

What Is Aikido?

Whenever I move, that's Aikido.

O Sensei, Morihei Ueshiba

Aikido is a Japanese martial art developed by Morihei Ueshiba (often referred to by his title 'O Sensei' or 'Great Teacher'). On a purely physical level it is an art involving some throws and joint locks that are derived from Jujitsu and some throws and other techniques derived from Kenjutsu. Aikido focuses not on punching or kicking opponents, but rather on using their own energy to gain control of them or to throw them away from you. It is not a static art, but places great emphasis on motion and the dynamics of movement.

Purpose

O Sensei believed that the purpose of the martial arts should not be only for self-defense or a way of defeating an opponent. Rather, he felt it should be used as a means of developing ourselves as human beings and a way of coping with the stress and confusion of a rapidly changing world.

Movements

In Aikido we never clash with an attacker head-on. Instead, utilizing evasive, circular movements we blend with the attack, leading the attacker into a variety of throws or joint locking techniques. Although Aikido is a powerful and effective form of self-defense, the techniques have been developed in such a way as to avoid permanent injury to an attacker. You don't have to be strong or young to practice Aikido. It can be practiced by women, men and children of all sizes and ages, since it uses the attackers' size and strength against them. Practice is geared toward an individual's ability and comfort level when he or she begins, and classes are conducted with a spirit of encouragement. Students help each other learn the techniques, and one learns as much from performing the technique as from receiving it.

Weapons

While Aikido does not focus on weapons practice, the movements are derived from defense against weapons attacks. The dojo does, therefore, practice some weapons training with wooden practice weapons: the jo (staff), bokken (sword) and tanto (knife). Weapons training should always be taken very seriously. Even though the practice weapons are wood, careless use of them can seriously injure one's practice partner. For this reason, weapons practice is usually reserved for students with a fair amount of Aikido training.

Competition in Aikido

There are no tournaments or competitive matches in Aikido. Instead you learn through repetitive practice in a thoughtful, studious atmosphere. Being non-competitive in nature, Aikido practices can be soft and flowing or vigorous and aerobic depending on the desires of you and your partner. Aikido promotes suppleness, flexibility and concentration as well as a confident, balanced personality.