



Northern Virginia Ki Aikido (NVKA) / Virginia Ki Society (VKS)
Newsletter for June, 2021
www.novaki aikido.org

This Week's Topics

- I. Dojo calendar (incl. upcoming events)
 - II. Clarity: Centering (short essay)
 - III. Upcoming events
 - IV. Weekly Shokushu: The one point in the lower abdomen
 - V. (New!) Book of the month
 - VI. (New!) Member feedback: [Let us hear from you!!](#)
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Dojo Calendar

Current Classes (Adults)

- (New!) Monday, 7:15 pm - 9:00 pm (starting June 14)
- Wednesday, 7:15 pm - 9:00 pm
- Saturday, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

Current Classes (Children)

- (New!) Saturday, 10:00 am - 11:00 am

****Note:** All adult classes are now contact classes, including ki testing and techniques. The children's class will be no contact for the time being.*

Upcoming Events

- (New!) Potluck Social -- First Annual Summer Kick-off at the Merrifield dojo: Sunday, June 13, 2:30 - 4:30pm
 - EKF Zoom Training: Saturday, June 5 (8:00 am - 9:00 am EST) and Thursday, June 10 (5:00 pm - 6:00 pm EST)
 - 2021 Miles Kessler Sensei USA Seminar at Aikido in Fredericksburg: Saturday, September 4 (9:00 am - 4:00 pm EST) and Sunday, September 5 (9:00 am - 1:00 pm EST)
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Clarity

Centering

Last month we clarified the value of our existence. We explored how subtle yet critical our notion of self and self-worth can be to our physical performance.

Another fundamental (and, of course, related) theme in Ki Aikido is the idea of "centering:" knowing or feeling where our center of gravity is and maintaining this connection throughout an interaction, a process that begins and ends with stillness and presence. We also learn to do this simultaneously with our partner and use this connection to lead him/her to a safe place.

We can understand this purely in terms of physics. Here are some useful YouTube videos that explain the basic physics behind center of gravity:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=qRsJXXb9WNE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YN2oALaRfL4>

In class we may often hear the Sensei speak of accepting and absorbing our partner's energy into our one point. If we react and resist this energy then our weight will go upperside, thus raising our center of gravity and making us more unstable. This can be as subtle and quick as a slight shift in attention.

But, if we allow this energy to flow and flow through our one point then it will lower our center of gravity, making us stronger and more stable physically which frees us to keep everyone safe through mindful application of Aikido techniques (or by simply running away if that is what the situation allows).

Off the mat, we may encounter people or events that can throw us off balance and evoke an emotional or physical reaction. Last week, we saw that if we cast off the stories we're telling ourselves about those people or events (and ourselves) then we can relax completely and respond effectively. But, when we do that, whether we know it or not, we're also reifying who we are in essence: vessels (i.e., bodymind) through which experience passes -- like a screen door channeling air -- where the two ultimately are one energy (i.e., Ki). Like our physical one point absorbing our partner's energy, this vessel receives what the Universe gives it and embodies real freedom, stability, and power.

This means prioritizing our center. It means forgiving *everything*, repairing connection to our true, compassionate nature when this connection ruptures, and making this repair the priority in any situation. This applies to all aspects of life, at all times. This *is* the practice. Ki Aikido founder Koichi Tohei Sensei emphasized extending this practice into daily life. Zen Master Dogen Kaigen said practice *is* enlightenment, that we are not practicing to get somewhere but rather practice *is already* the destination.

We always have our center. We just lose track of it sometimes, but it's always there even when we do. Likewise, we are always the constant, universal essence -- the vessel. We just forget or obscure it, but it's always there for us to remember. This is what it means to keep one point, to center.

Upcoming Events

Potluck Social
Sunday, June 13
2:30 - 4:30 pm

We are starting a new annual tradition: a potluck social to celebrate the end of the school year and kick off summer! This will be a super casual hang out time to reconnect with old friends and make new ones. Please click [here to RSVP](#) and let us know how many people and what snacks, drinks, etc you're planning to bring. If you can't access the signup from the link, please [let us know](#) if you can come and we'll go from there!

*Note: We'll have both indoor and outdoor capacity for members of all ages, weather permitting. We are asking folks to wear masks inside only if they have not been fully vaccinated.

We want to thank all the people who supported the dojo in so many ways to get us to this point: members (including those who continued paying mat fees), past and continuing donors, VKS and EKF leadership, volunteers, and friends nearby and across the country. We are truly blessed and feel overwhelming gratitude for all of your efforts!

2021 Miles Kessler Sensei USA Seminar

<https://www.aikidoinfredericksburg.org/>

Join Aikido in Frederickburg for this exploration of "Stillness and Movement in Aikido" with Miles Kessler Sensei. The seminar will celebrate renewed connections post-covid and our shared Aikido and meditation legacies. Non-refundable discounted registration is available through August 7, 2021. \$159 thereafter (if space is still available).

TENTATIVE - if the event is cancelled due to covid-19 you will receive a full refund.

Date: September 4, 2021, Time: 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Date: September 5, 2021, Time: 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Location:

6155 Hickory Ridge Road
Spotsylvania, VA 22551
(540) 582-9600

Shokushu Reading

Read the "Clarity" essay above for an exploration of this reading.

5. THE ONE POINT IN THE LOWER ABDOMEN

The Universe is a limitless circle with a limitless radius. This condensed becomes the one point in the lower abdomen which is the center of the Universe.

Let us calm our mind in this one point and become one with and send our Ki constantly to the Universe.

Book of the Month

This is a space we will periodically use to highlight a favorite book that has helped deepen our understanding and practice of Ki Aikido. This month's book is *The Untethered Soul* by Michael A. Singer. Check it out!

There is much in this book to love and which relates to Ki Aikido. Its primary goal is to teach how to have a different relationship with thoughts and function with mastery of them rather than at their mercy. In this context, there is a chapter that discusses centering, and we include an excerpt below (p170-171) that describes the continual act of maintaining one's center in a way that also describes centering in Ki Aikido:

"...When you move in the Tao, you are always present. Life becomes absolutely simple. In the Tao, it's easy to see what's happening in life -- it's unfolding right in front of you. But if you have all kinds of reactions going on inside because you're involved in the extremes, life seems confusing. That's because you're confused, not because life's confusing.

When you stop being confused, everything becomes simple. If you have no preference, if the only thing you want is to remain centered, then life unfolds while you simply feel for the center. There is an invisible thread that passes through everything. All things move quietly through that center balance. That is the Tao. It is really there. It is there in your relationships, in your diet, and in your business activities. It is there in everything. It is the eye of the storm. It is completely at peace.

To give you an idea of what it feels like to be in that center, let's use the example of sailing. We'll begin by going sailing when there's no wind. That's one extreme, and we're not going anywhere. Now let's go sailing when there's tremendous wind but there's no sail. That is the opposite extreme and, again, we're not going anywhere. Sailing is such a good example because there are many forces interacting together. There's the wind, the sail, the rudder, and the tension of the ropes on the sail. There is a tremendous interplay of forces. What happens if the wind is blowing and you hold the sail too loosely? It doesn't work. What if you hold it too tightly? You tip over. To sail properly you must hold it just right. But where is just right? It is in the center point of tautness of the sail against the force of the wind -- not too much, and not too little. It's what we call the "sweet spot." Imagine that feeling when the wind hits the sail just right, and you're holding the ropes just right. You take off with a perfect feeling of balance. Then the wind shifts and you adjust to it. You, the wind, the sail, and the water are one. All the forces are in harmony. Should one force shift, the others shift at the same instant. This is what it means to move in the Way.

In the Tao of sailing, the balance point is not static; it's a dynamic equilibrium. You move from balance point to balance point, from center to center. You can't have any concepts or preferences; you have to let the forces move you. In the Way, nothing is personal. You are merely an instrument in the hands of the forces,

participating in the harmony of balance. You must reach the point where your whole interest lies in the balance and not in any personal preference for how things should be..."

EKF Zoom Training

Email from Rich Fryling Sensei, Head Instructor, NYKA:

It is my pleasure to announce the following schedule of online EKF classes. I am excited for everyone to attend.

Attarian Sensei will lead an online class on **Saturday, June 5th @ 8:00am est.**

We will have another opportunity to train on **Thursday, June 10th @ 5:00pm est** using a live, moderated recording of the Saturday, June 5th class. This will not only give the Saturday participants the opportunity to review the class but also give those who could not attend on Saturday an opportunity to participate in the training.

All of this training is to further reinforce the overall theme that we've been developing around "**Ki no Shurenho**". This means ways to practice, drill, repeat activities in order to make a habit of unifying mind and body in the dojo as well as ways to practice outside the dojo by repeating again and again unified movements in daily life.

Please feel free to share the below Zoom link with your EKF students. And similar to our previous online classes, we ask that you do not share the link information on social media. This is primarily for security reasons.

As we return to the dojo setting, we will conduct our classes in alignment with the Zoom classes offered in Japan. As a reminder for those planning to participate next Saturday, I've attached the **online training protocols**. Please take the time to review these as well as pass them on to your students.

Wishing you plus ki,

Rich

Member Feedback

We would love to hear from you with any suggestions, concerns, questions, etc regarding anything dojo-related. Please don't be shy. Is there anything you're liking or not liking about the dojo? Is there anything you wish was different or don't want to change? Want to tell us what you LOVE about the newsletter (or would like to change)? Just want to chat? Please feel free to send us an email at vkdojo@gmail.com with anything on your mind. The door is always open!

THANK YOU! We hope to see you back on the mat soon.

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