

The Reiki Principles

- Vol. 3

by

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“DO NOT ...
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"Just for today do not anger, do not worry..."

Many people appear to have concerns about the use of the phrase "do not" in the wording of the first two Principles.

These concerns are primarily, it seems, due to the perception that the Principles comprise a set of 'affirmations' - and as such, are something which, to bring optimum effect, should be phrased in 'positive' terms. (Modern-day pop psychology, expounds the belief that the subconscious mind supposedly does not recognise negative suggestions / instructions / commands. Thus, the associated reasoning is that when we say, for example: "Don't get angry", the subconscious only 'hears' the "get angry" part and accepts this as the affirmed intent.) So some prefer to avoid the use of 'negative language' - choosing instead to rephrase the first two Principles - for example, saying: "let go of anger", "let go of worry".

However, the Principles are not exactly affirmations *per se* - at least not in the modern understanding of the term.

The Japanese term for the Five Principles is: *gokai*.¹ It is a descriptive term borrowed from Buddhism.² The 'go' part of the term translates as: *five*; and the 'gai' translates as: *admonition*, or *commandment*. There is also an implied sense of *moral injunction*.

So, on one level at least, the 'tone' of the Five Principles is a firm, authoritative one.

We are being earnestly urged to follow the advice / instructions given.

And, while subtle nuances may well get lost in translation, the particle "-na" on the end of the common Japanese version of the first two principles: "*okoru-na*, *shinpai su-na*", is clearly indicating the 'prohibitive'

i.e. "Don't ..."

This 'prohibitive' phrasing style is a traditional format, also borrowed from Buddhism.

It is interesting that in Japanese culture (perhaps more so in Usui-sensei's time than presently), great importance has been placed on choosing one's words with

care, on using appropriate expressions, and as far as possible, avoiding speaking' negatively' about things.

So it would certainly seem that, from Usui-sensei's own perspective, his choice of the prohibition "do not" is completely free from any psychologically-negative associations.

And, if it was good enough for him...

[Personally, I've always has issues with the whole pop psychology idea that the subconscious - which apparently processes all and every piece of information and sensory stimulus (and for that matter extra-sensory stimulus) we receive/experience - can't (ie. can *not*) handle negative concepts.]

Perhaps the reality is that the use of "do not" in the original phrasing of the Five Principles only carries "psychologically-negative" influences if we allow it to (- if we *expect* it to).

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Of course, we are always free to develop alternative wordings for the Principles, if we so choose.

In seeking new ways to re-phrase the Principles, we can perhaps allow ourselves to tap into our own subconscious insights and wisdoms, and discover our own personal connection with, and understanding of, the essence of the Principles. I personally find the process of creating new wordings to be a beneficial meditative practice for opening up new perspectives.

However, I do appreciate that, in attempting to create what we (Westerners) may consider more 'positive' wordings, *sometimes*, some of the original meaning may get lost.

Let us look at the first Principle, for example. If we compare the quite popular phrasing "Let go of anger" and the familiar "Do not anger", there is a subtle difference of inference to be taken from the two.

Of course it is good - therapeutically and otherwise - to let go of anger.

However the statement "Do not anger" perhaps calls us to a far more profound endeavour: the reorganizing of our very thought patterns and emotions so as to avoid the creating of 'anger' in the first place.

"With our thoughts we shape our reality"

On perhaps the simplest level, we can begin by exercising more mindfulness - more awareness - in our daily lives, catching ourselves 'in the moment': when we feel the first inklings of the onset of anger in any given situation; making the decision to step back, count to five (or whatever), BREATHE, and let the fledgling sense of anger go.

In this way we can begin to make positive change in our lives.
And of course we can also approach "Let go of anger" from a different (perhaps deeper) perspective.

If the old saying: "Like attracts Like" is true, then perhaps one of the secrets to not becoming angry is to first empty ourselves of all the old 'angers' we still cling to from our past.

[Much the same can be said in relation to the second Principle.]

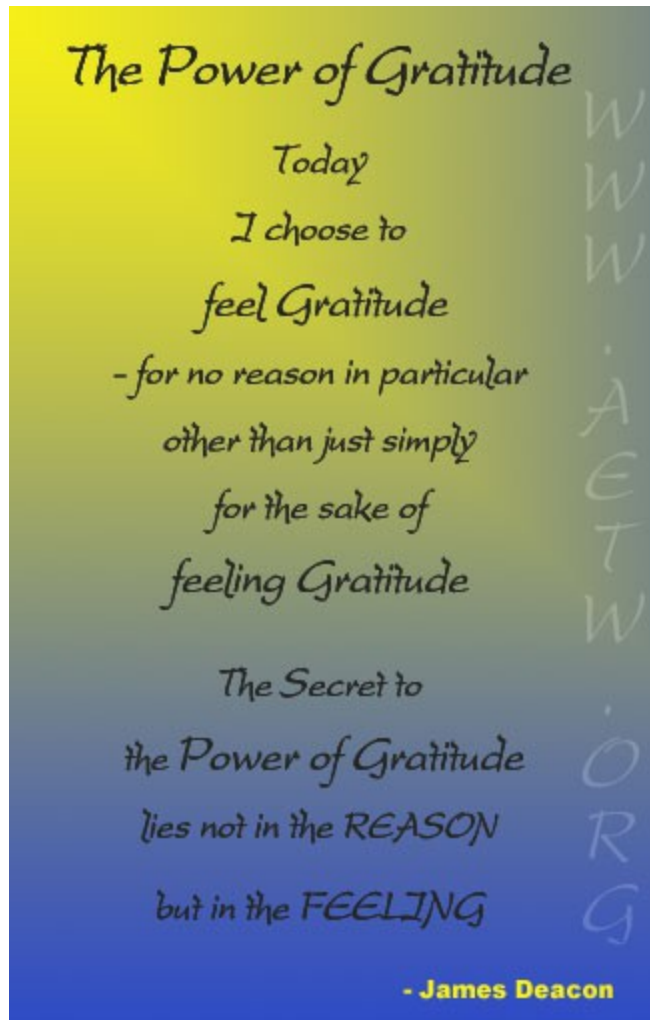
NOTES

1 This is the term used on the Usui Memorial, erected in 1927

2 Which, incidentally, has its own, unrelated, set of 'Five Admonitions'

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THE POWER OF GRATITUDE
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**JUST FOR TODAY,
WORK HARD...**

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A number of people have commented how a commonly-taught English version of this particular principle/precept i.e. "do your work honestly" (or "I will do my work honestly") is quite different in meaning from the basic direct translation: "work hard"

We must remember that on one level, the Gokai are a 'mnemonic device' - an aid to mindful remembrance.

In the simple statements of the gokai are to be found a distillation Usui-sensei's teachings - the very *essence* of his *Reiho* - his 'Spiritual Method'

And as such they will of necessity allow for *many* levels of interpretation

Perhaps it is also important to be mindful that much can be lost in *literal* translation.

In Japanese, this particular Principle is "Gyo wo hage me"

While this is commonly translated as: "Work Hard", it can *also* mean 'Study Hard'

And in a broader sense, it can imply:

"Strive to improve yourself"

(on *any* and *all* levels - physically, mentally, emotionally, ethically, morally, spiritually; your skills and abilities, your relationships, your standard of living – your *quality* of living)

The general sentiment behind the principle would seem to be:

"Be diligent in your endeavours"

- don't be lazy

Yet another way of expressing the sentiment is:

"Put your Heart and Soul into all that you do"

It can also have a sense of "Dedication to the task at hand"

In yet another sense, "Gyo wo hage me" can tie in with the Japanese concept of *giri* - duty or (moral/ethical) obligation.

So, it can also speak to a sense of duty/obligation to, for example. our teachers
and also, to those who give us employment.

Takata-sensei often phrased this principle along the lines of:

"Earn thy living by honest labor"

which perhaps has as much, if not more, to do with the old adage:

"An honest day's work for an honest day's pay - An honest day's pay for an honest day's work"*

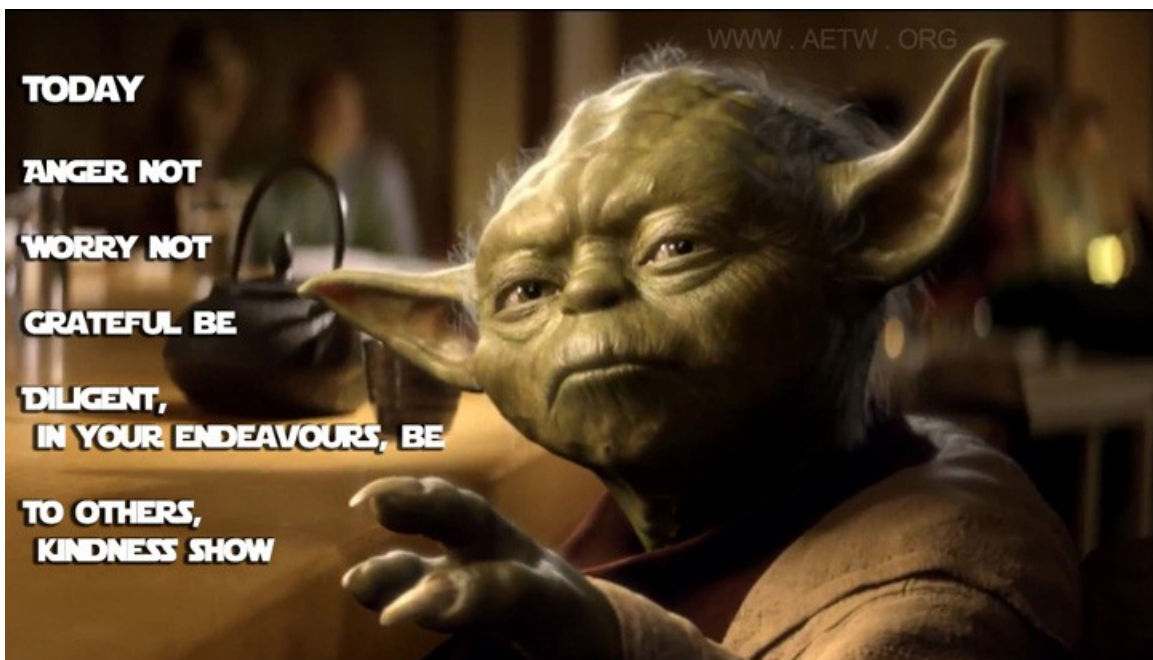
as it does with

"earn your living honestly"

which, IMO, speaks more to earning your living without deceiving others.

* 'honest' and 'fair' being seen as interchangeable here

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THE REIKI PRINCIPLES FROM THE USUI MEMORIAL?

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I've noticed, over the past few years, on several web sites and also in a couple of Reiki-related books (and more recently in a Reiki Manual by a fairly well-known Reiki teacher), information stating how the following familiar Japanese version of the Reiki Principles (and the accompanying 'user instructions') as shown here, comes directly from the inscription on the Memorial Stone erected at the Usui family burial plot in the Saihoji graveyard in Tokyo in 1927.

白井 鑒男	肇祖	心身改善 白井 靈氣療法	口に唱へよ	朝夕合掌して 心に念じ	業をはげめ 人に親切に	心配すな 感謝して	今日丈けは 怒るな	萬病の靈藥	招福の秘法
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The Gokai

*"The secret method of inviting blessings, the spiritual medicine of many illnesses
(Shōfuku no hihō, Manbyo no rei yaku)*

Just for today (Kyo dake wa):

Don't get angry (Ikaru na)

Don't worry (Shinpai su na)

Be grateful (Kansha shi-te)

Work diligently (Gyo wo hage me)

Be kind to others (Hito ni shinsetsu ni)

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Mornings and evenings sit in the gassho position and repeat these words out loud and in your heart (Asa you gassho shite kokoro ni nenji kuchi ni tonaeyo)

For the improvement of mind and body (Shin shin kaizen)

*Usui Spiritual Healing Method (Usui Reiki Ryoho)
The founder, Mikao Usui (Chossô, Usui Mikao)"*

However, this particular wording of the Reiki Principles and accompanying instructions DOES NOT appear on the Memorial.

The relevant section of the Memorial inscription speaks about how, when it comes to teaching, the student should be made aware of the admonitions of the Meiji Emperor, and also that they should chant the Gokai mornings and evenings, and keep them in mind.

It then goes on to list the Five Principles, separating each by stating, "Firstly we say:" "Secondly we say:" "Thirdly we say:", etc.

After doing so it reflects how they are "truly great teachings for cultivation and discipline in keeping with those great teachings of the ancient sages and the wise men" and then goes on to state that: "Sensei named these teachings 'the Secret Method of Inviting Blessings' and 'the Spiritual Medicine to cure many diseases'."

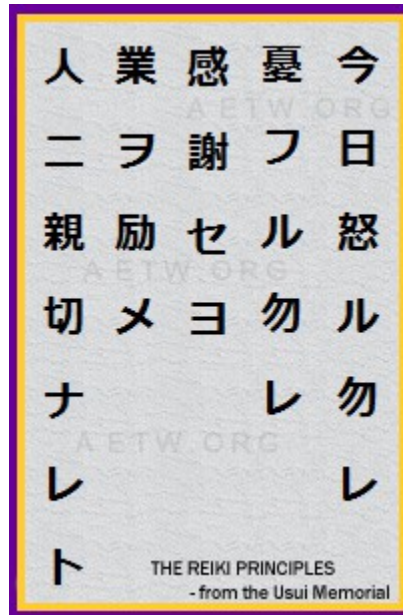
Instead of the familiar wording of the Principles themselves:

Kyo dake wa ikaru na
Shinpai su na
Kansha shi-te
Gyo wo hagemme
Hito ni shinsetsu ni

the actual Five Principles as listed on the Memorial, can be read as:

Kyo ikaru nakare
Yū furu nakare
Kansha seyo
Gyo wo hagemme
Hito ni shinsetsu nareto

[This is the wording shown on the image below, reading down the columns starting at the right]



Now while there *are* differences between the words used in the more commonly seen Japanese version of the Principles and those used in the description on the Memorial, the essential meaning of the two versions is still pretty much the same.

The memorial version could translate as:

Today do not anger
 Do not be anxious
 Be grateful
 Be diligent in your work
 Be kind to others

However, some people do find significance in that this version simply says: "today..." rather than the more familiar: "just(/only) for today..." in the first Principle.

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