

## **Why Aikido can help make a better world**

I believe that what most, if not all human beings crave is to be loved. From the day we are born, we are programmed to make a connection with our mothers and everything grows from that. This first experience is critical and the quality of these formative relationships, largely shapes the rest of our lives. Given that most mothers do actually love their children, then we should ask the question why then there is so much violence in the world?

One reason may be that the fear of not being loved by those we have contact with, is so great, that a bit of reverse psychology comes into play. Many choose to take control of the situation and reject other people rather than reach out and then be rejected themselves. It feels better to be in control and make decisions about the things that affect our lives, than have others make them for us. Fear, it would seem for many, is a far more powerful motivator than love.

It strikes me that all aggression is ultimately motivated by fear and in particular the fear of losing control. The trouble with this need to control, whether on a conscious or unconscious level, is that it is ultimately so debilitating. It robs us of so much that could have come our way, if only we were able to let go. In any event, it is a ridiculous notion that we can really control most of what happens in our lives. The forces of nature are unstoppable and the whims of fate play a huge part.

Ultimately, the result is self loathing to a greater or lesser degree. If you can not reach out to others, then the chances of finding true happiness are slim, because most our own self worth comes from the approval of our peers. If we feel that few people like us, it is very difficult to maintain self esteem. As the saying goes, 'charity begins at home' and if we can not love ourselves then it becomes almost impossible to love others. It can lead to a vicious circle where the less we reach out to others, the less they reach out to us. The less quality contact we have with our fellow man, the less we like ourselves and the more violence we see in the world.

In our modern society, where urbanisation is the way of the world, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a sense of community. Many of the traditional curbs on behaviour, such as the village elder and living within an extended family have disappeared and with it, so has the learning of rules that see us through life. In the traditional village everyone was interdependent on each other, so the failure of the one was visited upon the many, and this acted as a fantastic check on the individual. It was drilled into us from day one that you had to pull your weight for not only your own good, but also for the good of others. This concept, sadly, seems increasingly to be on the wane.

So now I have brought you to the pits of despair, let me remind you that as aikidoka, we have the rules and tools to reverse this trend. Aikido forces us to accept where we are at and only when we do, are we in a position to take the appropriate steps to move on and improve our situation. In every class, we learn to entrust our bodies to others and not to abuse this self same trust when someone lends us their body. We learn that fighting an attack only leads to pain, where true acceptance of an attack can lead to not only self preservation but hopefully a positive outcome for our attacker. We turn an opponent into a partner.

Aikido teaches us to become more and more positive and as we grow more effective in what we do, to appreciate that power wielded to the detriment of others is no power at all. It teaches us that persistence and effort are rewarded. It also provides us with a moral framework and set of rules that can be applied in all aspects of life and when we do so, ultimately we usually see a positive outcome.

International Aiki Peace Week, (IAPW), is one way in which we can shout to the world about what we have to offer and just as importantly it allows us to stretch hands across the oceans, strengthen our own community and share the mission of peace that the founder handed down to us. Aikido truly can be 'a way to reconcile the world' and that starts with the aikido community at large. When you sign up and actively participate in IAPW, you are visibly celebrating what we share and making light of the differences that come with style and affiliation. It is hugely symbolic and so important that we grow this movement, because when we heal ourselves, we can begin to heal the world at large.

Quentin Cooke

Chairman of Aikido for Daily Life  
Director of Aiki Extensions  
IAPW Committee member  
7<sup>th</sup> Dan Yuishinkai International  
[www.burwell-aikido.co.uk](http://www.burwell-aikido.co.uk)