

## YOUTH PROGRAM - INTRODUCTION

Aikido looks like a dance: it's intense, fun, energetic, alive. It works with big themes like bravery, intensity, self-responsibility and potential violence.

In Aikido, we're not training to defeat others. We're actually training ourselves not to fight at all! That way, no one is defeated, and the overall violence level goes down. We're training to hold boundaries, to be generous, and to ground out aggression: in other words, we're training to love other human beings - even if we might not like what they are doing.

## CLASS LEVELS AND EXPERIENCE

Students of different levels of experience should train together in Aikido. Younger (newer) students can learn things from older students they will not learn from the teacher. More experienced students will learn things they didn't know they knew in teaching other students.

## TRAINING, RANK, LOVE

Aikido training gives us the chance to practice the basic Aikido virtues: groundedness, centeredness, and generosity. All of these is a way to express loving kindness to our partners in class and then, because we have practiced, to those people we might have difficulty with in the world.

In order to give us focus, we break up training into a series of belts: each colored to represent a positive quality we want to embody, and is tied to an Aikido technique to learn.

## CELEBRATIONS

Our training is divided up into 3-month "rounds".

During each round, about 2 months in, we have a celebration practice where every student is invited to show what they've been working on, getting feedback from fellow students.

At the end of each **3-month round**, every student attends the special **celebration class**, where we gather to witness their excellence and beautiful hearts. Students are given the opportunity to demonstrate technique, and special 'exploits' that are great challenges.

If the student has attended enough classes to qualify for his current belt and both sensei and student feel the student is ready to progress, the student's progress will be acknowledged, and a new belt will be gained.

The pieces of Aikido a student should be studying are on a program board at the front of the dojo with colors matching the student's belt. Please review those and check our website for a downloadable version.

## PRACTICALITIES

Tuition is due at the 1st of each month, unless you have already informed sensei your child will not be training (no exceptions).

There is a **tuition box** at the front of the dojo - if you are paying in cash, put it in an envelope (provided) with your child's name on it.

Students can change their clothes and leave their shoes in the **change rooms** at the back of the dojo. Entering through the back makes this easier.

Please review the **Etiquette** guidelines for the dojo to make sure you understand what will be asked of your child.

# PRACTICE SAFETY

- This training space (dojo) is for the practice of Aikido, the Way of Peace. Out of respect for Aikido, please reserve the practice of other martial arts for elsewhere.
- Especially when starting out in Aikido, all Aikido practice should be supervised by a certified Instructor, for your safety.
- There are three characteristics for all Aikido practice: Non-violence, Non-injury, Non-resistance; observe these always.
- Aikido is the way of Unity, and includes no competition or sparring. Cooperation is at the heart of all Aikido practice.
- You reserve the right to decline practice with anyone who exceeds your safety level.
- Keep your nails short and do not wear jewelry or watches on the mat.
- Use of weapons - bokken, jo and tanto - is permitted only with the approval of an instructor.
- No rough play at any time in the dojo.
- To reduce the possibility of injury please be aware of your surroundings at all times.
- For reasons of safety, respect, and courtesy, please follow the sensei's (teacher's) instructions closely. Many Aikido techniques can be dangerous if not practiced properly. Emphasis should be placed on learning as much as possible through intent, observation, and sincere practice.
- If there is any doubt about the safety of any activity, don't do it! Ask the instructor!
- Please inform your sensei of any injuries that occur during practice.

# DOJO ETIQUETTE (REI)

**Purpose:** to build a history of right relationship; to embody an attitude of respect and enthusiasm.

- When entering the Dojo (place of the way), place your shoes in the shoe rack.
- Please stop and bow once toward the shomen when entering or leaving the dojo.
- Please do not bring food into the dojo.
- Please take care of any personal needs (restroom, water, phone calls, etc.) before putting on your uniform.
- Please wear only keiko gi (training uniforms) that are clean and in good condition, left side folded over right. If you wear an undershirt, please keep it simple and clean.
- Please be on the mat, ready to train, **5 to 10 minutes prior to class.**
- Prior to stepping onto or off the mat, bow once toward the shomen (front position).
- Formal training begins and ends with all students in seiza (formal seated position), facing the shomen. Sensei will lead you in a bowing ceremony which consists of 1 bow (unity), 2 claps (earth/sky - the world), and 1 bow (gratitude). This is followed by "onegaishimasu" (I'm in your hands) to start class or "thank you very much" when ending class.
- Students should make a sincere effort to be on time for class; however, if lateness is unavoidable, the student should wait for acknowledgement from the sensei and then perform the formal bow-in ceremony individually before beginning practice.
- When beginning or ending practice with a partner (aite), acknowledge your mutual benefit by bowing and saying "onegaishimasu" or "thank you".
- In order to observe the clear roles of Aikido practice, please address the instructor of a class as "Sensei".
- When your sensei offers some suggestion or comment on your training, respond with "yes, sensei", or "thank you, sensei" as a way of acknowledging your comprehension of the teaching.
- Students should refrain from sitting within the area surrounding the shomen. Traditionally this is the place for the instructor to sit while watching class.
- Should your uniform (gi) become disheveled or your belt (obi) become loosened during practice, please turn away from the shomen to adjust your attire.
- Tuition does not buy training. It helps maintain a beautiful Dojo and support a staff of professional (full time) Aikido instructors. Further, it provides every student an opportunity to affirm their personal abundance.
- Cleaning the training space is an act of respect and gratitude. Participate in cleaning after every class.