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## **Beginning Aikido Training**

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# **Aikido of Maine**

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Welcome to Aikido of Maine. Everyone has questions when they begin. This hand out has been prepared to answer some of them as well as explain aspects of Aikido training that you will need to understand.

### **What is Aikido?**

Aikido is a modern Japanese Budo (martial way). Judo, kendo (swordsmanship), Karate-do, Kyudo (archery) are examples of Budo. Properly understood, all are disciplines that use martial training as a means of character development. Ai Ki Do translates as Ai- universal love, joining, unifying, Ki- life-force energy, Do- path or way. Literally, Budo is “ The martial way of life”.

### **Purpose of Aikido**

Aikido is different in its training purpose from other martial arts. Formerly martial arts were practiced to gain fighting prowess. Yet not everyone can be a good fighter, some people are too small, or too weak, or disinclined to combat. Also in the modern world firearms had rendered much unarmed techniques useless. As the founder of Aikido, O Sensei's experience in martial arts grew, he realized that simply accumulating strength for fighting is ultimately futile. He saw the true purpose of Budo to be the refinement of the individual. This purpose transcends cultural boundaries and technological advancement. O Sensei developed Aikido as a martial way whereby the student develops a strong body and a mind that is calm, free from contentious thoughts, and whose natural reaction is centered, focused, and free of thoughts of destruction.

#### **O Sensei wrote:**

“Budo is not felling the opponent by force; nor is it a tool to lead the world into destruction with arms. True Budo is to accept the spirit of the universe, keep the peace of the world, correctly produce, protect, and cultivate all beings in nature”.

### **Practice**

Although we speak of personal refinement and improvement of the character, this does not mean that Aikido is an esoteric, purely mental exercise. Aikido is a physical process with a spiritual result. Aikido is a partner practice, when done correctly it is strenuous and demanding and involves the smooth completion of action, with no sense of conflict between the partners. Ukeme, or receiving or falling is one of the most important parts of training. Beginning students should make every effort to become proficient in this aspect so they are safe and start to feel and understand the power and energy of Aikido.

In class Gary or Ania sensei (sensei is Japanese for teacher) will demonstrate a technique. As well as you can, watch the attack and the beginning movements of the technique. Then the class forms into pairs and the partner's alternate between Attacker and defender or uke and nage. The newer student should seek out the more senior students for this part of training. Dojo members should train often and consistently. Your presence in the dojo is valued and with steady practice you and the other dojo members will benefit. People often ask, “how much should I train” This is personal to a point but as a general rule we feel 3 times or more per week as a starting point!

#### **Basic guidelines for practice are:**

Class begins with a sitting bow to the front (shomen) with two claps; we then bow to the teacher and say “o-negaishimas”. Every time we work with a partner we bow and repeat “o-negaishimas”(A request for instruction or practice). We follow the Japanese model of sempai (Senior) and kohai, (junior). With this system we have a community that is supported from the top and also the bottom! The seniors have been there longer and should make every effort to assist you during class with a minimum of talking. Do the best you can to follow the lead of the senior also with a minimum of talking. The newer student should attack first and follow your partner's movements, do not resist the technique, as nage also move smoothly, with no sudden jerks as your partner could get injured. Safe practice is one of the major priorities of the dojo. In this way confidence and smooth continuous movement is developed for both partners. The philosophy of Aikido is that all people, men and women, old and young, can participate and develop themselves. Feel free to ask questions after class.

### **Dues**

Dues are paid monthly and it is important that you take this responsibility seriously. Dues are for membership. The spirit of the practice should be that of gratitude for the art for our dojos existence, and the timely payment of dues is what keeps our doors open. If you need to take a break a leave of absence needs to be communicated to Gary or Ania, without this clarity your name will remain on the roster and you will be responsible for the dues while you are gone. As we have said Aikido is about character development and a key component in this is honest direct communication, with this we all benefit!

## **Cleaning**

All students are to clean the dojo as part of our training. We sweep and dust before and after every class we damp mop the mats on Wed and Sunday. Please take the responsibility for anything that needs cleaning. Do this with positive energy and help us respect the training space! This is not a health club but a Dojo. Follow the lead of your seniors.

## **Books**

There are many books on Aikido, these books can be found on the Internet or some bookstores locally will carry some of these. It is helpful to get familiar with the names of the techniques and basics and the following books will give you a lot of good information.

- 1] The Harmony of Nature Saotome Sensei's first book deals with spiritual aspect of Aikido
- 2] Principles of Aikido Saotome Sensei's second book
- 3] Spiritual Foundations of Aikido- Gleason sensei's first book
- 4] Dynamic Aikido- Shioda Sensei Good Technique Fundamentals
- 5] Total Aikido- Shioda Sensei
- 6] Dynamic Sphere Westbrook and Ratti Illustrated introduction.
- 7] Aikido- Kisshomaru Ueshiba Aikido's first Doshu