

IAIDO SAFEGUARDING

SAFE PRACTICE/SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Milton Keynes Aikikai:-

Contents

1. Commitment to Safeguarding
2. Principles
3. What is Iaido & Why we practice it
4. Protocols
5. Safe Practice Policy

Commitment to Safeguarding

Milton Keynes Aikikai acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare and safety of our students, and is committed to ensuring our safeguarding practices reflect the statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practices. We expect everyone who is a part of our school/club to share this commitment.

Principles

The policy recognises that the welfare, interests and safety of students are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, ability or disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, socio-economic background, MK Aikikai:

- promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of our students
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and safe practice
- ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern.
- creating a culture of zero-tolerance of harm to adults

What is Iaido & Why we practice it

Iaidō (居合道), abbreviated Iai (居合), is a Japanese martial art that emphasises awareness and being capable of quickly drawing the sword and responding to sudden attacks.

Iaido consists of four main components: the smooth, controlled movements of drawing the sword from its scabbard (or saya), striking or cutting an (imaginary) opponent, ceremonial shaking blood from the blade, and finally replacing the sword in the scabbard. Beginner practitioners of Iaido start learning with a wooden sword (bokken). Most practitioners use a blunt-edged sword called an Iaitō. After much practice, more experienced practitioners may opt to use a sharp-edged sword (shinken).

Iaido isn't about the act of fighting with a sword. The sword and the skills to employ it effectively are instead used as a vehicle for physical conditioning and personal development, since there is no practical use for the sword in modern society. Iaido is not an energetic physical practice, but more a slow purposeful, meditative practice.

Iai is a practice that encourages the student to focus on their actions in relation to their environment, creating awareness of and sensitivity to how their actions can affect others around them. It is used more as a meditative practice, similar to zazen, however using the physical act of using a sword to sharpen one's mind and bring oneself into focus, thus encouraging introspection and self development.

We use Iai practice to supplement our training in Aikido, learning principles in Iai that we can then apply to our main practice of Aikido.

Protocols

This protocol is designed to mitigate the risks of training in laido, by providing guidance on who may practice as well as the correct use, transportation and storage of weapons used for practice.

1. Who can practice.

- i. laido classes remain by invitation only, having met the below requirements. The Chief Instructor reserves the right to have the final say.
- ii. Students must be 18 years of age.
- iii. Students must have completed 100 aikido bukiwaza (weapons) classes, and demonstrate competency in the basic use of a sword.
- iv. Students should watch at least one laido class before participating.

2. Types of weapons

i. Wooden

These are used in aikido and iaido classes, they are made of wood, and are for the purpose of safely training in bukiwaza and iai, in solo and partnered work.

In the case of bokken and tanto, these either have a blunt end or a rounded point. The use of both is covered by the JAC (Joint Aikikai Council)

ii. Metal (non-live)

These are used only in laido classes, often called iaito, they are blunt blades made of a zinc alloy, to prevent sharpening. Under the 2008 Amendment to the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Offensive Weapons) could include weapons made from wood, alloy, carbon fibre or even plastic. The use of such weapons is covered by the JAC insurance policy

iii. Metal (Live)

These are metal blades able to hold an edge, and are only used by experienced students, with the Chief Instructor's permission. Under the 2008 Amendment to the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Offensive Weapons) could include weapons made from wood, alloy, carbon fibre or even plastic. The use of such weapons is covered by the JAC insurance policy

3. Basic Protocols

The following basic protocols and risk assessment requirements should be applied to the use of ALL types of weapons.

i. Transportation And Storage

- The law regarding the carrying of weapons in a public place is contained in Section 1 of the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 & Section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.
- Students carrying weapons who are stopped by the Police, should give every assistance to the officer(s) including an explanation of why such weapons are being carried. No attempt to conceal the fact that weapons are being carried should be made.
- Students should carry their Membership book to show they are participating in an approved martial art.
- Weapons should only be carried when it is known that they are required at a particular training session.
- Weapons should only be carried directly to and from a practice.
- Weapons should not be left in a vehicle on a permanent basis.
- Students should ensure that their weapons are carried within a secure bag at all times and hence not directly visible, and should ensure that the bag is never left unattended.
- “Live blades” must always be transported in their scabbard and in a weapons bag
- All live blades are to be stored in a locked and secure cupboard/locker if left in the dojo the Chief Instructor will have access to them, as they will have the only key.
- If not kept at the dojo, live blades should be kept in a secure place at the student’s homes.

ii. Risk Assessment

Before starting a training session the instructor should carry out a risk assessment including considering the following factors:

- The Dojo floor should be clean and present no tripping hazards.(check for holes, gaps etc and potential slippage from sweat)
- The height of the ceiling should be sufficient to avoid contact with weapons
- Avoid dangerous obstructions, pillars, heaters etc.
- The Dojo should be large enough for the number of students and the activity.
- Ensure students know how to check their own equipment and its safe use.
- Weapons and any related equipment should be checked, by the user, prior to the classes for any defects.
- The student’s gi and hakama should be worn correctly to avoid the risk of tripping over or weapons becoming entangled in clothing.

iii. Training with “Live Blades”

- Practice should be for classes under the strict and direct supervision of a qualified Instructor
- Have a minimum of 12 months of practice with wooden bokken. However, this can be at the discretion of the Chief Instructor and is based upon the ability of the student.
- The Instructor should ensure the students always practise what is being taught and not permit any deviation during the training session.
- There should be absolute quiet on the mat by all watching students with an atmosphere of study and concentration.
- Dry sweaty wrists and palms with a towel before practice.
- Unused blades should be placed in its scabbard, and securely located at the sides of the dojo.
- Non-participating spectators are not permitted, except in organised public demonstration, or invitation by the Chief Instructor..

Safe Practice Policy

Milton Keynes Aikikai acknowledges that martial arts and Iaido specifically, are activities where safe practice is essential to help prevent injury for all participants. It is our aim that this guide to safe practice will ensure that as many possible dangers are mitigated or eliminated from our day to day training.

1. Safe Training Environment

The environment should be fit for purpose, and checked by the instructor before class to ensure that the following items are as far as reasonable, suitable for training in a safe environment.

i. Floor

The floor surface of the dojo should be suitable for purpose; i.e having sufficient level of grip, but allowing for sliding and twisting of the feet and body. The floor should also be clean and devoid of any hazards such as holes/uneven surfaces, or objects that could cause injury.

Mats need to be kept in good condition; being cleaned regularly, repaired or replaced if damaged. Additionally, spills such as blood need to be wiped clean immediately, and sanitised, to avoid any contamination through cuts or cracks in the feet of participants.

ii. Lighting

Lighting should be adequate for safe vision. Artificial lighting should be well positioned to avoid glare and direct shine. Curtains or blinds should be used to prevent glare from the sun.

iii. Surrounding Area

All wall fixings such as power sockets, pictures, clocks and notice boards should be securely mounted, and have the appropriate amount of protection. Such as padding or edge protection. Unsecured objects such as items on shelves must be checked for stability. There is also a safe area an appropriate distance from the matted area for the use of spectators and visitors.

iv. Spatial Considerations

There must be an adequate amount of space for the number of students attending the lesson. This is to ensure that injuries do not occur, as equipment (bokken or iaito) is being used. This is also beneficial to ensure that the instructor can monitor the class easier, as well as ensuring that the students can clearly see the instructor. Good discipline is important to maintain safe spacing of students.

v. Equipment

All equipment used should be in safe and working order. Iaito will only be used by those with permission from the Chief Instructor. Time is set aside at the end of class for the students to clean and maintain iaito, to ensure they are safe to use. No jewellery is to be worn, and nails should be short.

2. Class Structure

i. Warm-up

Even though Iaido is not a particularly dynamic and cardiovascularly demanding as other martial arts, it is still good practice to start each session with a warm-up, so as to increase the blood flow to the working muscles and surrounding areas, this then brings with it an increase in heat, which makes the muscles and soft tissue more elastic and thus less prone to injury. We use activity specific warm-ups and exercises to target particular actions and muscle groups that will be used during class.

ii. Class

The basic structure of a class is as follows; warm-up, that includes specific exercises and stretches. Technical focus, learning and practising the forms of the techniques required. Finishing off with a cool down exercise, to again reduce the risk of injury.

During class each student is assigned a space large enough for what is being practised, to minimise the risk of injuring anyone else. When the instructor is demonstrating the students return the bokken/iaito to the saya (scabbard) and sit to the side of the mat giving their full attention to the instructor. Every movement is slow, smooth and purposeful, emphasising correctness and accuracy of technique rather than speed and power, this is done to again reduce risk of students not being in full control of their equipment.

Everything is either done together on a count, to give the instructor more control of the room and the students, or the individual pace of the students, to give the instructor the chance to give

personal instruction to each student. Both of these teaching methods are done to minimise any risk to the participants, either increasing teaching control, or correcting any bad habits that could lead to unnecessary risks immediately.

iii. Reiho

Reiho is the formal start and finish of the class. Rei in Japanese translates to respect. This highly emphasised attitude is integral to safe practice, as it ensures that all students behave in a controlled and mature manner during class, being able to take instruction and criticism especially when the safety of the participants is at stake.

The Reiho consists of bowing to the shomen (head of the dojo), the instructor and the bokken/iaito itself. This creates an environment of seriousness, again minimising the unnecessary risks involved with such practice such as playing/fooling around. As bowing to the bokken/iaito informs the participants that it is not an object for playing, and is more of an integral piece of equipment for our practice.

Swords in Japanese culture are seen and treated as more than a simple weapon, they are seen also as works of art themselves, and given the same reverence as traditional artworks.

iv. Cleaning

After class, participants clean the dojo (training space) and their iaito. Bokken are not cleaned after each practice, as their maintenance requires them to be sanded and oiled on a semi-regular basis to avoid splinters and breakage.

Iaito are wiped and oiled after each practice to ensure that they are in serviceable condition and to avoid any possible rusting of the blade. The saya (scabbard) is also inspected for any possible damage that could cause injury. If any problem with the equipment is found it should not be used for training and the issue reported to the instructor. Who can then give advice about how to correct any possible issue, or organise for the item to be disposed of in the appropriate manner.

Cleaning the dojo as a group regularly can ensure that fewer things are missed, and the space is kept in a suitable condition for training. The mats are swept, to remove any dust or small debris that has found its way onto the mat. They are then wiped down, to remove any sweat patches that could cause slipping. Additionally, if there has been any minor injury that draws blood; for example from the feet or fingers/hands, they are sanitised to avoid contamination.