

<p>Who remembers the children’s story - Goldilocks and the three bears? How about Goldilocks and the Three Attacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This one is too hard • This one is too soft • Ah! This one is Just Right! <p>I have seen quite a few articles recently on the role of Uke (The Attacker!) - and quite rightly so!</p> <p>I would like to explore this a little more and reflect on how the role of Uke relates to the Dojo (the Training Area)</p> <p>Anyone who has been studying Aikido for a while should be aware that the role of Uke is to work with Tori as a training partner - not an opponent. Training with your partner should help you both gain a better understanding of the technique – the result should be improvement for both</p>	
<p>So how hard or soft should we train? Everyone reading this will have their own views How strong should Uke’s attack be and how much resistance should be applied through the technique?</p> <p><i>The strength of attack and resistance applied by Uke should be ‘Just Right’ for the training exercise being studying at the time – and of course - the level and ability of Tori!</i></p> <p>If we were to measure Uke’s attack strength and resistance on a scale of 1 – 10. I hope we would all agree:-</p> <p>(1) Soft - being no strength and no resistance i.e. hit by a wet fish Uke always falls over in advance of technique – no one learns anything. In fact its counterproductive, as Tori goes away with a false perception of their own ability</p> <p>(10) Hard - Uke charging in with a frenzied attack and then freezing rigid is equally of no benefit to anyone An example of this would be a full force Tsuki attack which is then planted with Uke rooted to the spot – you cant get much more un-real than that</p> <p>(2) – (9) Here lies the full range of acceptable options to select from. The choice is yours Or more likely the choice is your instructor’s, who will decide on the nature and intensity of the practice</p>	<p>Hard or Soft?</p>
<p>Some styles of Aikido tend towards a softer approach and some are harder Some may say Hard is more real – is it really???</p> <p>If we train hard and fast, it could be argued (and often is) that we are relating our training to a ‘real life situation’ – not really. The attacks are still prescribed and Uke is still following the rules (or should be!). There are no rules outside the Dojo</p> <p>If we always trained hard and fast, then we would never be relaxed enough to learn anything. We would always be trying to defend ourselves and trying to avoid getting hurt</p> <p>If we train Soft and Slow, it could be argued (and rightly so) that we have more freedom to</p>	<p>‘Hard’ is more Real!</p>

<p>explore the technique or movement - to get it right, without being put under undue pressure</p> <p>All good - But we do need to be cautious. Out in the 'real world', an attacker is not a training partner and this can give us a dangerous false sense of security</p> <p>I should mention that there are of course times when its good for Uke to offer a very strong resistance. This is often done as a test, to ensure sufficient Ki is being developed and it is usually done as a static exercise</p>	
<p>We need to be careful not to dumb-down the powerful capability of Aikido as a Martial Art and indeed its true life benefit of self-confidence, wellbeing and self-preservation</p> <p>However, we must remember that the Dojo is just a training ground, a place to practice and learn. Techniques are simply a programme of pre-defined drills to fit a particular set of circumstances</p> <p>Techniques are not taught as quick fix self-defence fighting skills</p> <p>You must not judge each technique or exercise we practise on the mat as - 'will it work on the street?'</p> <p>The answer of course is yes the techniques will work - but only in a particular set of circumstances</p> <p>You mustn't feel that it is your duty to test your partner's self-defence skills with every attack - its not!</p>	<p>Training Ground</p>
<p>So I come back to</p> <p><i>The strength of attack and resistance applied by Uke should be 'Just Right' for the training exercise being studying at the time - and of course - the level and ability of Tori!</i></p> <p>Initially with beginners, we should train relatively soft and slow, to learn the basics and understand how we can affect a partner's balance or body structure, through movement and technique</p> <p>We learn techniques as set patterns of behaviour to take a specific attack and disturb the balance in a certain way – study how the partner reacts and follow this through to a technique and projection or pin.</p> <p>We are learning a specific process viewed through a particular window</p> <p>As we progress, we need to be introduced to increased pressure and train faster with increased intensity, so we can test and see how our basics can be applied under controlled pressure</p> <p>This does not mean that as you progress you should always train faster and harder</p> <p>Training should always be a varying balance of intensity</p>	<p>Just Right</p>
<p>I have used the words 'Hard' and 'Soft' a lot so far. Some of you may be uncomfortable with this. It can conjure up an image of aggression, with much 'grimacing' and 'grisliness'!</p> <p>Lets change 'Hard' and 'Soft' to 'Varying Intensity'. That sits better with me – hopefully it will with you too!</p> <p>Having hopefully all agreed that attacks can and should of 'varied intensity', one thing that is absolutely essential at both ends of the scale is that the attack must be Good,</p>	<p>Lets change 'Hard' and 'Soft'</p>

<p>Committed, Sincere, Consistent, True and Honest. You will have heard all these descriptions</p> <p>If the attack is too weak, Tori has nothing to work with – Tori walks away – no threat If the attack is too strong, Tori will be overwhelmed – Uki smiles, Tori cries and no one learns If the attack is delivered with the correct speed and intensity of force for the training exercise being studied and the ability and level of the Tori – then everyone learns</p>	
<p>The testing and pressure should be increased gradually as we progress through our Aikido training Its no good wrapping Kyu grades in cotton wool and then flicking a switch at Dan Grade level and expecting an instant ability to deal with fast and hard multiple attacks The result will be the inevitable playground scrap All Dan Grades know only too well what happens on courses when the ‘group freestyle’ switch gets thrown Devil horns grow, eyes glow green and the red mist descends. Attacks become ‘hard’ and stiff. Techniques become scrappy and strengthy. Breathing stops and relaxation disappears. A mix of fumbled techniques ensues All good fun - but unfortunately the learning process has stopped</p>	<p>The Red Mist</p>
<p>Its good to practice under pressure and be taken outside our comfort zone Its good to have fun and most of us like to get ‘stuck in’ – I certainly do!</p> <p>But Ukes - remember your job – you are a training partner - not an opponent</p> <p><i>Deliver an attack that is Good, Committed, Sincere, Consistent, True and Honest and delivered with the correct intensity</i></p> <p><i>Make sure your attack is ‘Just Right’ for the training exercise being studying at the time - and of course - the level and ability of Tori!</i></p> <p>Why do we spend so much time practising Kokyu?</p> <p>Keep relaxed – keep breathing and Goldilocks will become a good Aikidoka</p> <p>Chris Wallace – Marple Aikido (3rd Dan - 2014)</p>	<p>Keep Breathing</p>