution to all of humanity

Black belt: a grade of rank designating a graduate student in a given martial art

Blend: to join forces into a confluent or unified field of the whole

Buddha: the enlightened one, one who has seen beyond the world of duality, it also refers to the individual who showed the path, the founder of Buddhism

Budo: the way of the warrior; do is a path or way of study, Bu is the Japanese term for the spirit of a warrior, one who fulfills their responsibility

Center: physically, the point of balance within the body - emotionally, the quality of calm presence - spiritually, the source of power and vitality

Creation: the totality of all that exists

Daito-Ryu Aiki-jujitsu: the form of martial arts studied by O Sensei before founding Aikido

Dojo: school, a place where one studies the way

Energy: the activating force of a system

Extend: to project one's mind or energy into a situation

Felt sense: being in touch with one's experience

Flow: the movement of KI or energy in a specific channel or direction

Form: the manifest state of energy

Ground: connection for an individual to the larger force of being beyond the personal

Irimi nage: entering throw, an Aikido technique

Jiu waza: lit. free technique, a type of practice where the response is not pre-described

Kami: divine spirit, god, source of power or creative force

Kata: a set movement or series of movements practiced repeatedly to develop deeper learning

Ki: originating from the symbol for steam it implies the energy of the universe, life energy, spirit, common sense, adaptability, vitality, creativity

Kokyu: literally translated as breath or breath power, it describes the interpenetration of the physical by the spiritual - also harmony, connection, resonance, friendship

Mabinogi: the Welsh creation myth

Morihei Ueshiba: the founder of the art of Aikido also referred to as O Sensei

Non-resistance: allowing a situation to unfold according to its nature

O Sensei: great teacher or teacher's teacher

Principles: the basis and rules of action in a system

Relax: to release again the tension held over from past thought and activity

Self-reflexive: the ability to perceive oneself in relation to a situation and continually adjust action according to the feedback

Sensei: teacher, literally one who has gone before

Shiva: the Hindu god of destruction or transformation.

Sho Dan: the first level of graduate study in Budo commonly referred to as the first degree of black belt

Take Musu Aiki: take (pronounced takay) refers to the martial realm; musu is the realm of the divine or the mystery; take-musu Aiki is the power of divine creation that creates the martial art of Aikido. It implies the power to spontaneously create infinite or kaleidoscopic Aikido techniques.

Techniques: forms that apply the principles to action

Ueshiba: see Morihei Ueshiba above

Universe: the oneness of everything- all that is manifest

Whisperings of the *kami*: is a phrase I coined to describe the transfer of unknown knowledge and power. It implies the transmission of divine guidance. Omens, intuition and such phenomena are examples of how it may make itself heard but are reflections of the power and not the power itself.

