

Tandoku Undo

As with unsoku, the hand movements or *tandoku undo* underpin much of what we do in Aikido. They are a fundamental principle and close attention must be paid to their execution and application in order to get them right. As with unsoku it is assumed that the reader has a basic understanding of the five associated movements of tandoku undo.

Tandoku Undo examines and practices a number of principles:

- The First and Second Movements concentrate learning how to move whole body forwards and backwards in conjunction with the correct arm movements.
- The Third Movement shows how to move *around* uke's power.
- The Fourth Movement is about correct weight transference through correct hip motion in conjunction with centred hand movements and projection of energy.
- The Fifth Movement brings many of these movements together.

All of the movements examine the un-bendable arm principle and using it in conjunction with the delivery of a coordinated movement using the **whole body**.

These are very rudimentary explanations and whilst the moves themselves are quite simple, learning their proper application and correct form is difficult.

Each of the tandoku undo movements are repeatedly found throughout all the katas: it is this realisation that if you learn and apply the basic principles found in tandoku undo throughout your katas and techniques that a significant improvement in the quality of your aikido can be achieved very quickly.

Un-bendable Arm - why it is important

The un-bendable arm is used in break falling, it is used in kamae, it is used in tandoku undo and can be used to deliver very effective strikes. The un-bendable arm is used in almost every facet of Aikido and the hand movements of the Tomiki system are built around it.

Paradoxically the harder you try to stop someone bending your arm the easier it becomes to bend. Similarly, the harder you tense your arm to hit someone, or the more you try to hit someone, invariably the less effective strikes will be - this is because tensing arm and shoulder muscles tends to isolate them and stops them from working efficiently with the rest of the body.

By totally relaxing the arm natural biomechanics take over, and it becomes very difficult to bend and real power develops in the strikes and arm movements - this is because relaxation allows the whole body to become integrated with any given movement.

The arm should neither be too straight nor too bent; it should form a gentle curve. It should be relaxed, and remain relaxed throughout any movement or strike. Note, relaxed does not mean floppy or weak (a common misconception) - there should still be power flowing through the arm but there should be no feeling of strength, i.e. no tensing of the shoulder, bicep, tricep or latissimus dorsi muscles (lats).

There is misconception that in order to strike powerfully you have to tense the arm muscles - take a look at the very best boxers; they have very relaxed yet powerful shoulder and arm muscles when they strike - why? Because when relaxed they are hitting with their whole body behind the punch and not just the strength of the arm alone. Relaxation gives you a far better chance to naturally coordinate the joint movement of body and arms - and a better opportunity to engage the hips in the movements. Correct engagement of the hips is the real secret to powerful Aikido.

The principle is exactly the same when throwing. The more you try and throw someone, the less effective your throw will be; if you want to throw properly then you need to learn to relax your arms and apply the un-bendable arm principle, which in turn will allow you to engage your hips and thus the full momentum of your body.

Execution

Common mistakes with the first and second movements:

- Failure to apply the principles of unsoku first movement.
- The arm movements are not in tune with the movement of the body.
- The arms are rigid.
- No hip movement.
- Fingers and thumb are splayed - if you hit someone like this your fingers and thumb could easily be broken.
- Heel rises when moving - defensively unsound and causes power to dissipate.
- The arm fails to raise through the centre.
- All the principles of kamae are forgotten during the execution of tandoku undo.

Common mistakes with the third movement:

- No kamae.
- No hip movement.
- Tendency to 'sit on the hips' with weight on the heels.

- The entry is not executed at chest height and is not centred.
- The thumb sticks out on the second phase.
- Arm is not relaxed.
- The path of the entry is too direct rather than emphasising a curved path to either side of the ribs i.e. no un-bendable arm.

Common mistakes with the fourth movement:

- Kamae collapses.
- Tendency to 'sit on hips'.
- No forward projection of power with the body and arm.
- Off-balance and weight 'floating' in first phase.
- At the start of the second phase all weight transfers to heels.
- The hips are not engaged properly during weight transition in first phase to second phase resulting in an off-centred movement.
- Off balance in second phase.
- No drive of the arm down through the centre and up through centre to a chudan height to complete the second phase in conjunction with strong hip movement.
- Incomplete hip turn (hips end up side-on rather than hips being square-on).
- Little or no forward projection of energy throughout whole movement.

Common mistakes with the fifth movement:

- Hand fails to rise through centre.
- Heels rise off the ground whilst hip turning.
- Poor kamae during the second phase.
- Feet come together.
- Weight on heels.
- Too small a circle described with arm.
- Hand doesn't finish at a chudan height.

At the Meikyokai Dojo we emphasise the following when practicing Tandoku Undo:

- Move with the count.
- Relax - keep the shoulders and elbows down.

- Maintain the un-bendable arm throughout ALL the tandoku undo movements.
- Maintain a powerful kamae.
- Keep your heels on the ground.
- Ensure that all hand movements move through your centre.
- Engage the hips.
- Don't let your thumbs fly!
- Make the hand movements big and circular.

As with unsoku, tandoku undo can be practiced at home. Constantly examine your movements to ensure that faults like heel lifting do not creep in.

Meikyokai