

Aikido of Phoenix

Satori Dojo Newsletter

WWW.AikidoOfPhoenix.Com

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SENSEI'S CORNER

Konichiwa Deshi,

The last several weeks has seen a large number of tests here at Aikido of Phoenix. I continue to be amazed and pleased at how hard everyone works for their tests. As you all know, testing is a very serious event with me and I put a great deal of weight in a person's performance. Excluding dan ranks, we provide you with an entire month to prepare for testing and every day of it is needed.

Testing is a sensitive subject in the martial arts, especially here in the West. A great deal of weight is placed on rank and yet in many dojos across the country rank is a product simply of attendance or contracts. There is no shortage of schools that provide a direct route to black belt via check book. The argument is made that it is essential to promote retention in the student base, blah blah blah. On the other hand there are schools that promote students so rarely that most of the deshi have no idea if they will ever be promoted. Or worse yet, the promotion system is so racist that most non-Japanese deshi relegate themselves to a lifetime of Shodan or Nidan.

I attempt to strike a balance between belt mills and the eternal white belt dojo. I have discussed this in class many times, but I feel with all the testing that has occurred, it would be good to review.

When do I think students are ready to test? Well, read this carefully and save this because I am about to share the secret to test invitation. Train hard, be the best student you can be and do your best to apply Aiki to life. That's it. Sweet and simple. Want more detail? Well, let me break down each portion down a bit more.

Train Hard: What I mean by this is that when you are on the mat, that you are training. Not just when a punch is coming at you, but when you are just bowing on, or breaking for water. Utilize your training time and focus on getting the most out of every minute. Be there the whole time.

Be the best student you can be: There are general rules in the dojo that must be followed. First and foremost is cooperation with your fellow students. Over the years I have seen a number of students that seem to have a belief that they are slightly above others regardless of their rank. This is not an elitist attitude, but more like a "I understand this better than most"

feeling. While this may be true, it is essential that you come to the dojo as an empty vessel and provide your partners with the best uke possible. I see people trying to explain their belief about a technique or making corrections they believe to be right. In many cases they are not right. Do not take teaching into your own hands. If there is a problem then raise your hand and I will make the correction. This is especially true with lower rank students correcting students ranked above them. Big mistake boys and girls. Another problem area is in students resisting technique. While it is true that at almost any point you may be able to resist or stop a technique, it is also true that the nage is rarely going full speed. We train in harmony to learn the technique with a goal of eventually getting to what I call Combat Speed. Do not fool yourself into thinking that you have a special power because you can stop a nage's technique. Do not fight. This is an especially sensitive area for me because it shows an arrogance that is very un-aiki and poisonous to the dojo. If you have a person begin to do this, politely tell them you appreciate their efforts, but it is best if you simply train and that you can call Sensei over to teach the technique. One other point in this section has to do with people's motives for being in class. People come to Aikido for a variety of reasons. In a majority of cases the reasons are pure and simple. From time to time I feel a student in the dojo with a quiet agenda. They feel that they can achieve a certain personal goal through the members of the dojo. Religious recruitment, financial programs, and other similar items have been present over the years. Understand this, and I am dead serious when I say this. The dojo is a sacred place where people come together out of trust and cooperation. NEVER bring alternative plans into the dojo. People will only grow in the dojo if they feel that they are completely safe. Understand also that I have seen it all and am aware when there is a disruption in the harmony of the dojo. Come to class to learn Aikido, and that is all.

Apply Aikido to life: do your best to apply the principles of Aikido to everyday life. Blend with conflict, seek harmony and peace in all things you do. Make it your goal to make it through a single day without a harsh word or thought. See the good things in life and help people as though they were children. Seek peace and the path you walk will change for the better.

I realize that this may seem a bit much to simply get an invitation to test. I feel however that it is a healthy balance. No one ever said that it would be easy to get rank, but I will tell you this – when you do test, you will be ready. Train hard and enjoy the fruits of your work.

-In Oneness,
Sensei

THE CHANDLER KIDS' CORNER

It's been a busy month, but as always one that has been rewarding and fun. The month of May saw the beginning of the older class splitting into two groups on Wednesdays, a basic and advanced group. This went very well and already I can see the advantages of being in a smaller group. Look out details, here we come☺ James and I alternate between the two groups and we look forward to seeing what develops because of the extra attention.

I also invited the younger class to come a little bit earlier for their 5:15 class to get in some extra practice on the mat. I'm very pleased to see that some of you are able to take advantage of this opportunity. I realize that schedules are tight and that some of you just aren't able to make it, but if you are ever able to get in some extra practice time it sure pays off. I'm very proud of those who are coming early. I have seen some real practicing going on and we've been able to work out little details here and there.

Just for your information, James will be gone the first week of June and I will be gone the last two weeks of June. James will be visiting family in Kansas and I will be visiting my sister in New York. She is due to have a baby June 3. During our absences we will not be able to split the older class and we will try our best to get the dojo up and ready by 5:00 for the younger class.

Thank you for your continuing effort and positive attitudes. It's such a pleasure to be on the mat with you.

Teresa Mastison Sensei

GLENDALE GAZETTE

Greetings from Glendale. On Saturday, May 31st, we held a bottle cutting class using a "live" katana. I'm very pleased with the performance of the students. Experienced students as well as new did an excellent job cutting the bottles. The cuts were straight and nobody lost any limbs! We will try to do this class in the spring and fall at the Glendale location.

Independence Day, July 4th, falls on a Friday this year. As a result, there will not be any classes in Glendale on that night. There will be class on Saturday, July 5th, as usual.

It's been fairly uneventful at the Glendale dojo this past month. There were some tests in the youth class

and the candidates did an excellent job. I was very pleased with their performances and I am very pleased with the focus and energy of all of the kids in the youth classes. As you practice, don't worry if you don't understand a technique right away. It is through repeated training that we learn the "Art of Peace". You are all doing a great job. Keep up the good work!

I'd like to end this article with a quote from O'Sensei: "Failure is the key to success; each mistake teaches us something." (The Art of Peace; page 87.)

That's the news from the Westside.
Until next time...Sayonara!
Russ Fleegle Sensei

PROMOTIONS AND TEST CANDIDATES

Promoted:

Hachikyu – Clayton Carpenter, Ruby Morales

3rd Stepping Stone – Kyle Radosevich

4th Stepping Stone – Emilee Sparks, Connor Nigrovic

Nikyu – Darrell Wyatt

Invited to Test:

Rokkyu – Eric Aguirre, Dan Walch, Ross Gubrud

Gokyu – Phillip Snider, Wayne Johnson

Nikyu – Fred Wahlström

Nidan – Jim Clark

SHUGYU: HOW WEARING YOUR GI IS REALLY PART OF YOUR TRAINING

This is just a reminder that although we do not require anyone to purchase a gi (uniform) once that choice has been made then it is the student's responsibility to wear their clean gi to every class. There have been many comments about how hot it gets...and to this all we can say is, it's the desert and it's summer. You are not "excused" from wearing your gi just because it's getting hot outside. We are fortunate enough to train in an air-conditioned place so although it is hot outside we are not asking you to train in 100-degree temperatures inside the dojo. It's important to keep yourself hydrated throughout the day especially on training days. This means drink at least 8-10 glasses of water a day. You are also encouraged to bring a water bottle to class that you can put with your shoes. You then have access to a quick drink as opposed to leaving the dojo for a drink.

Shugyu is an Aikido principle that encompasses all that is hard, mentally and physically. The day-to-day struggle that everyone faces, the tiredness of training even when you don't really feel like it, the sweat and achy muscles you get from falling down and getting up a zillion times. Shugyu is a state of mind. It's the journey

not the destination. It's always doing what's right and your very best. It's wearing your gi even when it's the summer in the desert.

IT'S WORTH REPEATING: KEEP THE DOJO STINK-FREE

Let's all do our part to keep the dojo a pleasant place to train. Hotter temperatures mean sweaty feet and bodies, which have an unfortunate by-product – unpleasant odors. Come to class with clean feet and bodies. This goes for uniforms/clothes and socks as well. Nothing says "I'd love to be your partner" better than a clean person in a fresh uniform.☺ Thank you for your attention to this matter.

AIKIDO VIDEOTAPES AVAILABLE

Mastison Sensei has completed two videos and they are now available in VHS or CD (for computer). They are entitled **Student Guide to the Fundamentals**

of Aikido and **Kobudo: A Study of the Weapons of Budo**. They are an excellent supplement to the Student Manual as well as to your personal Aikido training and self-defense. The Student Guide video covers all the basics of your training with wonderful close up footage of how to do everything. It goes through all the hand undos, aiki taiso, ukemi, weapons forms, test etiquette and more. The Kobudo tape covers how to use the jo, bokken, obi (belt) and kuboton as tools of self-defense. The cost is \$20.00 for either videotape/CD. If you are interested in obtaining either one of these please see Teresa.

NEED TILE INSTALLED?

Darrell Wyatt has been in the tile trade for over six years and has worked with everything from ceramic to natural stone. He does installations of any size and also does repairs. He has competitive prices for quality craftsmanship. If you have any questions call Darrell at 602-570-7277.