



# Aikido: Mindfulness in Action

## A Program for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness

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### Aikido Program

- Partnership between Canadian Mental Health Association Windsor Essex County Branch, Mental Health Connections, Chudokan Dojo, and class instructor, Dr. Annette Dufresne
- Program operating since 2004
- Classes held in community at dojo facility, to help build links to community activities and provide an activity/ accomplishment outside the mental health system

### Class/Session Description

- Weekly classes led by Psychologist who has black belt in Aikido
- Class includes warm-ups and basic movements practiced solo, and techniques practiced with partner
- Class also includes circle discussion of how aikido concepts can be applied in everyday life
- Principles of non-competitiveness, cooperation, respect, and helping one another are nurtured with all students

### Program Participants

- Program open to individuals diagnosed with a serious mental illness
- Range of Ages – 18 yrs to 70 yrs.

### Aikido

- Aikido - The Way of Harmony, the Art of Peace
- Involves blending with energy of other person as a means of self-defence
- Involves practice focussing in the present – as if one’s life depended on it
- “The Art of Peace is the principle of nonresistance. Because it is nonresistant, it is victorious from the beginning. Those with evil intentions or contentious thoughts are instantly vanquished. The Art of Peace is invincible because it contends with nothing.” Morihei Ueshiba, Founder of Modern Aikido

### Mindfulness

- Being fully present in the moment
- Involves an attitude of acceptance, and being non-judgmental
- Involves working with whatever arises in the present
- “The best way to capture moments is to pay attention. This is how we cultivate mindfulness. Mindfulness means being awake.” Jon Kabat-Zinn

### Perceived Benefits:

Themes Identified from Qualitative Data:

- Health/physical benefits
- Psychological benefits
- Cognitive benefits,
- Perceived increase in self-defence skills
- Social Benefits
- Applying Ideas/philosophy to life

### Illustrative Quotes:

- “My ability to concentrate and focus has really improved.”
- “Maybe it’s not just from Aikido, but I have realized that if I’m ever going to get anywhere, I have to get out of my comfort zone.”
- “It makes me more aware.”
- “Sense of physical and emotional accomplishment.”

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