

## WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF AIKIDO

### Introduction

The first few weeks in any new activity are always the hardest, as you adjust to a new environment, new friends, strange customs and behaviour. In this leaflet you will find useful information about the Art of Aikido, the Instructors and the Club. We hope it will help you to settle in as smoothly as possible. If you want to know more, please don't hesitate to ask one of the Instructors.



### What is Aikido?

#### History:

Aikido is a Martial Art that was developed by a Japanese Master of several Martial Arts, called Morihei Ueshiba. We usually call him O Sensei, which roughly translates as Senior Instructor. Although it is a relatively new Martial Art, Aikido has its roots in some very old traditions, most noticeably Takeda Ryu and Daito-Ryu Aiki Ju-Jutsu.

#### Self Defence:

It is not acceptable in our society to take the law into our own hands. We don't have the right to injure or kill someone who tries to steal from us, for example. But we do have the right to use reasonable force to defend ourselves if attacked.

Aikido teaches people to use minimum force, and as such is the preferred Martial Art in many police training programmes, worldwide. Aikido training teaches us to get off the line of the attack, blend with it,

redirect it, and lead it to a safe conclusion. If you would like to defend yourself without becoming violent, Aikido is the answer.

Being physically attacked is not a frequent event in most ordinary people's lives. However, emotional attacks, or attacks in the business world, are everyday occurrences for many people. If you are interested, with a little imagination you can figure out how to apply Aikido principles in these situations.



#### Health and fitness:

Aikido training develops smooth, natural movement, as well as good balance and coordination. It also encourages the coordination of breathing and movement.

Everyone learns at his or her own pace. Fitness, strength, flexibility and stamina are built up gradually. Once you have learned to roll safely when thrown (take ukemi), you will be able to train at a pace that will provide you with aerobic exercise and a good all-over physical workout.

Many people report significant health improvements, and usually find they have more energy for everyday life, after they have made Aikido part of their weekly routine.

Apart from the physical benefits, Aikido also improves concentration and mental alertness. You will find that you need to use your brain as well as your body, while training.

**If you have a disability you are very welcome to class.**

We expect you to let us know how your disability affects you, so that we can work

with you to tailor the training to your individual requirements.

**If you have a medical condition** such as diabetes, heart disease, epilepsy etc., please tell your G.P. that you would like to try Aikido, and ask whether he/she considers this advisable. If you get the go-ahead from your doctor, please ask for it in writing, so that we can get insurance cover for you.



### **Philosophy:**

The central principle of Aikido is that rather than trying to injure or kill an enemy, we try to defend ourselves without harming the attacker. The goal is to defeat aggression, not the aggressor. This includes acknowledging and learning to control our own aggressive instincts.

Aikido training integrates mind and body to develop physical power. It can also be used to develop spiritual/psychological integrity - if that is your intention. Approached in this way, Aikido can be used as a path of personal development.

### **Social Benefits:**

Cooperation with others is an important component of Aikido practice. One translation of the word Aikido is: the Way of Harmonizing Energy. Learning to behave harmoniously with other people leads to better relationships. A lot of good

friendships are formed and sustained over many years, through Aikido practice.

Aikido is also a very helpful supplement to Assertiveness Training. It is much easier to remain calm and assertive when dealing with conflict, if you know that you can be physically assertive, too. Aikido training is physical assertiveness training - neither aggressive nor passive.

### **What happens in class?**

Aikido classes all over the world follow the same pattern. Class begins with bowing between students and instructor. We bow to each other to show mutual respect and our readiness to commence training.

We also bow to a picture of O Sensei. This is an acknowledgement of the source of our Art. Bowing is simply a sign of respect, in Japanese culture.

Next are the preliminaries, such as special breathing exercises (called Kokyu) and gentle stretches and warm-ups. Observe what the instructor and other students are doing and do your best to copy it.

After the preliminaries students are taught to fall safely by rolling forward and backward. Then we practice the basic Aikido steps and some exercises to develop good balance and co-ordination.

The rest of the class is usually spent on paired training. The instructor will demonstrate a technique with a club member, and when he/she is finished the rest of the class will pair off, or form groups, to explore the movement.

Everyone is required to adhere to the instructions imparted, and to train in the safest possible way. Class ends with a repeat of the bowing at the beginning.

### **What do people wear?**

Tee-shirt and track-suit bottoms/leggings are fine, while you're just checking to see if you would like to learn Aikido or not. Make sure that you have nothing sharp or hard in your pockets, and take off any jewellery, belt and watch before getting on the mat. This is in the interests of your own safety, and that of your training partners. If you don't want to take out a stud or ring, cover it with sticking plaster to prevent accidents.

If you decide that you would like to commit to regular practice, it's a good idea to buy a white suit (available from the AOI at better rates than in martial arts shops). This is called a Keikogi, and can take a lot of rough wear before needing to be replaced. Tee-shirts and leggings tear more quickly and easily, and might also be more expensive to replace.

In AOI clubs, when you get to black belt level, (Shodan) you can wear the **hakama**, which is a divided skirt or very wide trousers, usually black, worn by both men and women. It is a traditional part of Japanese dress. Reaching Shodan means that you have reached a stage at which you know the basics, and are now prepared to start learning Aikido in more depth. You may also start to teach. It's a starting point, not a finishing point. It's good to have some change of dress to outwardly symbolise that you have reached this stage of readiness.



“Aikido” in Japanese calligraphy.

### Hygiene and safety.

Everyone should wash before coming to class, and wear clean clothes on the mat, whether a keikogi or tracksuit. If you wash your training clothes after class, they will be fresh and clean again for the next class you attend. This is good for your own self-esteem, and a basic courtesy to your training partners.

Check your feet before class, as we train barefoot. Ensure your toenails and fingernails are short and filed smooth. Cuts can be accidentally inflicted by sharp nails.

Bring slippers or flip-flops to wear from the changing room to the training area, so that your feet don't get dirty on the way.

If you have a condition such as Athlete's Foot, wash your feet before class, apply anti-fungal cream and put on clean socks to wear while training, until the condition clears. This should heal the condition, and will prevent the infection spreading to your training partners.



### Training guidelines.

- Ø Watch and listen to demonstrations, but don't worry if you're not sure what to do. Just try to do what you think was shown. With practice it becomes easier to understand. If you have a problem, ask the teacher to help.
- Ø Remember it's important to learn how to give attacks correctly, “follow” well and fall safely, as well as learning to perform techniques.
- Ø Relax and enjoy your training. It's ok to make mistakes – that's a natural part of all learning.
- Ø Don't correct your training partners – they're allowed to make mistakes, just as you are! The teacher is responsible for giving the appropriate amount of correction at the appropriate time for each individual. Getting correction from everybody you train with is frustrating and off-putting. If you

want to help your partners, just try to be a good uke for them.

- Ø Respect yourself and others.
- Ø When training with someone for the first time, take it easy until you get used to each other. Not everybody can fall safely, or is used to receiving wrist-locks.
- Ø Always let your training partners and the teacher know if you are training with an injury. You may need to remind people during class, as well as telling them at the beginning.
- Ø Follow the advice of students who know how the mats should be set out and put away. This is a job that requires co-operation, so is also part of Aikido practice!
- Ø To ensure that you make steady progress and reap the full benefits of training, (improved health and fitness etc.) try to establish a routine of training every week.
- Ø **Training under the influence of alcohol or drugs is not permitted in the Aikikai Ireland Clubs.**
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**Aikikai Ireland - AOI**

### **About our Organisation**

The Aikikai Ireland - Aikido Organisation of Ireland (Cumann Aikido na hEireann) is officially recognised by the Aikido World Headquarters, Japan, for teaching Aikido in Ireland. Official Recognition was granted in July 2001 by Aikido World Chief Instructor

Moriteru Ueshiba (grandson of the Founder).

The AOI was established in June 1996 by Mr. Simone Chierchini, 4<sup>th</sup> Dan Aikikai and fellow instructor Mrs. Lara Natali 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan Aikikai. The primary objective of the Aikido Organisation of Ireland is to promote the understanding of Aikido according to the principles laid down by the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, and by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters, Tokyo.

The Aikido Organisation of Ireland has a strong interest in fostering understanding and communication between all the people of Ireland through the practice of Aikido.

At the all Aikikai Ireland-AOI Clubs new members will enjoy an open-minded and responsible Aikido practice, respectful of the principles and the tradition of the Art. High standard tuition will be at hand all year round with top Aikido Courses, held by our Technical Advisors, high rank Aikido Instructors. Grading is not obligatory, but the Training Syllabus will be covered, and anyone who wishes to take grading tests will be assisted in preparing for them. All grades are recognised by Aikido World Headquarters.

### **Technical Advisor**

*Chief Instructor of the AOI, Simone Chierchini Sensei, 4<sup>th</sup> Dan.* A native of Italy, he started to practice Aikido at the age of 8. During his Aikido career, he had the opportunity to study under some of the most highly qualified Japanese Instructors in the world. In 1996 Mr. Chierchini moved to Ireland with his wife, Lara Natali, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan Aikido Instructor, and started up the Aikido Organisation of Ireland, to which our club is affiliated.

Info: [www.aikikai.ie](http://www.aikikai.ie)