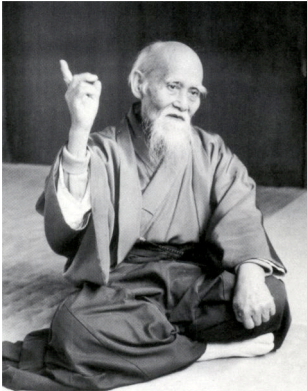


Why Kids Should Practice Aikido



Adults may practice Aikido for inner peace, relaxation, or self-defense. But these are concepts that most children don't even think about. So why is Aikido a good idea for kids? What can it contribute to their lives?

1) Aikido is a non-aggressive martial art. What does this mean? Basically, that you can't really start a fight with Aikido - you can only finish one. Aikido doesn't encourage kids to have Power Rangers Syndrome, in which they go around punching and kicking their friends, siblings, dogs, and cats. Aikido technique starts when someone else "breaks the rules", i.e. attacks.

2) Aikido teaches kids to be calm. Of course, kids shouldn't be calm all the time. But Aikido gives them the choice. If they need to sit still at school, or concentrate on homework, or focus during sports, Aikido shows them exactly how to do that. The techniques and ki testing we do teach them correct calmness. This is entirely different from keeping their emotions bottled up. Aikido calmness feels good.

3) Aikido teaches kids practical self-defense. Sarah Gray, a long-time children's class member, related a story of how an older boy was making trouble with her on the bus. Twice she used Aikido to take away his balance and safely pin him. It worked even though she was smaller (and a girl!). And she avoided the trouble she would have gotten herself into if she the only defense she knew was punching or kicking.

4) Aikido gives kids a positive world view. It teaches that in order to create something worthwhile, you must work in harmony with your environment. It teaches that if you make trouble, you will lose. But if your mind is correct, calm, and positive, you can make something good out of whatever the universe hands you.

5) Aikido teaches kids a lighter approach to life. A plodding, serious approach to life doesn't feel good. And it usually doesn't yield the best possible results. Our Aikido works best when you relax and feel light. By learning this in practice, our children can't help but apply this to their lives.

6) Aikido helps kids at school. By training in Aikido, kids develop calm, clear minds. As a result, they absorb knowledge easier, and think with greater clarity. Aikido is about developing the full human potential, and school is one of the most important places for this potential to be realized.

7) Aikido helps kids in sports. Sadaharu Oh, the Japanese homerun king, started out as a mediocre player. He attributed much of his success to his training in Aikido. The calmness Aikido gave him enabled him to learn to wait for the ball.

The balance Aikido gave him enabled him to develop a one-legged stance that allowed him to swing with great power.

8) Anyone can be good at Aikido. Aikido does not require athletic talent. In fact, athletic prowess can sometimes get in the way. The key to making progress in Aikido is simply persevering and having a positive attitude. What better lesson can we teach our kids?

9) Aikido works for little people. Since Aikido does not rely on size, or speed, or weight, or reach, it is actually applicable by children on adults. In fact, it can be quite surprising how much power our children can muster when throwing adults! It is important to remember, Maruyama Sensei is only 135 pounds, yet he throws with more power than anyone.

10) Aikido makes your kids tired. So hopefully, they'll go to bed a little earlier on Saturday nights.

<http://www.bodymindandmodem.com/Aikido/kids.html>