



BERMUDA AIKIKAI

WWW.BERMUDAAIKIAI.COM

Statement of intent

Bermuda Aikikai has a zero tolerance for any form of harassment or bullying and works diligently to create a safe space for all members. We advocate mutual respect for everyone and do not support or tolerate any form of discrimination, exploitation, or harassment of anyone for any reason whether based on ethnicity, age, ability, gender identity, sexual preference, religion, or socio-economic status.

There are no competitions in Aikido, all practice is undertaken with the understanding that all members are working to help one another progress and transform. Our aim is to practice and pass on traditional Aikido in a way that is both dynamic and still safe.

Aikido is fun but not always easy. The practice will challenge you physically and emotionally, but if you put in the time, it can also change your life. The best way to know if Bermuda Aikikai is right for you is to watch a class, collect information, and ask questions. The more informed potential students are about the dojo, the practice, and the membership the better the fit will be.

Dojo etiquette and other thoughts

Although Aikido has and will continue to evolve with each new generation there are certain traditions and systems of etiquette within the *dojo* (school) that should carry on in order to protect the students and practitioners and maintain the integrity of the dojo.

What follows here is a list of *dojo* etiquette and some explanations about a few of the traditions. Most of these are obvious and essentially common sense or good manners. Others are more specifically Japanese in their origins, but even in the west remain an important part of the systems of conduct in any traditional aikido school.

1 – Upon entering and leaving the *dojo* and stepping on and off the mat make a standing bow to the room and the people in it.

2 – Always leave your shoes outside the *dojo* or in the appropriate space provided. NEVER wear shoes on the mat.

3 – Please be on time for class. This means being early enough to be changed and ready to line up a few minutes before class is scheduled to begin. If you are late, please stand at the edge of the mat until the instructor invites you on. At this point you should bow in and join the class.

4 – While in the dojo the chief instructor (or any visiting instructor) should be addressed as “*Sensei*” or their first name followed by “*Sensei*”. Specific to Bermuda Aikikai - Smith Sensei is “Sensei”, Jamie and Eugene are Jamie Sensei and Eugene Sensei respectively. Signe, who is a scheduled instructor, is “*Sempai*” to anyone junior to her.

5 – Please do not leave the mat without permission. The reasons for leaving should only be for illness or injury. If you are tired you may sit on the edge of the mat out of the way and watch class until you are ready to train again.

6 – The proper way to sit is in *seiza*, which is a formal sitting position with your legs tucked under you. If you are unable to sit in *seiza* for any length of time (it takes getting used to) please sit cross-legged. Never slouch, lean against the wall, or sit with your legs outstretched. Never sit with your back to the *kamiza*.

7 – During class when the instructor is demonstrating a technique please sit quietly and watch. When the demonstration is finished please bow to a partner to begin practice. With each new technique you should try to practice with a new partner. To choose a partner bow to them and say “*O-negai-shimasu*” which is Japanese for ‘please practice me’. When the end of the technique is signalled please bow to your partner and sit down to await the next demonstrated technique

9 – Aikido is a physical practice and though we try to minimize the risks there is always the possibility of injury. It is each student’s responsibility to bring to the attention of the instructor any injuries or illnesses that they should be aware of.

10 – Aikido is learned by doing, not talking. The instructor will demonstrate a technique and partners will practice it. Repetition and focus are the keys. Talking and questions should be kept to an absolute minimum.

11 – If you are a senior student (*sempai*) training with a junior student (*kohai*) try to avoid giving too much verbal instruction. If you have some insight into the technique try to teach by example or speak very quietly. Remember that no matter how long you have been training (four months or forty years) you will never have all the answers.

12 – Please keep your *Do-Gi* (practice uniform) and yourself clean. It is always appreciated if you take the time to wash hands, feet, and teeth before training. Please turn off all cell phones before class.

13 – Opening and closing ceremony: At the beginning of each class students line up facing the *kamiza* with the instructor in front. First everyone bows together to *O Sensei* and then students bow to the instructor while saying “*O-negai-shimasu*”.

At the end of class the process is reversed.

Students should remain on the line until the instructor has left the mat or indicated that class is over, at this point all students should thank their training partners and begin clean up.

14 – Membership fees: please pay your membership fees on time. Prompt payment is as much a part of your practice as cleaning or arriving on time. Fees are about buying instruction, but rather about supporting the dojo so that we all can benefit.

Note: if any student needs financial assistance please speak to the chief instructor or a senior student; we have policies in place to help when help is needed.

15 – Bowing: Within the *dojo* there is much bowing. We bow when we enter the *dojo*, to step onto the mat, to begin class and to end class. We bow to the instructor when a technique is demonstrated and to our partners when we practice. There is nothing religious or about the bow. Aikido is a Japanese martial art, and bowing is the Japanese way to show respect to your lineage, your teachers and your fellow students.

16 – Practice: In Aikido we practice in pairs. The instructor will demonstrate a technique, and students will pair off and practice. Each person will do the technique four times alternating between the left and right sides. After four times the roles will reverse and practice will continue in this pattern of four and four until a new technique is demonstrated and you start all over again with a new partner. The person doing the technique at any given time is called “*Nage*” and the person receiving the technique or taking the fall is called “*Uke*”. The act of taking a fall or receiving a technique is called “*Ukemi*” and this will be 50% of your practice.

17 – cleaning the dojo. Keeping the dojo clean is a way of showing respect for the practice and connecting with the space. Each evening after class we do a quick wipe down of the mats and Kamiza. Once a month we gather for a deeper post class clean. In between, if you see something that needs cleaning (wash rooms, windows, office) please take a few minutes to do what is needed.

18 – Aikido is a physical and personal discipline. All the teachings and philosophical tenants are hidden within the techniques; therefore, technique and movement are the first line of focus in any traditional dojo. Aikido is not easy to learn, but like everything the process can be enjoyable if each practitioner brings enthusiasm, humility, focus and a sense of humour onto the mat. There is no magic involved, only practice and more practice.

19 – personal issues or question. There are several senior members of Bermuda Aikikai; if you have something you wish to discuss – a question, personal, or inter-personal issue please speak to someone you feel most comfortable with and they will make sure that the issue is addressed.

20 - Parents of children in the kid's program

Parents are welcome to stay and watch classes; however, they are asked to respect the traditions and etiquette of the dojo. Please remove shoes when entering. Please turn off mobile phones. Please no food or drink. Please do not interact with your child during class unless there is an emergency that requires your attention. Please remember that it is important to lead by example.

Final note:

This student handbook is a work in progress. For more detailed information about the history and philosophy of Aikido as well as a glossary of terms please also read the USAF Student Handbook and of course if you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the chief instructor or any members you feel comfortable with.