

Rediscovering Aikido

Paul de Beer 2020-07-04. Day 100 of lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa

(Please follow the Hyperlinks to lead you to explanatory definitions and exciting, stimulating material.)

MAKE “LOCKDOWN” YOUR DAMASCUS-JOURNEY:

This essay is intended as an inspiration and to stimulate ideas for home-training, but also as a training aide during the current Covid-19 lockdown. I trust that it can also serve as a useful Aikido-compass when life eventually returns to normality.

I would like practitioners to discover [Aikido as a Living Art](#). A way of life, different from a means of income, that can be adapted to guide and satisfy your individual needs. A true-life companion during good and bad times!

Extraordinary times present people with challenges and opportunities. It gives us a break to venture off the “Aikido Highway”. An opportunity to find quiet time to contemplate the world, to rediscover the environment and our bodies (with its imperfections), experience our spirituality and to connect with the boundless Universal!

“When you bow deeply to the universe, it bows back; when you call out the name of God, it echoes inside you.”

– Morihei Ueshiba, *The Art of Peace*

“I suddenly forgot all the martial techniques I had ever learned. The techniques of my teachers appeared completely new. Now they were vehicles for the cultivation of life, knowledge, and virtue, not devices to throw people with.”

– Morihei Ueshiba, *The Art of Peace*

“Aikido is love. It is the path that brings our heart into oneness with the spirit of the universe to complete our mission in life by instilling in us a love and reverence for all of nature.”

– Morihei Ueshiba, *The Art of Peace*

TRAINING SUGGESTIONS

Training can take many different and exciting forms. The possibilities are endless:
(Some of the mentioned solo exercises may be particularly useful when you are alone at home or confined during the current pandemic.)

- **1 REGULAR PRACTICE IN A DOJO:**

Regular, intense and sincere practice in a dojo is the cornerstone of any martial art. Trust your sensei and your training partners. Act friendly, be alert, and give it your All! Besides the physical exchange, be sure to use the sincerity, diversity, trust, and friendships of the dojo to its full potential. It is a rare opportunity. Treasure it, because it can expand your experience and exchange with peers, family, friends and professional contacts in the regular world. It can expose you to new ideas that will leave you better informed and appreciative of other thoughts, wisdom and the attitudes of other people across generations, different backgrounds, etc

“The purpose of training is to tighten up the slack, toughen the body, and polish the spirit.”

– Morihei Ueshiba, *The Art of Peace*

- **2 STRETCHING, CONDITIONING AND AWARENESS:**

Additional conditioning is recommended as a useful extension to our regular training routine, but also as a fitting essential to compensate for our lazy lifestyle. These exercises, combined with a fair amount of walking, balancing and cardiovascular activity are necessary to massage your internal organs, stimulate blood circulation, build immunity, and (when our minds and bodies are well coordinated) develop healthy and focused [Ki](#).

Excellent, time-tested and balanced conditioning routines have been developed by the great masters and have withstood severe scrutiny over time. (For example the 1500 year old, [Shaolin Arts](#)). It is still relevant, and it works!

Please consider some of the following wide-ranging and perfected methods for inspiration and information. Follow them meticulously and do not stray. (Click on the Hyperlinks to view some very interesting Videos):

Tada Sensei's [Ki-No-Renma](#), Kanetsuka Sensei's [Makko-ho](#), Traditional [Qi Gong](#), Hatha [Yoga](#), Shiatsu [Massage](#), Modern [Biokenetics](#), Modern [Pilates](#), etc.

General advice:

Relax your shoulders and relax into your stretches, feel how your body “unlock”, and try to hold your poses for longer than 30 seconds; breathe naturally and evenly; engage with your diaphragm; do not hold your breath; exhale when you contract your muscles or when you exert power, the inhalation will then happen spontaneously.

- **3 TRAINING MIND AND BODY:**

We need a strong [core](#), together with supple, healthy, pliable, and well-integrated and coordinated bodies, to perform our best Aikido. Body, mind and soul are equally important, useful, necessary and wonderful. Mind does not take precedence over body. It functions as a unit. There is nothing superstitious and magical about Ki, spirituality, or Aikido.

Budó involves one's total physical and mental being. It is crucial that we respect our bodies, follow an informed exercise regime, as well as a sensible, disciplined and responsible [lifestyle](#). By living in harmony with Nature and developing our instincts, we unlock our true potential. (We believe that a strong spirit controls a healthy body, rather than the Western concept of "a healthy body houses a healthy spirit").

Our overall wellbeing, spirituality and health goes hand in hand and are absolutely influenced by Universal laws. These laws are the pillars that dictate Aikido. It controls all life in the physical, mental and spiritual realms. On earth and in the heavens. We are particularly aware of them when we perform our Aikido.

It brings better understanding and appreciation if we can deliberately express or relate to the multitude of different physical, mental, spiritual, material, liquid, gaseous and other vibratory identities, through which these interrelated Laws or principles (see below) are manifested.

I will give a few examples and try to explain:

- **Structure:** Structure gives rigidity and strength to physical objects. Structure also brings clarity of mind and a strong spirituality.
- **Nourishment:** Food and water give nourishment to our bodies; sleep gives mental nourishment and devotion brings spiritual nourishment.
- **Cleanliness:** We clean our bodies by washing. We also clean our thoughts for sanity and mental hygiene.

One can also think of

Structure >> posture, strength, clarity

Nourishment >> diet, eat, drink, sleep, breath,

Purification >> refine, hygiene clean, drink, bath,

Calmness >> balance, equilibrium,

Spontaneity >> reflex, speed, natural,

Movement >> direction, trajectory, guided,

Vibration >> Ki (energy), material, gas, mind, spirit

etc, etc. The range are endless...

Add to this yet another layer of variables, e.g. hard/soft, internal/external, applied/academic, etc, etc and see how the end result differs.

This approach of thinking inspires a curiosity and awareness of the influences at play in our Aikido – the pallet that is used to bring variety to our techniques and which emphasise specific moods and intentions. These variations inform different Aikido systems. It also explains the vast amount of Budó styles in existence – Most of them relevant and useful.

“Do not criticize any of the other martial arts. Speak ill of others and it will surely come back to you. The mountain does not laugh at the river because it is lowly, nor does the river speak ill of the mountain because it cannot move about”.

-- Koichi Tohei, Aikido, the Coordination of Mind and Body for Self-defence.

- **4 MEDITATION, IMAGINATION, REFLECTION**

Coordinating mind and body:

On the entry level, the most basic way of practicing coordination, is simply to mimic your teacher's movements to a T. (This is also regarded as good/necessary etiquette.)

Coordinating mind and body and finding your Centre or "One Point" is of significant importance in Aikido-life. It can be enhanced through concentrated deep breathing, studying [Zen](#), developing balance, suppleness and coordination, but is mostly achieved just by doing Aikido in a mindful manner. (Centring can be explained and compared to focussing your mind on a single sound, or settling your mind in a cold shower, or when shaking your hands actively as in [Furitama/Funakogi-undo/Torifune-undo/Aiki Taiso](#))

Breathing practice:

Breathing forms a very important part of advanced Aikido practice. It helps to focus the mind and is extremely important when extending Ki: Extend from your [HARA](#), imagine your breath gushing through your body, sometimes even reaching beyond the limits of the sky.

Misogi [Breathing](#) is another time-tested method for calming the mind, nourishing the blood supply, cleaning the lungs and vitalising the body.

Kiai practice:

[Kiai](#), concentrating sound and action, can be regarded as an important element and extreme form of practice in martial arts.

Musubi practice:

This is commonly done by "connecting" and following your partner's hand/body-movements without actually touching each other (i.e. as if the hands are separated by a thin layer of paper), etc

Silence and Sound:

By making and listening to different sounds, we become aware of the diverse vibrations, sound-colours, therapy and energy-forms that exist.

Stillness:

Apart from Silence, stillness can also have another abstract meaning that is particularly relevant in the context of this discussion.

Please listen to the TED talk of Pico Iyer [HERE](#) and learn from the wisdom and insight of its author, renowned for his radical ideas about stillness.

You can also read the beautiful poem, Desiderata, [HERE](#)

Meditation and [Zen](#):

The discipline of Zen requires to fit regular time into one's daily routine for solitude "Sitting", thereby deliberately cutting out the negative and unnecessary "noise" and complexities of life. The objective is to return to basics and that which is pure - to aspire to the "truth". If this attitude is carried into our training, we experience the Aikido-movements as Zen in motion. It is also referred to as Aikido with "no mind".

Zen promotes the philosophy of non-attachment and teaches us not to indulge (to know what is enough and sufficient) and to renounce the emotions of pride, fear, competition, etc. For this reason, it aligns perfectly with Aikido-values.

- **5 MIMICKING TECHNIQUES: SOLO PRACTICE (TAI-JITSU)**

Imitate and learn from your teachers but be careful not to act “Japanese”, or to develop unnatural mannerisms.

Mimicking practice requires one to imagine and to actually feel the presence of uke as you run through set techniques. This can be performed solo, or as a pair – i.e. in cooperative movement like an imaginative kata. You can rehearse the sequences physically, or you can imagine the movements mentally - without moving.

It is extremely difficult and perhaps even futile to try this form of practice if you are not familiar with the techniques you are mimicking. On the other hand, it offers you the rare opportunity to train with the “perfect uke” – one that behaves exactly according to the book!

Most techniques follow a similar progression (as described below). Use this example as a guide to walk you through and examine each step of the specimen you wish to study. Vary your training by emphasising either detail, touch, flow or speed. Note that each variation will be determined by whether it is the Sword (cutting) or the Jo (thrusting) that inspire the movements. “Feel” the significant effect of the direction and power of your hips; also how the technique develops from your centre. Concentrate on moving lightly and settling your weight.

Playing Uke’s part:

- Be conscious of your [Ma-Ai](#) and imagine how you execute a genuine, targeted and effective attack;
- Focus your gaze, relax your shoulders, settle your weight and attend to your posture as you close in;
- Breathe out (or perform a silent/ or loud [Kiai](#)) Attend to the exact hand position, if applicable;
- Imagine how you connect and harmonise with the flow, energy and speed of Tori’s defence and follow his/her gaze;
- Do your best break-fall while breathing naturally. Use your energy sparingly and never over-exaggerate or be extravagant;
- Connect, breath naturally, keep a relaxed mindset as you are being pinned to the ground. Do a double pat to signify that Tori’s technique is effective;
- Return to your original position.

Playing Tori’s part:

- Imagine uke’s attack;
- Focus your gaze, relax your shoulders, settle your weight and attend to your posture;
- Close the distance (ma-ai) and attend to your stances;
- Breathe out, blend with the flow and direction of the imagined attack (or meet it head-on), extend with Ki (use correct and exact hand positions during and after the engagement-phase);
- “Feel” the connection with your partner and feel how you effortlessly control and unbalance him/her;
- Settle for a moment and feel comfortable and in charge as you imagine immobilising your partner. (Check your gaze, connection, breathing, the exact hand/feet positions, posture as you immobilise/project the attacker);
- Stand out of the technique and return to your original position.

By imagining, dramatizing, or mimicking movements and “feeling” their effects, opens up possibilities to discover the “spirit” of a technique and how it relates to natural phenomena.

Don't be surprised if one day, at the most unexpected moment, this type of training opens up your understanding of principles and techniques that have evaded you during most of your studies...

- **6 FOOTWORK AND STANCES:**

Aikido's range of footwork patterns and transitions are often practiced as solo exercises.

Strength, posture, endurance, discipline and stamina can be developed by sinking low in your stances and keeping your position for extended periods.

Balancing, walking an imaginary tight rope, standing on one leg, or practicing balancing postures, are excellent for toning and developing small muscle function, focus, coordination and mind-body control - Critical elements in any martial artist's repertoire.

For economy of movement, posture, smooth transition, body-mind coordination, dexterity, lightness of movement, etc., we practice repeated shifting from one predetermined stance and position into another. A good example of these are the highly regarded [Ashi-sabaki](#) sequences, developed by Tada Sensei. (Warning: Be careful not to imprint wrong movements and reflexes into your subconsciousness by repeating sluggish or mindless steps over and over. Bad habits that you acquire as a beginner, will later be difficult to correct.)

In general: Clutch the floor with all your toes (toes are called "foot-fingers" in Japanese). Make sliding movements, do not STEP! Concentrate on the direction of your hips, your ease of movement and the "lightness" of your body. "Feel" your contact with the earth and imagine yourself "in the centre of the universe".

- **7 WEAPONS PRACTICE:**

Studying the etiquette and significance of sword, bokken (cutting, stabbing), Jo (striking, thrusting, deflecting, etc) and Tanto brings deeper understanding of the military arts and explains much about Japanese culture and thinking in particular. It gives a sense of what it means to be confronted with a real and dangerous weapon, as well as the potential reach and danger of specific weapons. If we neglect the intensity and feeling of realism that comes with this, there is only limited benefit in doing weapons training.

Weapons are used to highlight the origins of Aikido and to demonstrate how the actual cuts and thrusts influenced the development of tai-jitsu. It can be performed as solo, or as paired exercises. It is important to imagine and experience your weapon as an extension of your body.

[Kata](#) (Practised solo or in pairs, with or without weapons):

A variety of complex forms were developed by some of Aikido's most respected masters. They form part of the Aikido heritage, but often vary between different schools.

Kata string a multitude of difficult techniques together and is especially convenient for studying weapons work. It is useful as a mind-body exercise and a way to attend to ma-ai, flow and flexibility, rhythm, the bond between partners and the economy/application/functionality of techniques.

Individual Suburi (with a weapon):

The aim is to study the detail of each individual movement with precision. It can be done slow-motion, or at normal speed and intensity. Attend to your exact gaze, posture, footwork, hand positions, focus, flexibility and “hikite” (contact/penetration).

Partner Training:

Practice the above in a pre-determined fashion (similar to kata)

Repetitive Suburi (solo and with a weapon; sometimes using a bukuto and/or makiwara:

The aim is to develop coordination, strength, endurance and discipline by doing repetitive cuts, stabs, etc. Attend specifically to your gaze, posture, breathing/kiai, flexibility, speed, footwork, hand positions, extension, focus, penetration, etc.

Special Equipment:

Specialised gear is often devised and used for special purposes.

Typical examples are [Tanren Uchi/makiwara](#) training, [Neribo](#) training, using weights or [Iron balls](#), etc.

• **8 APPLIED AND EXTREME PRACTICE**

Special training or Master Classes:

It has become custom in many organisations to stage special training events where students are exposed to visiting instructors and different masters. These courses often span a few days during which it is expected that all participants attend all the classes. It is therefore necessary to pace one’s training to make the most of it.

Practicing in extreme climate:

This is done as endurance training during the heat of summer, winter, or perhaps even New Year’s Day (It can take the form of mountain training, waterfall training, training on the beach, night training, water training, etc)

Partner practice with Uke resisting/challenging/ or commenting on techniques:

It can be fun, challenging and revealing to be tested under applied and extreme circumstances. It is, however, considered disrespectful and disruptive to do this in a normal class. It is therefore suggested that you spend private time with a colleague, create a relaxed and completely open/trusty relationship and challenge, compare fine tune, and explore your Aikido to your hearts content.

Zoom sessions:

Zoom training was recently introduced in response to the Covid-19 social distancing restrictions. Of most importance, more than the training even, is the fact that friends, a dojo or a Federation can interconnect and feel part of the greater Aikido-community. To build and maintain these relations are currently more important than to do better Aikido.

The training suggestions in this essay were envisaged to compliment these endeavours by suggesting specific ways to focus our attention, etc. By making our Aikido interesting and by training more mindfully, we can achieve better results.

• **9 READING, ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL PURSUITS:**

We feed our imagination and open ourselves to new ideas by reading, participate in thought-provoking discussions, playing, imitating, watching movies and studying videos, visiting faraway places, exploring new territory, reflecting, etc.....

Use these methods of study wisely and alongside your regular training. It should be an integral part of any modern and curious Budó-ka's education and development.

Aikido studies are beneficial for technical content, context and to gain a critical understanding of the history and philosophy of the art. It opens new worlds regarding eastern culture and serves to draw inspiration from the courage and exemplary lives of the great masters and sages.

Having said this, it is of little or of no use only to KNOW about Aikido and things. To become useful, Aikido must be lived, and the techniques and mindset must be drilled in and become natural reflexes. Keep on course, stay realistic and do not allow yourself to get overwhelmed or side-tracked by an information-overload.

“The purpose of education is to open your spirit. Modern education has forgotten this. The entire universe is a huge open book, full of miraculous things, and that is where true learning must be sought. In that spirit, take responsibility, train hard, develop yourselves, bloom in this world, and bear fruit.”
– Morihei Ueshiba, The Art of Peace

AIKIDO IN DAILY LIFE

BUDÓ, A TEACHER AND LIFELONG COMPANION:

To take up and study Aikido, as you know, is much more than only keeping fit or practicing “self-defence moves”. With the right attitude it soon becomes a lifelong commitment and a personal, cultural, and deep emotional affair.

There is a vital link between “Budó” and the “Daily Life” of a serious martial artist. The two energise and give meaning/context to each other in an ever-evolving cross-exchange.

(Aikido-skills ↔ Life-skills). There is also a strong interdependence between the practitioner, the relevant Aikido community, and the Sensei -- Individuals can easily uplift or tarnish the dynamic of an entire group.

Once we experience the positive and life-changing effects of Aikido and our infinite bond with nature, we get captured and bubbling with interest and enthusiasm. If this happens, Budó (Aikido) becomes a personal journey and a “way” worth contemplating, studying and sharing with others.

No matter the circumstances, a devoted Budó-ka will always take personal responsibility and find ways to advance his/her training and pursue his/her ambition.

The present lockdown is just another situation that require us to adapt to a different routine and keep practicing and studying.

“Aikido is the Way and Principle of Harmonising Heaven, Earth and Man”
– Morihei Ueshiba, The Art of Peace

LOCKDOWN - AN IDEAL TIME FOR “SIGHTSEEING”:

Training does not always follow the same routine or intensity.

To gain a deep understanding of a subject, it becomes necessary to study different perspectives and also to experiment with opposing views of a topic. This will help to appreciate the variety that exist, discover the “middle road”; earn and voice your own opinion.

It is important to realise that “Exorbitance” and “More - Faster” is not necessarily “Better”.

Focus rather on the purpose of your training and don't be distracted. Be mindful and meticulous. If you repeat incorrect techniques over and over, it imprints wrong reflexes into your subconscious. If you exercise mindlessly, it will amplify your mistakes and bear worthless fruit. (Please refer to [Neuroscience](#) and behavioural change if you are interested in the Science that explains this phenomena.)

If one considers the amount of personal time, energy, and resources Aikido consume (not forgetting the sacrifices our housemates and family must endure to support our training), it stresses the importance to use our opportunities constructively. Be practical, honest, and analytical. Do not allow good prospects to go to waste.

The current lockdown, however, is an ideal opportunity to divert from regular practice and to experiment, vary, distil, and ultimately to discover and deepen your perception of new facets of Aikido.

Compare your research to reading through the chapters of a comprehensive encyclopaedia, with every new chapter investigating different aspects and bringing better perspective.....

Now is the time for sightseeing and fun. Expose yourself to the vast scope of Aikido training. It will add to your insight and maturity.

GUARANTEED RESULTS:

Stop chasing after grades and selfish rewards, but apply the same effort, as if these actually mattered! Liberate yourself and do your Aikido because it matters and because it is fun!

Follow the following advice for guaranteed results:

Emphasise good posture, and work on your break-falls and suppleness. It is the quickest way to prepare yourself for advanced and dynamic training!

Next, intensify and target your attacks (without stiffening up, or inflicting pain). Always respect your partner and keep your attitude bright and energetic.

This will bring realism and fun to your training and simultaneously raise the energy and spirit in the dojo. It will rapidly improve the entire dojo's Aikido.

BE KIND AND GENEROUS:

During our life-journey, and as we grow up, we go through stages that influences the intensity and the way we perceive and relate to our training, the dojo, and to our training partners.

An Aikido community is ideally represented by a balanced and diverse group of people: Some seeking friendships and company; others striving to become strong - to defend themselves; you will find professional Aikido-ka full of vitality and ambition; students busy with studies and exams; some experimenting with liberty and freedom; people with spiritual aspirations; frail people with physical or unusual challenges; aging folk, managing pain - anxious to stay healthy and active; adventurers and holiday-makers; humble compatriots setting up home, raising kids, earning a living.... Normal people that reflects society.

The dojo is unique in this regard and it opens rare opportunities. We are reminded that we are all exceptional. Everybody with other inborn talents and abilities. Use every chance to accommodate these differences, make friends and learn from each other. Act natural and be yourself.

We achieve much more if we work as a collective and strive in the same direction. There is also the unexpected blessing when the kindness we show to others, returns in abundance!!

“The Art of Peace begins with you. Work on yourself and your appointed task in the Art of Peace. Everyone has a spirit that can be refined, a body that can be trained in some manner, a suitable path to follow.”

– Morihei Ueshiba, The Art of Peace

“It is not for correcting others; it is for correcting your own mind. This is Aikido. This is the mission of Aikido and should be your mission.”

– Morihei Ueshiba, The Art of Peace

SIGHTSEEING

It is always necessary to dust off old habits and to challenge long-standing beliefs. Remain curious and learn from history. Revisit the advice and example of the great masters and their scrutinised, time-tested practices. Then: Re-imagine the future ...and your Aikido! (WYSIWIG: What you see, or imagine, is what you get...)

To stimulate and to provoke new ideas, please join me and have some fun!

View the following websites, hold up a mirror and draw your own conclusions....

- [Punches](#) re-visited
- Angry [hands](#)
- Test your [endurance](#)
- [Jo](#)with a twist!
- Advice for the [elderly](#)
- Taking care of the Planet – Please revert to [Conscientious Living](#)
- Black Belt Magazine October 1966, page 26: [Tapping the Power of the Mind by Anthony Deleonardis](#)
- Black Belt Magazine May 1968, page 14: [The Old Man and the Ki](#)
- [Black Belt Magazine Archives](#)

Apply the acid-test:

The magic and benefits of Aikido are real, but it must be earned with effort, time, thought and emotion. Don't be naïve, or be fooled by populism, the spectacular stories you may see in cinema, or the drama often dished up on social media. True ability and bravery are tested in real life and misfortune can happen to any one of us at the most unexpected time. This is the reality we must expect and prepare for.

Those who have been confronted by an actual life-threatening situation, will understand the emotion it carries and how dire it gets. Budó is not cheap, sentimental talk, nor is it a show or a commodity. There is no warranty! Budó originates from War. It is a tool that can prepare you to survive a famine, or equally, to give kind advice, face a brutal attack or a devastating, unexpected pandemic. It is definitely not child's play!

[“Empty your cup”](#), remain humble, and be confident that “When the student is ready, the Master will appear!”

COVID-19, CRACKS AND FAULT-LINES

A consequence of the current pandemic is that it shows up all the flaws that existed in our national psyche, also the failings in our work and in our relationships. We see the results of a neglected economy, health services and our environment. Our jobs, savings and health are under threat. It also touches education, religion... -- Everything that was strained or compromised before the outbreak, is now in tatters and worsening. And if humankind does not wake up and start behaving more considerate and responsible, this situation may leave even more devastation, famine, misery and death in its wake!

We cannot escape the phenomenon, but we can soften the burden if we anticipate, adapt, avoid, or accept and cope with it -- and this is where our martial arts training can make a big difference. The patience, adaptability, discipline, courage, will-power, strength and empathy we develop through Budó, have for generations proved a great asset in surviving hardships. This is a two-way street, because in turn, the challenges will cross-pollinate and return compassion, depth and insight to our character and Budó/Aikido training.

As warriors, and ultimately as the guardians of our communities and the planet, we are expected to be informed, fearless and at the same time sensitive to our instincts and any unexpected threats. Covid-19 is forcing us to become practical and to value the importance of Science. We are discovering the critical importance of sustainability, interdependence, consideration, as well as preserving our food resources, environments, oceans, natural forests, etc. At the same time, we are also experiencing the effect and dangers of careless propaganda, misinformation and the smoke and mirrors of advertising, cinema and social media. Sadly, the same scenario is also playing out in the Budó-world and the proud reputation of Aikido is sometimes squandered. Aikido was entrusted to our generation for the benefit of humanity and with the intent to promote world-peace. It came as a fully integrated and perfected system. But often, this precious "jewel" is being exploited as a common commodity. There is a growing tendency to promote Aikido in a twisted, superficial manner, and as a flamboyant, mysterious sport, or set of "tricks". This is the direct opposite of what Aikido is intended to be. We, as "guardians", will have to take a stand against all types of exploitation!

We often use metaphors to explain Aikido concepts.

I believe that modern Aikido is often over popularised to the detriment of its intended purpose. In extreme cases certain advertising or instruction can even be considered dishonest or misleading. If compared to the treasures of the deep oceans of the world, we are perhaps overemphasising the superficial or flamboyant side of the Art. Seek deeper and be honest and objective! It is in the hidden depths that you will discover Budó's actual value and potential. You only discover the gems through perseverance and diligent practice. Work from the inside outward; the big issues first. Start with principles, philosophy, relations, goals, etc and the rest will follow naturally.

The influence of Yin/ Yang, Positive/Negative is in perpetual motion, seeking to find equilibrium in all spheres of life. In this way the Universal balances hardship with times of inspiration and joy and history seems to repeat itself over and over! If you live long enough you are guaranteed to witness the joys of birth, love, song, discovery...; but also the adversities of drought, floods, fire, dishonesty, violence, death, etc.... Consider all challenges as Life's Teachers. The pandemic we are currently facing is extreme, but in the greater scheme of things, it can be considered natural and "normal". Another day at school.....

Be careful to criticise and quick to prescribe to others, likewise, do not rely on dogma and do not follow the advice of people blindly or untested. Put more trust in yourself and in your Creator! The Covert-19 pandemic will pass, and we will overcome it as stronger and better people.

IN SUMMARY:

Training happens in the dojo, outdoors, in the dark, at home; everywhere. It can involve weapons, reading a book, stretching and/or visualisation. It can be done solo or with other people (beginners, seniors, children, etc). It can also comprise of endurance work, applied practice, repetitive training, the study of form, and much, much more...

YOUR DOJO IS WHERE YOU ARE: If you are stranded without a dojo, find a clean, quiet, sunny and airy spot where you can feel at ease and connected to Nature. Make it your “dojo” and charge it with positive Ki. Then, ENJOY your training!!!!

This quarantine period presents society with a unique and collective opportunity to reconsider the status quo and to imagine a new and better humanity. If we work in harmony, adapt our ways and set new and rational benchmarks, we can truly liberate ourselves.

Use this opportunity to respect Nature and integrate Aikido with your daily life. Make your Aikido meaningful and super SPECIAL!

Paul de Beer (6th Dan Aikikai, Japan)

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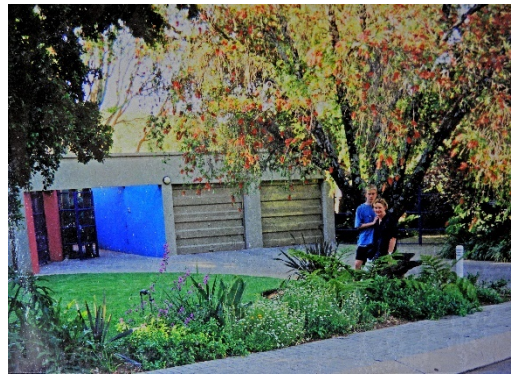
NOTICE:

The Author is interested to know your views regarding the value and future of contemporary Aikido. Please respond and share your thoughts.

We also invite readers for constructive articles to be considered for placement on our website.

Life's challenges

The de Beer family was left devastated after a raging flood of the Moreletta spruit destroyed most of their belongings shortly after midnight on 19 January 1996. This tragedy created new opportunities and miracles after the family, with the selfless generosity of an Aikido friend and the tremendous support and goodwill of the community, could rebuild their house and reconstruct their lives. What started as a nightmare, eventually turned into a perfect blessing!



1996-01-19: The Murrayfield residence flooded, the de Beer family's possessions destroyed, and their dreams shattered andrecreated!

Another near-death incident occurred when De Beer was ambushed and shot in early 2012. His arm was shattered but his life was miraculously saved. As in 1996, the grace of God, the lessons of Aikido, and the loving kindness of people left lasting impressions. Without the normal functionality of his arms and body, it also required him to continue practicing his Aikido without the use of strength. Wonderful lessons to gain insight and to value Aikido.



2012-01-23: De Beer recovering after being ambushed and shot at his home in Menlo Park

For your easy reference:

Please follow the Hyperlinks to lead you to explanatory definitions and exciting, stimulating material.

MAKE “LOCKDOWN” YOUR DAMASCUS-JOURNEY:

[Aikido as a Living Art](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fY1orKqCMI&feature=youtu.be) → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fY1orKqCMI&feature=youtu.be>

View Chiba Sensei's Message to Teachers and Students [HERE](#)

TRAINING SUGGESTIONS

STRETCHING, CONDITIONING AND AWARENESS:

Shaolin Monastery, → https://youtu.be/YDR31_nh70Q

To view an interesting documentary of the historic Shaolin Monastery, click [HERE](#)

[Ki-No-Renma](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWbR9o02m2Q&feature=youtu.be), → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWbR9o02m2Q&feature=youtu.be>

View an inspiring video about Tada Sensei and Ki-No-Renma, click [HERE](#)

[Makko-ho](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGOX0wNa7yM&feature=youtu.be), → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGOX0wNa7yM&feature=youtu.be>

View Kanetsuka Sensei's MAKKO-HO routine, click [HERE](#)

[Qi Gong](https://youtu.be/CtJ3j9cCAyY), → <https://youtu.be/CtJ3j9cCAyY>

View an example of traditional QI GONG, click [HERE](#)

[Yoga](https://youtu.be/NMYSRCCLeGw), → <https://youtu.be/NMYSRCCLeGw>

View an example of HATHA YOGA, click [HERE](#)

Shiatsu [Massage](https://youtu.be/hXyg-4IDSPg), → <https://youtu.be/hXyg-4IDSPg>

View an example of traditional SHIATSU, click [HERE](#)

[Biokenetics](https://youtu.be/fc-sdXOQMlo), → <https://youtu.be/fc-sdXOQMlo>

View an example of modern BIOKINETICS, click [HERE](#)

[Pilates](https://youtu.be/K-PpDkbcNGo),. → <https://youtu.be/K-PpDkbcNGo>

View an example of modern PILATES, click [HERE](#)

Typical Aikido → https://youtu.be/ESgCbpWO_-l

To view an example of a typical daily AIKIDO CLASS at Hombu Dojo, click [HERE](#)

TRAINING MIND AND BODY:

The [Core](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Core_(anatomy)), → [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Core_\(anatomy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Core_(anatomy))

For a WIKIPEDIA definition of the CORE, click [HERE](#)

[Lifestyle](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNjYUn8lyq8&feature=youtu.be) → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNjYUn8lyq8&feature=youtu.be>

For a thought-provoking discussion about LIFESTYLE, click [HERE](#)

MEDITATION, IMAGINATION, REFLECTION

[Stillness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desiderata) → <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desiderata>

Appreciate the importance of stillness. Read Desiderata, the poem, [HERE](#)

[Zen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen), → <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen>

For a WIKIPEDIA definition and explanation of ZEN, click [HERE](#)

Furitama/Funakogi-undo/Torifune-undo/Aiki Taiso) → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSTKGoc0eX8&feature=youtu.be>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MtYfBINLfi&feature=youtu.be>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2AjCGY9KRc&feature=youtu.be>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3B2PMwdD2cc&feature=youtu.be>

For some interesting FURITAMA, FUNAKOGI, TORIFUNE, AIKI TAISO insights, click [HERE](#), [HERE](#), [HERE](#), and [HERE](#),

[HARA](#), → <https://ihreiki.com/blog/the-deeper-meaning-of-hara/?v=68caa8201064>

For a definition and explanation of HARA, click [HERE](#)

Misogi [Breathing](#) → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY8fhEp7Eeg&feature=youtu.be>

For a video and explanation of MISOGI BREATHING, click [HERE](#)

[Kiai](#) → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9nk5CM1thU&feature=youtu.be>

For a short video and explanation of KIAI, click [HERE](#)

[Zen](#) → <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen>

For a definition and explanation of ZEN, click [HERE](#)

MIMICKING TECHNIQUES: SOLO PRACTICE (TAI-JITSU)

[Ma-Ai](#) → <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maai>

For a definition and explanation of MA-AI, click [HERE](#)

[Kiai](#) → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9nk5CM1thU&feature=youtu.be>

For a definition and explanation of KIAI, click [HERE](#)

FOOTWORK AND STANCES:

[Ashi-sabaki](#) → <https://youtu.be/hIhyk37xMwg>

For an example of Tada Sensei's ASHI-SABAKI routine, view [HERE](#)

WEAPONS PRACTICE:

[Kata](#) → <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kata>

For a definition and explanation of KATA, click [HERE](#)

[Tanren Uchi](#) → https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_TmFosN6bE&feature=youtu.be

View how TANREN-UCHI is executed, click [HERE](#)

[Makiwara](#) training, → <https://youtu.be/vUIDLagEMqg>

View how MAKIWARA TRAINING is done, click [HERE](#)

[Neribo](#) training, → <https://youtu.be/NqR9IgvSiIA>

View how NERIBO TRAINING is done, click [HERE](#)

Weights and [Iron ball exercises](#). → <https://youtu.be/yu2EHaDDTRc>

View some IRON BALL exercise, click [HERE](#)

LOCKDOWN - AN IDEAL TIME FOR "SIGHTSEEING":

Neuroscience → <https://healthtransformer.co/the-neuroscience-of-behavior-change-bcb567fa83c1>

For a definition and explanation about NEUROSCIENCE and Behaviour Change, click [HERE](#)

SIGHTSEEING:

Punches re-visited → https://youtu.be/1qZNdsUJ_TI

For some inspiration about PUNCHES, click [HERE](#)

Angry hands → <https://youtu.be/ZDMeovk2s4>

For inspiration about HANDS and ATTITUDE, click [HERE](#)

Endurance → <https://youtu.be/x-UGL8FRmsM>

For inspiration about WILL-POWER and DISCIPLINE, click [HERE](#)

Jo ...with a twist! → <https://youtu.be/MwoyP6HOdQM>

For inspiration about JO PRACTICE, click [HERE](#)

For the elderly → <https://youtu.be/BRuansCVV3U>

To inspire the ELDERLY, click [HERE](#)

Conscientious Living → <https://youtu.be/PNjYUn8lyq8>

For challenging the sustainability of our LIFESTYLE, click [HERE](#)

Black Belt Magazine October 1966, page 26:

Tapping the Power of the Mind by Anthony Deleonardis → <https://books.google.co.za/books?id=WM4DAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA26&lpg=PA26&dq=tapping+the+power+of+the+mind+by+anthony+deleonardis+black+belt&source=bl&ots=WiVM90ai2I&sig=ACfU3U0g17tSXdjeGosZProrJSIDosGGA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjvKp5eXpAhWUTsAKHRKHBJEQ6AEwAHoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=tapping%20the%20power%20of%20the%20mind%20by%20anthony%20deleonardis%20black%20belt&f=false>

For an historic and fascinating article about MENTAL ABILITIES, click [HERE](#)

Black Belt Magazine May 1968, page 14: The Old Man and the Ki → <https://books.google.co.za/books?id=Qs4DAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=black+belt+magazine+may+1968&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj2vXF6OXpAhWHY8AKHRmgDWAQ6AEINjAC#v=onepage&q=black%20belt%20magazine%20may%201968&f=false>

For an historic and inspirational article about UESHIBA MORIHEI, click [HERE](#)

Black Belt Magazine Archives → <http://www.ma-mags.com/showmag.php?CatCde=BB60>

To visit the BLACK BELT MAGAZINE archives, click [HERE](#)

"Empty your cup" → <https://www.mindfueldaily.com/livewell/inspirations-from-zen-story-empty-your-cup/>

For the story about the EMPTY CUP, click [HERE](#)