

Aikidosphere

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Aikido - Etiquette and Transmission

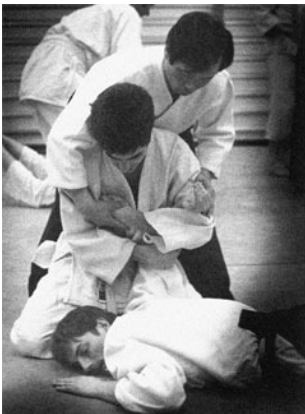
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Chapter 8

Translation by J.R. David, Aikido de la Montagne and Fiona Blyth, New England Aikikai

Editor's Note: We are extremely happy to present the next installment of Tamura Sensei's book Aikido - Etiquette and Transmission. This work, which has been available only in French is here presented first time in English. We are grateful to Tamura Sensei for his permission to produce this version.

Many thanks also go to Stephane Benedetti, 5th Dan, Chief Instructor of Mutokukai Europe Dojo Mirabeau, and student of Tamura Sensei, who translated (from Japanese), edited and published the original version, which was published by Les Editions du Soleil Levant in 1991. Photos courtesy of Aikido - Etiquette and Transmission.



Chapter 8 - Beginners

When a new student comes to enroll in the dojo, the teacher should study his or her face, language, attitude and appearance. The teacher should also find out why the new student wishes to practice Aikido, whether he intends to practice for a long time and regularly and determine whether he or she will integrate well with the other students.

It seems to me more than desirable to make at least such a cursory examination before accepting a new student.

Accepting as a student anyone who shows up at the dojo only because he or she pays his dues reflects a narrow-minded attitude. Moreover, it is disquieting that someone who bears the responsibility to guide others in the "way" would be so oriented and would behave in such a fashion.

Before entering the dojo, a beginner should be shown how to wear a gi and hakama, and how to fold them. The beginner should also be taught how to behave when entering or leaving the dojo, and how to bow to the teacher, the sempais and his partners. It is important that the teacher introduces the newcomer to the other students. It is only after a student has been introduced to the other members of the dojo that he or she should be considered as a student in good standing of the dojo.

Today it is often the dojo secretary who is responsible for controlling admissions. And yet the secretary should only be responsible for administrative issues. The decision-making power should be in the hands of the teacher -- at least in matters regarding teaching. Practicing budo is impossible in a dojo where beginners get on the mat without first introducing themselves to the teacher, and where more senior students allow this to happen as if it didn't concern them.

Beginners should start learning Aikido through basic practice such as tai no henko, ukemi, etc.

In order that they come to understand the nature and meaning of Aikido, beginners should be handled with patience, kindness, attention and precision. This will progressively bring them to a more intense level of practice.

At first, beginners feel lost and don't know what to do. The teacher's role is to avoid this situation. A beginner who is sitting alone on the side of the mat without a partner is proof that the education of the older students in the dojo is lacking.

If this situation occurs, it indicates that the dojo members lack awareness regarding how to maintain a general harmony among human beings during practice. They are not sensitive to the feelings of others. The teacher must strive to create a working atmosphere of mutual respect and harmony so that the students are highly attentive and behave in this way even when the teacher is absent. This education must take place on a daily basis.

In fact, such an atmosphere should be established without explicit intervention. Everyone should know these rules and put them into practice. Beginners will then effortlessly be integrated, thanks to the atmosphere in the dojo.