

Aikido Circle



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OUR AIKIDO JOURNEY: HOW THE MESSAGES PASSED ON BY YOUR SENSEI INFLUENCE STYLE



By Paul Barker Sensei, 7th Dan

We are each creating our own unique way of doing aikido – whether or not we realise this is the case. When we first start our practice we follow our Sensei, and in copying his way of doing aikido we imprint a carbon copy – to a small degree - onto our own practice.

That is why - in some cases - we can look at a student and can tell what style of aikido he does, either by the

way a technique is performed or whether he moves in a similar way to a particular Sensei.

When the uchi-deshi were under O'Sensei, I imagine they were all quite similar, being so close, young and practicing a lot together. It was when they were left to their own devices that they started to develop their own way of doing aikido. I think this is a good thing – although maybe over the course of time some of the connections with what O'Sensei was teaching have been lost, such as the spiritual messages and the importance of bokken and jo.

Our build, strength, speed and mental approach dictate a lot of how we do aikido. There are many great Senseis

out there but they may not appeal to everyone. You may look at one and know he is very good, but not like the way he moves or how he does a particular technique. It doesn't mean he's not good, just that you don't like his style.

Therefore you need to find someone with whom you can connect. It's important to be happy with your Sensei as this could be a life-long relationship.

The trouble with copying your Sensei is that you are only copying the outer factors of techniques and not the true essence of what is being shown. The path of aikido is a never-ending one full of wonders. It is a journey of continuous learning ♦

PAUL BARKER SENSEI GAINS A PROMOTION

Paul Barker Sensei, the chief instructor and head examiner of the Aikido Circle, is now a 7th Dan.

Sensei Barker, who has been an instructor for four decades, teaches regular classes at dojos in both Sussex and Essex.

WEBSITE OVERHAUL – WE NEED YOUR HELP

We are planning an overhaul of the website and would be delighted to receive any suggestions of how it can be improved to better serve the needs of existing and potential students.

What would you like to see? Do you want more instructional videos? Would you like to see more explanations of techniques? Do you feel you're being kept up-to-date with events?

Please either contact Paul Barker Sensei, email us at info@aikidocircle.com or click on the contact us section on the website and let us have your thoughts.

FOLLOW THE AIKIDO CIRCLE ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

The Aikido Circle now has a presence on Facebook – search for our page on which regular updates will be posted – or visit the link via the website.

We are also tweeting so come and follow us at www.twitter.com/aikidocircle. At the last count we had 292 followers so please help us spread the word and increase this number.



Members of the Aikido Circle with Ikeda Sensei at the end of his Coventry course.

CIRCLE MEMBERS TRAIN WITH IKEDA SENSEI AND CHIBA SHIHAN

Every year the Aikido Circle receives initiations to visit different schools and attend seminars to meet visiting Senseis – two recent courses have stood out as particularly enjoyable.

The first was **Ikeda Sensei's** Coventry seminar - part of his worldwide "aikido bridge" seminars. Ikeda Sensei is 7th Dan within the Aikikai. The training session lasted just over four and a half hours straight, with one short water break for everyone.

Ikeda Sensei focused on the importance of "connection" with an Uke. Feeling that connection, being able to use it effectively to break an Uke's balance and control his attack. He also explained the importance of being opened minded in practice to allow us to take new ideas from other styles and make them

useful/accessible in daily practice. It was an informative and well constructed training seminar - and with students from over 20 other schools attending it left us all with something to consider and think about in our future practice.

Ikeda Sensei invited several members of the Aikido Circle to visit and train with him in his home dojo of Boulder, Colorado, USA.

The second course was the opportunity to train with **Chiba Shihan** 8th Dan in the Aikikai – and a host of other sensei's over two days at Worcester University's sports hall.

There were opportunities to train for half a day, the whole day, the weekend or the whole week! Training started on certain days at 08:00 right through to 18:00.

NOTICES

CHANGES TO SUSSEX DOJOS TAKE EFFECT

The Hastings dojo, which has been running on a Thursday evening at the YMCA, is now closed.

Classes will still take place on that day but at the Bexhill dojo under Paul Barker Sensei, from 8pm to 9.30pm.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

It is expected that a mini course will be held at the Bexhill dojo before the end of the year.

Please check the website (or Facebook and Twitter feeds) for confirmation of the date and time.

There was something for everyone. With suwari waza practice, ki exercises, bokken, jo and lai-bokken throughout the day with normal practice in between as well. You were worked and you were worked hard but it was a great seminar! The highlight was of course to be able to train with Chiba Shihan. His energy, ki and the power of his technique were clear in all he did and all he taught. It was enjoyable to see just how hard some of the original training techniques were with the bokken in particular.

But most enjoyable was to hear him reminisce of his times learning under O'Sensei and his views on Aikido. Members of the Aikido Circle were also lucky to have the opportunity to meet with Chiba Sensei and speak with him after the last day of our seminar visits.



Members of the Aikido Circle with Chiba Shihan at the end of his course in Worcester.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING AN EXAMPLE

When you are teaching you must lead by example. This means being the first to arrive at the dojo and the last to leave, as well as being polite, clean and of smart appearance.

Your gi can be old but it must not be torn...if it is then patch it up. The same applies to your hakama. Your finger and toenails should be short and your slippers kept tidy at the side of the mat.

These basics must be learned early on in your aikido journey. In your own way you are representing the art and this must be to a high standard.

Techniques are important – but not as much as attitude or respect. Always ensure your weapons are out of their bags and tidy at the side of the mat, ready for immediate use.

Students should be moving at double time when sitting down after the Sensei claps his hands or getting up to practice.

They must not waste time talking and walking slowly to collect their weapons. They must get as much as possible out of their time in the dojo.

Paul Barker Sensei

LAST WORDS...

Paul Barker Sensei outlines how to improve your practice

It is wise to keep an open mind and try new things. Aikido is a growing art and it is better for you to develop than running through the same old training. I am not saying to forget your roots or the old ways of practice, just try something different.

Try not to be content with what you have learned already for there is lots yet to be discovered. Don't think you are already performing a technique to the best of your ability - you should strive to reach for the stars with a loving and open heart. Enjoy every lesson.

Anyone who has done Aikido with me knows that at the dojo where I teach we push training to the limit and make it as real as possible.

This, in turn, creates a strong mind, body and spirit. Don't get me

wrong. This art is not for the super fit only. It is for everyone that wants to put his or her heart and soul into it. It is more a state of mind. I hear students saying they can't seem to motivate themselves, are tired, have a headache, or some other excuse.

As I say, these people are weak in mind and spirit. They need to wake up and stop being so self-indulgent. I am here for anyone that wants to practice Aikido. All they need to do is take that first step and I will meet them half way.

We strengthen the mind and spirit by pushing the body to the limit at every lesson. There is no easy ride and by strengthening the mind and spirit we in turn strengthen the body. We are focusing on all three.

As Chinese sage Lao Tzu noted:
"He who conquers others is strong, he who conquers himself is mighty." ♦



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING US?

If you reading this and aren't a member of the Aikido Circle then why not come along and see firsthand what it's all about?

You can find information on our dojos in Sussex and Essex, as well as training times and details of forthcoming events, on our website: www.aikidocircle.com

If you have any other questions please either email us at info@aikidocircle.com or ring Paul Barker Sensei on 07773 676539.

"ONCE IT HAS BEEN FULLY DISCIPLINED, THE BREATH FOLLOWS ITS MASTER. DISCRETE, TENDER, FAITHFUL AS A LOVER, AS LIGHT AND GENTLE AS A CHILD'S WHISPERS AND YET, AT TIMES, ALL POWERFUL, QUICK, ASTOUNDING LIKE A FLASH OF LIGHTNING." **TORIKI SAN.**