

INSIGHTS THAT MY CLIENTS HAVE TAUGHT ME

VERBAL AIKIDO

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Verbal Aikido is based on the marshal art of Aikido and on a verse from Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Aikido is a marshal art in which you never strike the other person or block the other person’s strikes at you! Aikido is performed by blending with the motion of the attacker and redirecting the force of the attack rather than opposing it head-on. The goal of Aikido is to create a fighting style that practitioners can use to defend themselves while also protecting their attacker from injury.

The goal of Verbal Aikido is to strengthen relationships, help resolve conflicts and bring others emotionally closer. To be able to do this means being well balanced. This is true of both verbal and physical Aikido. Being balanced means you must know where you are in relationship to your environment and others. You need to be clear about where you are coming from and where the other person is coming from. To be able to do this requires that you be aware of what you feel when you feel it and that you be willing to accept all your feelings. Feelings are not “good” or “bad,” they just are.

You also must be clear about your boundaries and not let others take advantage of you. This means you must know both how to be assertive, and also to be willing to be assertive. You must know the difference between being assertive and being aggressive. The assertive person sets their boundaries and enforces them without physical or verbal violence. The other side is equally true; you must be respectful of others and their boundaries. You must establish value for value relationships where you are not taking more than you give or giving more than you are receiving.

You cannot let what others might think about you or your fear of “rocking the boat” turn you into a victim. Most people tend to be reactors instead of actors. Knowing your boundaries and enforcing them is only one part of what can keep you from being triggered by others. Knowing the TO Me rule is a concept that helps to sort out whose problem is it. The To Me rule says, What you say about me, says [nothing](#) about me. It only tells me about you.

In fact, whatever they say about anything is never about what they are talking about, it is only their perception or belief. “There is no God,” vs. “There is a God

and you are all going to hell.” Neither of these two statements is about God; it is what that person believes about God.

“You are stupid, dumb, lazy and a terrible parent,” is not about you; it is what that person believes about you and/or is what they are saying to manipulate you or get a reaction out of you. “You have blue eyes.” It is not about your eyes; it is about that person not being color blind. It is about how that person sees the world. If we see things the same way, then we assume that what you are saying is the truth. However, agreement does not make something true.

You can learn more about the To Me rule in my book, TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE.

Here are some more concepts that are important to adopt into your consciousness in order to set and maintain your boundaries:

- The difference between “I need” and “I want.” I need air, food and water. I do not need you, I want you. If I believe that I need you, I will find myself becoming a victim who is clinging, smothering, and manipulating. Or, I may become passive-aggressive and express my anger and disappointment by getting even.
- Accepting that I cannot change anybody else. The only person I can change is myself. When you start practicing changing yourself instead of others, you will discover that, *when I change myself, those around me start reacting differently and they may change.*
- Do vs. Say: The truth is always in what you do or what the other person does. “What you do speaks so loud, I cannot hear what you say.” If what you say and what you do does not match, then it is a lie! “I really want to come over and see you,” but they never come over. “I don’t want to go to work,” but then they get up and go to work. “I want to lose weight,” and they gain 20 pounds. “Deeds speak louder than words.”

Some people get defensive when they are confronted with their truth. They would rather defend their dishonesty by blaming others and then settle for feelings of powerlessness. However, telling the truth is empowering and it makes you a credible person. Once you accept the truth that you are doing what you want to do, then you can choose to change it and do something else!

Often, using Verbal Aikido will lead to listening to each other, then to problem solving and better relationships.

Here are some examples of Verbal Aikido responses that you can use to defuse difficult situations:

- If I do what you are asking, I would feel resentful, and bitter, and I love [care] enough about you that I wouldn't want to do that to our relationship. (A nice, assertive way of saying, no)
- I am confused about . . . can you help me understand . . . (Instead of "I am angry about. . .")
- Would you be willing to . . .
- How do you want me to respond to you when you don't do what you have promised to do?
- Never-the-less. . . Or regardless. . . (Helps you stay focused)
- That is not acceptable.
- I would be less than honest with you if I don't tell you. . .
- I feel. . . .
- I hear you saying. . . .
- May I suggest. . .
- You sound very upset and powerless. I would have been upset also, if that had happened to me. (Validating the person's feelings)
- That has got to be very upsetting. What do you see as your options?
- What do you see as the worst that could happen? What do you see as the best that could happen?
- Thank you for sharing your anger with me. Or, thanks for loving me so much. (The opposite of love is not anger or hate, it is indifference. Anger is a part of love; a statement of how important you are.)

These examples of Verbal Aikido need to be expressed in a calm and sincere tone of voice. Make sure that sarcasm and/or anger is not part of your response.

Nothing works all the time. Therefore, may I suggest that you clip out this list and keep it with you until these responses become a part of you.

There are some responses that never seem to work. Here are some no no's to avoid.

- No WHY questions. Why questions are usually heard as accusatory statements. "Why did you do that?" Is heard as "You should not have done that." And, it usually elicits a defensive response or the person quits talking.
- Do not give answers or try to fix the problem unless the person asks for suggestions. Then, give at least a couple of suggestions and ask, "Which do you think would work for you?"
- No name calling. Using the b or f word will never improve a relationship. If you resort to name calling, you are saying that you want to make the relationship worse!
- No labeling. People often become the labels that are used on them. "You're irresponsible." How does an irresponsible person act? Be careful of the labels that you use on yourself, or you may become what you say you are. "I'm so stupid." What do stupid people do?

- No ordering, commanding or demanding. Nobody likes to be controlled and they will resist by rebelling or getting even.

While learning Verbal Aikido, some of you will say, “But I don’t talk that way. That is just not me.” This can be said of any new language that you might try to learn. The whole purpose of learning a new language is to give you a skill that you can use when your native language is not working for you. The key to learning Verbal Aikido is practice, practice and more practice. And, you must be willing to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes to achieve mastery. With mastery, comes success and a lot less stress.

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