

Aikido




Finding Our Inner Strength

Welcome to all ages, and abilities. The instructor for the workshop is Pam Cooper—she has been training and teaching in Aikido for over 31 years. If you want more information about Sensei Cooper or Aikido of West Seattle, please go to www.aikidows.com

Cost \$55
Date Saturday May 19th
Location Aikido of West Seattle
4421 Fautleroy Way SW,
Seattle, WA 98126
Time Noon to 5:30PM

Noon to 1:30 Basic Aikido movement, philosophy
2:00 to 3:30 Applied Aikido principles
4:00 to 5:30 Your inner voice and power

To register: Email Pam at aikicooper@msn.com

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Aikido

The Path of Harmony

By Pam Cooper

I am still moved and fascinated by Aikido after 31 years on the path.

Aikido is a martial art and was developed in Japan, by a man named Morihei Uyeshiba. He studied many forms of Martial Arts and lived through many wars including World War I and II. He saw a lot of violence in the world and experienced his own violent nature. After almost killing someone, he had a moment of enlightenment and realized peace was needed in the world. He took the arts he had mastered and reworked them to help, rather than harm. One of my favorite quotes by him is this - "*The secret of Aikido is not in how you move your feet, it is how you move your mind. I'm not teaching you martial techniques, I'm teaching you non-violence.*" The hard part of Aikido is to use your mind to really see yourself, and how you affect others in the world. Aikido teaches us

compassion for others as well as ourselves.

I started taking Aikido in College as something to do, some self defense. After the first few classes, I realized how much more there was to it. Aikido means the path of Harmony or Love. It takes two to make a fight; it only takes one to make peace. In Aikido we use the other person's movement and momentum to off balance and influence them. I always see an attacker, as a misguided child who wants some form of human contact but doesn't see the difference between hitting and hugging.

Maybe the person who is attacking you only has known violence as a way to respond in the world. As an Aikido practitioner, I see it as my job to show them about love and non-violence. If I am attacked, I redirect the blow and set the person on the ground, taking care to not hurt their head, or arm. I can be heavy, but not add violence to the situation. What truly makes Aikido non-violent is how we learn to connect. All humans want to connect to one another, some do it in a less functional way - i.e. hitting or abusing someone else. They mistake violence for connection. Abused people often abuse mistaking violence for showing love. Abusers often come from a long line of abusers. They

show violence rather than love, hitting rather than hugs. As adults they often don't have the tools to stop the cycle of violence. I see Aikido as a path to learn the difference between violence and love. In Aikido training we get to participate as both the attacker and the defender. You literally get to see things from the others persons perspective. In training this way, we learn compassion, we understand what it is to be the person who does violence, and can really look at the consequences of our actions. As the person who is being attacked, we get to change the outcome from defeat to victory, using compassion and aikido movement.

The founder, Morihei Ueshiba teaches "True budo (the martial way) knows no defeat. Never defeated means never fighting. Winning means winning over the mind of discord in yourself. This is not mere theory. You practice it. Then you will accept the great power of oneness in Nature. True budo is to be one with the universe; that is, to be united with the Center of the universe." If you truly connect with another human being you converse on a non verbal level way before an attack can happen. I have had just such an experience; I consider it to be the best Aikido I ever had to do. I was walking to my car downtown at 9 pm after 7

a class I had taught. Suddenly around a corner about 100 feet away 2 guys showed up. They lined up with me and as they walked toward me I new they were going to mug me or try and hurt me. My First thought was "Not tonight I'm tired and I already trained for an hour". This thought actually surprised me, I didn't feel afraid, just mildly annoyed. They continued to walk close, as they got within 25 feet I looked them both in the eyes. The one guy who was closer to me, was the scarier of the two, because he seemed disconnected. As I met the gaze of the other guy he grabbed the first guy and as he walked him around me he said" leave it alone you got money in your pocket".



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The second guy could tell I wasn't afraid, which meant I might have a weapon, or be crazier than his friend. Because I was willing to connect and let them know I was ready, they didn't attack me. I didn't have to get in any special stance or yell at them, I just had to connect. They might have chosen to hurt me anyway, but when I connected with them I got information too, I knew they were looking for an easier target. If they had a plan to hurt me regardless of what I might do, I would have been given that information while they were still quite a distance from me.

We train in Aikido to build these skills. We start with separate exercises; I have developed some exercises for honing ones ability to connect energetically or psychically - "trusting your gut". Then we practice learning to put this into our techniques. This shows up in our techniques as starting almost before the attacker has attacked. We learn to move with the attackers thought and intent to attack, rather than waiting for the physical blow.

Of course this takes time to learn. Mainly it takes time to trust this will work and that you can do it. If you can truly connect to others, you will have time to make good choices, and a physical attack may never manifest. This is the goal of Aikido, true Non-Violence. People often ask me how it is I don't get bored with Aikido. Aikido is endlessly fascinating to me. Aikido is a living art and is more like modern dance or Jazz improvisation. Aikido means;" to harmonize with energy." Energy can take many forms.

The founder said "the movement of aikido is the movement of Nature-whose secret is profound and infinite." Aikido adapts to the moment. Yes we have basic techniques and basic way of moving, but when you are working with another human being a relationship happens which often has a surprising outcome. In Aikido movement we emphasize responding appropriately to the situation at hand. After a student has trained a few years we have them deal with more than one attacker at a time. This forces the student to truly embrace the concept of being present, in the moment. We call this Randori; - Ran means chaos, and dori means gather together. Randori means to make sense of the chaos. When you are put in the situation, you have to deal with each attacker as they get to you and be mindful and moving on to the next attacker. This situation is very much what we do in our daily lives. We meet each challenge and move on to the next one, knowing there are other challenges waiting for us. When you can truly embrace the chaos and either see or create a pattern in it, you can move forward and not be over run.

As you might be able to tell from this article, I always try and teach how I apply Aikido in my every day life. I teach all ages, two years to eighty years. One of my favorite classes is a toddler and parent class. It is wonderful to see adults playing with their children. It is also wonderful to see the two year old surprise their parents by being able to throw them, with little effort. Toddlers don't know they can't so without thinking they just move. They are as harmonious with the energy, as any of us will get. They don't fight the movement they just flow with it. I was teaching a children's class the other day, and I had the child have free time to practice whatever they liked the most. This exercise teaches me what I should keep in the class and what isn't working for the children. They help me with their curriculum. At the end of class, one of the children asked me what my favorite part of Aikido was - I said "watching how much everyone is enjoying their training."

I have seen how the littlest things can completely change a person. I myself experienced this early on. As a kid I had 5 to7 serious concussions, due to an inner ear problem, a fear of heights and an undiagnosed vision issue. When I first watched Aikido it looked like fun, but with the tumbling and rolling I was sure I would land on my head for the final time and be seriously injured! My first teachers helped me and showed me I could do it. After many months and many tears I was able to roll quite well. When I realized I could roll, and I had overcome that fear, I suddenly felt I could do anything just by rolling myself into a ball, not mastering any technique. I have seen many students change things in

their lives, because they became self aware and realized they had problems. Aikido is not the answer for everyone, and it is a great tool anyone can use.

I find it endlessly fascinating, and fun. I truly enjoy continuing to grow myself, my techniques, and my life. I am delighted and honored by those who come and train with me. At the end of every class we bow to one another and say thank you. I honestly thank my students and friends each class for allowing me to share this path with them and for teaching me so much.

If you would like to find out more about me or my school, or if you have a question about what you read here, please feel free to contact me. My email address is: aikicooper@msn.com

-Pam



ultimately,
 you are the one
 who has to *live*
 with your
SELF...

what do you want
 that experience
 to be like?

give your self
 permission
 for selfcare