

IN THE DOJO

AIKIDO OF SOUTH BROOKLYN NEWSLETTER MARCH 2020 SPECIAL EDITION

Testimonials

As the dojo is closed, this is the perfect time for you to write and submit your 3-5 sentence testimonial about your practice and dojo. Send it to me at josh@mindbodyartsinc.com.

Promotions

Congratulations to the following students on their promotions:
–Mike A.–Adult 7th kyu
–William L.–Youth 8th kyu
–Theo A.–Youth 8th kyu
–Arel D.–Youth 7th kyu

Social Media

In the coming weeks, we'll be posting about aikido's history, philosophy, and off-the-mats benefits. It'll be a unique series of posts. If you're not following @aikidoofsouthbrooklyn, you should!

Newsletter Submissions

Got ideas for the newsletter? Want to pitch or write a story? There's ample opportunity to get published! Just write us at josh@mindbodyartsinc.com with your ideas.



*“In reality, aikido has no forms, no set patterns.
It is like an invisible wave of energy...we use
provisional forms to explain it and put it into practice.”
—Morihei Ueshiba, O'sensei, aikido founder*

Aikido at Home

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many classes and activities ranging from individual instrument lessons, to sing-a-longs, drag queen story times, yoga and dance classes, etc., have begun delivering their services online.

These pursuits lend themselves to individual, solo viewing and practice. Aikido, however, is unique. It is intentionally designed to be practiced with other people.



Aikido has no forms. Unlike many traditional arts, we do not practice empty-hand solo kata (forms), and in our dojo's standard



Aikido and the Pandemic

The adaptation and spontaneity that characterizes aikido is not limited to time on the mat. In fact, what is really important is how we apply these principles to our lives outside the dojo. Martial integrity is an absolute essential, but aikido's benefits should not be measured solely in terms of its effectiveness on the "street," in the ring, or in [Thunderdome](#). The real measure of aikido's effectiveness is how it informs, guides, and improves your life. O'sensei said that the purpose of aikido is "to fashion sincere human beings... one who has unified body and spirit, one who is free of hesitation or doubt, and one who understands the power of words." Aikido teaches us to connect mind and body when under stress, and to move and act. It all begins with the breath. Seiza—the formal posture of sitting on the shins—literally means sitting correctly. It is called so because in this position the upper body aligns properly for the flow of breath. Breath (kokyu in Japanese, meaning breathing and harmony/balance/synchronization) is central to aikido, and other mind-body disciplines. In aikido, we practice misogi breathing: deep audible breaths in through the nose, down into your center (hara), and audibly out through the mouth. However, there are many styles of breathing with many purposes (for a truly deep discussion see B.K.S. Iyengar's [Light on Yoga](#)). Ultimately, all breathing practices (e.g., aikido, yoga, meditation) are about calming the mind and body. So, breath and move forward. It is all we can do.

-Josh Paul, chief instructor

curriculum there are only four solo weapons kata. Although we use consistently expressed forms (kihon waza, fundamental technique) as a method of transmitting information, in practice these techniques—even the most basic—are in constant flux and change, always adjusting to an attacker's body type, intensity, and style of attack. As O'sensei says in the quote above, the forms are provisional. The practice is applying them to the circumstances. There is no solo practice that we can conveniently stream into your living room. What solo practice there is is rather [strange looking](#), too.

That said, there are things we can do at home to stay fit and connected. Practice your weapons kata (but not in your living room), work on the aikitaiso exercises, and practice your striking technique. Also, stretch! This is your chance to increase your flexibility. There are tons of good yoga videos and apps.



It is also an opportunity to delve into aikido's history and mythology. People who trained with O'sensei say he often referred to stories from the [Kojiki: An Account of Ancient Matters](#), but who has read any of it? Here are few other suggestions to get your aikido library started:

- [Budo: Teachings of the Founder of Aikido](#), Morihei Ueshiba
- [Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere](#), A. Westbrook and O. Ratti
- [Ki in Daily Life](#), Koichi Tohei
- [Aikido in America](#), John Stone and Ron Meyer, eds.

We have many books in our dojo library, as well. If you need access to the library, weapons, or other equipment during this time, please let us know. In the meantime, be safe and careful, and get your information from reliable sources.

(Hopefully) Upcoming Aikido World Alliance Seminars

April 30-May 3: Spring Camp, Kiku Matsu, Chicago, IL

May 29-31: Andrew Sato shihan at Aikido of Cincinnati, OH

June 26-28: Kyushinkan Dojo, Alpharetta, GA

July 15-19: Summer Camp, Kiku Matsu, Chicago, IL