

## Thirteen Rules for Instructors: #7

Friday, Sept. 29, 2017 C. Curtis

Good evening everyone. Tonight is the 7<sup>th</sup> of the 13 of Tohei Sensei's "Rules for Instructors." We decided that the word "disciplinants" is actually better translated as "instructors." This is number 7 and it is about non-dissension. There aren't any titles. This one is about how important it is for us, not just as instructors, but as individuals, to operate from a state of mind of non-dissension.

Let me read you the original translation that we received from Japan back in the 1950's or 60's.

*"Cultivate the calm mind that comes from making the universal a part of the body, by concentrating your attention on the One Point in the lower abdomen. You must know that it is a shame to be narrow minded. No not dispute with others, merely to defend your own views. Right is right and wrong is wrong. Judge calmly what is right and what is wrong. If you are convinced that you are wrong, manfully make amends. If you meet one who is your superior, joyfully accept his teaching. If any man is in error, quietly explain to him the truth and strive to make him understand."*

This is very close to what it says in Japanese. Why don't you read it in Japanese next please... (Sayaka reads). Thank you Sayaka.

When we were working on this together, Sayaka said that this was one of the most difficult translations she has ever done. And it was difficult all the way around, even my editing, because of the words and word-phrases, and more than this, the actual concepts are really old fashioned. And Sayaka says that in Japanese, these ideas are also very old fashioned. In particular, the metaphors that Tohei Sensei uses are quite out of date. Just generally speaking, we don't say things like "right is right and wrong is wrong" any more. The world that I live in has come to a point....well....there are obviously many, many people in the United States and in the world, who still think that "right is right and wrong is wrong." In other words, they are right and everybody else is wrong. Everybody agrees with that, because we see that everywhere. There is this schism: "I am right and you are crazy." This is very difficult to avoid. And so actually, Tohei Sensei is telling us how to avoid being one of those people that thinks they are right and everybody else is wrong.

And this is the spirit of non-dissension. It is a non-fighting mind. It is a mind that does not contend with that which is the opposite of it, because it recognizes that it is a relative condition. Everything has it's opposite. If you have a thought one way, then I guarantee you that someone else is out there with the opposite thought, because it has to be. That is what the relative world has to be made of. That's what it is for. And that's why something like Tohei Sensei developing Aikido and offering it in this way is so profound for us. Because everything and everyone in our society constantly asks us to

choose sides and act on that choice. And if you don't, you are a slob, a less than useful human being. And this, even though we can easily see that, no matter what you do, the change that takes place is not truly effective, relative to your own mind state. Or if it is, it doesn't last very long. And then there continues to be more change, and it goes back and forth and back and forth, infinitely.

But somehow, throughout all of these ages, we have not noticed this, and we still continue to be addicted to this impotent way of interacting with each other.

I will read you now, what Sayaka and I came up with, which is closer, I think, to the original Japanese:

*"Calm your mind at the One Point in the lower abdomen, and cultivate the capacity to accept the universe there. If you maintain this state of mind, you will never be under the control of another. Don't cling to your opinion and fight with others. Think calmly for yourself what is right, and what is wrong, and if you can see that you were wrong, honestly admit it, and ask for correction from someone you respect. When someone else makes a mistake, explain what is wrong with a calm mind, and help them to understand."*

That's as modern as we could make it! It says, "If you maintain this state of mind, you will never be under the control of another." When we are upset with someone who has an opposite idea to ours, who is controlling us? The other person. That's right. That's what this means. Whenever we become reactive to another person or another group or idea, any kind of movement, or any time we get riled up, we are letting the opposite control us. And he is saying don't ever let other people control you like that. You think for yourself what is right and what is wrong.

The thing that is kind of amazing here is this last sentence. "If you see that you are wrong, honestly admit it, and ask for correction from someone you respect." Well, that, to begin with, is extremely difficult. When I read this, I hear "if you see that you are upset and contending with someone, then that means you are wrong." That's what is wrong. But you can read this like he means the concept you have is wrong and someone else's concept is right, or visa-versa. In other words, when people get into arguments, they argue about concepts, right? This is brown and this is pink. This is black and this is white. Relative things. So the wrongness is not in the concepts, because that is ultimately irrelevant, because everything is relative. What's wrong is getting upset. The wrongness is that.

So, if you ask someone whom you respect, they will help you to become calm again. That's how you admit that you were wrong. It's not admitting that your idea is wrong. You might see that your belief is a conditioned response, and right or wrong is all relative. Your mom and dad think it's right, but over here this other person's mom and dad don't think it is right. So that you see it one way, let's say, and the person another way.

And then that last one, “When someone else makes a mistake, explain what is wrong with a calm mind, and help them to understand.” How does that work for you? Yeah, that’s also very difficult. So I think the key to the whole thing, the whole rule, is “keep a calm mind.” Because then, when you are with someone that may disagree with you, if you have a calm mind, then they will be more likely to have a calm mind. Then maybe you will see that that’s what is important, not whether you are right and he is wrong, or he is right and you are wrong. Always, what’s wrong is to become controlled by another person.

So that’s my take on this. If you have any comments or questions, please let me know.

*Student: What Tohei Sensei is talking about is not opinion, which is what we usually equate with right and wrong. So when you talk about the scism and how people are divided, they are divided by opinion, yes, which is completely subjective. And then when you go into keeping a calm mind, that is the beginning of his statement where he says the whole universe resides in that One Point. And then, by helping to guide other people, it is not to change their mind, but to help them to become more calm, yes?*

Yes, and this is basically changing their mind. “Changing the mind state, “ meaning you only cling to belief, or opinion as you are saying, if you don’t have a calm mind, if you don’t keep One Point. If you calm your mind at the One Point in the lower abdomen, and cultivate the capacity to accept the universe there, the universe is non-relative. The universe is absolute. The universe accepts everything. So you could not be keeping One Point and at the same time arguing for some side or another. It is impossible. You become calm. “Becoming calm” means you are through arguing, not “Oh, I have to be really calm so I can win this argument!”

But people do not believe this. You know, I have a friend who is a well-known attorney on Maui. I have known him for 45 years now, and he is quite effective in the courtroom. He wins his cases and has made a lot of money. If I keep going you will figure out who he is. Anyway, he was always very interested in Aikido, loved Suzuki Sensei. We would hang out together and he would ask me often about Aikido. He always said, “This is exactly like what I am doing in the courtroom. I need this.” And then through the years I would run into him on an airplane or somewhere, and he would always say “The Aikido is working for me! I am winning all the cases! Just keep a calm mind and you can destroy them.”

So people actually want to do Aikido to become more powerful and more effective and basically to get their beliefs to be more prominent. To win. I mean let’s face it, everybody is looking for power these days. The right and left politically. Everybody is fighting for more power to get their side to be more prominent. So, if you can find something like Aikido to help out in the regard, it only makes sense to people.

In my three year retreat, my teacher wrote me a letter and said, “Shall we tell them what the stars are made of? No. The bastards would make a bomb out of it.” Yeah, because that’s all everybody wants. How to deal with North Korea. That’s all everybody

wants, is to have more power. It's not always weaponized power. It's not always physical. Sometimes it's money. Sometimes it's just being more effective as a human argument machine.

*Student: Sensei, if you were an attorney, how would you act, then? How would you apply this rule?*

That's like asking, if I was in a war, how would I practice non-dissension. Probably, if I am practicing non-dissension, I won't find myself in a war. I am sure attorneys are necessary in this world, but I would never be one, because it's all about winning. It's a pure manifestation of the fundamental error that we make that we are discussing tonight.

You know, it's just like anything else. I used to like to play golf, for instance. I don't play golf any more. I stopped playing golf, for a variety of reasons, (one of which is that it takes about 5 hours to play one round of golf) but mainly, I stopped playing because people were getting angry. Of course it is competitive, and people were wanting to win. And it was a big deal. But I wanted to just do it for fun. Similarly, I used to surf when I was a kid. I grew up in Southern California, so I surfed all up and down the coast until I was 17 or 18 years old. In the beginning, 6 or 8 of us would drive out to the beach and we would have the whole break to ourselves. And then more people started coming from inland, and it became very competitive and there were fights with people pissed off, and I said, "I'm not going to do this anymore." I had just wanted to surf for fun. And then later on I became an actor in New York City. I had trained and trained, and I began to become successful. I had these nice roles, and pretty soon people were fighting with me about those roles, jealous of me, and sniping at me. And also everybody was dependent upon Chris Curtis, the agents and all the different people supporting me. It's never just one person. An actor has an entourage, and it can be a huge number of people that make it all work. Legal people, etc. They are all depending upon you for their money, and they are all out there fighting for you. This team is fighting against the other team that wants that same role, because it's a lot of money and a lot of prestige. And then I thought, "This is no fun anymore." I did it because it was so much fun. But that part was not fun to me. That was a mistake. I wasn't sure why it was a mistake, but it just didn't feel good. And then, as I told you, I left the theatre and attended that three year retreat. That helped, of course, but I still....until I met Tohei Sensei and Suzuki Sensei I didn't realize that the whole deal is a sham. The whole thing is a mistake. It's all a big error.

It's not that I am not just like everybody else. You know, I read the letters to the editor in the paper in the morning, and I think, "Ugg!" I am never actually foolish enough to write back though. I read Facebook now and then. You guys ever look at Facebook? There are one of these angry people after another. Maybe not angry. Sometimes they are just passionate. But they are totally hooked, totally wrapped up in whatever it is. Sometimes it's even kittens, you know? But it's something, you know, that they are all wrapped up in, and I find that I want to respond. But I don't.

*Student: Well, Sensei, I would like to make a comment, based upon the question about imagining you are an attorney. Imagine yourself an educator. Imagine yourself needing to communicate to your college students the view that coral reefs are dying. You are giving them facts, but there are a lot of people that don't want to believe those facts. Imagine yourself a high school teacher, and you would like to convey to your students that evolution is a real thing. And there are many parents in the community who may be against that. You are not arguing. You are educating. And I believe that there is a huge difference between educating and fighting. So, if none of us did any educating, the world might go to hell in a hand basket. It really might, because there wouldn't be any good press check. But I believe we can't get caught up in the idea that any form of pushback against something wrong or evil or deleterious to human health and well-being, or education, is somehow to be avoided because we have to stick to this "keep a calm mind and never have any ruffles."*

Thank you. Those are really good questions. I am glad you brought that up, because all of us can put ourselves there, imagining ourselves in that situation. In my case, of course, I am already in that situation. I am actually an educator, but of adults, not high school or college kids. And most people in the community do not agree with what I teach. In fact, even many students don't agree with what I say. So, yeah, it is a matter of education, repeating over and over again. And you are right. That is not the same as fighting, if you do it correctly. But you could do it as fighting, and that is often the case. I have heard teachers, who, every word out of their mouth was a challenge. Like, "I just dare you not to believe what I am saying," instead of being a compassionate, loving teacher who has the student's best interest in mind, which is always to awaken to whatever it is we are studying. That is, whether it is coral reefs or evolution. And yes, in some communities it becomes so contentious, like with evolution versus creationism, that there is fighting going on. The teacher is fighting for his or her right to give their side of the story.

I think that the important thing to remember here is that, if you are an instructor, you are an instructor only by virtue of there being a need. If there were not a need, you would be unnecessary. Your reason for being is that there are uneducated people out there. And if there weren't, you would have nothing to do. That's why, as an Aikido teacher, I am always thanking all the students. Because, if it were not for you guys, I wouldn't have any function. Right? So that is important to remember, to keep you humble. You are only fulfilling something that, if it were not needed, you would have no function.

It has value to all of us, that there is an opposition. See, if you get too hung up on evolution....I mean, my education tells me that evolution is what is happening. The way I see it, I don't need to be educated in that department. I've got it. I could probably learn more about it, but I do already agree with that. But I also see what those creationist guys are talking about. I know exactly what they mean. And they are right from their own perspective. But it just doesn't work, the way they want to use it, in our society. And in any case, this is not the point. For instance, I was talking to my heart

doctor and he said, "It doesn't matter what the content of your mind is, you just need to keep it active. Keep studying." It's just that you need to keep doing the process. It will all change later in any case.

This is a really interesting and challenging question, because every instinct in us wants us to win. We think we see it correctly. I am not saying that you don't see it correctly, exactly. You do see your own view, whether about evolution or coral reefs, correctly, and I suppose you are helping somebody else understand that. But you have to understand that the very reason that you have to do that, is that there is not just a vacuum that needs filling. It's because there is a different view. And these people that hold these different views are not crazy. They are not stupid people. They just see something that you don't see.

The main thing is to be friends with them, not that you convince them of anything. The main thing is that you see that you are brothers and sisters, that you love them. So, if you want to love them, what we learn in Aikido is that you have to put yourself in the place of your opponent. You have to see what they are seeing. You have to see it from their point of view. Not, "Oh, I see what you mean, but..." That's not seeing it from their point of view. You have to sit in their seat, and see it from there. And then deal with the differences.. Balance. But as long as you are only sitting on one side, understanding one view, you are just the same as the other person.

If you truly want to transcend that duality, like certain people have in the past, like Jesus, Buddha, Gandhi, etc.... If you want to transcend that, then you have to be a fisher of men, you have fish for their soul, the love in their heart, not for their mind content.

I hope it doesn't sound like I don't think we should be passionate about education. That offers so much help. But this is...well, let me put it this way. I am 73 years old, so I have been around a long time. What I need to work on, every moment of every day, is keeping a calm mind, living in a state of mind/body unification, so that when I come up against one of my children, grandchildren, or my wife, or someone at Costco, an attorney, or whomever, when I come upon someone who is challenging me in some way, if I have a calm mind, then it's not a problem. And we can become friends. And I always find that it didn't really matter what the subject of contention was, anyway. None of those things matter in life. When you get older, you realize that is all childishness. It's childish, this clinging to being right. It's clinging desperately to something that gives you identity and meaning, and you don't need that. If you do this, you are letting other people control you, and you must not do that. You must not die a victim.

So, it's difficult, of course. But at least you must come to the point of realizing it's all about a calm mind.

Tohei Sensei gave me a calligraphy many years ago, and I asked him to let me know what it says. And he said, "Keep a calm mind." 'Oh, must be important for me!"

*Student: Just thinking about situations in my life and in the world right now and really, how to apply this and use it day to day, it's difficult, you know? There are bastards out there. They need to know they are bastards, you know, but they don't know it and they are never going to know it. So maybe the only thing is to laugh at it, just to let it go. I get caught in it, you know. I have employees, I have a business. There is always something, and it can be so infuriating sometimes. This training has helped me I guess. My employees say "You always seem so calm," and "You seem to have a good idea about how to do things."*

Yes, that's exactly what he is saying here.

*Student: And...it's sorely needed. There is so much turmoil and there is a constant storm dealing with the world of opposites. I am not sure how to do it better.*

He is saying here that how to do it better is just to become really calm. Which means sitting more, breathing more. It's not just sitting and breathing, although that makes it a lot easier. At some point we have to see the absurdity of clinging to an idea. If we can't find our way to that, if we have a mind that can excuse itself anything in order to allow our self to keep our identity and meaning in our life, well, that is very unfortunate.

I went over to Suzuki Sensei's house, in his later years, he was just sitting over there. I asked him what was happening, as an expression only. And he looked at me and said, "There is nothing happening. Nothing is going on. Things are just perfect." And he did not mean that there were no distractions. There were plenty. He meant, "I am calm. I have a calm mind. I am not sucked into anything at the moment" Like...finally.

Of course, he was a human being too, and had the same struggles that we all do. But that's why we come here to the dojo. We have these lectures, these discussions, we have this written material from Tohei Sensei that we must understand deeply. Like, "What is it that I don't get, yet?" We go over it again and again for 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years, and throughout all of those years, at some point you might decide you know what is non-dissension, though difficult to live by. And then, five years later, "Wait! That's not it at all!" In other words, we keep awakening, all the way through, and I hope it continues until the moment the bell rings and my time is done.

*Student: So, you were talking about how competition affected you in all of those things, so is competition wrong then?*

That sounds like a set up there. Obviously, there is a lot of discussion about this. That's like asking, "Is ambition wrong?" It's not a question of "wrong" or "right." At a certain point, competition is very important. A feeling of ambition to "be better than," to move forward, is important. People that want to sound like they have an even mind, say things like, "Oh, I just want to be better than myself?" Baloney. They want to be better than themselves, so they can be better than you. Basically, that's it. Competition is inbred. As in my story about cutting bokken with Suzuki Sensei, I had a goal to learn to cut like Suzuki Sensei. And I was fighting hard each day to get there. And if I hadn't had

that ambition, if I hadn't had that competitiveness, if I hadn't had that goal, I never would have done it. But the solution was, that it was an "error." Not that it was wrong, but that it was time to let it go. It was no longer useful in any way. In fact, it was the one thing standing in my way. And that is what was so ironic. I heard Barbara Streisand talking about this one day. She said, "The thing that gets you there, the vehicle that carries you, is so exciting that you would never do it if you didn't have that, but when you get there you realize that is the one thing that stands between you and really understanding your art." And no matter what we are engaged in, in our life, we all have this same situation happening, at some stage or other. So I hope you can recognize it in yourself, in your work, in your family relations. It is in everything, this whole process.

To become calm, to have a calm mind, you have to let go of the aggressive, competitive, ambition, because it roils your stomach. You want to succeed. Even if, as a teacher, it's just that you want to educate people. If you have that thing going on in you, that means that you don't yet understand about educating people. If you have done it all of your life, you will come to this. You will get this.

So, yes, that's a good question. Remember Tohei Sensei made this thing we called "Taigi Competition." He constantly insisted to us that this is not about competition. The word in Japanese is "Shinsakai," and that does not mean "competition." He told me that's not what the word means. (So, another unfortunate translation.) But, if you were going into the Taigi Competition, then you wanted to win, or do as well as possible. You wanted to do the best. And even when your own students do the best, then you feel "Ahh, my students won the Taigi Competition!" So then you become very proud of them. We have had this happen in the past.

This has been a very interesting discussion. Thank you very much for coming and participating. I appreciate it.