

Applied Aikido in Men's Work involves two distinct components:

I. The Languages of Head Heart and Hara

Aikido principles build upon and deepen what men learn about identifying and speaking about their feelings. They address how we may focus attention on conscious embodiment prior to engaging thought and speech. This enables us to distinguish current feelings from recent thoughts about past experiences, and it encourages sincerity and presence in communications.

We check in using the language of the head by naming what's on our mind; and the heart by speaking the feelings alive there, and the hara, informing our dialogue with what we don't know, but might wonder, imagine or be inclined toward; perhaps inspired.

II. The Gestures and Stances

I learned in Aikido that energy follows attention. This attention depends on my *intention*, and my egoic mind relishes attention, especially under pressure, when I get riled-up. After learning the language, we practice gestures and stances that transform predisposed attitudes that complicate settling down under pressure.

After centering awareness with the inner-directions, we'll consider a recent situation in which you experienced being under pressure, perhaps from a triggered shadow, or a work/relationship encounter. The response you feel in your body, one of three somatic responses to pressures (push-back, cave-in, rigidify) will be examined and transformed by centering and grounding practices that evoke connection by extending energy from our center. The gestures teach reversing these identified tension patterns by embodying the elements of grounded and centered attention and extending energy/ki from the hara (center of gravity.) Extension from ground and center includes receiving as well as giving. This is a somatic alternative to psychologically reprogramming shadowed beliefs, and it teaches connection where conditioned responses produce separation.

Embodied Aiki Wisdom : Stances and Gestures

1. **Basic Stance** is a triangle that supports the alignment of the front foot with intention and grounded weight. We learn centered balance by shifting weight forward and back, equalizing and reducing the distance to discover increasing stability. After practicing with the left foot forward, step forward to parallel with your right, then back with your left, reversing the posture. Shift weight in this stance, reducing the distance to stillness.

The posture practices ground and center. Standing still practices settling in the movement. The basic stance explores the posture we assume when presented with a situation/opportunity/conflict. The shape creates energy, readiness and anticipation. Extending awareness in this posture also conveys attention to another, defusing anger and frustration.

An advanced practice can develop by reversing the stance with increasing frequency, allowing the arms to extend, feeling the vertical plane that extends from your core; feel the energy between your palms.

2. **Ki Flow** builds on the Basic Stance by extending from weight transfer a progressive extension of energy through the arms, containing the gesture of offering from and receiving to our center/hara, which remains grounded and connected to Earth's core. It's practiced repeatedly on one side, then the other; an advanced practice can be developed by alternating the orientation.

This connection harnesses the power of gravity, that elusive electricity-magnetic force that connects us and mysteriously holds our universe together. Extending awareness through the arms and fingers explores how we can remain relaxed yet strong under pressure and when facing challenges.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oMAZGU6JhsVq-z_Q4tVQU1Isj1Tx-Wnk/view?usp=sharing



Ki Flow: Grounded extension in response to grab.

Jan Watson photo

After attending an online open circle, one embodied warrior said:

"My new awareness was a sharpening of something that I have been feeling for most of my life; easily mistaken for fear or shame that I am not good enough. As I became aware of my body and how I was standing, I noticed my alignment, balance, and posture, as well as the feelings in my gut. When I worked with my alignment I experienced a release of the emotional feeling of shame. This was accompanied by a release of energy in my body and mind. ... not able to say if the flow was out of me, into me, or an exchange of energy with the other men. I am grateful, energized and curious."

This man's account addresses both his personal work and the impact of connecting with others from hara. He changed his posture (stance, shape, attitude) and became totally present with the other men. We experienced this as a group, each in our unique way, all knowing "your work is my work." I-Groups know the feeling of connecting at the heart level. We haven't practiced connecting from hara yet, and we can.....

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