



## PRACTICING NONVIOLENCE IS A WAY OF LIFE

### VISITORS INFORMATION

Welcome to **Two Rivers Aikikai**. We have collected answers to questions that previous visitors most often asked as they watched classes. If you have additional questions, please feel free to ask.

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#### **What is Aikido?**

Aikido is the non-violent martial art. Aikido is the only effective method of self defense that does not use violence to oppose violence. The Japanese word for Ai Ki Do is written in three characters which translate to Harmony, Universal Energy and the Way. Aikido is the Way to find Harmony with the Spirit or Energy in all living things.

#### **Who founded Aikido?**

Although the roots of Aikido technique date back to feudal Japan, present day Aikido is the creation of a remarkable man, *Morehei Ueshiba*, commonly referred to as O Sensei, meaning Great Teacher. O Sensei maintained that true *budo*, the martial way, is a work of love, a path to overcome discord in ourselves and to bring peace to the world. Aikido is a martial art for perfecting one's character and spirit toward a non violent self.

#### **What are some of the benefits of Aikido?**

Aikido practice improves physical and mental conditioning. Training will increase your stamina, flexibility, balance, coordination, reaction speed, and muscle tone as well as your self confidence, alertness, focus, intuitiveness and concern for others. Aikido practice helps you develop ways to deal with stress and tension in your everyday life.

#### **Why do we bow?**

When we bow, we take the time to show respect to our teachers, to our partners, to the dojo and most importantly, to our selves. Bowing is a sign of compassion and a way to practice non-violence within ourselves.

#### **How does Aikido work?**

The essence of all Aikido techniques is spherical motion around a stable, energized center. Even when the direction appears to be linear, close observation reveals that the movements of Aikido are in fact circular. Properly executed, some techniques send an attacker flying through the air. Others immobilize an aggressor. Both results are achieved through precise use of leverage, inertia, gravity and the action of centrifugal and centripetal forces.

#### **Who can practice Aikido?**

Since it is the energy of the attack itself which brings down an attacker, techniques do not depend on physical strength to be effective. Therefore, women, men and children of all sizes and ages practice Aikido.

#### **How does Aikido compare to other martial arts?**

All martial arts emphasize good posture, movements from the center, awareness of strengths and weakness and protection of the center line. Aikido stresses non violent reaction to violence and a development of a cooperative and compassionate spirit as a foundation of martial arts training.

#### **Does it hurt to be thrown or pinned?**

Not if you pay attention. Beginners are taught how to roll forward and backward safely on the mat. They are eased into their roles as *uke* and *nage*. Aikido techniques do not attempt to injure an attacker like other martial arts. The main objective of Aikido is to convince attackers that they cannot hurt you. During practice, we learn how to control our aggressive instincts. As students become more proficient in taking falls, their partners can apply techniques more quickly and powerfully. Because of the cooperative nature of Aikido, students work together to practice at a level at which both are comfortable.

### **Is it easy to learn Aikido?**

There are hundreds of Aikido techniques and variations of techniques to be mastered. There is always something to think about and work out physically, mentally and at times emotionally. This is why we offer 4 week beginner sessions for new students. These classes are small, giving new students important individual instruction. Aikido offers life-long learning to those who want to meet the challenge.

### **Why are some students wearing skirts?**

Students who achieve a rank of *Shodan* (1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt) wear a *Hakama*, a pleated skirt similar to those worn by samurai of feudal Japan.

### **Are there colored belts in Aikido?**

There are 6 levels of white belt and several levels of black belt. New students who complete the 4 week beginner session may test for a rank of 6<sup>th</sup> Kyu and a wooden name tag on our front wall. After completing a prescribed number hours of practice, students can take tests based on the standards of the United States Aikido Federation, of which Two Rivers Aikikai is a member dojo. White belts progress from 6<sup>th</sup> kyu through 1<sup>st</sup> kyu in preparation for their Shodan test. The lack of colored belts in Aikido is a method for teaching and practicing equality.

### **How long does it take to reach Shodan?**

Anywhere from 5 years and up. Aikido is more than a science of tactics or a method of self defense. It is very difficult to defend oneself without resorting to violent behavior. It is a challenge that is worth pursuing no matter how long it takes.

### **Who are the instructors at Two Rivers?**

Two Rivers Aikikai is a member dojo of the United States Aikido Federation, under the direction of **Yoshimitsu Yamada** Shihan. Our Chief Instructor is **Spiros Koyanis** Sensei, 6<sup>th</sup> dan, Shidoiin in Aikido and 4th dan in Iaido. **Lynn Marshall**, 5<sup>th</sup> dan shidoiin and Koyanis Sensei studied Aikido and Iaido under the direction of the late **Mitsunari Kanai**, 8<sup>th</sup> dan Shihan. Kanai Sensei was the Chief Instructor of New England Aikikai and

the Technical Director of the USAF. Kanai Sensei's style of Aikido and his theory of *Toitsutai*, the unified body, is the foundation of the instruction at Two Rivers Aikikai. Assistant instructors include **Alex Nelson**, sandan, **Teri Pierson**, nidan, **Robert Fraley**, nidan and **Michael Boeder**, nidan in Aikido and sandan in Iaido. All instructors at Two Rivers Aikikai are dedicated to giving quality instruction in a safe and serious yet enjoyable manner. Instructors at Two Rivers are not paid. Teaching is part of their training.

### **What are weapons classes?**

Aikido techniques are complemented by practice with tanto (wooden knife), bokken (wooden sword), and jo (wooden staff). Practice with weapons includes solo practice- Kata, partner practice- Kunitachi and take away techniques- Tachi Tori. Weapons classes are open to students with a rank of 6<sup>th</sup> kyu and up.

### **How much does it cost to practice?**

\*\*\* **MEMBERSHIP FEES:** \*\*\*

One time registration fee:

\$50.00 for Adults & Teens

\$35.00 for Children (ages 6-12)

Monthly dues:

\$80.00 for Adults

\$60.00 for Teens (ages 13-18)

\$50.00 for Children (ages 8-12)

**4 week beginner session:** \$125.00

for teens & adults includes registration fee, gi & 1 month dues.

### **Do I need a uniform?**

Students wear a judo or a karate gi. We sell them here at the dojo. They cost \$50 for adults and \$40 for children. We also have a few used gis.

### **Can I start without one?**

Yes. You can wear sweats that cover your knees and elbows. You will want to buy a gi and zori (flip flops) after your first few classes.

Please speak directly to Koyanis Sensei if you have questions about Iaido.

Please visit our website: [www.2rivers.org](http://www.2rivers.org)  
or email the dojo: [info@2rivers.org](mailto:info@2rivers.org)