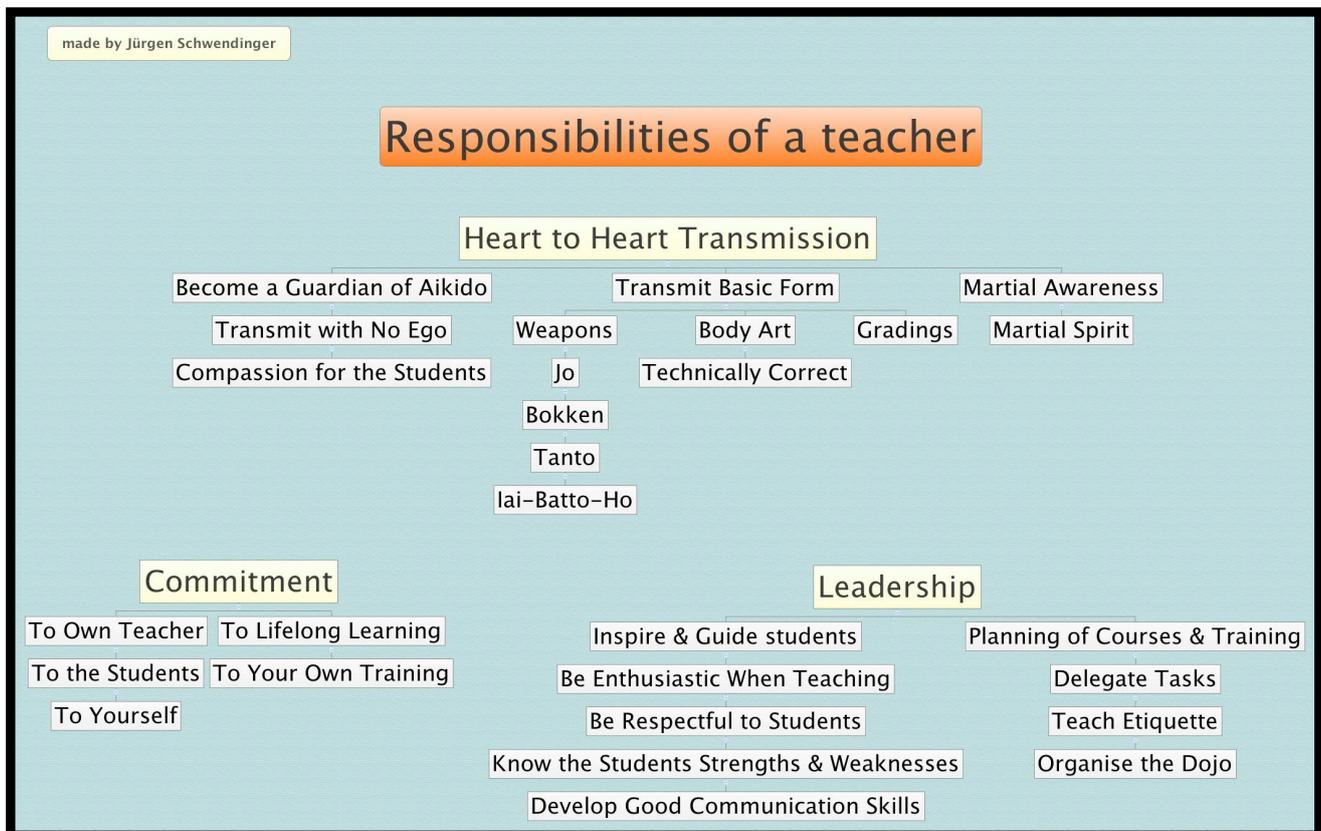


# Fukushidoin Retesting Essay



In this essay, I would like to write about the responsibilities I have as an Aikido teacher. I am going to write about three main pillars – Commitment, Heart to Heart Transmission and Leadership - as you can see in the mind map above.

The first pillar I am going to write about is commitment. I personally believe that without commitment there is nothing you can achieve in our school of Aikido. Every Aikido teacher should have a strong and deep commitment to his own teacher because he is the one who refills your batteries all the time. He is the one who challenges you and develops you. He is the one who gives you a hard time on the mat, but without that hard time there is no progress possible for your own learning. Again, my personal opinion is that without a true commitment to your own teacher, you can't become an Aikido teacher whom students will follow in the future.

Another important commitment is the commitment to your own students, which is a very difficult and sensitive process, I believe, as well. Every student is different and needs different things at different times. It is of great importance to know when to challenge a student and when to leave a student alone. Students have to go through different plateaus and, as Aikido teachers, we should be able to know where the students are and how to help them reach the next plateau.

The commitment to your own teacher and to your students is only possible if we have a true commitment to ourselves, which sometimes seems very demanding. However, because it is so demanding, it is also interesting and challenging and therefore, I think, we will have a lifelong learning process in our Aikido practice. One of the reasons why I love Aikido is because learning never stops.

The last commitment I would like to pay attention to is the commitment to our own training as Aikido teachers. Don't we often take the easy way out and only stay in the role of Tori and throw the students? Don't we often stop working hard on the mat when we teach? As Aikido teachers, we sometimes should ask ourselves these questions. I think we have to find ways to train ourselves *while* we are teaching. Our teaching should become our training. Similarly, we should not stop taking Ukemi for our students, because I believe that students respect us because we only ask them to do what we do ourselves.

The second pillar is the 'Heart to Heart Transmission' in our school of Aikido. Aikido itself is very fragile and can get bastardized easily. This is the reason why it needs guardians who are able to protect it. For me, my teacher is one of those guardians we have in Aikido. He transmits his Aikido to me with no ego but from his heart to my heart. He has compassion for me and therefore I get the chance to learn from him. This way of learning gives me great hope that, one day, I will also become a guardian of Aikido. Therefore, it is very important that the basic forms are transmitted correctly. The students have to know what basic form is and what a variation is. In our school of Aikido, they have to study a lot of weapon work and body art and they can show what they know when they do a grading. Gradings

are always a great way to show what the students know but also what the teacher has to look at again. Gradings also reflect the work and teaching of the teacher.

I have learned a lot from my teacher through his heart to heart transmission. Through that special connection, I have also developed my martial awareness. It might sound funny for a few people but also familiar to others if I say that I have learned most about my martial awareness while looking after my teacher *off* the mat. When he stays at my place, I am responsible for him and it is then, that I learn most about martial awareness.

On the mat, he has been polishing my martial spirit, which is a different thing. I think that martial spirit is created on the mat ukeing for different teachers. My teacher has the ability to create an atmosphere where the back of my hair stands up and this atmosphere demands both my martial spirit and my martial awareness to be there at all times.

The third and last pillar I am going to write about is ‚Leadership‘.

There are a few things every leader should be able to do. This is basically organizing everything in the dojo. This starts with planning and organising courses and seminars or planning the schedules in the dojo. Another task is to teach the students a proper etiquette. My personal experience is that the clearer the etiquette in the dojo is, the better the students feel, because they always know how to behave and what they have to do. However, it is also of great importance that a leader learns to delegate tasks. What I mean is, that a leader has to learn what he has to do himself and what others can easily do for him, so he frees himself for more important tasks.

The goal in our Aikido school is that every Aikido teacher should become a leader. I have been the leader of Aikikai Dornbirn for the last six-and-a-half years and to be honest, it wasn't always easy. Leaders don't have easy lives! I can only write about my own leadership in my own dojo. I have always tried to lead being an example for the others. What I mean is that I never asked a student for something

I wouldn't do myself. A leader should always inspire and guide his students. He can do this best through his teaching. Therefore, I think the teaching of a leader should always be enthusiastic and passionate. I know this is very difficult but, nevertheless, it should be that way. A teacher should know, as mentioned before, the students' strengths and weaknesses. If he knows them well, he naturally shows respect for them. I think we should always respect our students because if we don't, we might be left with no students one day, hence no Aikido. This is also the reason why a leader should know how to communicate with his students. He has to know when to talk to a student and when to leave him alone. In our dojo for example, I usually socialise with my students on Fridays after class and they are welcome to join and talk to me about anything they want. We call this the socialising process in our Aikido and my teacher even calls this „Big Aikido“. „Small Aikido“ is done on the mat and „Big Aikido“ off the mat.

Finally, I would like to thank my teacher Tony Cassells Sensei for his commitment towards me and for his heart to heart transmission, which means everything to me. I also thank him for being such a great leader I can learn from. When I look back at the last seven years, it has been an adventurous journey and I am looking forward to many more years full of learning. Those were my thoughts about the responsibilities of an Aikido teacher within Chiba Sensei's school.

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