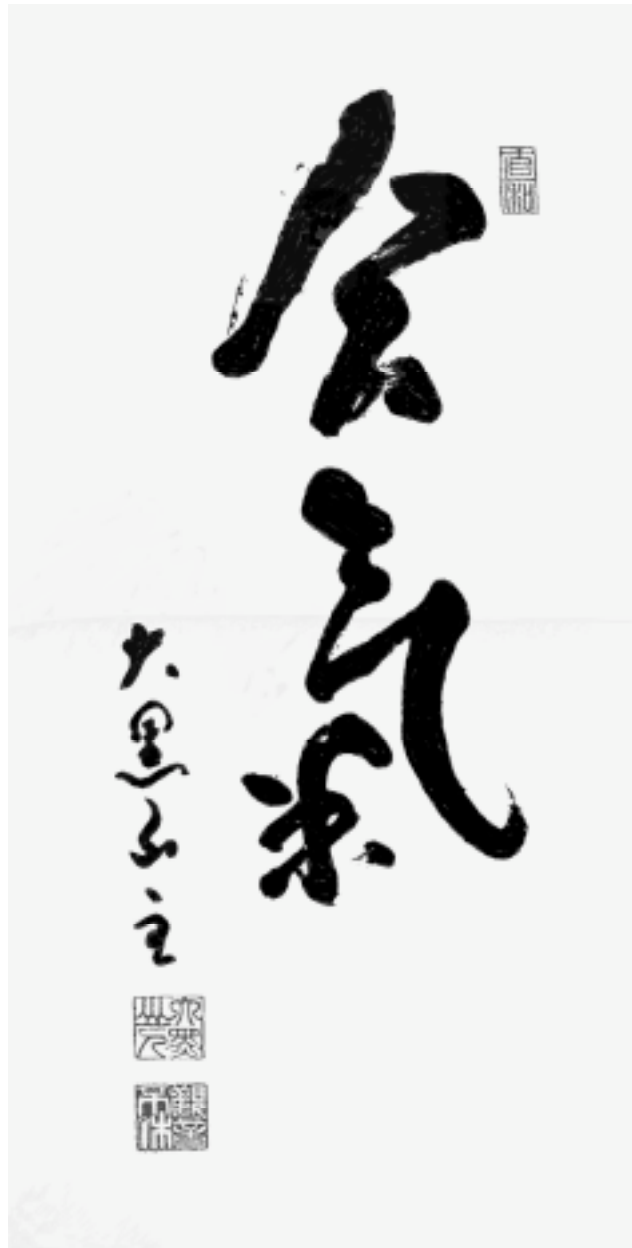


AIKIDO KENKYUKAI INTERNATIONAL
(Pennsylvania Dojo)

Student Handbook



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Basic Information for Students



"Aikido is the principle of nonresistance. Because it is nonresistant, it is victorious from the beginning. Aiki is not a technique to fight with or defeat the enemy. It is the way to reconcile to world and make human beings one family."

Morihei Ueshiba, Founder of Aikido

What is Aikido?

Aikido is both an exceptionally powerful and effective Japanese martial art, and a vastly challenging vehicle for self improvement and spiritual growth. Aikido's martial roots spring from jujitsu and Japanese sword arts. Its movements are natural and simple, focusing on timing and positioning, rather than physical strength and size. It is therefore practiced by young and old, male and female alike.

As a martial art, aikido is unique because rather than fostering a spirit of aggression, competition, and clash, aikido asks us to actually enter and find a harmonious way through conflict, not only in our practice, but in our every day life. Thus, it transforms the stress of our business, academic, and family lives into opportunities for personal growth and development.

Our Organization

Aikido Kenkyukai International (AKI), under the auspices of Takeda Yoshinobu, 7th dan. AKI has dojos in Australia; New Zealand; British Columbia, Canada; and in the USA -Pennsylvania, California, and Massachusetts. The US dojos are under the direction of Lia Suzuki, 5th dan. Suzuki Sensei has been training aikido for over 18 years, and specifically under Takeda Yoshinobu Shihan in Yokohama, Japan, for more than 15 years. In 1996, Takeda Shihan directed Suzuki Sensei and two other North American students to return and begin organizing dojos. Aikido Kenkyukai literally means "aikido research group."

Takeda Shihan



Takeda Yoshinobu, 7th dan, is the overall head of Aikido Kenkyukai International, headquartered in Yokohama, Japan. (The term “shihan” means master or accomplished teacher.) Takeda Shihan began his study of aikido in the 1960's at Aikido Hombu Dojo, training for many years as a student of the late Yamaguchi Seigo Shihan, 9th dan, who was a direct student of the founder, Ueshiba Morihei, or “O Sensei.” Takeda Shihan was soon recognized as one of Yamaguchi Shihan's most gifted students. Today he is regarded as one of the greatest living masters of aikido. Takeda Shihan's aikido is incredibly beautiful, dynamic and powerful, yet overwhelmingly soft and effortless. This unique combination of qualities has attracted and inspired students from all over the world. Takeda Shihan's senior students reflect his remarkable approach.

The Pennsylvania Dojo

The Pennsylvania dojo is a small, dedicated club started in 1996 by Lia Suzuki Sensei upon her return from nine years training in Japan. We remain under her direction. We are not a business. Monthly dues go to pay the rent and finance dojo events. The Pennsylvania dojo strives to emulate the atmosphere, traditions, and spirit of our parent dojos in Japan. We maintain an active connection to the other AKI dojos in North America, and with Takeda Shihan's dojos in Japan. Many of our students have the opportunity to make trips to train there. We also receive visits each year from Takeda Shihan or his senior students. Our Chief Instructor is Kirisawa Naoki, 5th dan, from Yokohama, Japan. Kirisawa Sensei is one of Takeda Shihan's senior students and has been training aikido for 28 years. It is a great pleasure and honor that he has chosen to come here specifically to support the Pennsylvania dojo..

The AKI Approach

In our dojo, *keiko* (practice) is high energy and fast paced with an emphasis on sensitivity and adaptability to our partner's movement. We aim to foster an exploratory and creative approach to Aikido study, rather than simply fixating on rote practice of *kihon waza* (basic techniques). Hence our name: “*kenkyukai*” means study or research group. The *kakejiku* or scroll found in an A.K.I. dojo comprises only two *kanji* (Chinese characters): **ai**, meaning

harmony, and **ki**, meaning spirit. The third character **do** (meaning Path or Way, as in Aikido) has been deliberately omitted. This is because Takeda Shihan is encouraging us to find our own Way, to discover and develop the Art for ourselves. This approach is challenging, exciting and inspiring, not to mention great fun.

Ukemi

One of the first things we learn in Aikido is how to take *ukemi* and this is arguably the most important part of our physical practice. *Ukemi* comes from the Japanese word *ukeru* (meaning to receive) and refers to the way in which we receive potentially dangerous joint locks and throws safely through gentle blending and rolling movements. Students take a lot of *ukemi* (they are thrown over and over again) during an AKI class!

Atogeiko

At the end of class, the teacher and the students bow formally towards the *shomen* (the front of the dojo) and then towards each other. For serious students however, this marks the true beginning of class! What follows next is known as *atogeiko* (meaning after practice) and is a time for students to approach *sensei* (teacher) and *sempai* (senior students) for *ukemi*. The average student will receive anywhere from 20 to 100 throws at a time, depending on their ability. This practice, while physically and mentally demanding, is invaluable for our progress as it develops suppleness, sensitivity and inner "heaviness." Once fatigued, one is no longer able to resist their partner's movement and thus, begins to move naturally and freely with no concept of mind, in accordance with Aikido principles. *Atogeiko* is a test of spirit through which we learn to extend ourselves beyond our physical and mental limits.

Gasshuku

Gasshuku (literally coming together) is a traditional Japanese custom of spending a weekend together to train. People practice and stay together, share meals, and play music, often in very beautiful surroundings. Several such camps are held each year and the practice is often led by Takeda Shihan or other high ranking instructors from Japan.

Why We Train Aikido

or

(Oh My God! What Have I Gotten Myself Into?)

It's a journey not a destination. Practicing aikido is a **process** that gives us different benefits at different stages. Sometimes these seem to come easily, sometimes with great difficulty. The important thing is to allow yourself to trust the process, and keep going. Think about what you were hoping to find when you started aikido. Most people who are attracted to aikido are seekers, looking for some way of experiencing their lives differently. Most of the time what we find is pretty different than what we expected. Do you like surprises?

This is killing me! Change is usually accompanied by pain and discomfort and chaos. Giving birth to a child, creating a new nation, fighting for civil rights, learning to ride a bicycle. Aikido seeks to change us at a very deep level. It's a change that takes place on the physical level, the emotional level, the intellectual level, and the spiritual level. It seeks to change the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us. If your body starts to hurt, it's probably not very fun, but it means that the process is working. You can see that your body hurts in different places as you progress in your training. If you find yourself feeling frustrated, it's a good sign. It usually means that you are trying hard and may be at a plateau. *Aikido is killing you* – it's killing the old you, the you that you wanted to leave behind.

Lose your mind and come to your senses. We try not to think or talk much when we train. The learning comes in the doing. Aikido has a rich tradition of spirituality and philosophy, and the hard training brings us to this most easily when we don't think too much. Ever see *The Karate Kid*? Wax on, wax off!

Pay attention! We try to be **present** at all times, and pay attention to our bodies, the people we are training with, the feeling in the dojo, and the sensei. Paying attention doesn't necessarily mean thinking. It means being more and more **aware**. We try to always stay in contact with our partners; physically and emotionally. Aikido helps us to become more and more sensitive and aware the longer and harder we train.

Have fun. Aikido people are probably a bit nuts anyway. Train hard, sweat, and keep a smile on your face. We're all just beginners here.

Dojo Etiquette & Conduct

Please Read This Carefully

1. When entering or leaving the dojo, please make a standing bow inward.
2. When stepping on or off the mat, please make a sitting bow in the direction of shomen.
3. When a technique has been demonstrated, students will bow together with the teacher and then bow to their next partner, saying "**onegai shimasu**".
4. When the next technique is called, students should say, "**domo arigato gozaimashita**" to their partner and sit seiza as quickly as possible.
5. At the end of keiko, students should seek out each person they trained with and say "**domo arigato gozaimashita**" to each one.
6. The tatami should be wiped carefully before and after each keiko. The cloths for cleaning the tatami should be laundered regularly. The training space should be kept neat and clean.
7. Students are encouraged to seek out and train with their Senpai. Each student, regardless of rank, should be looking to get the most from any training session. Therefore, it is not the responsibility of Senpai to approach kohai for training, but rather kohai to seek out Senpai. Please do not make the mistake of feeling that you are imposing upon Senpai because you're below him in rank and experience. In other words, don't be shy! Say "**onegai shimasu**" to your favorite Senpai before someone else gets to them and you miss your chance!"
8. It is encouraged that students go to their Senpai or sensei after class, bow, and say "**onegai shimasu**." to take more ukemi. This is not required, but in time will help both uke and nage tremendously in their progress and development.
9. Speaking during keiko should be kept to an absolute minimum. There is no need for social conversation, as it is distracting to others in the dojo and therefore not safe for practice.
10. Speaking after keiko should be held down out of courtesy for those who may want to participate in atogeiko. It is asked that students show courtesy to those who wish to train more after class, by holding down the volume of any conversations which may take place.

11. When you are training with someone and the teacher comes to you and throws you and your partner, please sit seiza while you are watching your partner get thrown. When the teacher is finished with you and your partner, please make a sitting bow and say, "**domo arigato gozaimashita.**"

12. For safety reasons, please take off all jewelry and accessories before training and have fingernails and toenails trimmed short.

Aikido Kenkyukai International
North Wales Dojo
113 South 3rd St., North Wales, PA, 19454

STUDENT AGREEMENT AND RELEASE FORMS
(Student Copy)

Please read the following carefully:

Students' Basic Responsibilities

1. Membership in Aikido Kenkyukai entitles one to practice and receive the full benefits of aikido training.
2. Monthly dues and the annual membership fee secure one's membership in the dojo. We are not a business. Dues must be paid by the tenth of each month. **Monthly dues are \$65. Dues are paid even if one is unable to train for a particular month.** This is a symbol of our ongoing commitment to the dojo and to our training.. The monthly dues are placed in the dojo account and are used to pay the rent and sometimes help defray the costs of special activities including visits from the senior instructors from Japan. **There is an annual membership fee is \$50** which is sent directly to Takeda Shihan and our sponsoring dojo in Japan as a mere token of respect and gratitude for their continued support of us.
3. Testing fees are to be paid directly to Lia Suzuki Sensei. 5th and 4th kyu tests are \$30. 3rd, 2nd, and 1st kyu tests are \$45. Testing fees should be paid as soon as possible after testing.
4. There is an \$10 mat fee for all visitors who are members of another dojo.

5. If a student is absent from the dojo for a month or more without giving notice of the intent to take a leave of absence, they are responsible for the dues of that period.

6. Monthly dues do not cover the costs of special seminars, gasshukus, etc..

7. Dues are not refundable.

8. Training while under the effects of any intoxicating substance, legal or illegal will be cause for immediate dismissal from the dojo.

9. Students are required to wear a *gi* from no later than the second month of their training. *Gi* should be kept clean, mended, and should not be left in the dojo.

I have read and agree to the above.

Dated _____ Signature _____

Agreement and Release of Liability (Student Copy) (Initial here:____)

In consideration for being permitted to engage and receive instruction in Aikido, I _____, agree as follows:

1. I hereby RELEASE AND DISCHARGE (Initial here:____) Lia Suzuki, Stephen Trinkle, Aikido Kenyukai USA, Santa Barbara Dojo and North Wales Dojo, Aikido Kenyukai International, their owners, agents, employees and instructors (collectively referred to as "Released Parties"), from any and all liability, claims, demands or causes of action that I may hereafter have for injuries and damages arising out of my participation in Aikido activities, including but not limited to losses CAUSED BY THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASED PARTIES (Initial here:____).

2. I further agree that I WILL NOT SUE OR MAKE A CLAIM against the Released Parties for damages or other losses sustained as a result of my participation in aikido (Initial here:____). I also agree to INDEMNIFY AND HOLD THE RELEASED PARTIES HARMLESS from all claims, judgments and costs, including attorneys' fees, incurred in connection with any action brought as a result of my participation in Aikido (Initial here:____).

3. I understand and acknowledge that Aikido has inherent dangers that no amount of care, caution, instruction or expertise can eliminate and EXPRESSLY AND VOLUNTARILY ASSUME ALL RISK OF PERSONAL INJURY OR DEATH SUSTAINED WHILE PARTICIPATING IN AIKIDO WHETHER OR NOT CAUSED BY THE NEGLIGENCE

OF THE RELEASED PARTIES (Initial here:____).

4. I hereby expressly recognize that this Agreement and Release of Liability is a contract pursuant to which I have released any and all claims against the Released Parties resulting from my participation in Aikido including and all claims caused by the negligence of the Released Parties (Initial here:____).

5. I expressly agree that this Agreement and Release of Liability is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of Pennsylvania and that, if any portion of the Agreement is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall, notwithstanding, continue in full legal force and effect (Initial here:____).

6. I hereby release all officials and professional personnel from any claim whatsoever on account of first aid, treatment or service rendered me during participation in Aikido (Initial here:____).

7. I was advised and recognize that instruction in the Aikido involves strenuous exercise and personal body contact with the inherent risk of injury, including, but not limited to, pulled muscles, dislocated joints, and broken bones, that cannot be eliminated (Initial here:____).

8. I was also advised that in accordance with the law, the Released Parties do not exclude individuals with medical conditions that do not pose a medically recognized threat to the health or safety of other students in the normal course of training. I understand that there are some unavoidable circumstances where these conditions may require special caution on my part to minimize danger to others, or myself and I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to act accordingly. (Initial here:____).

9. In particular, I understand that some students may be infected with diseases such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis that can be transmitted by exchanges of blood or other bodily fluids and that I may be training with them. I acknowledge that I have read and will follow the Released Parties' procedures (see, below, Blood Borne Pathogen Policy) for dealing with injuries to others, or myself that present opportunities for exposure to blood or body fluids (Initial here:____).

10. I understand that Aikido is an educational system. For the safety of myself and other members, I will practice in a considerate and conscientious manner and strictly follow all rules established by the Released Parties. Should I break any of these rules, I understand that it is the decision of the head instructor whether I may continue training. I will abide by that decision (Initial here:____).

11. This release contains the entire agreement between the parties and the terms are contractual and not a mere recital (Initial here:____).

I HAVE READ THIS AGREEMENT AND SIGN IT OF MY OWN FREE WILL. I FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS AND MEANING AND HEREBY DECLARE MYSELF TO BE PHYSICALLY SOUND WITH MEDICAL APPROVAL TO PARTICIPATE IN AIKIDO.

Dated _____ Signature _____

If the applicant is under 18:

I the undersigned, as parent or guardian of the above applicant, certify that I have read the above agreement and I consent to the applicant's receiving the instruction applied for and I agree to the provisions of the contract for myself and said applicant.

Dated _____ Signature _____

Blood Borne Pathogen Policy

To protect the dojo family against disease, Aikido Kenkyukai has adopted the following policy intended to minimize the risk of transmission of HIV, Hepatitis-B and other blood borne pathogens during training activities. Current available medical evidence suggests that the risk of transmission of HIV during the type of contact that occurs in Aikido training is extremely slight. Organizations such as the NCAA, the National Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Sports Medicine, and the U.S. Olympic Committee have concluded that persons affected with blood-borne pathogens, particularly HIV, should not be barred from participating in contact sports. Certain federal and state anti-discrimination laws may also prohibit such a ban. These organizations have also concluded that the already slight risk of transmission of HIV and other blood-borne pathogen diseases can be reduced further by the adoption of the Center for Disease Control-recommended "Universal Precautions". This Dojo will observe these "Universal Precautions". Generally this means that instructors and persons training in this dojo shall treat all exposed body fluids as if they were infected. Specifically, the following measures will be observed at all times:

1. If you have any open cuts or sores, you must clean them with a suitable antiseptic and cover them securely with a leakproof dressing before coming onto the mat. Make sure that the cut or sore stay covered while you are training. If your hands or feet have broken skin, suitable gloves or tabi may be worn to cover these areas. If you notice that someone else has an open cut or sore remind them of their obligation before training with that person.

2. If a bleeding wound, even a minor one, occurs during training, the person bleeding shall immediately stop training and leave the mat until the bleeding stops and the wound is securely covered. Immediate measures shall

be taken to stop the bleeding. If the person needs assistance with this then each person assisting shall wear a pair of latex gloves (which are available in the dojo first aid kit). Hands shall be washed with soap and hot water immediately after gloves are removed. All used gloves, bloody dressings and rags, etc shall be placed in a leakproof plastic bag provided for that purpose. All contaminated items should be disposed of carefully. Minor bloodstains on Gi should be treated with a disinfectant provided for this purpose. If there are major blood stains the Gi shall be removed as soon as possible, placed into a leakproof container and handled carefully until it can be laundered or disposed of.

3. If you come into contact with the blood of another, you shall immediately stop training, leave the training area and wash the exposed area thoroughly with soap and hot water before returning.

4. If blood is present on the mat, the training partner of the person bleeding shall insure that no one inadvertently comes into contact with the blood, while the bleeding person attends to his injury (in accordance with #2, above). The blood should be cleaned up as soon as possible by wiping the exposed surface with a disinfectant solution provided for this purpose. Each person assisting with this task shall put on a pair of latex gloves and shall wash their hands with soap and hot water immediately after the gloves are removed. It is preferable however that the person bleeding clean their own blood. Bloody rags and used gloves shall be disposed of as set out in Paragraph 2.

Finally, there are other diseases and illnesses aside from those transmitted through blood. You are reminded that you are responsible for not only your own health and safety but the health and safety of others with whom you train. If you know or suspect that you have any illness or disease which might infect others, please refrain from training until you are no longer a risk to others. This self-defense and consideration of yourself and your fellow aikidoka is your responsibility and part of your training. It is embodied in the spirit of the art we study.