

Awase is the newsletter of the
Aikido Institute of Davis, a dojo where you
can learn the arts of Aikido and Tai Chi.

The Awase newsletter is published twice
yearly in Winter and Summer.

Please visit our website at
AikidoDavis.com for information on
membership & class times.



Feel the Technique

By Hoa Newens Sensei

You watched in disbelief as the Twin Towers were successively hit by loaded airplanes, imploded, and evaporated into dust. You were horrified by the video clips of people jumping to their death from the windows of these burning buildings. At first, it was disbelief and denial. A few hours later, if you were the average American who just realized what happened to America, you would have felt a gut-wrenching sensation in your body that promptly turned into a rage, followed quickly by an urge to do something immediately. Many people rushed to make donations to the victims; many rushed to New York to help hands-on at the scene; and many enlisted in the armed forces to join the war against the terrorists.

I apologize for making you recall this painful experience; however, it is the perfect illustration of the intimate connection between feeling and action. An emotion is a stir of energy deep within us that often manifests inwardly as a mental state and outwardly as a physical action. Etymologically, an “e-motion” is that which causes motion. A bold corollary is that, since motion is the basis of life, e-motion brings life. There are scores of scientific studies on human emotions and their applications in the fields of psychology and social sciences. Here we present a view of emotion through the lens of internal martial artists.

For this purpose, imagine that each human being is made up of four layers of energy, or four bodies superimposed on each other. From subtle to gross, they are the mental, the emotional, the

etheric and the physical. Life enfolds from the subtle to the gross thus, the mental oversees the emotional, the emotional moves the etheric, and the etheric animates the physical. To be exact, above these four there are three other bodies that belong to the spiritual realm and represent the pre-birth potential of the four lower bodies. Altogether the seven bodies constitute the human individual linked to its source. To simplify the ensuing discussion, we will exclude the spiritual and concern ourselves with the lower four bodies.

A simple analogy is helpful for further understanding. If the mental is the blueprint, the emotional is the desire to create, the etheric is the labor and effort that spawn from the desire, and the physical is the building. An idea that wants to manifest, attracts energies that transform it into an object of the physical world.

The four bodies are intrinsically made of energy of different grade that is constantly in flow, they constantly interact with, and affect, each other. Each body contains all the higher ones. The physical body is the densest and contains all other bodies. A minute re-ordering or disturbance in a subtle body has a snowballing effect toward the grosser level: a small revision in the drawing may entail a major rescheduling of labor, and result in a completely different building from the previous design. The gross can also affect the subtle, albeit with relatively more effort: many new styled buildings may cause changes in the types of labor and effort, which may eventually lead to revision of design standards.

When the mind receives a stimulant, internal or external, it processes it against its internal database and provides meaning. Based on this meaning, mind marshals the necessary energies from the etheric body to either protect it or aggrandize it. At the same time, mind continues to digest the meaning, which is food to the mind, by chewing on it continuously. These are thoughts or images that keep returning in your mind and are hard to rid of. This circular motion

amplifies the original disturbance in a snowballing effect and results in a build-up of high pressure energy. The natural tendency for this pressurized energy to seek release is the urge for action; this is how the etheric body relieves itself on the physical body.

For example, you drive past someone on the freeway and he gives you a hand sign with four fingers (objective stimulant). This sign has no meaning to you, so you keep on driving. However, if you grew up in a culture (mind contents) in which a hand sign with four fingers conveys the message that your behavior is comparable to that of a four-legged animal (meaning), the sign is now empowered with meaning and the mind grabs it and devours it (Mind says: Really! What was that all about) and the message is reinforced. If there is no control by the discriminatory mind all messages pass without screening to the emotional body. The reinforced meaning causes an accretion of energy in the emotional body that results in a state we call "anger" (the emotion). You may initially hold back on any physical reaction, but the energetic pressure in the etheric body may become unbearable; and you may have to release it by honking on the horn.

Our view of emotion is that it is an internal build-up of energy that has been given a flavor based on our internal psychic make up. We call the subjective awareness of the emotion "a feeling". For example, I feel a certain state of my being that I label sadness, another state as happiness, and yet another as inspiration.

These disturbances of our energetic make-up occur daily; as we mentioned earlier, this is the stuff of life. Yet they are not trivial. Consider what American poet Maya Angelou has to say about feeling: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Each of our interaction, direct or indirect, with another sentient being has the potential of altering our respective energetic make up, that is, creating emotions within us

and/or that other being. How often are we aware of this change in state? Emotion animates life, so we must befriend it and tame it so that it can be used constructively in our life.

Taming our emotion provides an opportunity for us to change ourselves and to change the world. This opportunity arises at the brief moment when we can exercise our God-given right to make a decision. In the energetic framework, the opportunity exists when we realize that we have the power to either ride the existing energy flow or change its course. That moment of realization may be faint and brief but it can have life or death consequence. It is in that moment that we have the ability to bring to bear the totality of ourselves to either support, cancel or redirect the wave of energy that follows our emotion. It is in that moment that we determine whether the current emotion is congruent with our total being.

This moment of choice exists before any action, small or big: before you say no to your child who wants to stay out longer tonight; before you sign your mortgage papers; before you say yes to a marriage proposal; before you pull the trigger. In order to have a say in our destiny we must become aware of this crucial moment in our emotional state.

Although the crucial moment can best be perceived when the energy mass reaches near the stage of manifestation into physical action, in practice, an earlier awareness of this energy current is much more effective for internal change. Controlling a river from an upstream position is always easier than from further downstream. For example, as soon as you detect a tinge of sadness approaching the memorial of a sad event, you decide to buck this emotional flow and go work out at the gym. If you had not detected this internal change in state until it has caused you to reach to old photographs of the event and indulge in the sad mood, by the time you want to get off of it, you may not have the power to lift yourself up; the mood has hijacked your resources, isolated you and shut all access

to your total being. Now you are a slave to this emotion.

Though we know that energy current follows an emotion, most of the time, it is easier to detect and control the emotion through awareness of the energy current. This is a primary goal of *Chi Kung* (or *Qi Gong*, internal energy work). If properly developed and nurtured, this ability evolves into the ability to be aware of surrounding energy flows, including the emotional state of other sentient beings around us. This expanded ability has vast applications in the martial arts as well as in daily life.

How do we train to acquire this ability? First, by recognizing that we already possess this inborn ability and all we need to do is to develop and refine it. The challenge is that in the West, we presently live in an age in which our “advanced” society accords more respect to the intellect and its ability to build edifices around itself, that is, to reason based on an artifice called “logic”. The self-preserving intellect wants its master (the self) to identify with it and will put down anything that is not based on logic. Our various social structures, including the education system, the law and justice system, organizational theories, even the sciences, are based on logic and belittle human activities that are not congruent with their basis.

Therefore, first, we need to give validity to our feelings. It’s okay to say “I feel you”, I understand what you mean. It’s okay to let our children, and we should encourage them to, express their feelings, especially boys. It’s okay for guys to go soft some times. Stoicism should not be misunderstood as repression of feelings but should be viewed as a way to redirect our energy toward more constructive behavior, using our ability to check the unruly expression of emotions. In this respect, I am happy to see the concept of “emotional intelligence” slowly catching on as an alternative measure of intelligence other than the IQ.

The second step to train for emotional awareness is to be constantly alert for any change in our

energy state. The practice is to be simply aware of an emotion as it begins to form, without judgment and without affecting its expression. This is easier said than done. Do not “think” about the emotion, just note that it is there and leave it be. When you see a homeless person sleeping outside in the cold and feel compassion, just note it; when you hear Jingle Bells while relaxing at a Starbucks coffee shop and feel a tinge of happiness, just note it. It bears to repeat that this is not self-reflection, only an awareness exercise.

A variant of the second step is to practice awareness of abnormal energy currents, such as sudden spikes, drops or stagnancy, through awareness of physical sensations associated with your feelings. As an exercise, during the day, note the moments when you suddenly feel depressed, down, buoyant ~~associated~~, overjoyed or bored; and pay attention to any unusual sensations in your body during those moments, without trying to change anything. For examples, you put in your mouth an award-winning piece of chocolate that melts and slides down your throat like sweet cream, do you feel a certain tingling that makes the whole body shudder? You watch as your favorite sports team loses the championship game during overtime play after a hard-fought season; do you feel your heart sink and your guts all knotted up? Just acknowledge these sensations without judgment or action. All changes in our emotional body produce a corresponding change in our physical body that we need to learn to become aware of.

A third step is to practice the awareness of energy blockages in the body. Energy is essentially the sum of motion at the atomic scale, and therefore, is in constant flow. The flow of energy in the etheric body is ordinarily in harmony with other energies in the surrounding environment. The most frequent interference to this flow comes from self-defense mechanisms within a person’s mental body. For example, the newly appointed CEO re-organizes the company and reshuffles the entire management team; as a long-time staff member,

I believe that the existing organization and team are doing just fine and I object to this change. As a result, I often feel my blood boiling and my jaws tightening. I resist and push back against this wave of change. This resistance represents an order from my mind to my emotional and etheric bodies to stop the flow of energy, thus setting up dams across various energy channels in my body. With time, the trapped energy becomes less fluid and progressively solidifies, creating diseases.

Our goal is to locate these pockets of blocked energy and release them before they harm the body. This is a fundamental exercise in our Chi Kung class. To this end, the most basic technique is to find quiet time and gently stretch the body, paying attention to the parts of the body that are being stretched, noting any uncomfortable tension or sensation, and letting go of them. Absolute concentration is necessary and will yield amazing results when the exercise is performed regularly.

The exercises described thus far will help increase a person’s ability to feel his or her physical body and to be in touch with the etheric body. We start with relatively passive exercises until the person reaches a comfortable level of awareness and attunement with these bodies. The next step is to begin feeling movement.

We learn to feel a movement by breaking the movement down into static stances and practicing the stances separately. Holding a stance freezes external variables and allows the mind to survey the state of various parts of the body in more detail. This cognition of detail infuses the stance with more consciousness and makes it come alive, transforming it into a posture. The enlivened stances, now postures, can then be re-assembled into a meaningful string to form a movement. Practicing stances that are part of a movement is one sure way to improve performance of the movement. In the same vein, performing the movement in a slow and deliberate pace will serve a similar purpose.

A side practice, which may eventually become a mainstay, is meditation. Of utmost importance is the practice of mindfulness in a mindless way. This means letting consciousness bare itself with no thoughts veiling it. Left unrestrained, the mind attracts thoughts and feeds on them to grow, while concurrently attempting to dethrone the higher self and proclaim sovereignty. One way to curb this tyranny is to starve the mind to prevent it from restlessness and interfering with our consciousness' effort to regain its glory and reclaim its divine heredity. The simplest form of meditation is to sit still, away from mental and physical distractions, and witness what goes on, including thoughts, without holding on to anything. One key point to remember is that one must not try hard or make concerted effort, because an effort is an activity of the mind and the mind will not tolerate any activity designed to minimize it or eliminate it; it will push back and make your work harder. It is best to lead it quietly into irrelevance. The meditator only needs to remain still and in a state of full alertness and openness.

Continued practice of feeling movement will cause one to associate a movement with its unique identifying feeling, and bring about the ability to perform the movement by recalling the feeling. This ability will in turn enable many others, such as, the ability to assimilate a series of complex movements quickly by watching and absorbing the encoded feeling. This is how an experienced martial artist can "steal" a technique from another martial artist by watching a brief performance. Hence, the secrecy required by the masters of old. A derivative ability is to recognize instantly the quality and level of a performer within the first few moves by grasping the feel. Teachers of this caliber could conduct a *dan* examination within one minute.

At a more advanced level, the martial artist who has honed her perception of techniques to a high degree, will be able create techniques with her feeling skill. More specifically, she would create the feeling in herself, before expressing it as a physical movement. For example, she feels like

drawing a spiral of energy toward her in a funnel shape, sends it downward, lets it bounce up and fall down on top of the uke; she then expresses this feeling out physically as a technique. This is a practice that belongs to the realm of *Takemusu Aiki*, a pinnacle of Aikido training.

There is the story of a master of *cha no yu* (tea ceremony) who knew nothing about swordfight yet accepted a duel with a *ronin* (wandering samurai) due to circumstances. He quickly sought the advice of a sword master who, recognizing his mastery in *cha no yu* taught him one simple sword stance. The sword master advised him to deliberately enter into this stance at the duel as if he was preparing to serve tea in a ceremony, with the same degree of attention to detail. Thus, facing his opponent at the duel, the tea master serenely greeted him, delicately folded his jacket, attentively put his fan on top, slowly drew the sword and raised it purposely over his head, ready to cut and die. Fortunately, his opponent was skilled enough to recognize the sign of mastery and backed off. The tea master had transferred the feeling of *cha no yu* mastery into the form of a sword stance.

In summary, as one progresses in the study of martial arts, there might be a point when it is beneficial to turn one's attention inward to explore the sensory information contained inside the body and how all its parts work harmoniously to maintain life. When this internal awareness is ripe, one can train to identify the unique feeling of a movement. Over time, when this perceptive skill is honed to a high degree, one reaches the stage in which a prototype movement can be created first as a feeling then expressed outwardly. At this level, one has achieved integration of the mental, emotional, etheric and physical bodies. This achievement opens up a new world of possibilities.

The journey to that exciting world starts with a respectful appreciation of the sophisticated tool that God gave every one of us, our body, and its subtle layers.

Therapeutic Resolution

By Paul Williams

Some say, aikido is a martial that should only be practiced for combat. Others say, it should be soft and focused on energy and connection without much emphasis at all on techniques or honest attacks. These attitudes and viewpoints lead to not only different methods of practice but entrenched fracturing within the aikido community. One pointing the finger at the other saying, "How dreadful, they are not practicing real aikido!"

So how do we clean up this conflict? Well, everyone's aikido is different. The most reasonable answer as to why one's practice is different from the next is that everyone comes to aikido with different intentions. Some approach aikido with the intention of learning a martial art and others are searching for a meaningful activity. These intentions are led by value. More specifically subjective value. Subjective value is really as it sounds. It is value brought to an object by the subject or individual in this case. Therefore, anything that has such a value is subject to change. For example, some would say that the sun has inherent value. However, the sun has value because we are dependent on its energy to promote life here on earth. So we give it value. Of course this begs the question, does anything have inherent value?

My belief is that the idea of inherent or intrinsic value is troublesome and the cause of conflict in the aikido world and around the globe in general. The reason inherent value is problematic as a concept is that inherent value always begs the question, for what or to whom? When that question is answered, as it always has to be, then we discover an object's subjectivity and lack of inherent nature. After all, if we weren't here on this planet at all what value would the sun have otherwise? There would be no one here to give it. This leads me to my

conclusion that inherent value is very problematic and even an absurd way of looking at things. Not only that, the concept leads to some very unhelpful attitudes.

We all fall into this egoic trap, especially myself at times. One might be corrected on the mat by being too hard in attacks and told they need to blend more. Or on the flip side of it, one might be corrected to be more rigid, stronger, and give a more honest attack. In either case, as a training partner we have to be sensitive to how the other wishes to approach their practice. We need to be responsive to our training partner's subjective value of their training. Do they want to train for self defense, connectivity, or for personal development?

Whatever the reason may be, it is always important on the mat as in life to do one thing. BLEND! I am a practicing physical therapist and I'd like to share a story about one of my old patients back at the catastrophic rehab facility that I think would show how this attitude is not only the right approach but also the most helpful. As a clinician, I have a bit of a different personality apart from real life. I'm actually very confident in what I do and so I lead the patient with that confidence in order for them to feel secure in a plan of care that I have laid out for them. In other words, I take control.

Well, one day as a new therapist a patient came in on a gurney with a sheet drawn over her head yelling and screaming at the EMT's and at us. Cursing and screaming saying, "Don't you f*@\$ing touch me!". That would have been impossible because we had to slide her into her bed so transport could go home. You could tell by their faces it was a long ride. When we did the transfer to bed and she became even more irate. Then I noticed that she was a little five foot nothing young woman. Barely old young enough to drink. I thought to myself, "take it easy with this one".

On the mat as an uke, one has to feel out where the partner is in their training through the principle of blending with their energy. It's the

same in being a clinician. Are they beginners and need guidance? Perhaps they are intermediates and need some encouragement and a little instruction, or they are experts at this and only need initiation. In this case, I had to be almost non-existent. There was no way I would be able to tell her what to do. Not even if it was in her best interest. So what I did that evening after she kicked everyone out was give her the reins. I let her take control by being quiet and sitting with her. After she emerged from the sheets, the only talking I did was to introduce myself, reassure her that this was not the hospital, and that she would be taken care of. If she wanted to participate in therapy to try and walk again then that was her choice and no one else's. For a moment, she was quiet and then softly whispered, "ok". I left the room knowing that I had reached her in some way. This would not have been possible without applying the principle of blending.

Her progress was slow. Incrementally she allowed me to do more and more with her at every visit but only after I sat and watched t.v. with her. Her first answer in the morning was always "no" but after watching some Judge Judy she would let me teach her exercises. It took weeks before she let me touch her legs for range of motion exercises. Slowly I gained that trust. Soon she could wiggle her toes, then move her legs, and then regained the ability to be more mobile in bed. A very long story short, she was my first patient that I was able to help walk again.

The moral of the story is that blending on the mat or in life to other people's subjective values is the key ingredient to resolving any perception of conflict. The value to her therapy was led by her value of control. Without it, therapy meant nothing to her. To this day, she was by far my toughest patient. As a new physical therapist with little experience, I had to call upon learned principles of aikido. I had to blend or fail as a physical therapist and possibly ruin her chances at walking again. On the mat, we have to take people as they are today and not as we would

like them to be. We can not and should not force what we think aikido ought to be or inherently is. Otherwise, we fail as aikidoka as we would in life.

Practice Makes Perfect?

By Bruce Donehower

As Sensei often mentions, the end of the year and the beginning of the new year are good times to reflect on one's life and think about goals. One of the ways we are encouraged to do this in the dojo is to write about aikido and our experiences learning and practicing and teaching aikido.

When I was new to the dojo in Davis, I found it a bit challenging to sit down and write about my aikido experience.

Over the years, however, I came to see that Sensei's advice to write and reflect made a lot of sense. Aikido is both an outer journey and an inner journey; it is a private experience (as Sensei tells us) in that we advance due to our own efforts; we learn what we learn because of who we are and what we do. But it is also a social experience of sharing who we are, in addition to what we do. Sometimes the social experience gets short changed. We naturally become very goal-oriented in our training. Maybe our goal is to advance to the next kyu level or to get the next dan ranking or to steal the Sensei's art so that we can "graduate." We interact with each other with such training goals in mind. Can a sempai help me learn a new challenging technique or improve my faulty execution of a weapons kata? Can I help another student who is just learning the ropes to improve, progress, and shine?

I am very sympathetic with this mindset. But recently another experience came my way and I will share how I pondered on it and related it to my aikido path.

As some of you know, I spend several days a week taking care of my daughter's dog, an Airedale terrier. Dale the Airedale and I take lots of walks at the American River, and we've been doing so for about three years now.

One of the things Dale and I witness, in addition to coyotes and deer and hawks and otters and buzzards and homeless folks and cranes and salmon, is runners. One runner stands out. We see him often. He is very disciplined and dauntless in his training routine. In fact, going back five years or maybe even six years I can remember seeing him at the river even before I had the dog. That is to say: he has been running at the river *regularly* for a long time.

The thing about him is this: he is hopeless. He has a body that is clearly unsuited for what he does.

The first time I saw him at the river I thought: "That old dude should really quit running right away. Not only is he stiff and un-athletic, he looks like he is either recovering from a heart attack or will have a heart attack very soon."

The man I am describing is probably in his late sixties or seventies. He is bow-legged. He runs without grace, landing heavily with each step. His pace is slow – so slow that I can easily keep up with him at a walking pace. He never wears gear. Each time I see him he is dressed the same (and I have seen him, as I mentioned, for probably six years or so, regularly). He always wears an old baggy t-shirt and the same baggy shorts and the same dirty white knee pads. He has no cool shoes. He does not listen to an iPod or iPhone. He runs with his head down and with a plodding gait, as I mentioned. He seldom makes eye contact or appears to enjoy nature. After several years, he finally said "hi" to me when I said "hi" to him. And he never improves! Over the years that I have witnessed him at the river, he has not become even a slightly better runner. His style of running is still painful to witness; his plodding pace has not changed. He never looks happy. But he persists.

I would have to say that he is one of the most inspiring athletes I ever have witnessed. I say this because not only has he not improved *at all* over six years of jogging – he appears to have no ambition or hope of improving, ever! In fact, it's hopeless, like I said. He will never run fast; he will never be swift or graceful. Objectively speaking, I would advise him to give up running immediately – walk, do yoga, stretch, do Tai Chi! Dude, running is not your thing! But there he is.

I admire him for his persistence in doing a task that appears to have no goal and makes no sense.

Now of course you can say: Bruce, you're being stupid. Don't be stupid! The man is clearly improving just by going out every day and continuing his routine. He must be getting fitter. He moves; he breathes. Sure, he'll never win a race (maybe he doesn't want to), but he benefits mentally from the discipline and his routine must do *something* to improve his health.

True, I don't deny it. But my admiration for him is based on something else.

I guess what I find inspiring about him is his dedication to practice for the sake of practice. I don't know if he enjoys his practice or not – he never smiles or looks joyful. But he does persist. I don't know if he has a goal in his mind, an ideal that he checks himself against – but like I said, his running has never improved. After six years of doing something regularly, most of us would feel downhearted, I think, if we were still at the same place as when we started. But I guess he doesn't feel that way. He just does what he does and keeps doing it. He goes out; he runs; he repeats. No goal, no gain, no purpose – so far as I can tell.

At the close of the year I came to this reflection while walking at the river and watching him and listening to a recorded book of one of my other teachers, Kwong Roshi from the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Here's what Roshi had to say that set me thinking on this essay:

“So many of us fear repetition. We live in a society that always demands that things be new, new, new and fast, fast, fast. But what is this newness bringing us? It doesn't seem that things are getting better even with all this new technology. Most people have not discovered a way to know their true nature or to become intimate with their original mind. What these terms express is completely foreign to them. So I don't think our focus on what is new and fast can ever deeply satisfy us in this way. It's the repetition, the power of repetition, the very opposite of distraction, that helps to calm and soothe the mind and heart. This is what gives us the sense that there is some place that is a refuge, a place that holds the assurance that we know we are here, that we can in all ways return to this space, and that we know how to arrive. We are going home. Like the river we are returning to the ocean. That's where we really want to go.” (Excerpt from: Jakusho Kwong; *No Beginning, No End: The Intimate Heart of Zen*; Harmony Books, New York.)

The Vase Challenge

By Donny Shiu

Once upon a time, there was a friendly martial arts challenge at the village square. This friendly event was to showcase various martial artists in town. The challenge was to break a vase that would be resting on a stand with in front of each participant. There were three masters participating. The demonstration proceeded as follows:

Master #1 delivered a powerful **punch** to the vase causing it to break and shatter into pieces;

Master #2 delivered a powerful **kick** to the next vase and it also broke and shattered into pieces;

Master#3 placed his hand on the final vase and gently **redirected** it off the stand. The vase broke into pieces upon hitting the solid ground.

The gathered crowd cheered for all three masters completing the challenge successfully. The

difference was the how. “Fight” the force or “work” with the force. Gravity sucks, so *may the force be with you*.

Lessons From Back Pain

By Naomi Hayashi

I have been training regularly since I joined the Dojo three years ago. Because of my chronic arthritis, I sometime need to skip training when my joints flared up with inflammation. In early July, I felt my back was bit stiff. I knew this was not related to my arthritis, so I continued training Aikido. In addition, I started core workouts as well thinking that strengthening core muscles would reduce the pain. After continuing training every day, pain was getting worse, and ukemi roll was getting harder. I realized that Aikido training was not helping the pain, so I decided to take some rest.

While taking a rest, my thought was often going to negative side, such as this pain may never go away or may stay with me for long time. I started attending Wednesday's Tai Chi class early this year to improve my posture and to have strong center axis; those are my training goals of 2016 (and continue to be for 2017). Luckily, I could still go to the Tai Chi class, and it helped me not to think about the pain at all times. I heard that well trained martial artists could heal their pain by flowing their Chi to the exact location of the pain. As a beginner, this is not possible for me, but I tried to follow Sensei's direction to feel the Chi flows during the class. Standing meditation and other practices (i.e. Dragon and Tiger Chi Kung) became my daily routines at home as well.

From daily Tai Chi practice with couple of acupuncture sessions and Hawaii vacation, my back was getting better. By the end of August, the pain was totally gone and I was able to move around as before. I still don't know the exact

cause of the back pain, but I've learned a few lessons from this experience:

- Need to improve awareness of my own body; I should listen and pay attention more to myself.
- Taking some rest does not mean doing nothing; I can still do standing or sitting meditation to take my mind off, so don't be afraid to take a break.
- Appreciate having no pain; I appreciate and cherish the time I'm able to train.

OODA And Your Opponent

By Mitch Peters

In practicing randori, it is my natural instinct to retreat to gain time to think and react. This, of course, is the opposite of what I am being taught. During a recent class, Sensei emphasized the need to advance towards your opponent. And while this shortens your time to think, it can disrupt your opponent's thought process and give you an advantage. It's very logical, but in implementing this tactic, I felt as though my performance in executing technique deteriorated as I was unable to analyze my options as well as I could when I was not advancing. So just how important can it be to move in on your aggressor?

Colonel Boyd came up with a decision-making model for fighter pilots called the OODA loop and concluded that the combatant to reach the end of a cycle first would be victorious. OODA stands for observe, orient, decide, and act. Since the defender is by definition reacting to an attack, he is already behind in the initial cycle and must get inside and disrupt his attacker's loop and cycle through his loop ahead his opponent. If you can contradict your opponent's expectations, you can set him back to the observation phase. Meanwhile, you orient, decide and act. Combat is not necessarily a single loop but multiple loops being cycled on both sides until a successful action is achieved.

In the action beats reaction world of combat, you must interrupt your opponent's action with the unexpected and short circuit his attack in order to get ahead of him in the cycle. You must be unpredictable and break his concentration to change his focus. Force your attacker to under or over-react to your actions.

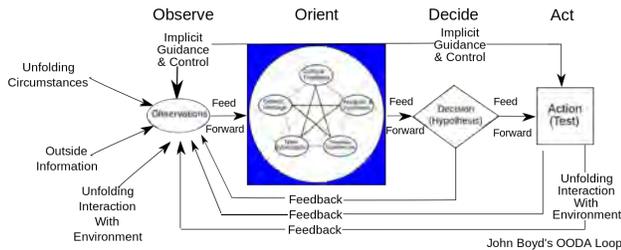
Orientation is the key component in the cycle. It is the process of deciphering what has been observed and aligning it with what you know. Speed and accuracy of orientation are essential. To be quick, you must have effective mental models for the situation. Models are concepts that you can use immediately when you recognize the situation in which they have been successful. You make mental models based on what has and hasn't worked and then practice, train and visualize the models that work. You need mental models because "the body can't go where the mind hasn't been." When your observations match with a proven and practiced mental model, you just have to act.

So, I know that I want to advance towards my opponent to disrupt his cycle and be the one in control of the situation, but I want the feeling I have when I don't advance. I can't really think faster, but I can train so that I have free flowing responses. Takemusu aiki is the spontaneous use of Aikido, and is said to be its highest level. The ability to observe, orient, decide and act without conscious effort will allow you to complete your loop while your attacker is reformulating his actions.

Learning techniques are the tip of the iceberg: through continued training, I hope to reach a level where they are truly spontaneous. The only way to improve your OODA loop is through training. Thinking less and acting more is what will give you the advantage.



This is an OOD



This is the OODA LOOP

(Consult Mitch for further details. – Editor)



OODA OOPS!

Thanks to Teo Kurtovic (8th kyu yellow belt- aikido youth class) for Santa Irimi Nage Picture!

KYU Promotions

June, 2016

Chris Cook	5K
Elias Marvinney	1K
Hannah Miller	5K
Luca Del Bene-Kythos	8K
Marie Capistrano	5K
Matilda Lohstroh	8K
Mehul Paparaju	7K
Naomi Hayashi	2K
Oren Vinokurov	8K
Rick Moore	6K
Zahra Baxi	5K

October, 2016

Camilo Conklin	8K
Enya Fujishima	5K
Jared Canio	5K
Teo Kurtovic	8K

November, 2016

David Gutierrez	6K
Janna Toy	6K
John Tyner	6K
Kim Lounsberry	6K
Ray Hickey	6K
Sue Gelber	6K
Zack Lounsberry	6K

DAN Promotion

December 2016

Mitch Peters Shodan



A note about the newsletter: The AWASE newsletter is currently published twice a year, at the beginning of winter and at the beginning of summer. All submissions are welcome! Very little editing is done. Authors should take care to edit, copyedit, proofread, and make their own stylistic corrections prior to submission; however, formatting mistakes are generally the unfortunate goofs of your editor, who may be confused from time to time. If I have made any mistakes in the presentation of your submission, I greatly apologize! Thank you for submitting to AWASE. – Bruce Sempai

Dues are due at the beginning of the month. Please pay on time or use automatic payments from your bank. Thanks!

**Aikido Institute Davis
638 Cantrill Drive, Suite B, Davis, CA
95616
530-297-1215 www.aikidodavis.com**