



Developmental exercise – Body&Brain (B&B) Its origin dates back to 2007 when Gergely Juhász embarked on the development of a special method for the development of children (age group 3–12) through exercise upon request of the British International School of Budapest (BISB). The Body&Brain (B&B) special developmental exercise method is the result of this effort. Classes are held in Hungarian and English. During exercises, we stimulate the neurological system through special movements and stimuli, which improves perception and the sense of balance. Exercises are performed alone and often in pairs, with the use of both (left and right) sides of the body, which has a positive impact on communication between the cerebral hemispheres and thereby improves coordination and linguistic skills, among other things. The programme was offered for over 10 years as part of the curriculum of primary school pupils. It is currently offered as an afternoon activity. We have also introduced our unique educational method at the Planet Kids, Tiger Kid Private Kindergarten, Cool Kindergarten institutions as part of the physical education curriculum. Body&Brain is now also offered at the Buda Physical Development Centre for the general public. Everybody is welcome to join our classes!

BODY AND BRAIN (B&B)

The written materials of the website reveal the extent to which Aikido touches on all aspects of life. We list below just some elements we gain from Aikido and martial arts, which also serve the development objectives of the B&B method tailored to children. These are:

Development of spatial orientation, spatial perception

Verbal development

Development of body scheme

Development of balance

Development of fine motor skills

Development of large movement

Development of eye-hand-leg coordination

Development of shape visualisation

Development of muscle sensation

Development of social skills

Development of cognitive skills

Introduction

We believe that Far Eastern martial arts offer many values that are either insufficiently addressed, or are discussed at a theoretical level, but are not adopted in practice. We decided to account for, systemise, and adopt in practice these values. We made this choice, because many issues in our day-to-day lives have gained urgency, and we feel that this method and initiative—B&B—fills a gap.

The first part of this text discusses concepts that appear implicitly in practice, often in a symbolic form, while the second part addresses those for which exercises have not been directly developed but are always present in exercises by nature of the movement.



Trust – responsibility

These two concepts always go hand-in-hand. If we trust someone, that person will be responsible for the things he/she knows about us. Such a person is basically responsible for the trust he/she receives. When someone trusts us, that person entrusts us with a value, which is either that person or something he/she considers to be important. It is the most essential element of society and interpersonal relationships, the lack of which renders any system dysfunctional in the long term.

In martial arts, during training, we generally trust our partner without any guarantees (e.g. to survive training without injury, which, by the way, has always been the case so far). This aspect is perhaps most accentuated in Aikido, as there are many situations during technical executions in which we have no choice, but to trust our partner. It is in these instances that we reveal the extent to which we experience this to be a difficulty. But for the time being, it should suffice to say that Aikido—and B&B for the “general public”—is very effective in developing skills for both receiving and giving trust.

Openness – courage, courage to learn from our mistakes

There is no learning process without openness. We have to open our channels to be on the receiving end. Our personal environment and responsiveness etc. determine the extent to which we are able to open up. But specifically for pursuing B&B and martial arts in general, we have to accept a general rule: not causing harm and helping others is a fundamental requirement; general values promoting human coexistence have a priority. Those who are incapable of or unwilling to accept this will never become martial artists; this principle has always been valid in the case of charismatic figures of the past centuries.

Humility is always important in practising martial arts; it helps us to accept the things we are told, even if these are not communicated appreciatively. The ability and courage to ask questions are likewise important. If we learned something the wrong way or fail to learn it, it will soon become evident in practice—this is an excellent opportunity for learning, just as in life in general. Practice teaches us something that has become a source of shame for the majority of people today; we have come to almost exclusively learn from our own mistakes (although the observation of bad movements also offers many lessons, just as in life).

Having participated in our training camps for over two decades, I observed a distinct trend: Despite having the opportunity, people don't ask questions from those from whom they could learn something, and instead insist on their own crazy practices, or worse, teach them to others, even though they are supposed to be doing other things. People who are successful in life always had the courage to ask questions. As a major example, after World War II, Japan

became a developed economy by asking and observing, and eventually developed the things it learned from others to the level of perfection in almost all areas.

Acceptance

This is also something lacking in our world. If we look around the world, this is the case in almost all areas of life. Wars and violence almost always stem from a lack of acceptance. Often, due to the presumed importance of our position as parents, teachers, and bosses, which we might take ridiculously seriously, we tend to consider our own opinions and values to be superior and ignore the legitimacy of the views of others. This not only leads to much unnecessary conflict and suffering at an international level but also at lower levels of society and family.

When practising martial arts, including B&B, we take ownership of acceptance by analogy, by nature of the movement. Aikido cannot be practised without recognition-acceptance simply because it is a fundamental element that is essential for technique, as we have to accept and pass on others' intentions and thoughts, and actions. Technique culminates in a common denominator, where no one is exposed to harm.

Cooperation

The other central concept. Success is impossible without others; there are no single Saviours, except maybe Chuck Norris. If we take a closer look, the success of people and things is the result of cooperation. We are struggling in this regard. Take traffic as an example. Merchants using methods geared for cheating others are only successful in the short term. They may be successful at a given point but could be even more successful, were they to change.

Cooperation is an essential element of Aikido and B&B. There is no technique without cooperation. Both sides are needed for a successful series of movements. The contribution of the moved side may be servile (too assisting) and opposing (too rigid, opposed). The moving side may be too straining (violent) or too soft (lacking character, posture). We learn both roles by practising each of them; they eventually become integral to our being and help us and those around us in life.

Self-reflection – self-criticism

Any manifestation of the consequence and result of the above is essential for harmonious coexistence. What is alarmingly lacking today? Perhaps the above. We could list a vast number of examples, but thousands of years of practice in meditation and martial arts have basically focussed on this one thing: ourselves. Whether we are focusing on our breathing, posture, or movement, we are always wanting to change ourselves, taking each moment at a time to shape ourselves.

This is no different in the world at large—there is really no other option. We have direct access only to ourselves, and we can change our environment only if we have made the necessary effort in ourselves, because only then will we be able to see what needs changing and what is the correct method. If we look around the world, exactly the opposite is happening. Why is this the case? Because this is how we have been socialised, it's what we grew up in; no one told us that this is wrong. The cultures of Eastern societies reveal how they are very different in this respect. In our culture, we tend to point our finger at others and to find fault, not in ourselves, but typically in others. Western psychology has long ago adopted the relevant term for this: projection. This is what we do to varying degrees on a day-to-day basis; the intensity of this degree depends on our self-control...

Since we just mentioned self-control! Has anyone actually calmed down from counting to 10? This is not the answer because it involves humiliation, oppression, suppression. The answer is the understanding of the situation, which will eliminate anger and grudges. This is very important because it renders movement and thinking rigid and extremely counter-productive. More on this later...



Assertiveness

In most cases, the inability to be assertive—i.e. self-assertion without oppressing the interests of others—stems from a lack of self-confidence. Self-confidence is the result of our courageous response to life's challenges, where we put ourselves to the test, and if we eventually seem to fail, we can still claim to have had the courage to try. It can be easy to successfully overcome a challenge; in this case, feedback is positive: we are good. If life validates us, this can give us a tremendous boost. But this is not possible without taking risks. Our elderly, but very energetic karate master, sensei Sáfár, used to say: "Guys! If this were easy, everybody would be doing it." This is the motto of what I discussed above.

Only assertively executed actions are effective in martial arts—there are no other options. Choosing the right time to start and to stop is a concept that helps us find our way in our lives as well, but it is achievable only through practice—guidance from books and the internet is insufficient.

Openness – successful relationships

If we do not live, communicate, and behave openly, people will eventually abandon us, and those who stick with us for longer will do so only because they are similar. Lack of openness doesn't pay off in the long term, but this is not why it is important. I think this is a very wise saying: "Works spoken are heeded." Everything else is just games or frills. This holds true even if non-verbal information is more pronounced because in an ideal case it is consistent with what is said. Behaviour that is not open sooner or later leads to negative consequences, such as psychosomatic diseases. Most of these are somehow related to the above. We are wrong in believing that openness chases people away from us; it chases only those away, who dislike openness. I think that such people are not worthwhile, and it is important to emphasise that we keep significantly more people around us for various reasons than is necessary, but we shall not explore this question any deeper...

Open execution is a fundamental element of B&B and martial arts. This is an "all or nothing" attitude. It evolved from a time when hesitation could cost our lives. The risks are smaller today, but not insignificant. In many cases, hesitation prolongs our suffering, whatever the issue at hand. Budo challenges hesitation, conditioning us to take fast decisions with an open, forward-looking gaze. Incidentally, at yesterday's training, I was told that often I don't completely turn my head in the direction of my moves.

Posture = attitude

In other words, we should observe our posture and physical movements in various positions, as it will be key. But we'll discuss this later as well...

Consciousness – each day is a new beginning, practice is never over (we're never "finished")

We believe this is the beginning and end of all things. There is little discussion of this topic in psychology today, but this is possibly changing with the appearance of mindfulness.

Our experiences are not whole, our reactions are dull, and our thoughts and feelings can be confusing and painful because we don't understand them. We don't understand them, because we've never been told about these things, so we don't even know what there is to understand. We want to escape and rid ourselves of the bad things in our lives (even if this is impossible, thereby causing additional suffering to what is already bad) and fail to experience the good things because our bad habits prevent us from seeing them, and the value of such experience is lost. It is therefore not surprising that the perception of bad things becomes dominant, as these do not demand attention. An aching tooth does not need a separate reminder. It is, therefore, no coincidence that reality is perceived unrealistically, distorted in a bad direction; this is caused by idle consciousness and because our consciousness is active not in the right direction.

Mediation and martial arts are also aimed at maintaining consciousness and channelling it in the right direction. This is also something that needs practice; once we recognise its importance, we no longer want to ignore it. Lack of consciousness during training may lead to injury, unnecessary practice without learning. Mindfulness defines the "zombie" state in our day-to-day lives as an autopilot. To dispel any misunderstanding, such a way of operation is necessary for our everyday lives, as boxed solutions and automatic scenarios always save us energy. We encounter problems when we are unable to distinguish situations when it is necessary and when it is not, or when we simply don't understand the difference between the two.

We basically don't live when our emotional-intellectual world is dominated by automatic mode. We do not live in these moments, there is no meaningful experience – no life (life as the result of living).

Many claims that BUDO (collective term for traditional martial arts of Japanese origin) is life itself.

It is also said that the sword is for protecting life. The Aikido sword (aiki-ken) and the B&B method protect life by helping it to come into existence.

