

Aiki-Somatics

Bertram Wohak

What is *Aiki-Somatics*?

Aiki-Somatics is based on the martial art of Aikido and Western methods of bodywork and somatic education. It combines these eastern and western methods to help us live fully in our body and meet the challenges of life with mindfulness, inner strength and compassion.

Aiki is an old Japanese term (合氣), which was chosen by O'Sensei Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido, as central part of the name of his art. *Aiki* has meanings on many levels, a simplified translation could be "to come together, to unify (Ai) with the energy (Ki)". An important aspect of *Aiki* is to bring oneself into the right relationship. First in the right relationship to oneself, then to others, to our environment, and to the pressures, that we encounter from outside.

Soma comes from the Greek (σῶμα) and refers to the living, self-regulating, and self-sensing body. *Somatics* is a term coined by Thomas Hanna, a philosopher, early student of Moshé Feldenkrais and creator of *Hanna Somatics*, a special form of somatic education. It denotes the process in which the body is experienced from within through inner perception of one's own movements and postures. This was described by Thomas Hanna as the "first-person point of view" and is clearly distinguishable from the "third-person point of view", which prevails in our culture, and in which we see ourselves mostly from the outside with a characteristic lack of self awareness.

Aiki-Somatics unites these eastern and western views and their related practice methods to create a system of body-mind training, which is accessible to a broad public. We develop and train our self-perception through exercises on centering, stability, breath power, contact, the radiating of energy and the effects of mental states on our bodies. In this work, the concept of "life force" (Japanese "ki") in a natural way plays a central role. In addition, *Aiki-Somatics* improves our agility, deepens our breathing, normalizes the muscle tone without bias and helps to restore an upright and symmetric body, which is able to move freely around a consciously felt center.

Aiki-Somatics weakens counterproductive reflexes such as fight, flight, and freeze or cowering, and holding one's breath under fear and threat. It creates new reflexes in such areas as controlling the loss of balance and falling. It creates new confidence in our body. Thus in the course of the training we find back to more natural movements and learn to experience our body from within. This helps to create the mental and physical abilities to cope with life's challenges in a creative and flexible way.

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