

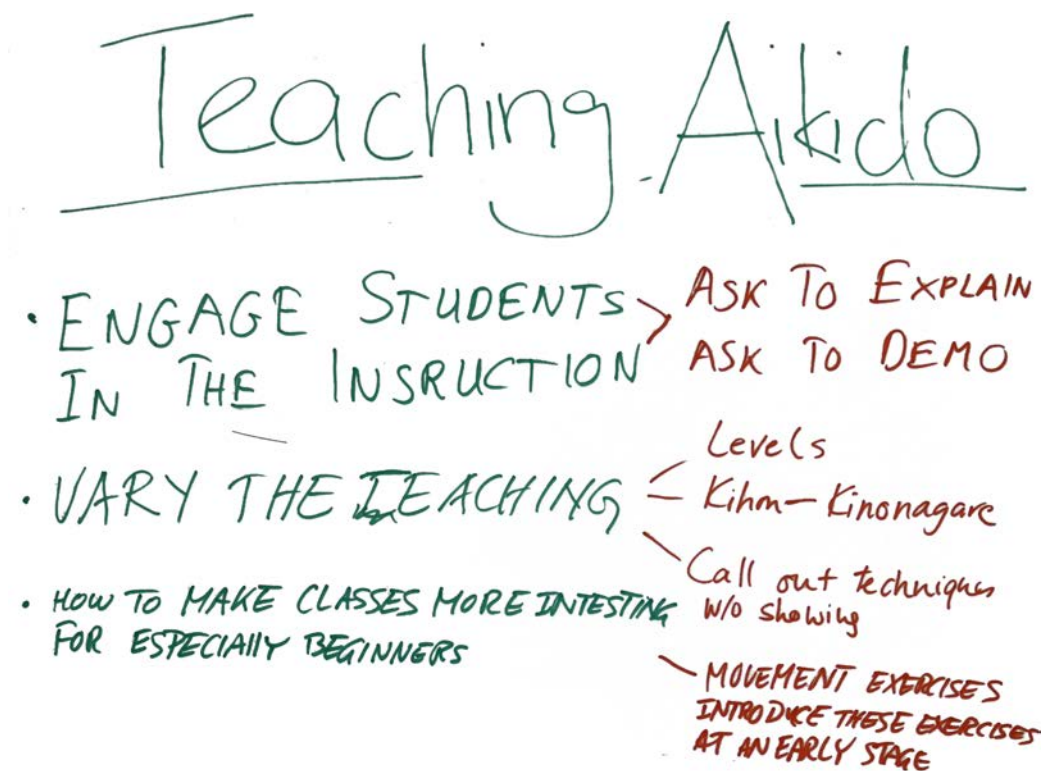
Yudansha-Seminar, December 2018: Workshop

Purpose of the workshop: Make use of wide and varied experiences of participants and the network. Make this available to everyone participating.

Aim: Make people aware what they can benefit from the network. Establish a culture of exchanging experience and knowledge. Also tackle weaknesses and challenges.

Discussion groups:

1. Teaching Aikido



Many students wish for more movement /jyu-waza, but still don't control the basic techniques

How do I deal with students who actively choose not to do what I show them?

Ask them why

Ask them to demo

How do I teach students of very different levels in the same class?

Beginners are encouraged to train with more advanced

The group is separated into levels

Start with basics and increase the level during class

How do I create curiosity for aikido practice?

How to handle people who constantly forget techniques?

Referencing information sources (youtube, books etc)

Techniques karaoke

How to make classes more interesting and fun? e.g. tai no henko and morote dori kokyūho are abstract. 80-90% of beginners leave after a few months

Moving exercises from simple to more complex

Attacks: avoiding, blocking, doing techniques

Invite outsiders for special classes

How can I make the students do what I ask them to?

Not too strict a plan for the class, but stay with your idea for it

Ask the students what did I show before?

Ask a selected student to demonstrate what I just tried to instruct

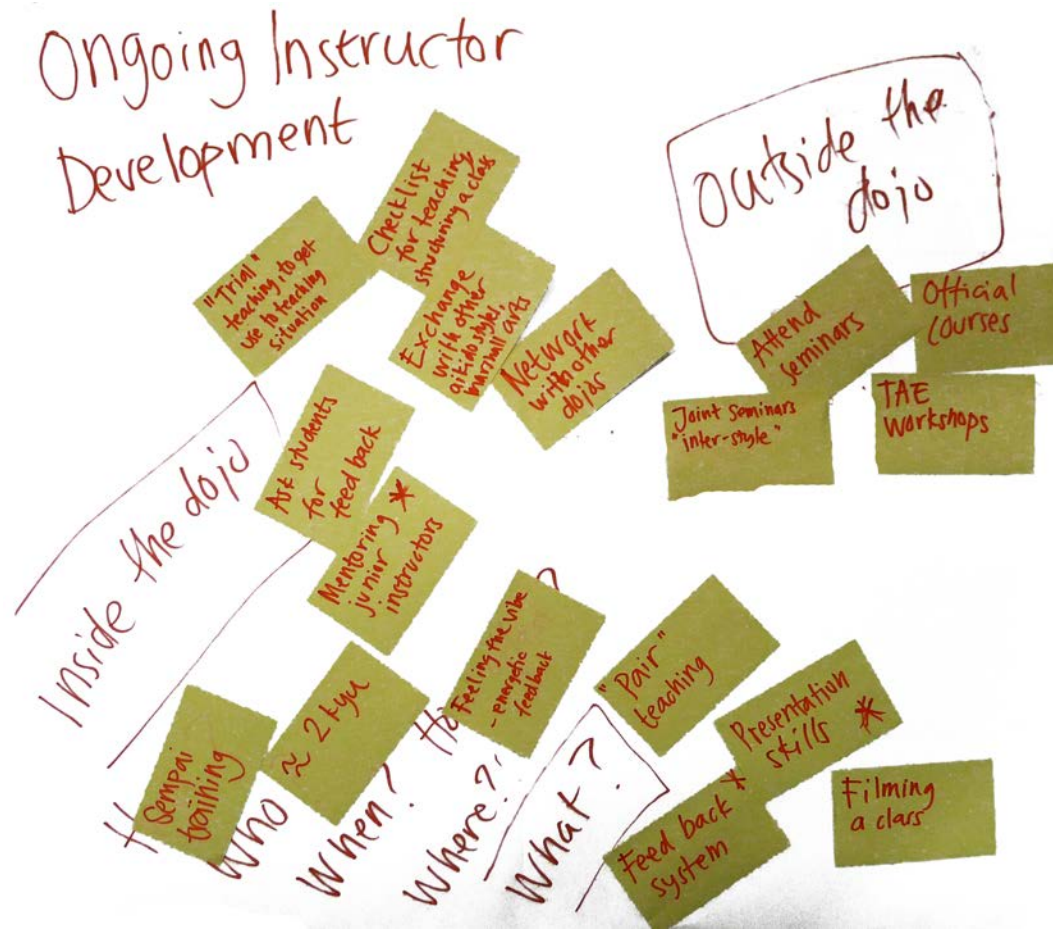
Summary

The discussion mainly focused around three basic questions:

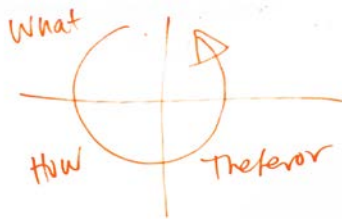
- *How to keep training interesting?*
- *How to teach heterogenic (beginner/advanced) groups?*
- *How to deal with reluctant students?*

The conclusion of the group was to engage the students more into the training, sometimes contrary to the traditional japanese way of frontal teaching. Several ideas in this direction have been discussed and written on the flipchart. Everybody agreed that teaching Aikido should contain creative and playful elements but in the meantime not denying its roots as a traditional martial art.

2. Ongoing Instructor Development



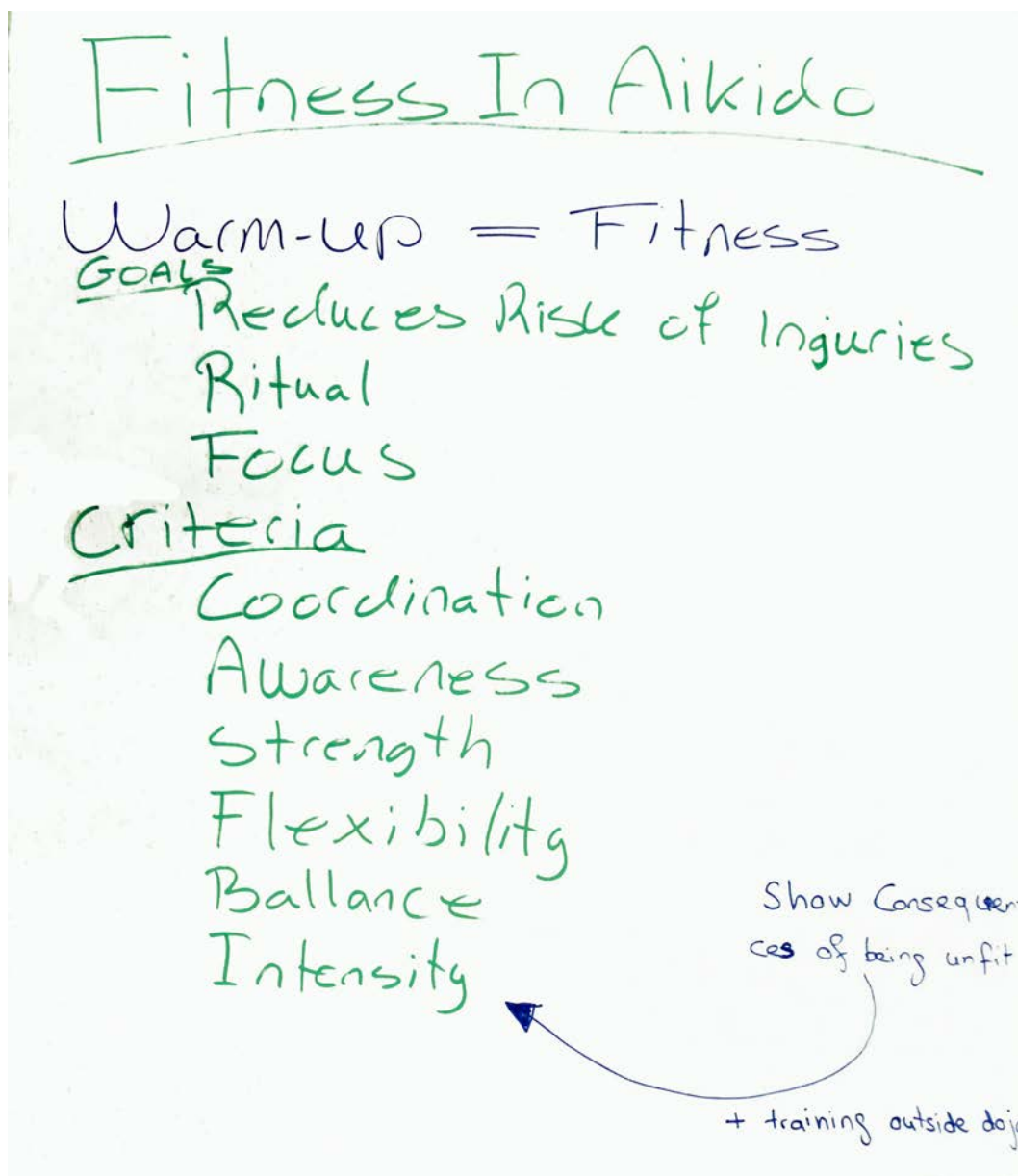
Feedback system



- * Special teaching sessions
- * Feedback card / feedback buddy
- * Ask students what they learned

on giving and receiving Feedback, see Appendix.

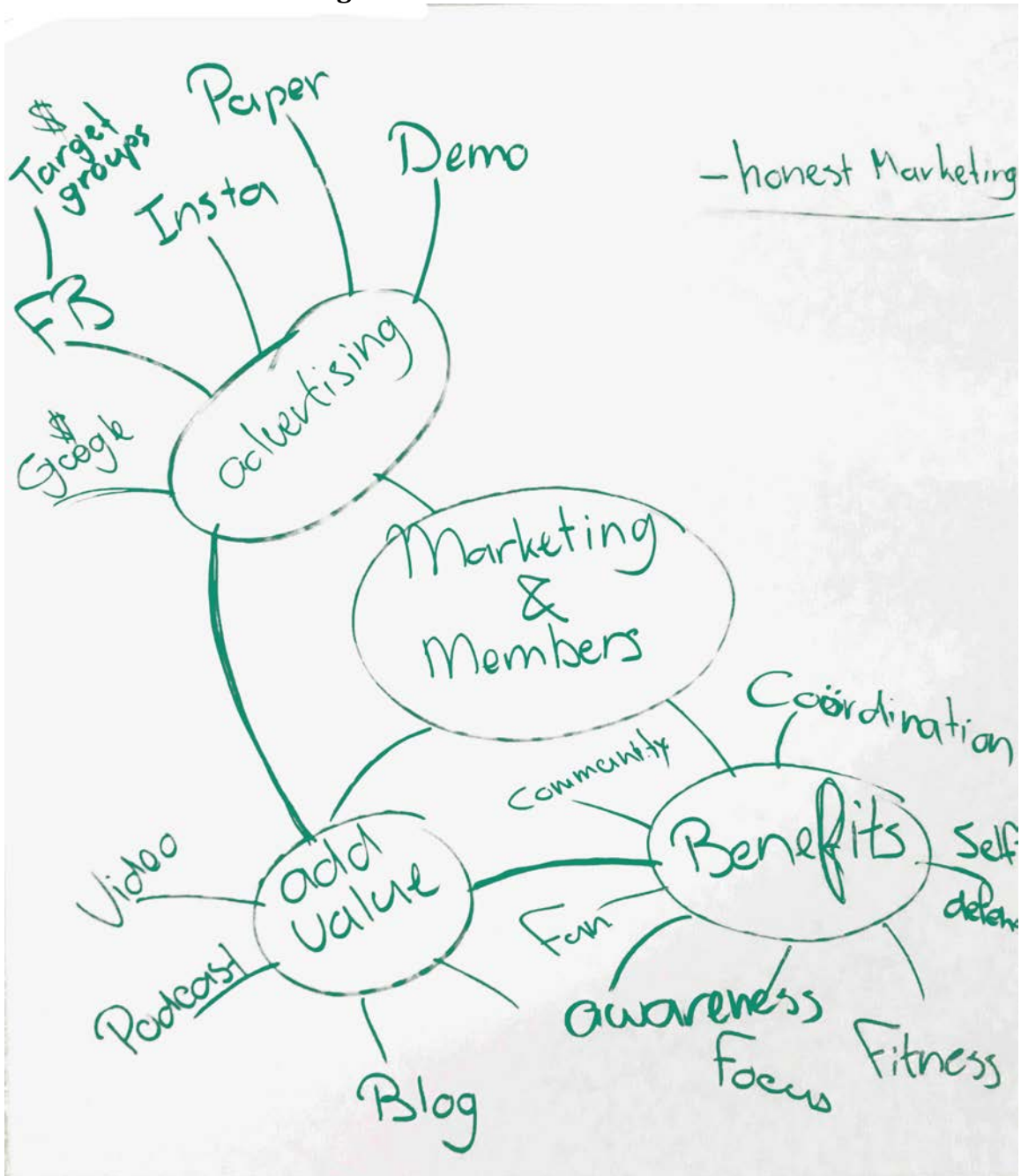
3. Fitness in Aikido



Warm-ups and fitness exercises should not be seen as a boring necessity, but should be an integrative part of the class. As a ritual to be present in the dojo, as a tool to increase the focus and of course to reduce the risk of injuries.

The aspects coordination, awareness (of your own body, of the surrounding), strength, flexibility and balance should be addressed. By varying the intensity of the exercise, resp. letting people choose their own level of intensity, their fitness level can be increased - or they can become aware of their being unfit.

4. Members and Marketing



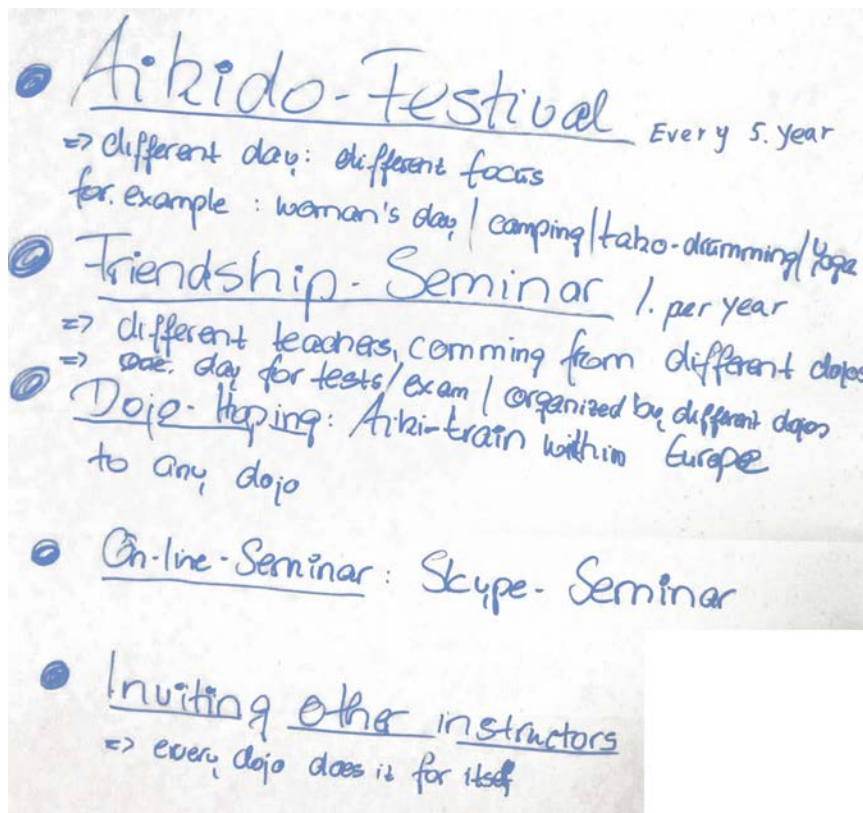
Here is what the discussion group agreed on

1. Need for new people

There is a need to constantly attract new practitioners since there will always be some who stop, move away, have changes in life which change the priorities. There also seems to be less interest in doing Aikido than there used to be in the early nineties.

2. The overriding principle should be „honest marketing“
 We don't want to attract anybody, we want to attract people with interest and who will stay.
 Thus the marketing should honestly represent Aikido and the priorities of the specific group. If there is no match between marketing and dojo practice people will be disappointed and leave.
 Example: marketing stresses movement and martial qualities but practice in the dojo is more contemplative and soft so that young martial-oriented males will feel out of place.
3. Advertising can be helpful in different channels: local papers, local events (demos), Fb with defining local target groups etc.
4. The question is how to gain the attention of people who might like aikido.
 - 4.1. The idea is to talk about the benefits of Aikido like coordination, awareness, being focused, dealing with attacks, self defense, self confidence, being part of a community, having fun, ...
 - 4.2. The idea is also to offer benefits, to offer something valuable
 Examples: running a blog which offers content and insight, sharing videos and like messages on Fb, offering free trial lessons etc.

5. Special Events



6. Children in Aikido

Summary of Discussion:

- 1) It is not founded that there is a difficulty in older children training with younger children. However strong guidance is needed as to the required etiquette of both students and their parents.
- 2) The facility to create a bank of current practice of games that support the principles of aikido would be useful.
- 3) The transition of children leaving the group to join the adult class is a difficult one to make happen.
- 4) Competition within the lesson can be both useful to encourage participation as well as damaging to cause isolation and insecurities.
- 5) Talking to experienced other teachers of children is not readily available

Further areas of discussion:

As well as the above we agreed that the teaching of techniques should be done from the beginning. The concentration of focused study needs practicing as well as the other principles. There is also a need to ensure the aikido class is not a babysitting club.

Advice from the group:

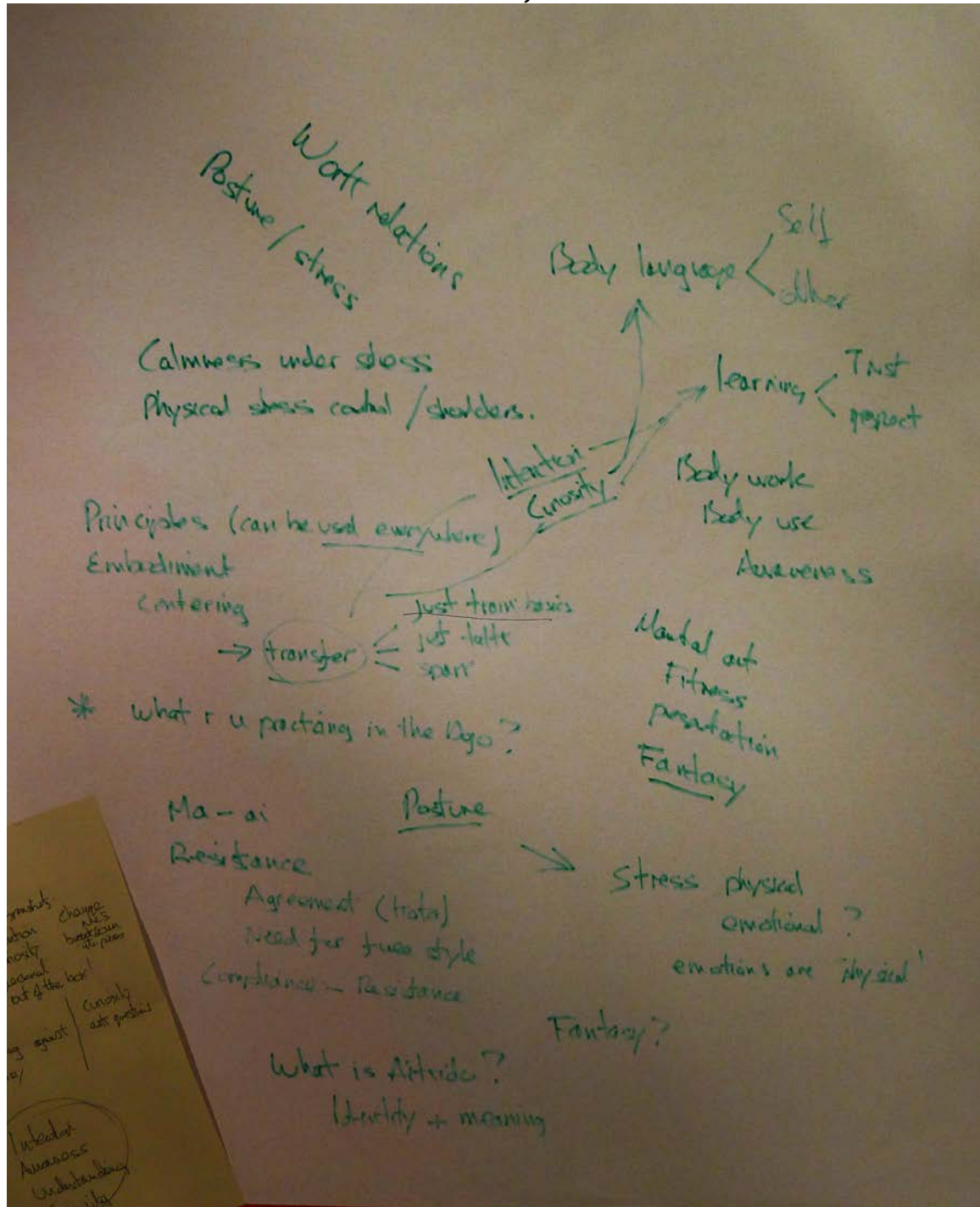
- 1) TAE to create a list of Aikido Instructors willing to be contacted regarding the teaching of Children in Aikido.
- 2) A Drop-box-like facility to store examples of current practice.
- 3) A few examples of working DOJO RULES that especially incorporate children and their parents.
- 4) Instructors to be in control of all competitive elements of a lesson involving children.
- 5) Encourage the adults in the group to attend children's classes on a rota system to lessen the fear of the junior later joining the adult class.

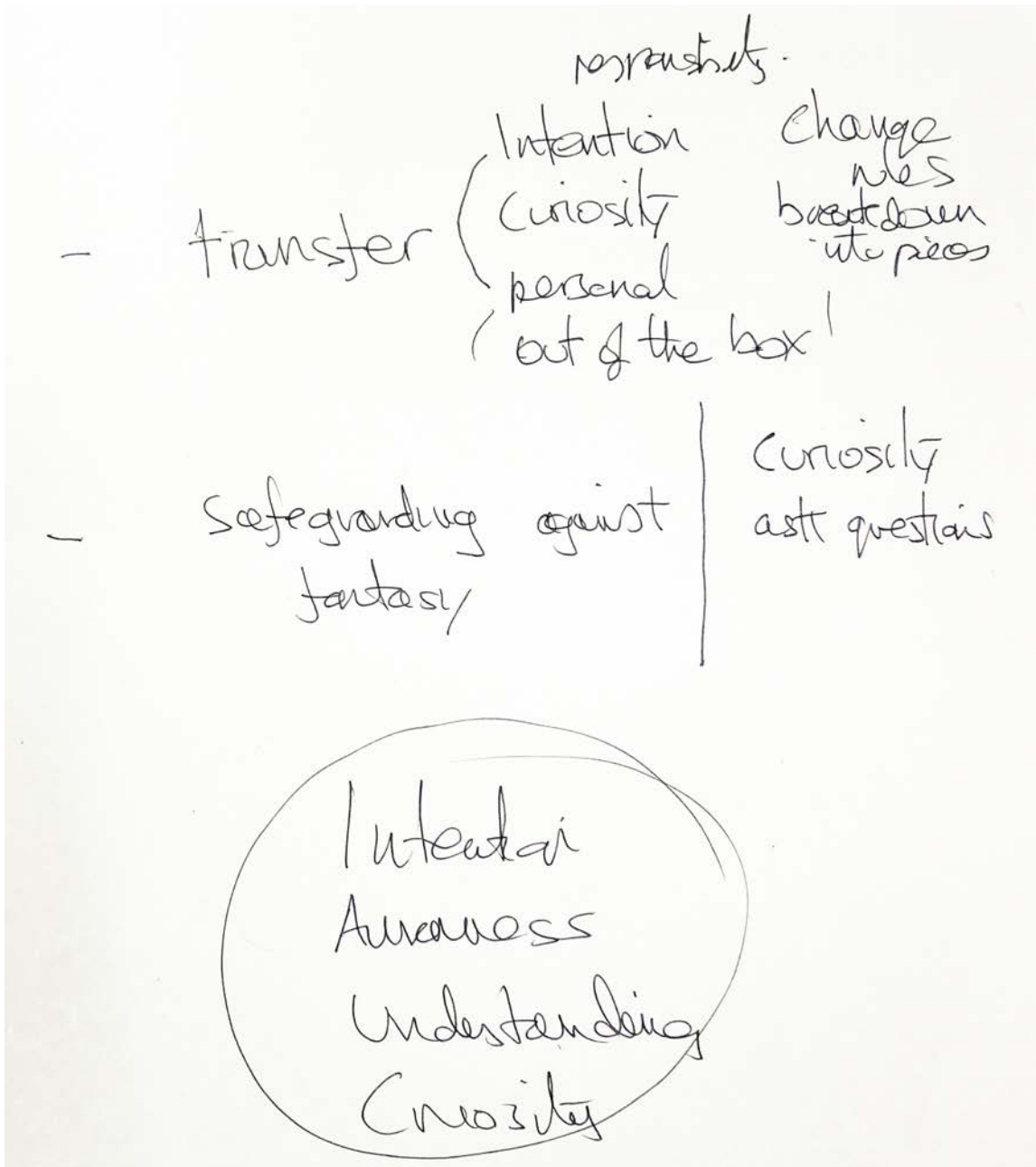
Questions raised from the presentation:

- 1) What are the thoughts regarding teaching techniques involving joints?
- 2) When should weapons be introduced?
- 3) What are your thoughts on gradings?

All these would benefit on some more discussion/research.

7. Aikido and its Relevance outside the dojo





The consensus in the group was that Aikido is relevant at many different levels in daily life.

- Body awareness.
- Reading other bodies.

This part of the discussion (enhanced body awareness and as a consequence a finer perception of the body language of others) began with straightforward physical awareness and issues relating to stress: tense body armouring, raising shoulders, blocking knees. A greater appreciation for what 'centering' means not just physically but mentally and

emotionally and how greater ‘centered and balanced embodiment’ affects one’s awareness and sense of self.

Aikido is fundamentally a relational art. This appreciation of the other and of the nuances of the emotional ‘music’ playing constantly through the statement we are making through our body language became more apparent and appreciated through the discussion.

What are emotions? What are their purpose? On what are they based? This was interesting in that at the beginning some of the group equated ‘emotions’ with ‘strong emotions’. Gradually it became clear for the group that emotions are a constant background to experience, sometime moving to the fore, but never absent. And definitely an aspect to be aware of in practice!

- Aikido and violence. Dealing with violence.

Do our techniques help this? Is the training something that prepares us for this? How much experience do we have of this aspect of daily life, rare as it is?

Huge topic. The first thing of course is one’s level of awareness in daily life and specifically one’s level of ‘situational awareness’. The second aspect is ‘reading’ or interpreting ‘correctly enough’ the threat level of a given situation or the risk one may be taking upon entering or navigating a particular environment (think about walking through dangerous neighbourhoods or abandoned empty parks late at night...). Third is avoidance. Fourth, engagement when avoidance or negotiation is no longer possible. Bearing in mind that ‘violence is the last resort of the incompetent’ as the saying goes, and all avoidance and neutralising measures have failed or are inapplicable given the nature of the situation, how does Aikido daily practice reflect in this extreme situation?

Interestingly the responses varied clearly according to level of skill within aikido and general experience of other more ‘sport combat’ oriented martial arts and experience of life in general with ‘more experience’ in all the aforementioned areas giving a more balanced realistic assessment of Aikido in this area. There are no magic techniques or short cuts. The training needs to prepare us on multiple levels and be able to ‘shift’ the odds in our favour.

The general consensus was that yes, of course aikido is relevant, but the understanding of how to deal with such situations requires many more factors than just technical expertise. And also a clear understanding of what we are learning in basic technique and how that relates to more advanced levels such as oyo waza. And how they relate to actual physical encounter. From there we naturally came upon the important issue of ‘fantasy’. Critical in all disciplines that purport to enhance one’s capacities beyond the specific disciplines (think meditation, yoga etc) and frankly a rampant issue. Human beings it would seem have a rather lazy tendency to fill in the blanks when they don’t ‘know’ something or to just selectively assess their experience in favour of positions that serve the personality rather than seek effectiveness or truth regardless of consequences. Not enough time to really go into this ‘huge’ and fascinating topic, but the issues of students really taking responsibility for their own development and not taking things at face value is primary.

Asking questions. And staying endlessly curious. Which of course also keeps things constantly interesting.

- Transfer.

This was my input (Lewis) before wrapping up the discussion. That transfer of skill (any skill) from the safe and controlled learning environment of the dojo to the often chaotic and never controlled environment (no matter how much we think we are in control) of daily life is a bumpy one with many failures and falls. We need to appreciate this more realistically.

So when we fail to apply aikido in daily life (in the broadest sense) we need to only ask two questions:

1. Does Aikido and the principles underlying it work? Or.
2. Am I not able to apply Aikido and its principles 'effectively enough' yet?

It is surprising how lack of understanding and inevitable reflexive defensiveness in the face of failure usually draws us to answering in negative the first question.

Aikido does work. But it is not an easy art nor is the transfer to daily life an automatic thing (in any art) We need to work at it. But the rewards are more than worth it, whatever the level of 'transfer' that we attain.

Appendix:

The WIN Feedback Model (from Stirling Council, stirling.learningpool.com)

Giving and receiving feedback is important to us all - we can all learn from both our mistakes and our successes. Everyone has the right and individual responsibility to give honest and direct feedback to another person when they've done something well or not so well. It can be difficult or you may feel awkward giving or receiving feedback at first if you're not used to it.

The WIN feedback model provides a helpful structure and ensures that there is a common approach to giving and receiving feedback.

There are three elements to the model.

- It provides a common language and framework for feedback that is behaviourally based.
- WIN helps a constructive discussion between two people about behaviour and its impact and a way forward. This is not a passive process where individuals simply receive feedback from others but an opportunity to begin a meaningful dialogue between individuals.
- It can help give individuals praise as well as get to the heart of potentially difficult feedback in a concise and constructive manner.

The model is split into 3 parts:

What –	Describe the behaviour/action - What the person did – be specific
Impact –	Describe the impact of the behaviour/action on you – this is very powerful as it is about the impact on you and how it made you feel.
Next –	Suggest how they might do things differently/better next time

The phrases below show how the model can work in practice.

Seeking Supportive Feedback

- What** “What did I do well?”
Impact “What was the positive impact of my behaviour/action?”
Next “What could I do next to do this even better?”

Seeking Challenging Feedback

- What** “What did I do less well?”
Impact “What was the impact of my behaviour/action?”
Next “How could I do this better next time?”

When Seeking Feedback:

- DO** explore rather than challenge
- DO** be prepared to accept the feedback
- DO** think of the benefits of doing things differently

DON'T challenge – accept the feedback as valid

DON'T try to defend or excuse how you acted

Giving Supportive Feedback

What “What you did well was....”

Impact “The impact of this behaviour/action on me was ...”

Next “What I think you could do next time is.....”

Giving Challenging Feedback

What “What you did less well was....”

Impact “I felt the impact of this behaviour was.....”

Next “I felt you could do this differently / better next time by.....”

When Giving Feedback:

- DO** support and challenge
- DO** be factual
- DO** think through your feedback before giving it

DON'T stereotype or label “that’s typical of...”

DON'T allocate blame

DON'T use offensive words or get angry