

## The Relaxed Martial Art

Traditionally, martial art systems were created as a documented practice of training for combat mode in the ancient eras. Naturally, its modern day applications are primarily for self-defense, exercise and physical fitness. One form of martial arts however stands out from the rest in the sense that it espouses a relaxed way of life over cunning and physical strength.

At the heart of it, the Aikido spirit is about cultivating relaxation and a serenity throughout everyday life to be able to harness this virtue in actual physical combat. Aikido is actually a modern Japanese martial art and the Aikido spirit continues to live on today years after it was developed by Morihei Ueshiba between 1920 to 1960. Noteworthy about this particular martial art is that the Aikido spirit is cultivated within its students so that there is a spiritual and philosophical development that happens; which in turn becomes the basis of the combative art. Modern day students of Aikido testify that they bring the Aikido spirit with them throughout ordinary mundane activities, forming a bridge between principles of how to tackle everyday life and combat moves on the training mat.

This spiritual and philosophical basis of the Aikido spirit that cultivates relaxation and the peaceful control of aggression, is attributed to the founder's background in Omoto-kyo religion. Omoto-kyo is a modern Japanese religion, which is said to be an offshoot of Shintoism. Omoto-kyo followers believe in beautifying the world with art because they believe that art brings humans closer to the divine.

Aside from this however, the Omoto-kyo followers are pacifists who espouse peace over war. This is the parallel between Omoto-kyo and Aikido. That is why the Aikido spirit is often paradoxically referred to as the art of peace. One may wonder about the sanity behind the fact that a martial art which was in all intentions created for combat and winning over the enemy can indeed to be claim to the art of peace. For all intents and purposes however, the philosophical and spiritual foundation of Aikido is about maintaining a constant state of relaxation.

It is in this relaxed state that the Aikido practitioner is able to perform difficult throws and maneuvers as taught by the martial art. The relaxed state can be attributed to a deep unshakable peace free of aggression. The concept is that when we are tense and not relaxed, we needlessly waste energy on aggression and force. By going with the flow and not being afraid of what can or cannot happen to us, we cultivate a peace with a relaxed demeanor as its direct consequence.

The Aikido spirit aims to cultivate a mental discipline, develop character and self-confidence with the end goal of being able to maintain peace and relaxation. It believes that in peace can one realize true power: The power to spread peace further and the strength to be able to withstand the onslaught of everyday situations. The basics in passing on the Aikido spirit can be done through practical applications that clearly show that a relaxed demeanor is more effective than an aggressive one.

One such physical example is the exercise of trying to cause someone to lose their balance. To be able to topple off an opponent usually means that we should be physically stronger and in some cases larger so that superior physical strength through muscle contraction is the traditional measure of victory.