



**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.

What is Aikido?

Aikido is the martial art of peace. 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.

Why is there so much bowing?

When we bow, we show respect to O Sensei, to our instructors, to our partners and most importantly, to our selves.

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 straight forward or backward, close observation reveals that the movements of Aikido are in fact circular. Properly executed, some techniques send an attacker flying through the air. Others are small quick movements that 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.

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.

How does Aikido compare to other martial arts?

There is no competition in Aikido; nor is there violent kicking or punching. Practitioners learn in a cooperative manner as partners. Each works at his own level of ability, alternating as *uke* (an attacker) and as *nage* (the defender), in an energetic yet focused atmosphere.

Does it hurt to be thrown or pinned?

Not unless you want it to. Beginners are taught how to roll forward and backward safely on the mat. They are eased into their role as *uke* and *nage*. The main objective of Aikido is to convince attackers that they cannot hurt you. Aikido techniques do not attempt to injure. During practice, we help one another learn how to control our aggressive instincts. Yet, 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?

Aikido is not easy to learn. It is a challenge for all of us. There are hundreds of techniques and variations of techniques to be mastered. There is always something to think about and work out physically, mentally and sometimes emotionally. This is why we offer beginners classes that are restricted to students who have practiced for 3 months or less. These classes are small, giving students important individual instruction.

Why are some students wearing skirts?

Students who achieve a rank of *Shodan* (1st 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 only white belts and black belts, but several levels of each. New students who complete their 3 month beginner class acquire a rank of 6th 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 6th kyu through 1st kyu in preparation for their Shodan test.

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 a true *budo* or martial way. Aikido is a discipline for perfecting the spirit and developing a polished, balanced and sensitive human character.

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, 5th dan, Shidoin in Aikido and nidan in Iaido. **Lynn Marshall**, 4th dan fukushidoin and Koyanis Sensei studied Aikido and Iaido under the direction of the late **Mitsunari Kanai**, 8th 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. Our instructors in training include **Alex Nelson**, 1st dan and **Teri Pierson**, 1st dan. 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 who have completed their 3 month beginners class.

How much does it cost to practice?

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

One time registration fee:

\$35.00 for Adults

\$25.00 for Teens (ages 13-18)

\$20.00 for Children (ages 6-12)

Monthly dues:

\$70.00 for Adults

\$50.00 for Teens (ages 13-18)

\$40.00 for Children (ages 6-12)

Do I need a uniform?

Students wear a judo or a karate gi. We sell them here at the dojo or you can purchase them elsewhere. 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.

Do you have a new student package deal?

Yes. You can sign up for three months for \$225. -- includes reg. fee, 3 months dues and a gi. (save \$70.) This is for new students only.

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

Please visit our website: www.2rivers.org