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SENSEI'S BLOGS:

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Step by Step

Of course many of us start training Budo because we are inspired by footage of masters downing the villains with an apparently effortless blow or throw... swords cutting a swath through the baddies and so on. The problems start if we are encouraged to try to copy that apparent effortless at the beginning of our journey. In no time we are moving with gracefulness ... until we meet actual force or are faced with a fast and committed attack

To progress through Aikido and Shinto Muso Ryu we can best follow four simple steps. They are **Big, Powerful, Fast and Light**. Please remember these stages.

When we start we must be encouraged to make big movements, shift our weight as much as possible (take big steps), extend our centre (bring our hips through), make big circles (with or without weapons) and use big breaths. At first these big movements can lead to loss of balance however over time we learn to maximise the use of our centreline and maintain a strongly grounded body. We can extend ourselves *and* maintain our balance.

As this occurs we can begin to create power. This power comes from increasing control of those big movements as our weight is directed on to, into and through our partners. This power feels 'heavy' to uke/uchidachi. We learn about leverage, use drive from the floor and transmit this heavy power through big muscle groups acting in concert.

Now we can begin to add speed. Or, I'd like to suggest, what appears as speed from the outside. Speed is a very interesting thing because of course it is entirely relative. In martial arts the thing it is relative to is the 'speed' of the attacker/s. I don't want to 'tell' you what speed is but rather to suggest that perhaps it is worth some investigation and thought. Speed can be thought of as part of *Maai* (combative interval) which involves both space and time and Mr Einstein had some interesting things to say about them.

Last is light. Or again, what appears as light. This stage is also sometimes referred to as 'soft power'. It is different to powerful because it is not characterised by trying to create and emit power. It is more about releasing energy. There is a subtle physiological difference engendered in our bodies between these two concepts. The second has a 'wave-like' feeling when we receive it rather than heaviness. Nishioka Sensei says that 'down' (gravity) looks after itself and the consciousness needs to be in the 'up'.

I understand that we need to move through each phase in this order and completely. Knowing which phase we are in and being involved in it completely is also important. In the end these are all guidelines to help us





enjoy our Budo practice and optimise the results of the time and effort we put into our studies.

Gambatte.

David Dangerfield

