

ATTENDANCE

“Be patient,” I say. “Aikido is more than just learning a set of techniques. It’s a way of life. It’s a way of thinking about things.” He looks at me thoughtfully for a moment, then comments, “It’s like the part in *The Empire Strikes Back* when Luke Skywalker says to Yoda, ‘Yes, I’ll be patient Master; just teach me now.’”

In Search of the Warrior Spirit, Richard Strozzi Heckler

Attendance is very important in learning *Aikido*. However, attendance encompasses more than just being physically present in class. It is important to be on time for class, to help set up the *dojo* and prepare yourself for training. It is also important to have a respectful attitude towards your training, your fellow students and yourself, and to pay attention to the instructor. Without a serious attitude towards your training, you are wasting your time and money. In addition, the *dojo* is an interdependent community: other members depend on you to help them train and to help set the tone for the learning experience. Regular, on-time attendance helps establish a good atmosphere for learning.

Remember that you are learning the entire time you are in the *dojo*, not just when you are performing a technique. As *uke*, you have the opportunity to improve your attacking and falling skills, and to feel how other people do the same technique. As an observer, you can notice the interaction between *uke* and *nage*, and improve your understanding of how different people handle a situation. Ideally, there is no wasted time from the moment you enter the *dojo* until you leave it: you are learning the entire time.

Clearly, there are times when you can’t be present in class. We understand that each person has a variety of commitments, and that *Aikido* practice will not always be the foremost of them. It is important to note, however, that the *dojo*’s commitments (providing a space, mats, and instructors for your training) don’t stop just because you can’t attend. Your dues do not purchase a certain amount of training, but rather secure for you the opportunity to train. Even if you can’t attend, that opportunity still exists. We recognize that there will be times when a member will need to take a leave of absence from training, and we are always willing to work with individuals to adjust dues based on unusual circumstances. However, in general, absence from class will not be sufficient reason for nonpayment of dues.