

Hi all,

I spend a great deal of time talking to others about Aikido. It's part of the job of Dojo Cho to be an ambassador for Aikido and for our dojo. In addition to the expected inquiries about class times and fees, prospective students ask the usual variety of questions: how is aikido different from karate or some other art; am I too old to start practice; do I have to learn how to roll; will people be touching me; this looks choreographed—will it really work; is that black belt going to throw me that hard; tell me about how aikido started; how soon can I get my black belt; is there a spiritual component to the practice? I am very happy to patiently answer these questions and provide other information which might be meaningful to their decision making process. For example, most visitors are quite surprised to learn that we are a non-profit school and that none of our adult aikido instructors are paid to teach. We teach aikido because we have found the lessons of Aikido to be meaningful and wish to pass that experience on to others.

I would like to think that I use my aikido skills during this initial encounter—listening to our visitor/uke's questions and discerning their real concerns and then responding in a sincere and mutually beneficial way. Let's face it, Aikido and our dojo are not for everyone. I want the student to be a "good fit" for both the art and our dojo. Hence, we offer visitors two weeks of free classes before any sort of commitment to the dojo needs to be made.

Visitors always remark to me how pleasantly surprised they are by the warm greeting they receive from everyone at the dojo. During a break, many of you will come talk to the visitor and sing the dojo's praises. The warm atmosphere of our dojo is also vitally important. There is laughter and camaraderie when we practice and that joy is manifest to visitors.

Thank you for the spirit of your practice. Thank you for the warm greetings you give our visitors. Thank you for your efforts in reaching out to others.

Michael D. Goodman
Dojo Cho