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Aikido: The Art of It

Like other forms of personal development, Aikido moves from the outside (physical) to the inside (spiritual). The practice of Aikido, or the way of the peaceful warrior, leads us from the mechanics of kata (structured forms) to the power of connected relationships with other people (the art). We might say that aikido is, in essence, a relational art. As such, it is a powerful vehicle for personal growth. Through practice, we learn about ourselves and our impact on others.

Why learn Kata?

Just as artists learn about the mechanics of drawing, (basic techniques, movements, and spatial relationships), *aikidoists* learn kata, or technical forms. These forms provide the “container” from within which subtle more intangible levels of aikido can be experienced.

Why practice Contact?

Ultimately, the art of Aikido is transmitted directly to the student by the teacher. It is the quality of connection that cannot be taught with words, or through seeing kata alone. It is experienced and felt by the student.

The paradox of losing the self (ego-investment) in order to find the self (which is our ability to be “present and available for relationship”) is central to the practice of aikido. We practice being open to everything, ready for nothing. Like meditation, the goal is to be empty, yet present. This translates as availability for relationships with others, without anticipating what is going to happen. Aikido is phenomenological and mystical in the sense that the wisdom that one acquires through the practice is grounded in one’s own experience and deepens, over time, with practice.