

# Welcome to Aikido of Connecticut

As a new student of Aikido it is important to begin your training correctly. As an art aikido is the way of harmony with ki. To learn to be in harmony with ki one must refine the way one is. We each come to aikido with different life experiences to date that have shaped us into who we are. Each new student will start on the path to harmony with ki from a different direction yet each direction will head towards the same center of the circle of the universe. Aikido is an art that through practice, will harmonize the mind and body in to a coordinated and non-conflicting whole. The greatest challenge in aikido is reaching this inner harmony by removing your conflicts from within. Practice with Uke is not just about Uke, but about how you respond to Uke. From the start of your practice of aikido there are principles of practice to keep in mind.

## **Safe Training Environment**

The pathway to the Center is long, and to follow the path for a long time means being physically able to do so. Injuries are to be avoided. A culmination of injuries that results in no longer being able to follow the path towards center would be an unfortunate way. To promote safe training it is best to observe these training guidelines.

## Relationship

Nage and Uke's relationship is one of mutual assistance in learning. Nage is like the sword, uke is like the sharpening stone. If you do not use the sharpening stone properly it will dull the blade- not sharpen it. If you strike the sword forcibly into the stone it will dull it also.

## Falling

- Fall away from others (preferably towards the wall)
- Look to where you are falling
- Protect yourself when falling
- Fall to protect yourself

## Rolling

The goal of all rolling is to spread the impact over a wide area over a long period of time while you are moving into a safe position.

## Resistance

- As a Uke resist only at a level Nage can learn from
- Do not stop Nage unless it is to help Nage improve by seeing their error.
- As Nage when you meet resistance find your way around it- not by forcing your way through it. If you find resistance, it means you are not doing something right.

## Practice

- Be aware, alert, attentive
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- Breathe naturally
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- Be centered, open, receptive and relaxed
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- Have good intention
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- Sincere attacks
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- Attacks can be fast or slow depending on Nages experience
  
- Base your attack on not knowing what technique is being practiced. Specific techniques being practiced depend on the appropriate attack for the technique to be applicable. If you attack differently than the attack being practiced then the attack being practiced would be the wrong response and another technique would be used instead.
  
- Techniques are a medium used to join, lead and control Ukes ki and center. They are the connection with Uke. The more force you feel in a technique they less control you have over Uke.
  
- Balance action with instruction. Aikido is learned by doing. The more you practice the more you will change. During each practice- practice, mind and body coordination can only happen when mind and body are used together.
  
- Work out with different people as much as possible. Individuals respond differently. You need to learn about differences and how to respond to them differently.
  
- Uke determines the attack. Nage responds. What Uke does will determine what Nage does. Nage can not decide what to do before the attack. Nage, however can influence (evoke, alter) the attack. If there is no attack-that is the best aikido.
  
- Vigor for the sake of vigor in practice without focus of ki and connection to center is to be avoided. Beginners may attack with vigor but Nage should not confuse vigor with forcing a lead and getting ahead of Uke.
  
- A good Uke will always try to be aware of the connection with Nage. A good Nage will always lead the connection without yielding the led to Uke. The best aikido is when Uke is not aware of how and where he is being lead and is always trying to catch up with nage but never can. Good aikido is when Uke is not in fear

of what's happening to them. Uke's find themselves on the mat with no pressure or pain.

- Pain may be used to lead Uke, but remember if you can lead without pain aikido will work on everyone. Aikido that relies on pain assumes that Uke feels pain adversely and will move away from it. This is not true for all Ukes.

### **The Key to Training**

The key to training is to realize that everything you do is a mistake. As you train the magnitude and degree of mistakes you make will lessen. We are on a path to perfection that is never ending. The hard part is knowing what to shed and what to keep. This is easier in the beginning and gets harder and harder as one progresses. Only by being open to constant change will you improve. Do not let the prospect of making a mistake by trying a new way hold you back. Be humble to the art and yourself. Do not worry about your progress, it will only hold you back, just keep practicing with an open mind and you will get better. Be patient with yourself.

The mind controls the body. Good aikido start from a good mind from which is manifested good physical form. Good ki results in a good mind which results in good aikido. Use your aikido in mental and physical form.

You are responsible for your own training. Sensei and fellow students can assist but it has to come from within.

We are all students of aikido. We all learn and change with every practice. What is taught today will be taught different tomorrow as we each change in our understanding.

### **Aikido is not techniques**

Aikido is manifested through techniques. One could say that there are 1000's of techniques but perhaps there is only one technique with infinite variations. The one technique is becoming "One" with the universe from which we all are a part. A person who practices aikido and never needs to use a technique, (in a specific physical form) is using aikido at the highest (mental) level.

If you have any questions about the information contained herein please ask Sensei Ralph or Jon.