

AIKIDO OF AUSTIN

AIKIDO OF AUSTIN was established in 1985 as a non-profit educational organization for the dissemination of Aikido technique and philosophy. A free-standing dojo was opened for classes in November 1987, with a total of seven students and **JOSEF BIRDSONG** as **SENSEI** (instructor).

After 5 years downtown at 4th and Lavaca and 5 years on Justin Ln., the dojo moved in 1997 to the current location where it currently has over 120 students.

BIRDSONG SENSEI has been practicing Aikido since 1970 and holds the rank of **YONDAN** (fourth degree black belt), awarded to him by **AKIRA TOHEI SHIHAN** (Shihan=Master Instructor).

He studied for 26 years under **TOHEI SHIHAN**, who was the highest ranking **AIKIDOKA** (Aikido professional) in the United States until his death on July 2, 1999. At the request of **KISSHOMARU UESHIBA DOSHU**, **TOHEI SHIHAN** came to Chicago in 1972 to establish the **MIDWEST AIKIDO FEDERATION**, one of three federations that make up the **UNITED STATES AIKIDO FEDERATION**.

Birdsong Sensei is **SHIDOIN** with the **UNITED STATES AIKIDO FEDERATION**, a position which gives him the authority to promote students up to two ranks beneath his current rank.

In traditional Japanese fashion, adult classes are open to students of all levels. Students with varying levels of experience practice together to the best of their ability with newer students learning from their seniors. Two classes per week are devoted exclusively to beginners. All members are encouraged to practice as often as possible. In any case, each student determines how often and how rigorously he or she will practice.

There are separate programs for children (ages 5-17), and special rates for full-time college students and families. There are no contracts. Membership dues are remitted on a monthly basis. **AIKIDO OF AUSTIN** does not promise any specific rank in return for advance payment.

AIKIDO OF AUSTIN is always open to the public and visitors are welcome at any time without appointment to observe class and ask questions. Please see our printed schedule or visit www.austinaikido.org

PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- **ADULT REGULAR PROGRAM** (7 days/week)
- **BEGINNERS' PROGRAM** (12 introductory classes during initial month)
- **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAM** (5 days/week)
- **MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM** (5 days/week)



Reasons to Practice:

When you came to Aikido of Austin you came with some purpose in mind. People begin their practice for many reasons and often find that what they get out of Aikido is something they didn't even know they were searching for. What benefits do students of Aikido of Austin find? This is a partial list based on comments they have made:

PHYSICAL

- Improved stamina & endurance
- Weight Loss
- Increased lung & heart capacity
- More energy/more feeling of being alive
- Balance/focus on center
- Carry over of gracefulness and agility into other sports & activities

SOCIAL

- Common interest,
- Shared activity with spouse or friend
- Friendships
- Social events
- A place to play

- Community of friends ("I know the other students better than I know my neighbors.")
- Common interest that can be shared with the whole family (age five through senior citizens can practice)

OTHER

- Aesthetically pleasing (It's a lot like dancing)
- Flexibility of schedule
- Self-defense
- Exposure to many related disciplines (meditation, a spiritual way of eating, sword practices)
- Peaceful atmosphere

What are you searching for?

EMOTIONAL & SPIRITUAL

- Better self-discipline
- Spiritual path consistent with one's core beliefs
- Increased ability to see other people's perspective
- Improved relationships at home and work
- Greater sense of calmness throughout the day
- Increased self-confidence
- Feel safer when traveling
- Fun
- Sense of structure in life
- Better sense of control
- Reduced anger and other aggressive feelings

- Calm under attack (both physical and verbal)
- More composure, calmness
- Re-learning how to learn
- Joy of being a beginner
- More patience
- Great way to reduce stress (leave your worries off the mat)
- Non-judgmental atmosphere
- Non-competitive atmosphere

MENTAL

- Being disciplined about a discipline
- Better concentration
- Low pressure
- A source of learning that is never exhausted



AIKIDO OF AUSTIN is a tax-exempt educational organization under the Internal Revenue Code, section 501(c)(3). Donations (though not dues or fees) are therefore tax-deductible as charitable contributions.

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AIKIDO

WHAT IS AIKIDO?



- AI** Harmony
- KI** Spirit or Energy
- DO** The Path or The Way

AIKIDO IS THE WAY OF THE SPIRIT OF HARMONY.

Martial arts are studied for self-defense and self-improvement, but Aikido differs from other martial arts in that the practitioner seeks to achieve self-defense without injury to attackers. The basic movements of Aikido are circular in nature. Most attacks are linear. The Aikido student harmonizes with, rather than confronting, an aggressive line and converts it into a circular motion that renders attackers helpless.

Instead of using potentially crippling kicks or punches, the Aikido student trains to apply various wristlocks, arm pins, or unbalancing throws to neutralize aggressors without injury. There are no kicks in Aikido, and the "attacks" that are taught are used for the purpose of learning the defense against those attacks rather than for the purpose of injuring an opponent. The techniques are designed to harmonize with the natural movements of the body. About half of the techniques involve joint locks which enable the "attacker" to be moved to a pinning position where they can be held without injury. Other techniques involve throwing the partner. Much practice time is spent learning how to fall safely.

Because of the harmonizing quality of the movements, spectators of Aikido often comment on the dance-like, graceful quality of the movements. While there is a choreographed quality to daily practice, at the higher levels partners practice with one another with no pre-conceived notion of what the attack or the defense will be. Having trained for years in harmonizing and blending with their partner, experienced students move at ease with one another and so the spontaneous movements appear like a natural dance. Due to the harmonious nature of the movements, we have seen students continue practicing well into their 80s!

In observing a class you will see the full spectrum from older or more cautious students practicing slowly to very vigorous workouts from cooperative pairs practicing full-out. There is room in the dojo for the whole spectrum and we invite you to find your place, your pace, and your own reasons for studying Aikido.

A HISTORY OF AIKIDO

MORIHEI UESHIBA, now called **O-SENSEI** ("Great Teacher"), founded the martial art known today as Aikido. Born in 1883 in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan, he dedicated himself to becoming strong after seeing his father assaulted by political opponents. He sought out and studied under masters in many traditional martial arts, eventually becoming expert at a number of styles of *JUJITSU* (unarmed combat), *KENJITSU* (sword fighting), and *SOJITSU* (spear fighting). Dissatisfied with mere strength and technical mastery, he also immersed himself in religious and philosophical studies. The stories of his immense physical strength and martial prowess are impressive enough, but more important is the legacy of nonviolence and human integrity he left to mankind.

In early 20th-century Japan, involvement in the martial arts was a competitive and dangerous business. Contest, feuds, and rivalries often resulted in injuries and even deaths. The formulation of Aikido dates from an incident that occurred in 1925. In the course of a discussion about martial arts, a disagreement arose between **O-SENSEI** and a naval officer who was a fencing instructor. The officer challenged **O-SENSEI** to a match, and attacked with a wooden sword. **O-SENSEI** faced the officer unarmed, and won the match by evading blows until his attacker dropped from exhaustion. He later recalled that he could see his opponent's moves before they were executed, and that this was the beginning of his enlightenment. He had defeated an armed attacker without hurting him—without even touching him.

O-SENSEI later wrote: "Budo (the Martial Way) is not felling the opponent by our force; nor is it a tool to lead the world into destruction with arms. True Budo is to accept the spirit of the universe, keep the peace of the world, correctly produce, and cultivate all things in nature."

O-SENSEI continued to practice and teach Aikido into his old age. Observers would marvel at his martial abilities, vitality, and good humor; he was still giving public demonstrations of Aikido at age 86, four months before his death. After he passed away on April 26, 1969, the Japanese government posthumously declared **MORIHEI UESHIBA** a Sacred National Treasure of Japan.

O-Sensei's son, **KISSHOMARU UESHIBA**, inherited the title **DOSHU** ("Leader of the Way"). In 1999, after he passed away, the title was passed to O-Sensei's grandson, **MORITERU UESHIBA**. He continues his grandfather's work at Aikido World Headquarters (called **HOMBU DOJO**) in Tokyo. Today, Aikido is practiced by men, women, and children in over fifty countries. O-Sensei's teachings enlighten the lives of thousands of people all over the world.

THE PRACTICE OF AIKIDO

Why study Aikido? Aikido offers practical self-defense, but more importantly, it teaches self-improvement. Aikido is more than the study of physical techniques. Proper etiquette, attitude, and behavior are also emphasized.

Throwing and falling are stressed equally—your partner is not an opponent, but an assistant. You acquire the technique by being thrown, and practice the technique by throwing. Aikido

improves not only your physical conditioning: stamina, balance, flexibility, coordination, strength and resilience—but your mental conditioning as well, in such areas as self-confidence, concentration, alertness, and concern for others.

Aikido has an ethic to defend yourself without vengeance, to forgive your enemies, and to harmonize with any attack of any description.

Aikido techniques

are a metaphor for a way to lead your life: avoid confrontations, harmonize with unavoidable ones, and maintain grace under pressure through good times and bad.

Techniques using or defending against weapons such as the *JO* (walking staff), *BOKKEN* (wooden sword), and *TANTO* (knife) are taught in conjunction with empty-handed techniques.

The practice uniform is called a *KEIKO-GI* (gi for short). Black skirt-like trousers, called *HAKAMA*, are worn by black-belt holders and by women of all ranks.

Students attend classes and accumulate hours of practice toward eligibility for testing. Ranks are determined through a nationally standardized set of examinations, which are held periodically. There are five ranks called *KYU*, followed by black belt grades, called *DAN* (shodan or "beginning" dan, second dan, third dan, etc.) On average, students practicing a minimum of three hours per week, and applying themselves seriously, take about five to seven years to achieve the rank of shodan.

