



THE DOJO STARTER KIT

Three Aikido
practices for
working leaders



From:

THE
DOJO DESIGN
DYNAMICS

by Mark Araujo



THE DOJO STARTER KIT

WELCOME

A meeting begins before anyone speaks. The first three breaths in the room set the rest. Most leaders never notice this. The ones who do, lead differently. This kit is for the second kind.

Inside are three practices drawn from The Dojo Design Dynamics: ninety-second resets you can use between meetings, gentle sentence

shifts that unstick stuck conversations, and a weekly rhythm that holds your team without burning anyone. They sit at the centre of the book, and they work without it.

Use the first card today. Use the second this week. Run the third for one whole week and notice what changes. That is the whole instruction.

THREE WORDS TO KNOW

These show up across the kit. You can practise without them, but they sharpen what you are doing.

Hara

The centre of gravity, just below the navel. In Aikido, the seat of presence. You will feel it when the breath drops and the shoulders quieten.

Kuzushi

Breaking balance without force. Shifting a stuck position by changing angle, not by pushing harder.

Zanshin

The continued awareness after the action is done. Closing the loop with attention rather than relief.



NINETY-SECOND RESETS

Presence, Pace, and Boundaries

Six ninety-second resets. Not meditation. Short, repeatable shifts you do between things: before a hard meeting, after an escalation, in the gap before sending an email you would regret.

Start with Four-Count Arrival. Use it once today, before your next conversation.
That is enough for today.

Purpose: Quick resets for presence, pace, and boundaries. Cut along lines to create cards.

FOUR-COUNT ARRIVAL In 4 (nose), hold 2, out 6–8 (mouth). Hand to lower abdomen. Shoulders down. Use: before speaking; before sending.	FEET / BREATH / SENTENCE Feel feet. Drop breath. Offer one precise, non-accusatory line. Example: “We have a hard date and a shaky dependency.” Use: meeting openings, escalations.
BOUNDARY BOW Palm over <i>hara</i>. Silent cue: “Kind and firm.” Say: “We’ll keep trust intact and meet Friday by narrowing scope.”	TIME AS BREATH When pace spikes, slow exhale. Say: “Two minutes to sense; then one smallest safe step.”
BOX BREATH RESET In 4 · hold 4 · out 4 · hold 4 (x3–4 cycles). Cue: square your stance; eyes soften. Use: pre-presentation, post-escalation	HARA DROP Exhale fully; Place palm on lower abdomen; Say (silently): “Weight down, roots in.” Cue: relax jaw; tongue to palate. Use: when pace feels brittle.



KUZUSHI LANGUAGE SWAPS

Gentle Frame Shifts

A stuck conversation does not need to be won. It needs to lose its grip. These are five small sentence shifts that unbalance a fixed frame without making anyone defensive.

Pick one this week. The next time a meeting starts to harden, try the swap. Watch what changes in the room.

Purpose: Unstick without force.

Why it works: Validates aim, shifts stance, invites the smallest safe experiment.

AGGRESSIVE DEADLINE ↔ AMBITIOUS WINDOW

The deadline is ambitious. How do we protect trust and still learn by Friday?

OPINION ↔ ADVICE WITHIN CONSTRAINT

What's your advice to make this succeed within [constraint]?

PERSON ↔ PROCESS

Help me see the work. Which part of the load feels off. Where can we rebalance?

LOOP ↔ SILENT TEN

Ten seconds silent. Write the one thing we must protect. One line each.

BUT ↔ AND

There's strength here, and we can test a 5% variant by Friday.



CORPORATE DOJO WEEKLY RITUALS

Lightweight Operating System

A team needs a rhythm. Most teams have a calendar instead. This card gives you the smallest weekly rhythm worth keeping: a Monday opening, a midweek correction, a Friday close. Run it this week and look at the five signals on Friday. Decide whether to run it again.

Purpose: A humane weekly rhythm you can sustain.

MONDAY

Arrival (team, 3 min):
Feet · Breath · Sentence.

Intent & constraints (one line):

MID-WEEK

Sensing (10 min). Then the smallest safe move — one that is reversible inside a day.

Names & times said aloud; record:

FRIDAY

Zanshin: Seam check (10 min) —
What's not done yet? Close loops:

Aftercare: One learning captured; one
balance practice scheduled.

LEADING SIGNALS

- ☐ Arrivals started on breath
- ☐ Constraints named early
- ☐ Smallest safe steps chosen
- ☐ Seam checks booked & done
- ☐ No weekend heroics

NOTES

This week's story (3 lines):



If these three made sense, the book has plenty of pages in the same shape. Fourteen principles, ten cards, four maps. Same voice. Same restraint. Same trust in the reader to do the work.

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I'm not a martial artist myself, but the philosophy felt immediately relevant. Leadership framed through awareness and adaptability, not control or force. Practical without being simplistic.

Janet Frizzarin

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Mark Araujo has practised Aikido since 1997 under Reishin Kawai Shihan, the teacher who brought it to Brazil. He has designed visual systems for global brands for twenty-five years. The Dojo Design Dynamics is where the two finally meet.



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