

# Vancouver Aikikai Renfrew Community Centre

2929 East 22nd Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C., V5M 2Y3

## About Aikido

**Aikido is a traditional Japanese martial art** the modern form of which was founded in 1925 by Master Morihei Ueshiba (O'Sensei). The techniques that form the basis of modern Aikido are derived from centuries old tactics developed by Samurai warriors. It has evolved in the historic tradition of Japanese warrior arts, but is more than just a science of tactics and self-defense; it is a discipline for perfecting the spirit. The Japanese word *Ai-ki-do* consists of three Kanji characters which can be translated as "the way of unity with the fundamental force of the universe". Aikido practitioners train to integrate their body, mind and spirit through harmonious practice of basic principles. Aikido teaches us to be aware of our surroundings and to use our bodies to move with physical confrontation instead of against it.

**Aikido is a true Budo or "Martial Way"**. The essence of all Aikido technique is the use of total body movements to create spherical motion around a stable, energized center. Even when a technique appears to be using only one part of the body, close observation reveals the Aikidoist's movements are, in fact, whole body movements.

**Aikido is a purely defensive martial art.** Rather than meeting violence with reciprocal violence, the Aikidoist learns to evade and redirect the power of the attack, resulting in the attacker being unbalanced and either projected (thrown) or immobilized. The results are achieved through precise use of leverage, inertia, gravity, and the action of centrifugal and centripetal forces. Inevitably, it is the attacker's own force and momentum that neutralize his aggression. Because of this principle of "active non-resistance", Aikido can be effectively performed even against larger, stronger attackers. At the higher levels of the art, it is equally effective against multiple attackers.

**Aikido is not a sport or a game.** There are no tournaments or competitions. Rather, practice is conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation. Aikido has been proven to be an effective means of self defense and its' techniques form the basis of many police "control and restraint" tactics. It is also distinguished by a highly developed moral code which seeks to protect the assailant while simultaneously neutralizing his will and ability to attack. Beyond being merely a form of self protection, Aikido is a method of personal development that teaches the practitioner balance and character, which enhance all aspects of daily life.

**Most practice is done with a partner.** Each works at his or her own level of ability, alternating as *Uke* (the attacker), and *Nage* (the one who receives the attack). Both roles are stressed as each contributes skills that enhance overall sensitivity and control. Practice is non-competitive with partners working in a cooperative manner to encourage the physical, mental and spiritual growth of each other.

## Dojo Etiquette

The following guidelines are very important in Aikido. Following the proper etiquette demonstrates an understanding of martial arts and your willingness to subjugate your own ego to "the way". Aikido begins and ends with etiquette and the practice of etiquette maintains the structure and harmony of the dojo.

### Clothing

Aikido practice is best done in the traditional outfit of Japanese martial arts, the dogi. Beginners may wear loose clothing but once you decide to commit yourself to Aikido, you should buy a dogi. When not on the mats, please wear zori (thongs) or shoes. Remove your footwear before stepping on the mats and position them together neatly next to the other footwear with the toes pointing away from the mats.

### Bowing

Bowing or rei is a very important part of Aikido and should be mastered as soon as possible. Rei is a symbol of appreciation and respect, not subjugation. We express this respect to O Sensei, the dojo, the Sensei present at the dojo and the other practitioners. Bowing is a tangible expression of our appreciation for being taught "the way."

The two types of bowing to be mastered are the standing bow and the sitting bow.

The standing bow is executed by placing your arms at your sides, fingers stretched toward the floor and bending the body 30 to 45 degrees forward. Always do the standing bow when entering or leaving the dojo and when temporarily leaving and returning to the mats. Never leave the mats without Sensei's permission.

The sitting bow begins from a kneeling position (about two fist's separation between your knees), with your hands resting on your thighs. Place your left hand and then your right hand on the mat in front of you so that the thumbs and first fingers form a

triangle. Bow deeply and return to an upright position and place your right hand and then your left on your thighs.

The subtleties of bowing are numerous and you should try to master as many as you can. Use the sitting bow to O-Sensei when first stepping onto the mats and when finally leaving the mats. This bow is also used when bowing to O-Sensei and then to Sensei at the beginning and end of class.

Always try to bow before your Sensei bows to you and bring your head up after he/she has completed his/her bow. Bow to your partner before and after each technique. At the end of class after Sensei has left the mats, bow to the people with whom you practiced.

## **Personal Hygiene**

Personal hygiene is a reflection of our attitude toward and our respect for Aikido, Sensei, fellow practitioners and ourselves. Long hair must be tied back. Jewelry is very dangerous and must be removed. Fingernails and toenails must be kept short and clean. Hair, body and dogi should be kept clean.

## **On the Mats**

Try to get on the mats early if possible minutes before class. Use this time to warm-up quietly and to drop all preoccupation that may have been brought into the dojo. It may also be a time to ask question and to practice things individually that you need to work on. Aikido is a life and death activity. You will need all your powers of concentration to learn effectively and to avoid injury to yourself or others.

When the senior student takes a sitting position you should immediately move to a place in line that reflects your rank. Students sit in order of rank with the highest at the right end of the line. Meditate until Sensei begins class.

If you arrive late, do your warm-ups off the mats and sit quietly at the edge of the mats until Sensei indicates that you may join the class. Do not leave the mats without permission from the Sensei. During practice you should try not to talk. Let your eyes and your bodies teach you.

If Sensei is speaking to the class or to you individually, sit quietly and look directly at him. In these matters as well as those previously discussed, you may always ask direction from senior students. Better yet, don't ask -- just watch and imitate.

## **Ranking**

Unlike some other martial arts, there are no competitions in Aikido. Ranking is done by tests on which you must demonstrate a certain level of proficiency.

Length of Aikido practice, attitude, character and seriousness and diligence of practice are all considered in promotion. Ranks proceed from fifth to first kyu (white belt) and then from first to tenth dan (black belt).

## **Deference to Senior Students**

Aikido is not a democracy. Seniority determines authority. Never correct a person senior to you. Always let the senior partner be the first to practice a technique (nage) while you are the first to receive the technique (uke). Don't give instructions as to where on the mats you should practice or how you should practice if your partner is senior to you.

## **Other Martial Arts**

Students should be careful not to criticize other Martial Arts. Practitioners and Instructors of other arts are following a different path than ours. We would bring our Aikido training into disrepute by regarding ourselves as superior.

## **Partners**

Your partner is the mirror of yourself. You can learn from any partner, regardless of their age, physical limitations, rank and capabilities. Working with some partners can be more of a challenge than with others. These are often the best opportunities to practice the spirit of Aikido and the fundamental concept of harmonizing with others. If you continue to have difficulties speak privately to the Sensei or a senior student.

Avoid competition. Competition is not a part of Aikido. Trying to win, bragging about one's power or ability and looking down on other students is not Aikido. The aim of Aikido is to become a better person and to perfect the techniques you are being taught.

## **Guests**

If you wish to bring a guest to watch class, please introduce him/her to Sensei before class. Also instruct the guest on how to behave during the class.

## Illness

Do not practice when you are ill. If you feel ill or too tired to practice during a class, excuse yourself (sumimasen), bow to your partner and then approach Sensei. Bow, excuse yourself and ask if you can rest at the side of the mats or be excused from class.

## Instruction

Never correct a Sensei. Although all Senseis try to emulate their instructors, every Sensei has his/her own interpretation of Aikido techniques. Instructions will vary from instructor to instructor and from day to day with the same instructor. Try to understand what is being taught at the moment. We should never tell our Sensei how to teach, how another Sensei teaches more effectively or how he/she could change his/her style of teaching so we could learn faster.

Our job is to learn from what we are being shown or told. Our instructors are giving a gift based upon years of study, practice and, in some cases, great sacrifice. With this gift comes the responsibility to treat others respectfully and to be an exemplary representative of Aikido.

## Expressions

**Onegai shimasu** (Please share with me)

This is said to Sensei at the beginning of class, after he/she gives instruction to the entire class or when you ask him/her for help. You also say this to your partner before practicing a technique.

**Domo Arigato gozaimashita** (Thank you very much)

This is said to Sensei if he/she has given you personal instruction during class and to Sensei at the end of class. It is said to your partner after practicing a technique and to all partners at the end of practice.

**Sumimasen** (I'm sorry / Excuse me)

Accompanied by a bow, this is said to another practitioner or couple when you accidentally bump them or to your partner when you make a mistake.

## Pronunciation of Japanese Words

Consonants and vowels in the Japanese language are pronounced the say way each time they are encountered. Thus, if you know the pronunciation of one word, you already know how the vowels and consonants will sound in another word containing those vowels and consonants. The following guide may be of help:

'a' sounds like 'a' in 'march'	'y' sounds like the 'y' in 'yet'
'e' sounds like 'e' in 'bed'	'ai' sounds like the 'i' in 'mine'
'i' sounds like 'ee' in 'kneel'	'ei' sounds like the 'a' in 'say'
'o' sounds like 'oa' in 'boat'	'g' sounds like the 'g' in 'get'
'u' sounds like the 'oo' in 'mood'	

## Counting in Japanese

ICHI one	ROKKU six
NI two	SHICHI seven
SAN three	HACHI eight
SHI (YON) four	KU (KYU) nine
GO five	JU (JYU) ten

## Some Japanese Terms Encountered In Aikido

<b>AI</b>	harmony, unity, to join or become one with
<b>AI-HANMI</b>	asymmetric stance (eg right foot to right foot)
<b>AIKI</b>	harmonizing/blending energy
<b>AIKIDO</b>	the way of harmonizing with the force and principle of the Universe/Nature
<b>AWASE</b>	matching the timing of movements of uke and nage
<b>BOKKEN</b>	wooden sword
<b>BUDO</b>	lit. "the way of martial arts"
<b>CHUDAN</b>	middle guard position
<b>DAN</b>	black belt rank
<b>DESHI</b>	student, pupil, disciple
<b>DO</b>	the "Way", path or road
<b>DO-GI/KEIKOGI</b>	training uniform, lit "clothes of the way"
<b>DOJO</b>	training hall, the place where the "Way" is practiced
<b>DOSHU</b>	honorary title of the headmaster of the Art
<b>GEDAN</b>	lower guard position
<b>GYAKU-HANMI</b>	symmetrical stance (eg right foot to left foot)

<b>HAKAMA</b>	pleated pant-skirt (usually worn by black belt ranks)
<b>HANMI</b>	relaxed triangle oblique stance used in Aikido. Lit. "Half-body"
<b>HANMI-HANDACHI-WAZA</b>	techniques performed with nage kneeling and uke in a standing position.
<b>HARA</b>	also called 'Center'; a point in the lower abdomen corresponding to the body's center of gravity.
<b>HIDARI</b>	left (refers to left side or movement to the left)
<b>HOMBU</b>	Aikido world Headquarters located in Tokyo, Japan
<b>IRIMI</b>	a (usually direct) entering movement
<b>JO</b>	wooder staff, approx. 50"-54" long and approx 1" diameter
<b>JODAN</b>	upper guard position
<b>KAMAE</b>	guard stance or ready position (referring to position of the hands or position of a weapon)
<b>KEIKO</b>	training or practice
<b>KI</b>	spirit, life force or vital energy
<b>KIAI</b>	the release of power in a piercing shout or scream. Lit "a meeting of the spirits"
<b>KOHAI</b>	junior student
<b>KOKYU</b>	breath, refers to the power released when body movement, ki flow and breath are perfectly coordinated
<b>KOKYU-DOSA</b>	breath power exercise
<b>KUZUSHI</b>	the act of physically and mentally unbalancing your opponent
<b>KYU</b>	a white belt rank/grade
<b>MA-AI</b>	the physical and psychological distance between nage and uke
<b>MAE-UKEMI</b>	forward roll or fall
<b>MIGI</b>	right (refers to right side or movement to the right)
<b>MISOGI</b>	purification (refers to cleansing of the mind, body and spirit)
<b>MUDANSHA</b>	refers to a non-blackbelt rank (ie whitebelt rank)
<b>NAGE</b>	to throw; the person who performs the technique
<b>O-SENSEI</b>	great teacher/revered teacher (refers to Master Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido)
<b>OBI</b>	belt (part of the DO-GI)
<b>OMOTE</b>	to the front (refers to movement or direction)
<b>REI</b>	to bow, perform a salutation. Also refers generally to the etiquette and an attitude of respect
<b>SEIZA</b>	formally sitting position on the knees (correct way to sit on the mat)
<b>SEMPAI</b>	a senior student
<b>SENSEI</b>	teacher, lit. ("one who was born before")

<b>SHIHAN</b>	master teacher (title for a master teacher of at least 6th Dan rank)
<b>SHIKKO</b>	knee walking
<b>SUBURI</b>	(usually) refers to body/mind purification & training with the bokken
<b>SUWARI WAZA</b>	techniques performed with both nage and uke in a kneeling position
<b>TACHI WAZA</b>	techniques performed with both nage and uke in a standing position
<b>TAIJUTSU</b>	empty-hand (unarmed) techniques, also called body arts
<b>TAI-SABAKI</b>	body movement (refers to footwork and body movement)
<b>TANDEN</b>	center (see Hara)
<b>TANTO</b>	wooden knife
<b>TATAMI</b>	practice mats (refers specifically to the straw bound mats which are traditionally used for Aikido training)
<b>TEGATANA</b>	hand-blade
<b>TENKAN</b>	turning movement
<b>UKE</b>	one who receives; the person being thrown
<b>UKEMI</b>	the way of receiving; the person being thrown
<b>URA</b>	to the rear; or behind (refers to direction or movement)
<b>USHIRO</b>	from behind (referring to attacks or techniques from behind)
<b>USHIRO-UKEMI</b>	backward fall
<b>WAZA</b>	techniques, way of
<b>YUDANSHA</b>	person(s) who hold blackbelt rank
<b>ZANSHIN</b>	position of relaxed extension and attention; Continuity of attention
<b>ZORI</b>	sandals (footwear should ALWAYS be worn when not on the mats)

### **Names of Some Attacks Encountered in Aikido Training**

<b>KATATE-TORI</b>	one handed grip on one wrist
<b>RYOTE-TORI</b>	two handed grip, one on each wrist
<b>MOROTE-TORI</b>	two handed grip, both on one wrist
<b>USHIRO RYOTEKUBI-TORI</b>	<i>ryote-tori</i> from behind nage
<b>MUNE-TORI(MUNE-MOCHI)</b>	one handed grip on lapel
<b>KATA-TORI</b>	one handed grip to one shoulder
<b>RYOKATA-TORI</b>	two handed grip, one to each shoulder
<b>USHIRO RYOKATA-TORI</b>	<i>ryokata-tori</i> from behind the nage
<b>SODE-TORI</b>	one handed grip to the sleeve (at elbow)

<b>KATATE-TORI KUBISHIME</b>	one handed grip to wrist with neck choke from begin the nage
<b>TSUKI</b>	straight punch
<b>JODAN TSUKI</b>	straight punch to the high position (face or neck)
<b>CHUDAN TSUKI</b>	straight punch to the middle position (chest or abdomen)
<b>SHOMEN-UCHI</b>	vertical strike to the center of the head with the handblade
<b>YOKOMEN-UCHI</b>	diagonal strike to the side of the head or neck with the handblade
<b>KATA-TORI MEN-UCHI</b>	one handed grip on one shoulder with <i>shomen-uchi</i> strike to the head
<b>KATA-TORI YOKOMEN-UCHI</b>	one handed grip on one should with <i>yokomen-uchi</i> strike to the head

### **Names of Some Aikido Techniques**

<b>IKKYO</b>	arm immobilization
<b>NIKYO</b>	ikkyo with hand turning
<b>SANKYO</b>	ikkyo with hand twisting
<b>YONKYO</b>	ikkyo with pressure on wrist
<b>GOKYO</b>	variation of ikkyo (knife attack)
<b>IRIMI-NAGE</b>	throw by entering (irimi) behind uke
<b>SHIHO-NAGE</b>	four direction throw
<b>SUMI-OTOSHI</b>	corner drop
<b>KOTE-GAESHI</b>	palm turning
<b>KAITEN-NAGE</b>	rotation throw
<b>KOSHI-NAGE</b>	hip throw
<b>TENCHI-NAGE</b>	heaven and earth throw
<b>UDEKIME-NAGE</b>	arm-lock throw
<b>KOKYU-NAGE</b>	breath throw
<b>JUJI-GARAMI</b>	crossed arm-lock throw
<b>AIKI-OTOSHI</b>	aiki drop