

Body language *Aikido*

Hitoshi Nagai, chief instructor at Aikido Doyu-Kai Hong Kong, shows **Emily Liu Yi** a gentler form of fighting

What exactly is Aikido?

Compared with other Japanese martial arts, Aikido is less aggressive and offensive, and does not involve weapons. It is more about how to protect yourself and avoid attack from your enemies than fighting back to kill or injure. It is a more sophisticated sport since you have to take down your opponent without hurting them.

What is a normal class like?

There are over 2,000 techniques and body movements in Aikido. Generally, I demonstrate a technique to the class, and then they practice with their partners. We train everyone together, regardless of age, because seniors can help the juniors; the whole class is like one big family.

Who's your typical practitioner?

Anyone can practice

Aikido. It's about mindset not body condition. We have students from eight to 60 years old in our class.

Is there any etiquette involved?

We are not just teaching techniques, but also traditional Japanese manners and philosophy; how to enter the mat, how to bow, how to face to the opponents, and how to start and finish the training – it's kind of like a Japanese tea ceremony. We call our training space a dojo, and it is a spiritual place because Aikido is about training body and spirit together. The dojo is our holy land, a world separate from the outside.

What are the benefits?

People become more confident by going beyond their physical limits. But more importantly, you become connected mentally with your opponent, and learn how to respect them. *Emily Liu Yi* Aikido Doyu-kai Hong Kong, Sham Shui Po Dojo, 6/F, Pei Ho St Sports Centre Municipal Service Bldg, 333 Ki Lung St, Sham Shui Po; North Point Dojo, Java Rd Sports Centre, 99 Java Rd, North Point. 6340 5053

