



Phillip Smith: The Positive Effect of Aikido (and Other Martial Arts) on Mental Health in Adolescents



Phillip Smith is a 7th Dan Shihan in Aikido and one of the senior instructors of the UK Aikikai. He teaches regularly at Ren Shin Kan Dojo, as well as being an Assistant Professor in Sports Science at Coventry University. Learn about the research he conducted on the benefits of Aikido training on adolescents.

**TOP EMBODIMENT TIP:** Just move. Try to connect to somebody and just enjoy moving, whether it's dance, martial arts, or another activity. Just do it.

The Benefits of Martial Arts:

- **Physical:** increased aerobic capacity, balance, strength, flexibility, reduced body fat %.
- **Mental:** improved anger management and sense of well-being; decreased depression and sleep disruption; positive effect on ADHD, improved social identity, independence and adaptability.
- **Social:** lower frequency of aggression, greater frequency of helpful bystanding over time, decrease in aggressiveness and anxiety and increase in self-esteem.

What is Aikido:

- Japanese martial art developed in 1930 by Morihei Ueshiba, characterized by throws and pins through joint locks and holds.
- Non-confrontational with an emphasis on cooperation between participants.
- It's not a sport. It's a discipline, an educational process for training the mind, body, and spirit.
- **"True Victory is Self Victory"** (Old Japanese saying). Physical technique is not the final objective, but rather a tool for self-development and spiritual growth.
- Attitudes of respect, sincerity and modesty, combined with proper atmosphere are essential to the learning process.

Research Study at Ren Shin Kan Dojo:

- Could Aikido be an acute mental health intervention in at-risk adolescents with behavior issues? Participants (29) received 8 sessions, 90-minutes each and a certificate of completion.
- Measured using YPCore 10 (YPC) tool before and after each session. Score of 10-40 indicates risk of harmful behaviors and in need of psychological support.
- Results: Marked improvement for group as a whole (YPC decreased by 25.56%). Biggest effect seen in adolescents on the verge of developing serious issues. Aikido possibly helped to stop or slow them down.
- Full article available on academia.edu

Resources

- ❖ **Website:** [aikidodudley.org.uk](http://aikidodudley.org.uk)
- ❖ **Facebook:** [Ren Shin Kan](https://www.facebook.com/RenShinKan)



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Rafe's work has been featured in TEDx, the Journal of Ancestral Health, Paleo Fx, the Ancestral Health Symposium, The Embodiment Conference, multiple health and well-being podcasts, and he even organized the first international parkour events in the United States.



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