

[What would be the one thing you would like to impart to all aikido students.](#)

I would like people to aim for a higher level of aikido through fun and positive practice

[How has teaching affected your progress throughout your aikido career?](#)

Because I started teaching early, I think I progressed more while I was teaching rather than while training. I understand the learner's perspective, and having a broader view, I was able to tackle matters more positively.

The way I taught students in Japan didn't work in the U.S. The students here were larger, and I needed to have something convincing to demonstrate. I was physically no match for them, so my movements inevitably became larger.

[How did you come to develop your personal style of aikido?](#)

How did I find my own aikido? I was greatly influenced by three teachers, Kisaburo Osawa Sensei, Koichi Tohei Sensei, Kisshomaru Doshu. Naturally, I absorbed what I've learned from them in my own way. I learned fluid and large movements along with an indescribably peaceful and warm lesson atmosphere from Osawa Sensei. From Tohei Sensei I learned to loosen physical strength and relax the body while becoming strong and flexible. His aikido gave me an idea of how to teach larger foreigners. And it was the purity of the techniques of Kisshomaru Sensei that I found so extremely important. His techniques were faithful to the basics, orthodox so to say, and unpretentious.

[Do you see one particular aspect of current aikido practice that bothers you?](#)

Recently, it seems to me that people are relying more on assumed situations. Many people involve their own personal view, thinking "under the circumstances, things should turn out to be as I assume." This seems logical because we are taught "how uke is supposed to move." However, nobody would fall in "the right way" if they were unaware of how to do so. I find it difficult to accept as one of people who practically practice aikido. I actually do think one can become imprudent from such an attitude.

[What is your view about learning from teachers other than your main instructor.](#)

In this regard, I feel that I was taught serious aikido by Kisshomaru sensei. After all, it is very important to be taught by a good teacher in order to advance. It also is important to learn from various teachers if one has the opportunity. It is important to approach those opportunities with an open mind, without being fixated by one's own framework. If anything valuable is found in such opportunities, one should steal it without hesitation. However, it should not be a case of total mimicry, but one's own interpretation of what one has seen. Each person is built differently, so simply copying someone else who is not built the same way would look ridiculous.

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There are some aikido teachers who prohibit their students from attending other teacher's seminars. I wouldn't prohibit my students, and I think this is important. Each teacher has something good to offer, so the students should be able to acquire that. We humans are all different, and we are all good in our own ways.

[Are there things you see in daily practice that prevent students from progressing?](#)

There are people who practice in a way that prevents them from making progress, no matter how many years they practice. They do not care that they are making such basic mistakes as not standing in hanmi or making movements slovenly and negligently, even after becoming black belts. It is acceptable that beginners make mistakes or cannot move properly. However, progress can not be expected if one is doing techniques negligently while thinking one is actually doing them properly.

There is the proper stance for each technique. It is essential to get it right. However, many people, for some reason, focus too much on the upper body and then the footwork becomes negligent. Because the partner still falls in aikido, they tend to think they are doing the technique correctly. I detest it when I watch such a performance at examinations.

The techniques should be performed clearly and convincingly so that they work on the person's partner. Otherwise, practice becomes meaningless. Position and balance should be kept properly. In order to do that, the footwork must be firm. Only then will the technique work within the flow and the balance kept after the throw, making the overall movement beautiful.

[What can teachers do to help the student avoid these mistakes?](#)

Sometimes there also is a problem on the teaching side. There are some teachers who stop the movement of their students and try to teach them small details. The students do not progress if taught this way. It is just fine to leave the discovery process up to the students. So long as the key points are clearly taught, it is not necessary to tell them small details.

For example, in case of teaching a blind person how to get from point A to point B, the blind person first needs to be guided to be able to go to point B on their own. On the way, the person may bump into something or may fall down. Moreover, the person also may not be able to walk at the desired pace. In this way, the person gets to be able to follow the passage to the final destination in their own time. The small details can be learned later. If stopped frequently and told, "It is dangerous here, so be careful," each and every time, the person won't be able to learn the way to the destination. Similarly, if stopped and taught small details from the beginning, the practice cannot be fun.

[Is there anything else you would like to say about a student's practice attitude?](#)

One more thing I would like to emphasize is to have a positive attitude toward practice. One does not advance having a doubt about aikido. Progressing by solving questions is one method for sure; however that approach is for people who have

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already learned a considerable amount of aikido. It is a waste of time if one is thinking, “Will this ikkyo work for real?” while practicing. I believe aikido practice should be done positively and seriously. I do not mean austerely because it is important to enjoy practice. I hope people will practice aikido passionately with joy. Aikido is very profound. I wish people would not be satisfied with their present levels or state – even if they are advanced to some extent – but that they aim for an even higher and happier practice.