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New Year and New Spring greetings to all of you!

I feel now that everyone in our kyudo family can look forward to the coming of a fine spring. And, as a group, all together, we can carry each other's aspirations for a good, fresh beginning.

As for myself, I look forward to passing the year 2008 by seeing each of you and being able to thank you all in person for your tremendously good help, without which, I could not be here. I am now 86 years old. Please know that I send my heartfelt greetings to each and every one of you this year.

Kyudo is not merely about practicing an ancient form, nor is it a sport. It is cutting ego. Keep a great aspiration to change your practice from last year, to refine and deepen your meditation. First, there is sitting meditation, *zazen*; second, standing meditation, *ritsu zen*, which is kyudo; and last, walking meditation. Hitting the target is good. Not hitting the target is good. Wherever the *ya* goes, that's fine. My hope is that you simply enjoy, from your hearts, the cleansing of your inner *ki*.

This year make a commitment to clearing the confusion that arises from the seven excessive emotions. Do this with compassion, for the benefit of others. Indulgence in these emotional states only feeds the enjoyment of your ego. The seven points of emotional confusion each relate to an area of the body:

1. Excessive **happiness** can destroy your **heart**. You might go out, carried away by your happiness, and have a big accident.
2. **Anxiety** can collapse your **lungs**.
3. **Anger** also connects with your **breathing**.
4. Too much **thinking** also affects your **chest** area. It can lead to problems like pneumonia.
5. **Sadness or depression** can hurt your **esophagus**
6. **Fear** affects your **liver**.
7. **Surprise** can break your *ki* at the **tanden**, the central point for your *ki* below the navel. This also connects to the life force of your liver.

Understand that true benefit from the practice can only arise from clearing of this kind of confusion. When we try to be too “nice” and, subsequently, indulge these states, it’s not particularly helpful. Sometimes, if a person was shivering with cold and feeling very weak, an old samurai might throw cold water over him to wake him up further, rather than offering a warm blanket and coddling him. In the same way, a child does not learn by being overly protected. If parents continually hold their children close, so that they don’t venture out, this is something the parents are doing for themselves. It does not benefit the child. A child who is continually shielded from hurt in this way cannot grow strong. In Japan, we have something called *ai no muchi*, which means “love’s whip”. True love is not particularly soft and sweet all the time. Sometimes it is fierce, cutting, and uncompromising. Cutting confusion—not just making ourselves look and feel like “nice people”—this is authentic help.

So, please, older students, come and offer help to the newer people. Let’s have a positive start this year. I invite *all* of the old students to come help and carry this excellent aspiration forward, so that we can create a wonderful New Year’s dream together.

May each of you have good health, strong bodies, and fulfill your dream of the New Year for all of the next 365 days.

With warmest regards to every one of you,

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