



No matter your size or age, regular Aikido training will improve core strength, stability, flexibility, balance and posture, as six-foot tall Master, Jean Francois Riondet of France and his qualified instructors demonstrate in their training workshop. Host Sensei Kevin Bonanno tells Glow more about this “Art of Peace.” Page ▽



Students during the International training weekend held at the dojo in Hamrun. Watch their demo videos, [page ▾](#)

HOW AIKIDO DELIVERS FITNESS RESULTS

Words: Kevin Bonanno Photos: Reuben Chircop

The weekend of 15 October was an exceptional one for students of Malta's leading Aikido dojo - the Bu Iku Kan Yamato dojo based in Hamrun. It was the second time this year when the school's French Aikido Master, Jean Francois Riondet came to lead the school through a demanding series of training sessions.

Aikido is unusual both as a martial art as it was created as a devastating fighting technique, physically derived from the ancient Samurai fighting techniques.

However it has evolved and nowadays its emphasis is on harmony and on non-violence and non-aggression. In fact it is also known as "The Art of Peace" and differentiates itself from most other martial arts in that it has not developed a sporting competitive element. Aikido practitioners don't spar or compete.

Aikido is performed by blending with the motion of the attacker and redirecting the force of the attack rather than opposing it head-on.

A typical 90 minute Aikido session usually starts with stretching and breathing exercises. Instructors demonstrate techniques with the help of a student, and then the class pairs-up to practice. Partners take turn to apply and receive the technique a few times. "Ukemi," or taking falls, is as much a part of the technique as using it.

The pace of the exchange, which can be quite aerobic, depends on a pair's combined skill and energy level. During the practice, instructors make their rounds to offer guidance, usually by applying the technique to various students. Classes often end with further stretching, breathing and meditation exercises.

In practice the effect is very similar to fitness exercises with some important differences. Certain aerobic fitness activities, such as weight training, emphasize contracting movements. In Aikido, pushing or extending movements are much more common than pulling or contracting movements. Aikido training does not attempt to isolate specific muscles or muscle groups to improve tone, mass, and power. Aikido-related training emphasizes instead the use of coordinated whole-body movement and balance similar to yoga or pilates. Aikido training tends to emphasize controlled relaxation and endurance rather than to strength training. Qualities that are particularly suitable for those who seek a regimen that they can do all their lives.

The mental elements of Aikido are also of great benefit. As with all martial arts, the exposure to 'controlled' threat teaches one to remain calm in the face of the unexpected. As it is also important to keep steady, deep breathing while training this assists in developing focus and composure. The emphasis on balance and, in the particular case of Aikido, on harmony and non-violence, teaches the practitioner to lift his or her spirit beyond the world of competition, aggression and 'beating others'. ▾

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“The pace of the exchange, which can be quite aerobic, depends on a pair’s combined skill and energy level,” says Sensei Kevin Bonanno of Yamato dojo in Hamrun.

Aikido training is truly holistic. It encourages a supple body and a thoughtful mind. Regular aikido training will improve core strength, stability and flexibility as well as balance and posture.

Sensei Riondet was accompanied by his Japanese wife who is also a qualified instructor and assisted in the sessions in Malta as well as four of his advanced students. Apart from demonstrating a number of advanced defense techniques Riondet and his wife demonstrated several stretching and breathing exercises that are designed to assist in Aikido training and form an integral part of Aikido syllabus.

The Bu-lku-Kan Yamato dojo is Malta’s leading Aikido Club. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the art of traditional Aikido. The club is a branch of the French Bu lku Kan-Provence Aikido Club.

The Maltese dojo is one of six dojos that make up the French school which was founded by Jean Francois Riondet, a student of Hirokazu Kobayashi Shihan who was a direct disciple of O'Sensei, the founder of Aikido.

The Yamato club regularly receives visiting Aikidoka from overseas and warmly welcomes the opportunity to enrich its Aikido experience and broaden the Aikido friendship and community.

Whether you are a new student or an experienced Aikidoka feel free to stop by the dojo to observe, ask questions or practice.

For information, contact:

Aikido Malta on Facebook or at www.aikidomalta.net

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