

## Characteristics of Aikido Techniques

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(From the Aikikai Foundation (Aikido World Headquarters) Brochure)

The goal of Aikido training is not perfection of a step or skill, but to improve one's character worshipping the rule of nature so that one becomes "tough" inside in such a way that this strength is expressed softly in movement. This is exactly like nature: Nature's movements are efficient, rational, and soft, but the center is immovable, firm, and stable. This can be said for Space and Earth - they all have a hard core - and must be true for human beings. These cores should become as one, so that the culmination of nature can be expressed.

Maintaining this firm, stable center, Aikido movement, with its emphasis on spherical rotation, is characterized by flowing, almost dance-like, circular motions (pivoting, entering, circling) that are used to overcome and control the strength of the opponent. The principle of spherical rotation makes it possible to defend one's self from an opponent of superior size, strength, and experience.

Although Aikido movements are as soft, rational, and smooth as nature, by applying a bit of force, it can become "tough" and devastating. The soft or gentle quality of Aikido makes it appealing to people of all ages. In fact, Aikido can be enjoyed by all men and women (regardless of age) and children. It not only offers spiritual development, but also provides exercise and teaches proper etiquette and behavior.

At the heart of Aikido is the Oriental concept of the universal creative principle, Ki. Aikido ("the way of harmony with Ki") seeks to achieve the total unification of this universal Ki with the Ki (life force or breath) of the individual self.