



One thing leads to another

*an interview
with a sensei*



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1st edition June 2012

Idea and text: Alois Lucas Tetelepta

Text advice: Marie van der Donk & Arthur Frieswijk

Illustrations: Alex van Kooten

Art direction: Richel Lamandassa

Design: Ton de Jong, PrimaMedia

Photography: Robert van Ingen (cover)

Production, final editing and guidance:

Ton de Jong, PrimaMedia

Martin Kersten

Alois Lucas Tetelepta

With thanks to: the Aikido workshops held by
dojo Manen Cho Ho.

For questions or additional information, please send an email to:
info@doozo.nl, or visit: www.doozo.nl

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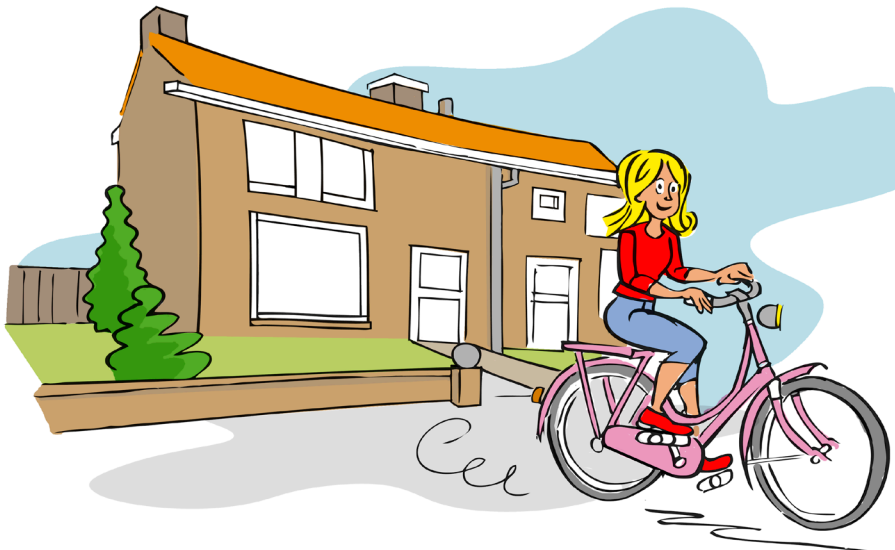
One thing leads to another

An interview with a sensei

Aikido on Sunday

Sunday afternoon, yuck! **I don't like Sundays.** Sundays are for grown-ups. Booooring! *"Don't make a fuss", my father said. "And please finally do something!" "What? I am boooooored." "Well, check out the new gym, just around the corner. They do all kinds of strange contact sports there. You help write the school newspaper, don't you? Maybe you can interview someone."* Hmm. Not such a bad idea of dad.

It's almost time for the next edition of the school newspaper. *"Okay"* I said, and then put by notepad and pen in my bag. When I am walking out the door, I hear my father calling me: *"And ask what 'dojo' means. That's written on the front of the building."*



It only takes a few minutes biking to the small building next to the park. **'Dojo Centrum'** is indeed written above the door. I cautiously step inside. I see a hallway with a few chairs and a small desk with a woman standing behind it. She looks at me curiously. *"I...uhm...am here to do an interview ...for the newspaper. The school newspaper"*, I said a little awkward. *"With the boss."* *"The boss?"* the woman laughs. *"You probably mean the sensei...the teacher. Shall we go have a look?"*

She leads the way to a door and opens it. Suddenly, I am looking into a room with at least ten, twelve people who are busy with...yeah, what are they doing? Dancing? Fighting? They are all wearing long black skirts and waiving wooden sticks at each other. Wow! I have never seen anything like this before. All kinds of super tricks. *"This is aikido"*, the woman explains. *"And there, the man upfront ... that's the sensei."* The man is already approaching us. He walks very calmly and has a friendly demeanor. *"The press has arrived"*, the woman says and winks at me. *"For an interview with the sensei."*

"Aha! Well, I do have a few minutes to talk to the press. They are keeping each other busy anyway. Shall we sit down there for a moment?" He points at a spot on the mat. When we are seated, I get out my pen and notepad *"You've come prepared"*, the man laughs. *"What do you want to know?"*



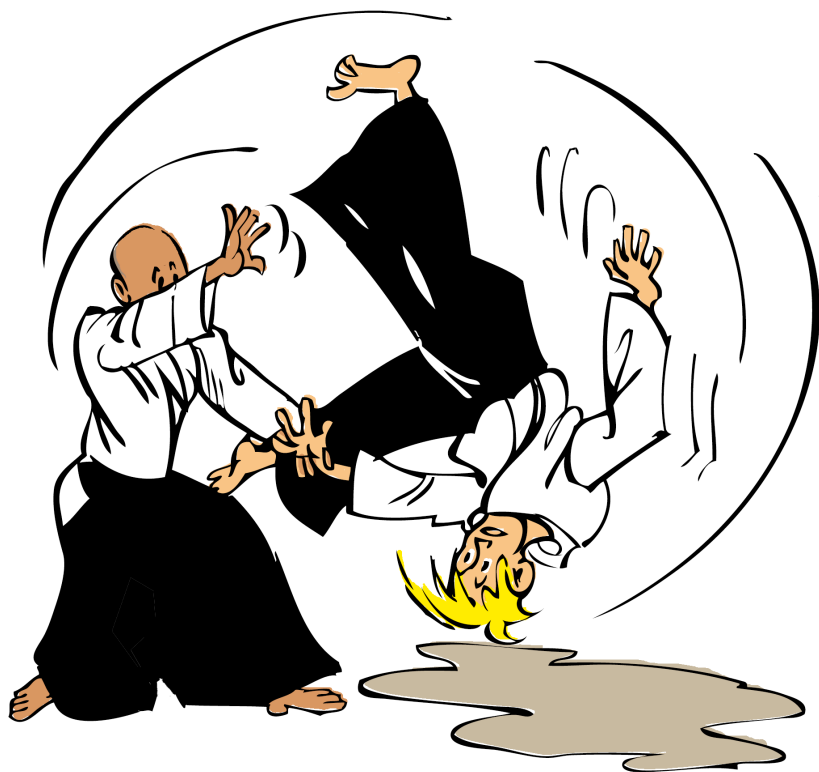
What does 'Dojo' mean?

Dojo is a Japanese word. That's what we call our spot where we get together to work on ourselves. The word really consists of two parts: '**do**' and '**jo**'. 'Do' means 'the path'. That can be taken literally, so a real path, but also symbolically, such as a trip or a life's journey. And '**jo**' means '**spot**' or '**place**'. If you combine the two you get:

'The place where a road or a journey begins'.

That's what we call our gym and with that we want to show that we do more here than just work out. Each workout is the beginning of a journey, what you learn here you take with you on your life's journey. That sounds serious, doesn't it? But the most important thing is, that you behave in the best way possible. There are rules in the dojo and everyone abides by them and **respects** one another.

合氣道



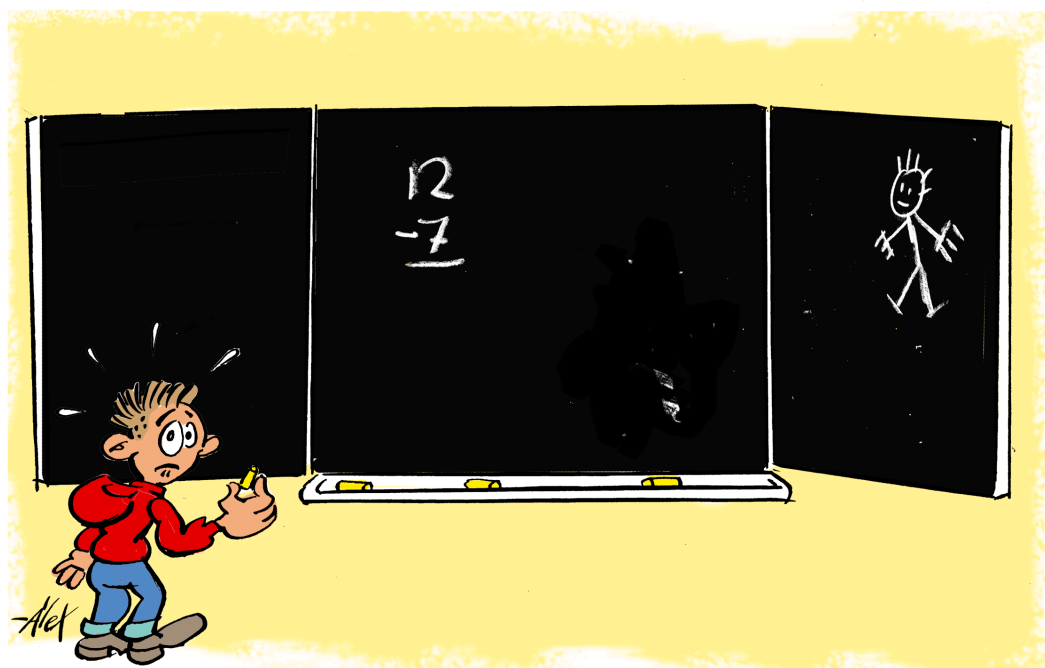
And in the dojo you do... aikido?

Yes, in this dojo we do, but it's a place where you can practice all kinds of michi (plural of do). **Aikido** is a Japanese martial art. More of these exist, but we practice aikido. It is founded by Morihei Uesiba whom we call O'sensei as a way towards peace.

Aikido is WOW!

Can I also learn those tricks?

What looks like a trick to you, is only the outside. The trick is not to do too much, to accept things as they are, and to keep on straight posture.



But it all looks so easy. Can't you teach me a simple trick...for example, how to toss someone to the ground?


You know, it's not about '**tricks**'.

If you know a trick, you haven't really learnt anything. You can teach a parrot to say 'good morning', but it has no clue what it's saying. Actually no one can teach you anything:

You can only teach something to yourself.

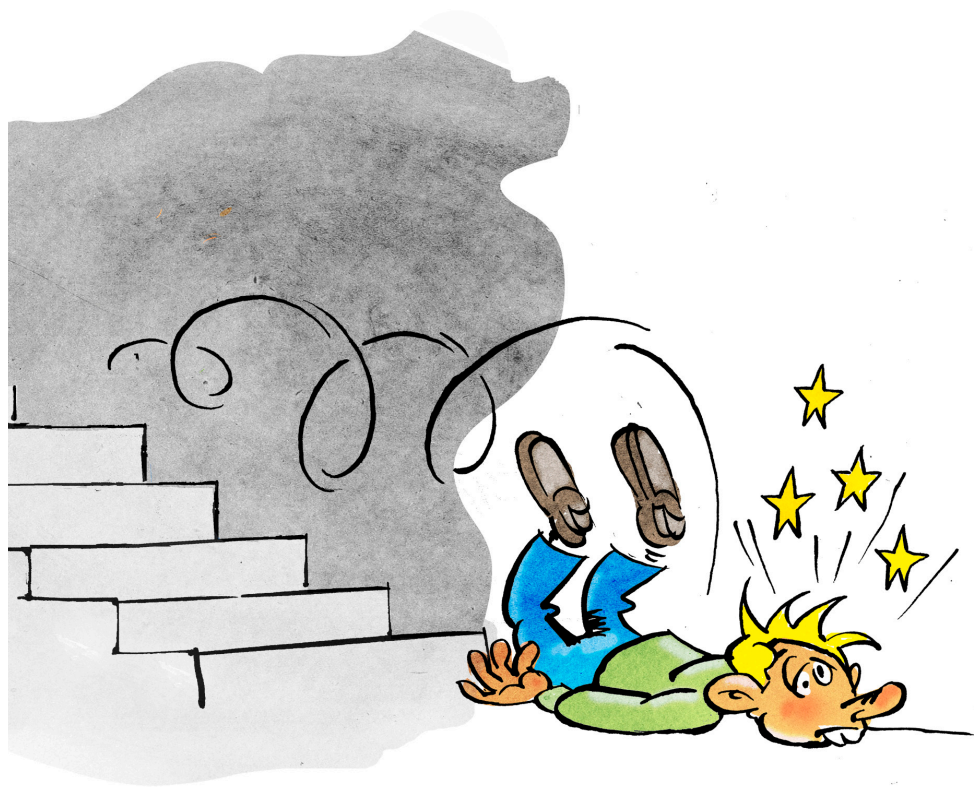
Another person can **show you** something. And you can **study it**, and then copy it again, and again, and so, by **practicing** a lot, you can finally **learn** something. But then you have done it all by **yourself**. And with practicing I don't mean practicing a few times, or a few hours here and there. No, I mean weeks, months, years of practicing. Maybe even your whole life. But then you will be able to do it well, catch the deeper lessons!





So the more you practice, the better you will be able to fight and the better you will be able to defend yourself?

That's a very good question. In aikido you are taught that fighting is pointless and that giving into such emotions of fear, leads to bad things. In aikido you are not taught to fight, but rather **to not fight**. In an Aikido dojo we practice to **be truly free** and positively handle feelings of fear, anger and fighting. Because if these emotions are the basis for our actions this will in the end lead to terrible even horrible things. Once you start fighting, the other fights back and you will have even more problems. And who really wants problems? So, in fact, we try to avoid fighting and keep such actions as far away from us as possible. And that requires a **lot of practice**.



Uhm... I am not sure I understand.

For example, we learn to keep a safe distance from danger. And the trick for that is ... well, that is indeed a trick, perhaps the most important trick of aikido:

Is to truly Love yourself and the world around you!

Do you know why? If you love yourself, really love yourself, you will radiate **self-confidence** and don't do things that will cause you problems. Or cause others problems. Think of **Bullying** for example. Do you ever bully someone?



I...uhm...well...sometimes...a little...

I think that someone who bullies someone else does not love him/herself.

And also that someone who is bullied does not love him/herself. You see, someone who is bullied does **not radiate self-confidence** and bullies always pick someone with less self-confidence than they have. But that doesnot mean that bullies truly love themselves. If that were the case, they wouldn't need to bully others to feel better. Right? Eventually also the **Bullies** get **punished** and that doesn't make life any more fun. And that is what I mean:

If you love yourself, then you don't do all those things that make your life less fun on purpose.

So it's important that you love yourself.

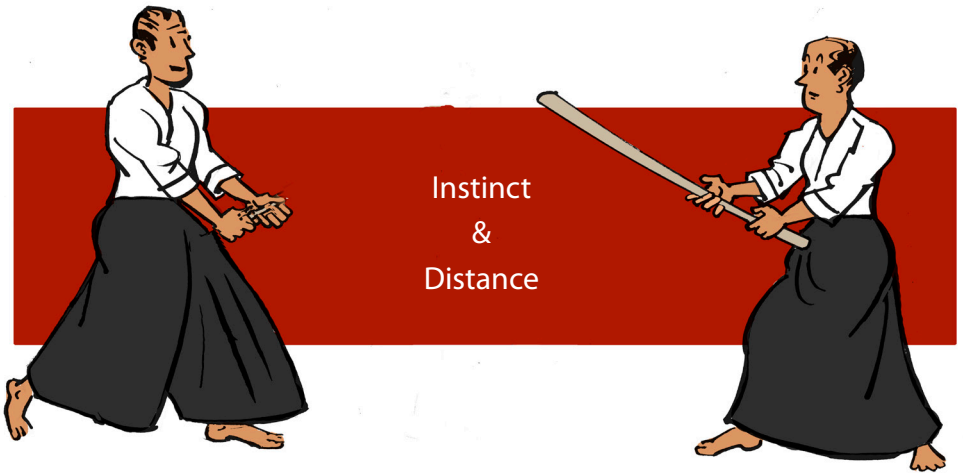
I always say:

You are worth to live a good life, otherwise you would not be here.



Okay, so you are taught not to fight here?

Learning **to fight is useless**. You might see too much fighting around you: in movies, on TV, in computer games. But it's obviously fake. In real life, ninja's don't really jump out of the bushes to fight with you. If you just **pay attention**, stay **nice** and **polite**, in Japan they call this **omotenasi**, then you don't have to fight in real life



Sorry... ninja!?!

Excuse me! A **ninja** is a Japanese assassin from the past, very dangerous, and with a whole lot of different weapons. But fortunately I have never bumped into one. The danger lies in other things. Ordinary things. In people you call '**friend**' or '**girlfriend**' but who are really **not good** for you. You might get into 'a fight' with them or an argument, while it's better to keep them at a distance. Do you know the feeling that when you sometimes go to places where it just doesn't feel right? Where the '**atmosphere**' feels wrong somehow? But what is '**atmosphere**'? What is '**wrong**'? and what is wright that's hard to say, but you know that it doesn't feel right. That is also a form of self-defense:

Sensing danger, so that you chooce a different path.

You have to learn to trust your instincts. My teacher taught me that you can't read minds, but that you can sense what someone thinks or feels



Aha, so that's what you learn in the dojo?

Let's just say that I was taught how to learn here. In the dojo you find out that you learn by doing the best you can , and by making mistakes. When you truly do your best, then making a mistake is fine.

**Those who hide their mistakes,
will never be able to learn.**

Only when you **accept** that you can't do everything yet, you can improve yourself. It's very important that you can accept criticism. A lot of people get upset by criticism or just plain angry, but criticism is actually very positive:

**It gives you the opportunity to see
how you can evolve and grow even
more.**

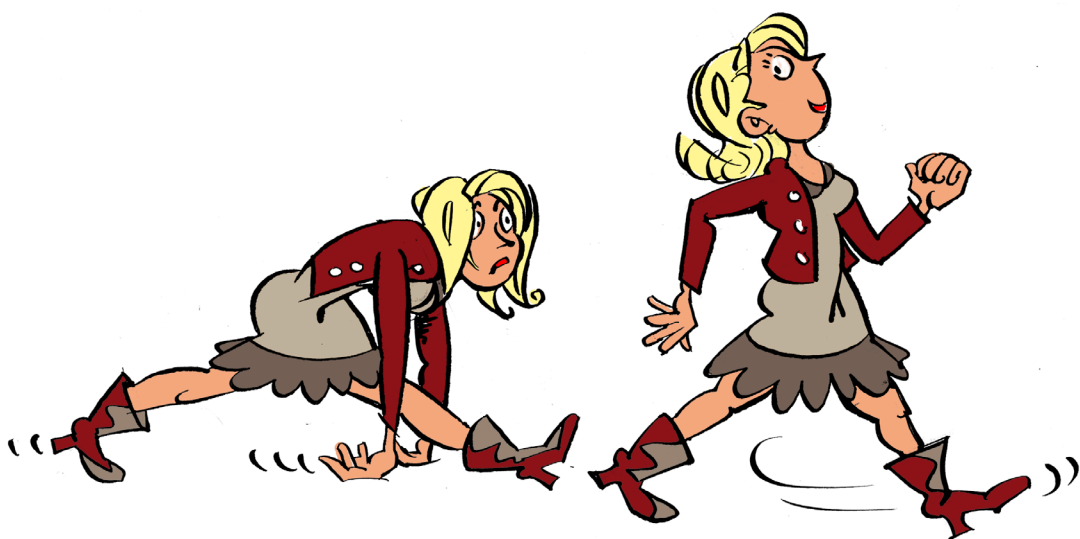


That's what you learn in the dojo part 2

So, Aikido teaches you to just be yourself and to realize that the choices that you make have consequences for you and the world around you. I always ask people:

Do you want a nice life or a life full of problems?

What would you say?



Nice ofcourse

Of course! Everyone wants a great life. But are you doing the things that will give you a great life? And are you mixing with people that will enable you to have a fun life? Again, self-defense is not about fighting and controlling others, but about **self-control**. Can you control yourself? Controlling is ruling yourself, so being the boss of yourself. For example, if you're rude to people, well, then that always provokes trouble. If you get angry quickly or try to force people, then you will get into an argument sooner, and fighting is the next step. And for self-control, you need self-knowledge. When you want to force or control others they will resist.

Self-defense is therefore mainly about **self-knowledge**. If you know who you are and what you want, it's easier to decide to keep a safe distance from dangerous situations or people. You have to make sure you don't create problems for yourself. And that requires **self-confidence**. Someone who does not love him/herself, acts pathetic or tough, and provokes reactions. But someone who loves him/herself, stands up straight and has a positive charisma. This kind of person doesn't want to fight and no-one wants to fight with someone like that.



Can you only do this while practicing with aikido?

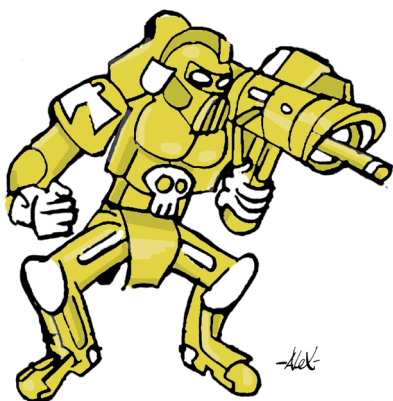
Oh, no, but aikido is totally perfect for me. Michi (plural of Do) offers you mental rest, harmony, and beauty. The lesson that practicing a michi under a sensei will teach you, is like climbing up a mountain and there are many roads to reach the top. If you don't decide to do a michi, then make sure you do a sport that builds your self-confidence, so that you will love yourself more. But there are some conditions. It has to be something for which you need **discipline**, where you are allowed to make mistakes, for which you could use some **criticism**. You have to make the **most of yourself**. Search for personal triumph not a triumph over others. But I would say, just start doing aikido, practice it for a couple of years and see where it takes you personally.



Do you also do something else?

Absolutely. I write **haikus**. Do you know what these are? They are small poems written in Japanese style. These poems help me to understand my feelings better and to **express** them. That's why I feel angry or sad less quickly, and I dare to rely more on my own **feelings**. I write haikus for myself, because I think they're beautiful. Sometimes I don't finish them in one go. Then it takes a while, to find the right words, or I have to keep changing words because they're not quite right. That doesn't matter at all, it teaches me a lot. Especially the wrong words force me to search for the right words.

Mind you, not everyone finds my poems beautiful or likes them. 'I don't get it at all', they say. This helps me to learn to **deal** with criticism. What's important to me, is that I'm doing something positive, that suits me perfectly. Originally a haiku is about nature, you can recognize seasons in the poems, and there is rhythm and motion in it. Personally I don't always stick to these rules, I sometimes write haikus about other things that cross my mind.



Can you show an example of such a haiku?

I will write a few down for you later. You will see, they're about 'ordinary' things, that don't seem dangerous at all, like 'gaming', 'a cigarette' and 'alcohol'. This is what I **like**: aikido and haikus. But everyone should find and develop his or her **own talent**. For instance, I think that you do great interviews.

Oh, thank you! Uhm...

Here, let me show you a few **haikus**

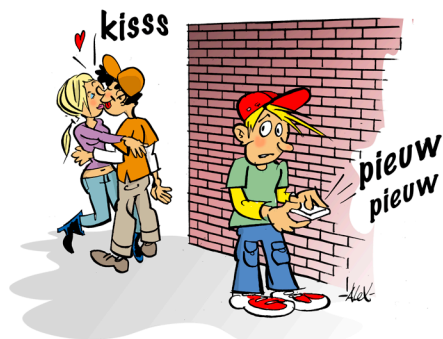


Haiku's about gaming

Fun Gaming
Fun and exciting
Passing time

Fun Gaming
Improving quickly
Challenging

Fun Gaming
More and more often
Like always



Haiku's about gaming

Fun Gaming
Our own little world
People shy

Fun Gaming
Growth is around you
Standing still

Fun Gaming
Great healthy hobby
True or false?



Haiku's about gaming

Fun Gaming
One can do much more
Dare to live!!!

Fun Gaming
Look in the mirror
Discover

Haiku's about a cigarette



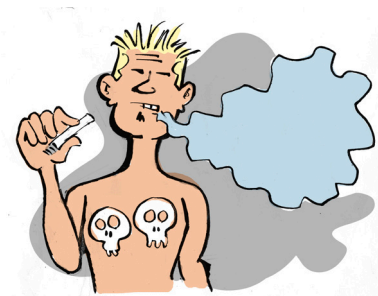
Haikus about a cigarette

Smoke a cigarette
Taking time for that small break
Light it up and smoke

Smoke a cigarette
No stressing, but relaxing
Just doing nothing

Smoke a cigarette
Craving for moments of rest
Craving gives no rest

Haiku's about a cigarette



Haikus about a cigarette

Smoke a cigarette
Getting grey smoke in your lungs
Smelly and stuffy

Smoke a cigarette
Buy a package for a week
No longer enough

Smoke a cigarette
Money and squeaky breathing
And stinking badly

Haiku's about a cigarette



Haikus about a cigarette

**Smoke a cigarette
Simply don't ever start this
A really fresh choice**

Haiku's about Alcohol



Haikus about Alcohol

Alcohol
Fun with partying
Hiccup, drunk

Alcohol
Spinning and twisting
Letting go

Alcohol
What did I just say ???
No idea

Haiku's about Alcohol



Haikus about Alcohol

Alcohol
Many accidents
Bad, headache

Alcohol
Barfing and blunders
all not nice

Alcohol
Act tough and argue
Cause problems

Haiku's about Alcohol



Haikus about Alcohol

Alcohol
Copy behaviour
Stay yourself

合氣道

Maybe you can write some yourself but lets stay at the subject of aikido.

Ok.. What does the word 'aikido' mean?

'**Aikido**' is also a Japanese word, like '**dojo**'.

But of course you understood that! It's made up out of three **Japanese characters**: do you see them hanging on the wall there?

合

The first one is 'ai', which means

Love, harmony, unity

By that we mean that you should seek harmony, through cooperation and by dealing with criticism in a **positive way**. And it also stands for the unity of body and mind. Because they belong together. For instance: suppose you're at school, in the classroom.

Your body is in the classroom, but are your thoughts also in class? And if that's not the case, does this make sense? 'Ai' is therefore very important in life. And those who want to develop his or her 'ai', must learn to be **patient** and have **self-control**. If you start to see so-called 'problems' just as personal challenges, frustration and aggression will disappear by itself, and we believe that inner harmony will lead to a more harmonious, loving world.

氣

The second is 'ki':

Strength and energy

In aikido 'ki' means that you learn to relax your nerves. And direct your effort to a specific goal. You will notice that you will have a lot more **strength**, if you don't hesitate and just do your best and focus at the task that is at hand.

Just compare it to a soccer player who takes a penalty kick: if he or she is really nervous and thinks of all sort of things instead of just kicking the ball past the keeper, he or she will kick the ball in a way he or she didnt intended.

Do you want more 'ki' in your life? Stand and sit up beautifull straight. Then learn to breath calmly. Out through the mouth, and in through the nose. Exhale good and deep with the use of your belly!! Don't act pathetic or tough, but dare to be yourself. That is having **self-confidence** and will give immense power!

道

And the third character is 'do'. We already mentioned this, right? 'Do' is the **path**: your school path, your life's path, your training path, any path you can think of.

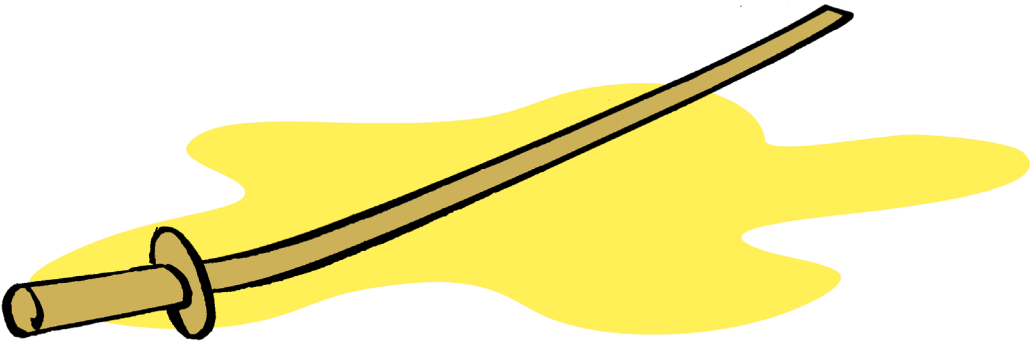
In aikido, it comes down to the fact we use everything that happens in our daily lives to **grow**. To become a **better person** and to make the world a better and a more beautiful place.

Situations are the result of **action** and **reaction**.

When you learn to realize that your actions have consequences, you can start to change the situations.

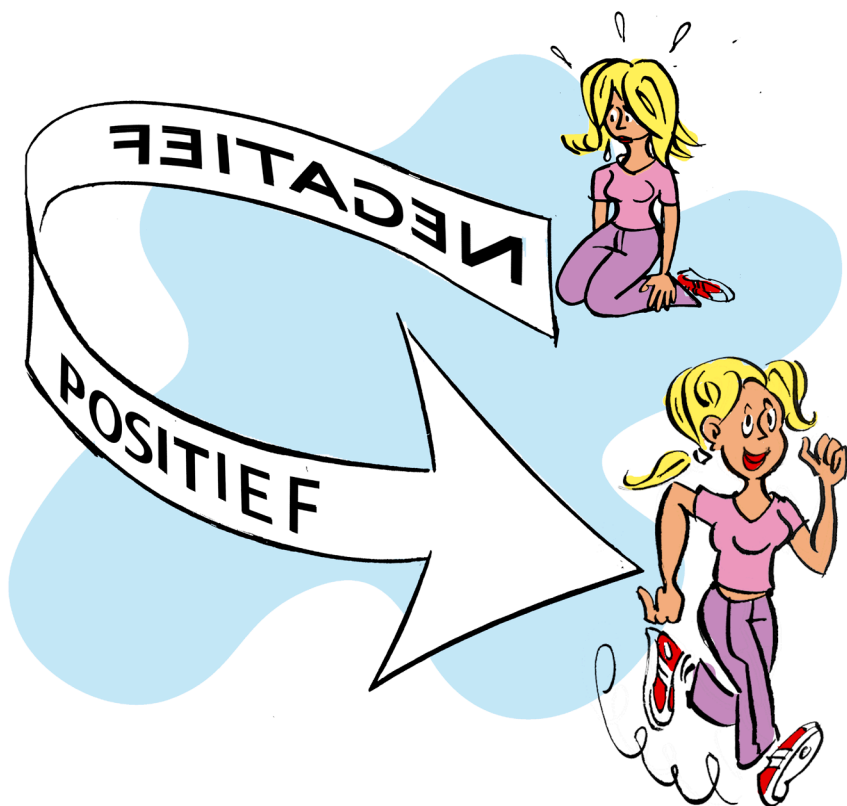
Would you like to give your 'do' a positive twist?

Then, learn to say '**sorry**'. Or, even better, change your behavior. Acknowledging your mistakes; that will increase your **inner harmony**.



Phew, I think this is quite difficult.
How am I supposed to learn all this?

Haha, just like you learn things in school. Just really pay attention and then take little steps at a time. That's all: **pay attention and take it step by step.** That's how you advance, bit by bit. And if it goes wrong, it doesn't matter at all. You might take a step back, and then just climb back up again. As long as you **keep on going**, you'll eventually climb back up again. Aikido teaches you how to take someone's sword away, but of course not right away, in the first lesson. First, we practice without weapons. We grab hold of each other. When someone grabs hold of you, the easiest way to escape is to stay calm and to look for harmony. Between body and mind and even between you and the attacker. But will you succeed? The same goes for when someone attacks you with a stick or a sword. If you remain **calm** and **do not panic**, you can think straight and will be able to achieve more. That's why we practice with weapons. We learn to switch negative situations and feelings to positive ones, that is aikido. **If you want to learn something, then you have to do so by paying attention and taking small steps!**



Does aikido have a competition?

No, aikido **doesn't have a competition or tournaments**. Some people live their whole life as one big competition and see **other people** as their **opponents**. We recognize only one opponent in aikido and that's **yourself**. You struggle with your **own insecurities** and your own feelings, that's the only competition that counts. And this is much more difficult than a competition with others. Do your best to be open even if something feels as an attack, try to understand another point of view, other cultures and customs. Accept yourself and that others are different. It is ok to change your insight. Try to improve yourself and so the world. But...you can only ever do your best. You must never forget that. Contribute to world peace through inner peace. Those are clear and present challenges in everyone's life. Do your best to improve yourself!

As long as you really try your best, you cannot lose.

Really try your best, don't lose your nerve, don't hide behind aggression and violence don't be an offender or victim: those are the contests you have with yourself.

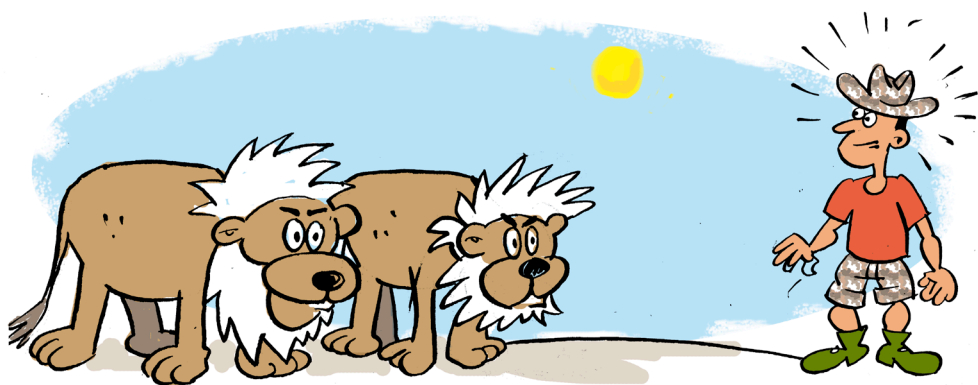


So you can learn how to deal with tension and stress?

The best option is to **prevent** tension and stress. Dealing with a nervous breakdown or attack requires training. To deal with an attack as smooth as water, you have to train a lot. Because your first **reaction** will be to freeze. Therefore it's better to learn a little Aikido wisdom that you can use straight away.



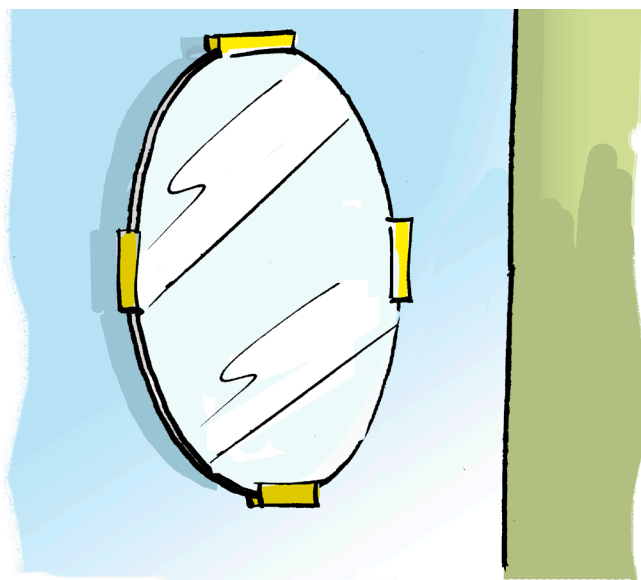
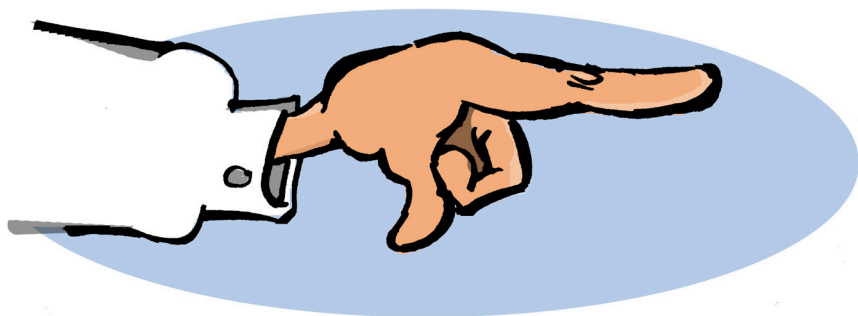
Walk, sit, stand up straight.



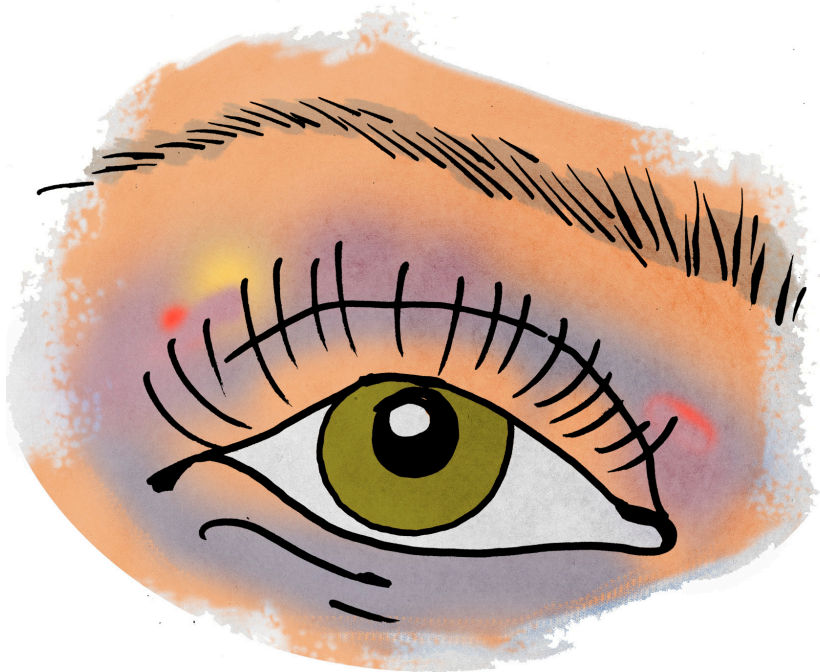
**Keep a safe distance from
dangerous situations, animals,
and people.**



**Have patience and learn to trust
your instincts.**



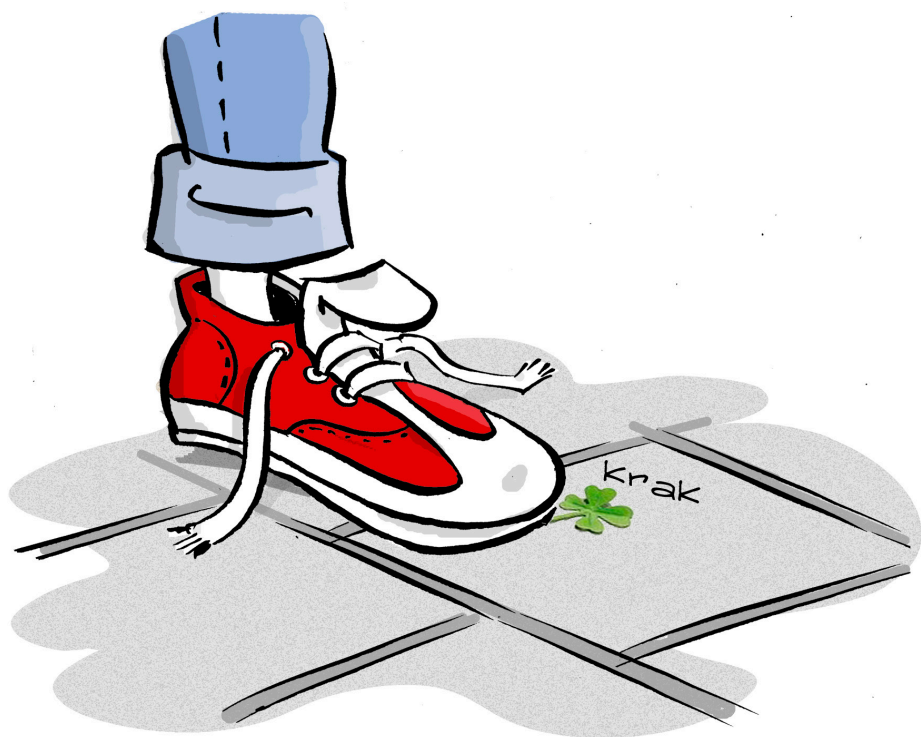
**It doesn't matter what others do,
but what you do yourself.**



**Just behave in a way that won't
result in people wanting to give
you a black eye.**

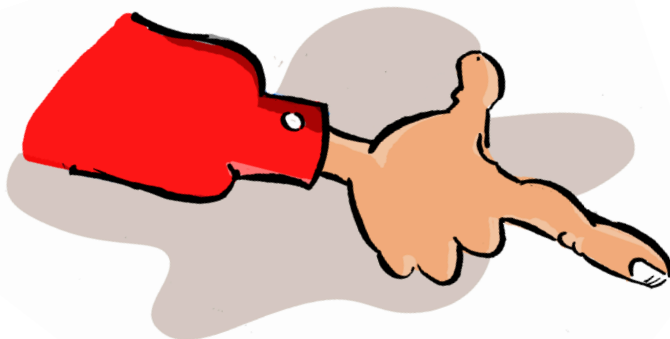


**Never stay down after a fall,
always get up again.**



**Discover and do something
with your talent(s).**

Dare to be your real self,





become what you want to be!



The sensei gets up again. He looks at me. *"I have to get back to class",* He said. *"But I really liked the interview. Thank you."* *"No, thank you", I say and get up quickly too. "I have learned a lot."* *"Do you know what the most important lesson is? The very most important? It's simple: learn to turn something negative into something positive. THAT is what aikido is".* With these last words, he nods one more time and continues teaching. I put my notebook away in my bag, and walk outside. The woman behind the little desk waves. On my way home I think, that wasn't smart, I didn't write anything down! What am I going to do for the school newspaper? But then I think of aikido and start to laugh. Turn the negative into a positive. I really enjoyed listening and I can tell the story by heart later. At home, my father's reading the newspaper. He looks up. *"And? How was it?"* *"Fun",* I said, and think: what a great afternoon. **I love Sundays!**

Making your own haikus

You can express emotions and feelings in many ways. For instance, by observing. You look at someone, and make eye-contact. Or by talking, so through language. In this kind of thing, life is a practice ground. By using your instincts, you learn automatically. When you're in touch with and work with your feelings, the answers seem to appear by themselves. Also, writing is a way to express yourself.

A haiku is a form of poetic writing. It's a simple and easy form of poetry, if only because a haiku doesn't have to rhyme. You can make great use of haikus to express your feelings in a fun, creative and positive way. The haiku is from Japan and was originally used to write about nature.

What is a haiku?

Two variations exist: the tanka, which is a more elaborate form, where nature and inner feelings are combined, and the senryu, a humoristic form about the imperfections of human nature. I mix them up. In my opinion, nature, inner feelings, and the imperfections of human nature, can't be viewed separately. A haiku consists of seventeen syllables, split up into three lines. The first line has five syllables, the middle seven, and the last five again. (An alternative is that the first line has three syllables, the middle five, and the last three again. That amounts to 11 syllables). As said, the haiku isn't meant to rhyme.

What is a syllable?

This is the smallest combination of letters in which a word can be split.

Example:

talent = (1) ta (2) lent = 2 syllables.

This arranged in a sequence of 3-5-3 or 5-7-5, is a haiku.

Anyone can write a haiku:

Count the syllables of your first thought.

Otherwise just say several different sentences.

Just remember, everything's allowed and nothing is required.

Count the syllables; count the syllables of your thoughts.

Maybe change it a little.

Example

The thought 'whopping nonsense'

'whopping nonsense' = (1) whop (2) ping (3) non (4)
sense = (1) + (2) + (3) + (4) = 4 syllables

becomes: 'one whopping nonsense' =

(1) one (2) whop (3) ping (4) non (5) sense

= (1) + (2) + (3) + (4) + (5) = 5 syllables.

That's how you create a sentence.

Try the following little exercise:

Begin by reading the first line.

Count the syllables of your first thought.

**Keep in mind, everything's allowed
and nothing is required.**

**Count the syllables, possibly change it a little,
and you have created a new line.**

Another example

Try something

-----3-----> (1) Try (2) some (3) thing = (1) + (2) + (3) = 3
stressed syllables

-----5-----> 5 stressed syllables

-----3-----> 3 stressed syllables

Try something

-----3-----> (1) Try (2) some (3) thing

Just go for it now

-----5-----> (1) Just (2) go (3) for (4) it (5) now

Believe, act

-----3-----> (1) Be (2) lieve (3) act

Complete the following Haikus

Try something

-----3-----> (1) Try (2) some (3) thing

Be open, let go

-----5-----> (1) Be (2) o (3) pen (4) let (5) go

-----3-----

Try something

-----3-----> (1) Try (2) some (3) thing

The first real pitfall

-----5-----> (1) The (2) first (3) real (4) pit (5) fall

-----3-----

Exercise

Tomorrow I start

-----5----->

(1) To (2) mor (3) row (4) I (5) start = (1) + (2) + (3) +
(4) + (5) = 5 syllables

-----7----->

-----5----->

Now, make your own haiku or complete the following:
Take it easy, it doesn't all have to be done in one go.
Everyone takes his or her own time. It will give you a
good idea of how you look at things now!

Just do it

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 True boredom (3-5-3) | 23 Own desire (3-5-3) |
| 2 What does respect mean (5-7-5) | 24 Children and warfare (5-7-5) |
| 3 Why to give respect (5-7-5) | 25 One moment (3-5-3) |
| 4 How to get better (5-7-5) | 26 Morning sun (3-5-3) |
| 5 Why pay attention (5-7-5) | 27 New life (3-5-3) |
| 6 Now or what? (3-5-3) | 28 Energy (3-5-3) |
| 7 How and act (3-5-3) | 29 That's okay (3-5-3) |
| 8 You and peace ? (3-5-3) | 30 Concentrationcamp (5-7-5) |
| 9 Get something? (3-5-3) | 31 Limit, will (3-5-3) |
| 10 Your expectations (5-7-5) | 32 Connections (3-5-3) |
| 11 Functioning (3-5-3) | 33 Excuses (3-5-3) |
| 12 Laugh and tear (3-5-3) | 34 Believe, will (3-5-3) |
| 13 Tear and laugh (3-5-3) | 35 Think, let go (3-5-3) |
| 14 Act and feel (3-5-3) | 36 Gets better (3-5-3) |
| 15 Share and care (3-5-3) | 37 It's okay (3-5-3) |
| 16 One by one (3-5-3) | 38 You, me, us, our love (5-7-5) |
| 17 Mellow out (3-5-3) | 39 Missing what (3-5-3) |
| 18 An atomic bomb (5 -7- 5) | 40 Inner peace (3-5-3) |
| 19 Big ego (3-5-3) | 41 Wish to see (3 -5- 3) |
| 20 Persevere (3-5-3) | 42 Rather not (5-7-5) |
| 21 Peace and real power (3-5-3) | 43 Distraction (5-7-5) |
| 22 Confidence (3-5-3) | 44 Capability(5-7-5) |



It is Sunday afternoon, yuck!
I don't like Sundays.
Sundays are for grown-ups. Booring!
"Don't make a fuss", my father
said. "And please finally
do something!" "What? I am
boooooored."
"Well, check out the new gym,
just around the corner."
They do all kinds of...

