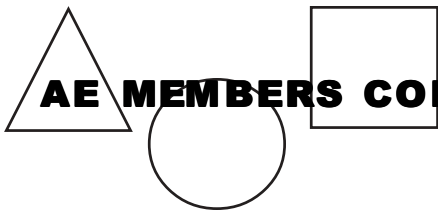




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AE MEMBERS CONVENE AT AUGSBURG

Three dozen aikidoka from Germany, Poland, and the United States assembled at the University of Augsburg, July 25-27, 2003 for The Fifth International Conference of Aiki Extensions (AE).

AE-founder Donald Levine of Chicago greeted the gathering with a pointed overview, citing the various ways in which members have applied aikido in such disparate fields as bodywork, psychotherapy, education, business, mediation, law enforcement, youth outreach, the fine arts and spirituality. (See attached insert). Many of these members were present, and over the course of the next three days, they enriched the conference by giving presentations, leading discussion groups and workshops, and expounding upon the details of their work.

Jack Richford of Richmond, VA, articulated the many strengths aikido can have in building leadership skills. He reported on a workshop held last September at King's College, London, saying, "participants developed not only a new language and a reflective perspective on leadership dynamics, but also a set of leadership skills based on the concepts of center, balance, engagement, connectivity, harmony, timing, listening, and resolution."

Drawing upon the leadership theories of James MacGregor Burns and Ronald Heifetz, with exercises from aikido, Richford offered workshop participants a physical metaphor for reflecting on personal definitions of leadership. This workshop presented a holistic approach which integrated inner focus and calm with outer connectivity and action.

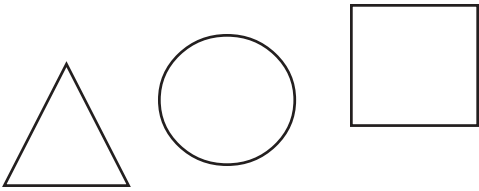
Following an aikido demonstration, workshop participants engaged in a series of movement activities modeled on aikido techniques. These movements helped participants begin to understand the embodied knowledge and skillful capacities required of a complex behavior like leadership. These leadership concepts and "movement" activities are designed to address fundamental conflict situations in new and productive ways that transform leader-follower relationships. They have been introduced successfully both in k-12 leadership programs and in postgraduate level leadership institutes and seminars.

Martin Gruber of Birach urged aikido teachers never to view their students as "human resources." "I only teach individuals," he said. "I know their names, their personalities, their problems. They are a part of my life and they teach me too."

Hanna and Gunter Buck of Stuttgart described ways in which aikido can help managers with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD). They propose to transfer experiences with aikido-based techniques and mental strategies used in helping AD/HD children, adolescents, and adults, to people in leadership positions who display "shadow symptoms" of AD/HD. This would help stabilize their self-esteem and confidence levels, and assist them in self-monitoring their addictive tendencies, a common AD/HD symptom.

Friday activities concluded with the AE signature, round-robin keiko.

Saturday, began with a conflict management workshop led by Ernst Friedrich, Michael Pest, Stephan Daniel Richter and Gerd Seligmann, all of Munich. Special focus was placed on cooperation and violence prevention.



Vaughn Brandt of Madison, WI offered a presentation entitled “Risk Management and Organizational Troubleshooting with Client Grievances: Using Aikido to Resolve Conflicts.” He stated that “the principles and movement of Aikido offer many useful models for responding to clients’ concerns and maximizing organizational effectiveness.” Brandt works closely with the institutionalized mentally ill, and the interactive part of his presentation allowed participants to consider and discuss aiki responses to patient rights violations.

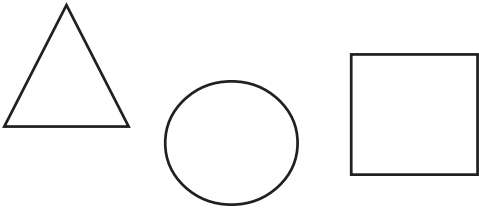
In "Sculpture Work and Budo: Stone and Water," David Sikora and Michael Berger focused on unification and the "flow experience." Placing emphasis on embodying a mindful nothingness, they reminded all attending that, as part of the creation of the universe, we can never be out of the flow, but that our minds often create the illusion of separateness. This is in accordance with the teachings of Buddha, which state that it is the belief in separateness that is the cause of all human suffering.

Overcoming this belief, Sikora and Berger say, is a matter of acknowledging its existence, while simultaneously utilizing it in practical and effective ways in our everyday conflicts, as family members, teachers, therapists, managers, and leaders. This process, they say, correlates closely to the lessons found in the practice of Aikido and Shaolin Gong Fu.

They described this process as:

1. Centering ourselves": Waiting, watchfulness, tuning in, becoming empty, following the breath, moving into or allowing nothingness" -air
2. Taking up contact, blending, ikiu-saori (bridge-hands), pacing with the system - be it the family, a team in a company, a health institution, or a training group that is experiencing a "problem", inertness, too much "something-ness"-stone
3. Creating or more often "allowing" the conditions to prevail that let flow happen in the system, leading, future orientation, rinsing, cleansing, bubbling (humor) -water

A mini-conference on “Progress, Paradigms and Aiki Extensions” took everybody to the next round of keiko. This time, special importance was placed on comparing different interpretations of one particular aikido technique.



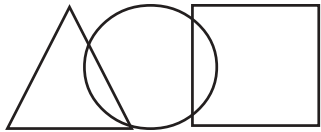
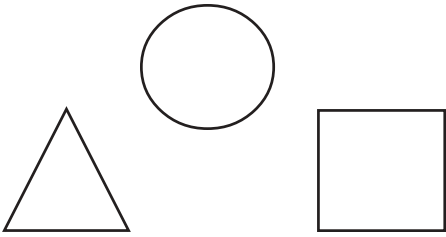
Harold Melchior of Munich offered a paper on “Mediation – The Martial Art without Sword.” He detailed the history of mediation in Asia, Germany, and the U.S., and offered a conceptual framework for understanding conflict. He referred to Koichi Tohei Sensei’s words: “There is no conflict in the absolute universe, but there is conflict in the relative world. If we unify our mind and body, become one with the universe, and practice its principles, others will follow us gladly.” This segued smoothly into Carlo Kuster's disquisition, “How to use an attack as a tool.”

Consultants Frank Kappler and Werner Mostl of Offenhausen then spoke on “business energy” and aikido’s potential contributions to the business world. Increasingly, they said, employees of organizations refuse to embrace change. Everybody in the organization knows very well what has to be improved, but most of the time people refuse to embrace the change it embodies. With this behavior, the structural tension increases and perpetuates a general feeling of frustration, a condition they call OSCILLATION. By contrast, FLOW realizes a way of continuous progress in the existing energy flow, which leads the employees to a state of empowerment. The reaction of awareness to the impulse means an existing readiness and an open communication culture to move all together with confidence into the necessary way of change. Most enterprises stand in a structural tension and can choose, every moment, either to follow the way of oscillation or the way of flow. What we need for a successful future in the business world is the potential of the mental energy of the employees. This can be enhanced through ki development as learned in the practice of aikido.

The final presentation was “Friend or Foe? Aiki Reframing as a Mode of Reality Construction,” in which Peter Schettgen discussed the effects of varying perspectives or attributions on conflict management. This was part of his larger effort to draw on a communication paradigm developed by Ruth Cohn in the 1970s known as theme-centered interaction. Schettgen uses this paradigm to organize aiki principles systematically within the conflict management process. This includes such responses as restoring balance through relaxing, centering, and grounding; and dealing with conflict situations by going off the line (not taking attacks personally), taking the other's emotional perspective, and making good contact with the attacker.

He says: "For me, reframing means to work with the powers of imagination. Imagination has put forward mankind since its beginning. For example, in mankind's history people imagined to fly, to live under water or to talk with each other over far distances, and now they are able to do so. Reframing works with the possibility that things are not what they seem to be or could be in another way. We ourselves define 'what is real.' If you are not attached to a certain perception of a certain situation, you are able to use the degrees of freedom which lie in the option to use other frames, perspectives, and even actions."

Thus ended The Fifth International Conference of Aiki Extensions, and no one could deny that it had been a wonderful experience.



AIKI EXTENSIONS NEWSLETTER

Editor: Scott B. Evans

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They are sent to subscribers on payment of costs.

To become a **member**, complete the questionnaire at

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