

STKS Seminar - Ki Meditation Class

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This seminar is called *Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shiki*, which means “The celebration of our intention to experience true practice”, and this is the first of three sessions. Tonight we will be exploring Ki Mediation and also Ki Breathing.

Over here on the wall we have listed Tohei Sensei’s Four Basic Principles. Maybe you remember that in the old days, the list used to have an initial listed beside each principle. Keep One Point used to have an M, Relax Completely had a B, Keep Weight Underside had a B, and Extend Ki had another M. MBBM. This stood for “Mind, Body, Body, Mind”. Please erase these if you still have them listed in your dojo.

Those initials are pointing to an idea, a concept, and indicate a separation of mind and body. Our practice is all about experience, and in our practice mind and body are not experienced as separate. Tohei Sensei used to say that the Four Basic Principles are four ways of looking at the same thing. But it is important to realize that the way of pointing and the experience being pointed to are not separate. If we think “mind approach” and then “body approach” we are stuck in that idea separating the two, which prevents us from actually experiencing what this is pointing to.

You can do this with me right now, as we are sitting here. Keep one point. OK? Relax completely. OK? Keep weight underside. OK? Extend Ki. OK? Now those are four different ideas, and maybe we can attribute the ideas to mind, body, body, mind. But when we label our experience in this way, we become separate from it. True training is actually just experiencing. Not learning about it, being able to discuss it well, not reading about it. Although we do read about it, we do discuss it, and it is important to have a correct intellectual understanding of it so that when you are doing the training you are actually do the training, not something else, and we are not confused or misled.

When you experienced those Four Basic Principles just now, what did you experience with each one? Were they the same, or different?

Student: Same.

Right. Did anybody experience four different things?

Student: I did.

You did? All right, describe to me the first experience that you had.

Student: I felt like I was focusing on my center.

That's what you did. But what was the experience that resulted from focusing on your center? "Focusing on center" is another way of saying "Keep One Point". What was the result?

Student: I felt balanced.

OK. What was the second experience that you had?

Student: I relaxed.

Yes, that's a description of what you did, just like "Relax Completely". I want to know what you experienced.

Student: I guess I felt more relaxed.

And is that experience of relaxation different than the feeling of being balanced? Can these two exist separately in experience? Think about that. Now, what was your experience of Weight Underside?

Student: I felt my weight settle.

You felt your weight settle. Is everybody getting this? Because this is important for all of us.

And number four?

Student: I tried to push my awareness out.

What did that feel like?

Student: I became calmer.

When we attempt to describe an experience, our words are taken from an idea that we have about that experience. It's possible to see that the experience of these Four Basic Principles takes us to one experience that can be expressed four different ways. It doesn't happen exclusively in an area we can call "body" and it doesn't happen exclusively in a place we can call "mind". How can those be separated? Tohei Sensei says these Four Basic Principles are four different ways of looking at the same experience. They open us to mind/body unification. In other words, the whole point of the Four Basic Principles is to experience that there is no separation between mind and body.

Tohei Sensei introduced two words to us: *taiga* and *shoga*. When we look at things from the perspective of the way of seeing that Tohei Sensei calls *shoga*, we're seeing the full 24 hours of the day, beginning, middle, and end. We're seeing a dual world. We're seeing a world that we can measure, name, and put boundaries around. This is a world that can be described. It's a world in which we can share and exchange money, things, gifts. It's a world in which we see time passing. And as such, we see space and objects in space.

This morning I was walking in Haiku. It was dark and the moon was just a sliver. It was quite low in the sky and I could see the sun coming up as the earth was turning toward it. I could see the sun shining brightly on the moon, and the whole sky at the horizon was brightly lit, and it was clear that soon the sun was going to shine on me. This is a good example of seeing shoga. We can visualize the sun at the center with the earth traveling around the sun, the earth spinning on its axis, and the moon traveling around the earth, all at once. However, trying to visualize all of the suns and planets in all of the universes this way is impossible. Our visualization begins to take in more and more, and at some point this visualization becomes incomprehensible, and we are no longer able to hold the objects and space in our imagination.

When we do Ki Mediation and we say “kakudaiho”, Tohei Sensei asks us to imagine a sphere that is doubling in size and getting bigger and bigger and bigger. However, we all know that at some point we cannot imagine any longer because it continues to grow and becomes infinitely large. “Infinitely” means it becomes beyond comprehension. So even the shoga world that we are used to seeing as a limited, quantifiable world at some point collapses, breaks down, doesn’t hold up for us. When that happens there is a shift that happens within each one of us, and Tohei Sensei calls this shift taiga.

Don’t be confused about these terms. Even though you might have heard it said this way, he is not saying that shoga is one kind of self and taiga is another kind of self. Self is a construct that we put on top of those two kinds of experiences. Don’t think of self. Don’t worry about self. Don’t think about self.

Taiga is the state of mind where space and time come together. And where is the only place that space and time come together? Here, now. When we say here, now we mean space and time have suddenly disappeared. When we are experiencing only just what is arising in this moment there is no sense of time. We forget what time it is and where we are, and we forget even that some one is here. Any time you are having a good time, riding a wave, painting a painting, playing football, you can have this experience. Although it may not happen continually, because as soon as we become conscious of what is happening we tend to snap back like a rubber band and say, “Oh, look, I’m in the moment.” And then we aren’t any more. We have stepped aside from it.

Tohei Sensei had this experience of residing in, or abiding in, or some people say resting in, the moment, the taiga moment, where everything in the relative consciousness is gone and there is just this unified field that we are existing in. This state of mind is very centered, very relaxed, very calm, and very expanded. So he said four ways of pointing to this state, and these all actually are this condition which he calls mind/body unification. This is taiga.

So when we have mind/body unification, there is no mind and there is no body, no time, no object, no self/subject, and no space. In fact in this condition we cannot even say there is any unification, because there is nothing to unify with. There is no

thing. That's what makes it so cool. And yet experience continues to arise. People still try to grab us, smack up, give us Ki tests, and still yell at us, challenge us. All problems, all suffering, begins when we react to those challenges because that pulls us back into the world of shoga, a world where I'm over there and you're over there, back into the world of time and space.

When we practice Ki Meditation and Ki Breathing, we are practicing resting in taiga. Tohei Sensei spent many years engaged in this experience, and was primarily concerned with how best to teach this to other people so that they could have this experience as well. He can't give you this experience. Of course, every single one of us have had and can have this experience. But unfortunately there is still suffering. In other words unfortunately we still forget this mind condition, fall out of it. We are still distracted by our reactions. So the practice of Ki Breathing and Ki Mediation is the practice of resting in taiga while not being disturbed by senses, thoughts, or emotions. It's pretty simple. There is nothing more to do. All trouble begins when we think there is something other that needs to be taken care of. Thich Nhat Hanh once said, "People say they want peace. But first they must learn to enjoy peace."

So please keep this in mind as we go into Ki Breathing here. I'd like to start at the very beginning with Ki Breathing, which is posture. When I watch a group of people practicing Ki Breathing, the thing that tips off their lack of residing in taiga is their posture.

What's good posture?

Student: The ability to move in any direction at any time.

OK, yes. Posture does have to work for whatever it is you are doing. If you are doing Aikido techniques, that definition would be accurate. A posture has to work for you. So it is particularly important to know and be clear about what your intension is. Once your intension is clear, then you can find the posture that serves that intension best.

So what is our intention, again, in Ki Breathing?

Student: Resting in taiga.

Right. So what is a good posture for resting in taiga? In other words, what is a good posture for not being distracted into your every day, humdrum concerns, which take you away from taiga into shoga? What would be a good posture for that?

Student: Something that is comfortable and doesn't take a lot of effort to maintain.

Exactly right, well said. Something that is comfortable and doesn't take effort to maintain. If you have to do something to maintain your posture, guess what? It's really hard to rest there, because you are busy doing something.

When I first saw people doing Ki Breathing many years ago, there was a grimace on the face, legs were forced wide open, and tension showed in the shoulders. There was a lot of general tension in their bodies. But Ki Breathing has come a long way. In those days, a good posture was described as a “ramrod straight” posture, and “Don’t you move!” Suzuki Sensei used to yell us in the middle of breathing class if we moved even a little bit. So we were all quite up tight. It was impossible for us to rest. He didn’t mean to cause tension in us, of course. He just was following his times. So when I say breathing has come a long way, I mean it has changed a lot. We’ve finally gotten down to something that is functional, something that works for us. Now I say, “If it doesn’t work for you, don’t do it.”

But this is a very important part of your training, so you have to experiment with this for yourself. I am going to describe what my experience is of a posture that works for me, and maybe you can take something from it, and maybe not. Maybe it won’t work quite like that for you, maybe the image I use doesn’t quite work for you. You find it for yourself. If your posture creates tension in your body, or if your posture collapses while you are sitting, then those are the two main indications that your posture is not correct.

Correct posture for you also depends upon the condition of your particular body, our age, and so forth. Personally, from age 20 to 25 I sat in full lotus posture. That’s legs crossed and the soles of the feet pointing upwards. Then from age 25 to 30 I sat half lotus, a slightly less severe posture. Then at 30 I began Aikido, so from 30 to 45 I sat seiza, from 45 to 60 I sat on a seiza bench and then from 60 on I have been sitting on a chair. And when I am older I will probably be in a bark-a-lounger. When I see Suzuki Sensei he is generally in the lounging position. So this is a result of age changing the body. But it is also a result of learning to not get in the way of myself. The point is to rest in awareness. If there is something in the posture that takes that away, don’t tell yourself like I used to do, “No. My teacher said ‘Sit seiza’, I will sit seiza, damnit, for two hours and I won’t move and I won’t get up until I am done.” You know, there may be something to that. I mean, you really get disciplined. But the problem is, with that attitude, physically and mentally, there is no true sitting the entire time! You are too rigid physically, and also you are too rigid mentally if you think you must do this thing in this certain way no matter what. “The teacher said so, so I must do so.” So please be careful not to adopt this incorrect approach to sitting.

We want a posture that works for our intension, a posture that is comfortable and doesn’t get in our way. The following basics I will mention apply similarly whether you are sitting seiza, on a bench, or on a chair. Cross-legged is an different matter. I won’t discuss that tonight, but different techniques apply there. When sitting seiza, it’s important to sit up on your two hip bones, we can call “sit bones”, because these are the two main bones that we sit on. If you rock back a little on them you will feel that they are somewhat rounded. If you sit up in your best posture, notice where you are on your sit bones. Then from this position, role back on those bones slightly. How do you feel now?

Student: Not so good. I feel collapsed.

Yes. When we roll back on these two bones, the small of the back curves outward, and we slump. Even just a tiny bit of rolling back, and an alarm should go off. We must be that sensitive. On the other hand, I have heard people say that your “anus should be peeking at the sun.” Well, it couldn’t possibly do that, I don’t think, but if you try really hard to arch your back that way, that’s not it either. A comfortable position is where you are just sitting on the flat part of these bones without rocking back. If you are on a chair, your feet are flat on the floor and about shoulder width. If you are sitting seiza, either with or without a bench, your knees are about two fists apart. Your hands in all cases, are resting comfortably on your thighs. And there is no way to say exactly where on the knees your hands rest, because each person’s arms are of different lengths. So you can find for yourself where is the comfortable position of the hands. Just be natural. Sometimes, in the middle of a Ki Breathing session, some people will begin to put pressure on their hands, which causes tension in their shoulders. So check for this as well.

For me, I always touch the first finger and thumb together on each hand. This is not because it is some special hand mudra, (although it is) but because I notice that, if I lose attention, these fingers will come apart. Losing attention is losing awareness, so we can use all the help we can get. This works for me. I am not saying everyone in this dojo should sit like this. See what works for you.

And then the next important part of our posture is the neck and head. So take the best posture with your head. Now, let your head just hang forward a little bit. How does that feel? You know what happens when we are sitting and become distracted? You have to sit a bit for this to become obvious. What happens when your head goes forward like this?

Student: You go to sleep.

Well yes, but something happens on the way to going to sleep, which is why you go to sleep. What is it that happens when your head goes forward like this?

Student: Your mind has wondered off somewhere.

Yes, you are following a thought, or a feeling, or a sensation. Something of interest occurs to us. We’re meaning to be following the breathing. That’s our exercise, following the breathing. We follow it in, follow it out, and then you remember something someone said to you yesterday that disturbed you. It might have been an insult, or something that you feel you left undone, or it might be something that you thought of that seemed brilliant, a great idea. You know, maybe in your work, you invented suddenly the perfect mousetrap. If you want to think about the mousetrap, That is OK, but then take another time for that, because that is not meditation. That’s thinking, and thinking is anathema to meditation.

Now this doesn’t mean that you are going to achieve a state where no thoughts arise, no emotions arise, and you are unaware of any sensation. This is not achieving a

state that is impervious to your own experience. If you could sit down and meditate in that condition, you would have achieved a state of complete dullness, basically being asleep while being awake. This is not so unusual. Many people who meditate a lot get into this place. It is like a safe zone. Basically it is avoiding all thinking, avoiding all sensation, avoiding all feeling. This is why I say it is dull. Nothing is happening there. Whereas awareness is crystal clear and filled with knowing, not knowing some thing, just knowing. So when we practice, we are just resting in that condition of knowing, or awareness. Tohei Sensei calls this mind/body unification.

We have three stages of breathing. I know you have all heard me talk about, read about, or heard other teachers talk about the three stages of breathing. Everybody knows them? Number one, Whole Body Breathing, number two, Universal Breathing, and number three, Musoku, or No Breathing. Why we use a Japanese word for the third and not the others I don't know. Sounds more official, I suppose.

Whole Body Breathing. We practice Whole Body Breathing to learn to just be aware, to begin to build our capacity of attention. The way Tohei Sensei taught us, we do this by imagining that we are breathing in from the ends of the universe and filling our body from the tips of our toes to the top of our head. Just as if your whole body is the receptacle that you fill. You can think of the infilling substance as breath or air or Ki at this point and it doesn't much matter. These are just ideas. All I want is for you to experience an infilling from infinity. It may be impossible to describe, but you can experience it. Filling from the tips of the toes to the top of the head, and then as you breath out, you send that in the other direction completely to the ends of the universe. You fill the universe. This is Whole Body Breathing. Basically we are breathing with our whole body, not just with our lungs.

All right, take your best posture. Check your sit bones, your spine, your neck and head, your shoulders and arms. Place your tongue behind your lower front teeth, open the mouth wide without putting tension on your larynx or on the back of your neck. Be natural in the position of your head and jaw. If at some point during the breathing you feel pressure on your larynx or if your mouth closes slightly, it means your head has collapsed forward and you have lost attention.

Again I am telling you how I have learned, and what works for me. Generally, it will work for you too. But you have to find your own best posture because everybody is a little bit different. In the way of physical clues, what we want to watch for is tension or collapse. One of my early teachers used to say to imagine pressing up the back of your head as if you are holding up the ceiling. But that means to imagine, not to do. If you try to stretch your head and neck in that way, you will create tension.

So now we've created a really comfortable structure that is resting on it's natural components without causing tension or collapse. You are very balanced and relaxed without having to do anything to make it work.

Next, how long should you breathe out and how long should you breathe in? Does anyone have any definite ideas about that? How long do you breathe in and out when you are breathing alone?

Student: I breathe in until I am full and then breathe out until I don't have any more breath to exhale. This take about 25 seconds each way.

Student: The more relaxed I am, the longer I can breathe out.

Student: I find that I can breathe in longer than I can breathe out.

OK. Some people find they can breathe out easier and some find they can breathe in easier. I also usually found it easier to breathe in, in the beginning, but then at other times I found it easier to breathe out. In either case, something is out of balance. When we are in balance, breathing in is just as relaxed and easy as breathing out.

As far as the length of the breathing goes, it will find its own length. I don't want to tell you to do 15 or 20 or 30 seconds. Suzuki Sensei used to tell me, "When I breathe, I breathe 30 seconds in 30 seconds out. One hour, maybe 50 breaths." I took that to mean that's the way it's got to be. So from the start I was trying to force myself to be able to do 30 in, 30 out, which created great tension in me. As you say, once you learn to relax, maybe you will find that you are breathing out for 30 seconds. That's fine. But if you have the idea to do something like that, this is not possible. You must be very careful how you understand what the teacher says. Once again, Suzuki Sensei had no intention to create difficulty or tension in me. That's just his way of expressing. It took me a long time to learn that maybe he didn't always mean exactly what I heard. And I heard what I heard because I carried with me my idea, which was to please him. You have to listen very carefully to the instruction, do it, and then find out what works for you and what doesn't work for you. But be careful also, when I tell you that, because at the same time, your responsibility is to not edit your instruction. In this case, your instruction is to find the best way for you to do the breathing, but to do the breathing no matter what.

When I lead the breathing in class, I try to do 15 seconds each way, which is fairly moderate. Even so, some of you do have difficulty even with that. So, here it is. If you are having a difficulty, cheat! That's right. If you are building too much tension trying to keep up with the breath, just stop and take a couple of deep breaths, and then return to the breathing in the class. You know, throw the dog a bone. Really, there is someone in there that thinks you are going to die. That's what that tension is all about. So throw the dog a bone. Give him some breath. Let him relax a bit and know he is not going to die right now, and then go back to the breathing again. And if it happens again, take another couple of relaxed breaths, and return to the breathing again.

The key is always showing up. No matter how difficult an experience you have in the dojo, come back the next time. No matter how difficult and experience you have Ki Breathing, keep coming back to Ki Breathing. No matter how many times you get distracted, even if you are distracted and follow some thought for five or ten

minutes, as soon as you remember you are meant to be breathing, then just come back. Don't accuse yourself of being a failure. Just come back. It's the way it is for all of us. And the more you do this coming back, showing up every time, the stronger you become. That's being responsible for your role as a student. Just come back.

OK. Sit up.

(they breathe for a period of time)

How was that? Comments? Did anyone not get distracted even once?

Student: I don't know why, but I find it easier to breathe alone at home than in a group. Is that normal?

Yes, it's normal. I think most everyone finds it easier to breathe at home than in class. Why? Well, for starters, we don't like to be told what to do. And, this is messing with your breathing, and you feel that if it doesn't go well, you may die. So combine those two things, and it's usually a bit more difficult in class.

But on the other hand, there is a demand here to do it, which there may not be at home, unless you supply it, and there is something to be said for the energy in the room here, which you are a part of. The level of the energy is quite high in this room, and so you are less likely to be distracted. And though it can be said that both the demand that you do it now and the energy quality in the room here should be an advantage, these two also can be the source of resistance. Do you see? If you resist, you will not be aware of, or able to share in, that higher level of energy. We are very selfish people. We have to give up the resistance to being directed and supported in this very intimate practice.

Student: So this is like when we are doing Sokushin no gyo and you feel that perfect coming together of everyone?

Yeah. And it was here just now. I experienced that just now. Maybe someone else here did too?

Students: Yes.

Student: What's the right amount of movement after the breath is exhaled and after the breath is inhaled?

The amount that doesn't disturb you. That is the amount of movement that happens naturally, not because someone told you to move forward and come back. I didn't even cover that tonight, since I was counting on this happening naturally. What gets pointed to often tends to become artificial.

The answer to those kinds of questions is always the same. The purpose is don't disturb.

I will say that in my own experience this moving forward and coming back has become less and less through the years. I used to have quite a bit of movement and now there is very little if any. Again, it is up to you. This is just a natural phenomenon. As you are breathing out, and as the breath ceases, Tohei Sensei taught us to continue in that same state even though the breath is finished. In this way, we can remain in this state of presence, mind/body unification, with or without the breath moving. This is like seishi after a physical movement.

There is another thing I notice. When I am leading the breathing, I notice people are breathing at their own pace. It's as if I'm here for no reason. It's as if they are saying, "I can breathe a lot longer than these guys. I'm not ready to stop breathing out yet." So they just keep going and I am already half way through the in-breath and then they change. Does anyone here know they are doing this?

Student: Well, I do it accidentally. I just don't hear the clackers sometimes.

Oh, they're pretty loud. Could that maybe be a rationalization to hide an indulgence? Perhaps you are very entranced with your own breathing. It's so beautiful, yes? This is why we come to class and breathe as a group. This kind of stuff comes up and we get to see it.

Student: The slight movement at the end of breathing out and breathing in seems like a paradox to me. I understand that we use the movement to help us remain calm during the transition, but it seems like it is just something else to take your mind away.

Couldn't you say that about any part of any technique, which are very elaborate movements that we are required to learn to perform skillfully? You just have to do them over and over again until they are second nature. That's how we practice technique, so that whatever situation arises, that technique is available and just comes out without thought. Well, this is a technique as well. So practice this in the same way.

Student: Sometimes when I am breathing out and the breath is gone, I know I am supposed to count to three then then begin breathing in. But the pause is so attractive, so pleasurable that I almost forget to start breathing in.

Don't get lost in the experience of breathing. When you have been breathing a lot, it can be ecstatic. Just imagine if you could just stay there without breathing in. Sometimes it seems like that. This is often mistaken for Musoku, because there seems to be no breathing. But that is still something you are enjoying. You are doing something. It's not clear awareness. It might be something really cool, but don't get lost. It's like being distracted.

So what are we finally being distracted from? This is what we are learning to discover, hopefully in a skillful manner. And so following each step without editing is very important. Follow the procedure.

The reason we want to wake up, is so that we can function better in our lives. Our lives are constantly dictating to us. Every moment is bringing up another limitation, another challenge, another requirement, just like someone else hitting the sokuboku and leading us in breathing. Our task is to learn to follow. Of course, it's easier when we are in our own private meditation chamber and we can "get off on it". But look out. Because the purpose of taking this sitting time alone is to be able to be in that condition when you are engaged with people. And, you know, would you want me to be just blissed out up here all the time, and unable to speak or do anything? No. That's not functioning well. That's not skillful.

Everything is a potential distraction, whether it's going well or poorly, it's a distraction to get caught up in that. Just rest in awareness itself. So, when we are doing Whole Body Breathing we are building our capacity to be aware, to be present without being distracted. That's why we come back and come back. As we do more and more Ki Breathing, we have this process to watch, filling up and letting out over and over hour after hour day after day month after month year after year. In this way we are building our capacity.

When we get to certain point, and I can't tell you what that point is, but you will know, you may begin to experience Universal Breathing. I used to have a formula for this but I threw it away. It happens naturally. Then, instead of watching yourself doing the breathing in your body, you will lose track of this body, and you won't think about breathing from the tips of your toes to the top of your head. At this point the whole universe comes into the center of who you are, and then who you are fills the entire universe, infinitely. This right here, this Universal Breathing continues for the longest period of time, basically for the rest of your life. After five or six years of Whole Body Breathing, then you may find yourself doing Universal Breathing. Maybe less, maybe more, it depends upon how much training you had before you came here, how much capacity you have. But you will know if you have gone into Universal Breathing too soon, because you will be too aware of your body, or the limitations of being inside a skin. When you notice that, just go back to Whole Body Breathing. It's OK. There's nobody measuring you. Don't measure yourself against any idea or anyone else. It's just you.

And then, when you are engaged in Universal Breathing, perhaps No Breathing happens. And again, it doesn't mean the breathing stops. It means Mu breathing. It means no one is there breathing. Mu means none of it, or empty. There is no person, or identity present. There's breathing and there's awareness, but there isn't a watcher being aware and watching the breathing. In the beginning it might just happen for an instant, and then you suddenly appear on the scene again and think "Whoa, what was that?" It can be terrifying. You know, "Where did I go?" Like dying. You might also find your self just laughing. In any case, just return to your breathing. And again it might happen, and on occasion you might find yourself in this condition for some time. But as soon as you step aside from it and remark on it, then it is gone. Then you are not in that condition.

As I said, Mu-soku means no-breath. There's also mu-washing the dishes, mu-driving, mu-singing, mu-talking, mu-techniques, mu-cutting the vegetables, etc. There's mu-everything. This is mu-living. It doesn't mean there's no living. Life is intense and full of clarity and awareness. There's just nobody doing it. It is just being done.

We have to be careful about this. On the one hand, I don't want you to hear me talking about this and think, "He's had this experience, so I have to have this experience." Then you begin to look to when is this going to happen and if it doesn't happen there is something wrong. That's a mistake, because that wanting to make it happen will prevent it from happening. The one that wants it to happen is the one that needs to get out of the way, and this "wanting it to happen" can become really intense. On the other hand, if I don't tell you about it, you won't know that possibility is there. And you need to know that possibility is there. Number one it might happen and then you would freak out and not know what is going on. This happened to me the first time because nobody told me about it. Or you might just say, "Well, all I need to do is do Aikido because that's all there is, just physical Aikido."

Tohei Sensei is such a wonderful teacher because everything he taught us, all the principles, lead us to see that there is something much deeper here than just the physical techniques. And yet most people who do Aikido are in fact just doing the physical techniques. That's it.

The other main exercise that Tohei Sensei taught us is Ki Meditation or Ki no Ishiho. Ishi means will. So why then did he call it Ki no Ishiho? What are we supposed to be doing with our will?

Student: Are you alternately concentrating on it and then letting go of it?

Anybody else?

Student: You're practicing your focus.

OK. Where does will come into that?

Student: It's what happens when you focus.

Could you be more specific than that? Tell us in your own experience?

Student: When you focus on doing something, your attentions kind of coalesces to surround that thing, or your experience with that thing, and that's your will?

The way I described it way back in the Training Manual was that when you have a pond, or water bucket that you are looking in, and it's all agitated, will is what we use to keep still and wait and allow it to settle. Will is what we use to wait and see. So therefore he calls it Ki no Ishiho. Hopefully this will become apparent as we go along here tonight.

When we do Ki no Ishiho, we use a bell. Others don't always use a bell, but I like to because I think it helps. The sound of the bell disappearing helps. I will hit the bell and say "Shuchuho". Shuchuho mean to collect, or we can say concentrate. So you bring the whole Ki of the universe into your one point, half, half, half. Within two or three seconds it's already here, becoming smaller by half, infinitely. And you follow that infinitely becoming smaller until you can't imagine it any longer. And that might be soon. This recognition of infinity creates the shift that I was talking about at the beginning of the class tonight, from shoga to taiga.

Once when I asked my dad what was out there beyond the stars and if it ended somewhere, he said, "Well if it stopped somewhere, what would be on the other side?" And right there I had my first experience of this shift. Suddenly my shoga consciousness collapsed for an instant. I got it back right away of course.

OK? So that's what we are doing. We are just like kids, looking out into the universe and seeing that it doesn't stop. This is a sort of formal way to do that.

Shuchuho everything comes in. Then when I hit the bell again I'll say "Kakudaiho" and then everything expands in this same way, double, double, double. And right away you reach a point where you cannot imagine the expansion anymore, shoga has come to its limits. Your ability to cognize has reached its limit. So you just let that go, and there again is a shift. This exercise has revealed a feeling we call "peaceful" or "calm" or "relaxed" or "centered." This is mind/body unification that has appeared. And this is where the "ishi" comes in. Just wait and rest in that feeling. And then soon I'll hit the bell again.

Of course, your attention will wander and you'll start thinking about something. Then, just come back. This exercise is really great because you learn to come back to the experience itself. You know in the breathing practice you learn to come back to something. You are doing a practice of breathing. You can come back to the activity that you forgot you were doing. But in this case you just bring yourself back to the feeling.

OK, sit up straight and close your eyes.

(period of Ki no Ishiho)

All right. How many people practice at home? Ah, good, everyone does this! This is the first class I have ever had such an answer. This is very good.