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### AIKIDOTHERAPY AS A METHOD OF OVERCOMING STRESS

*The authors of this article consider Aikido in the context of its positive impact in the process of overcoming stress, normalization of the mental state, self-control, etc. Not limited to the perception of aikido as one of the types of martial arts or the discipline of Budo, we define its place as a separate recreational direction, i.e. aikidotherapy. The relevance and importance of which is especially increasing now, in the conditions of the global crisis and military actions on the territory of Ukraine, against the background of constant high emotional tension.*

*It was determined that a similar approach in the world practice of both psychological science and some European and American aikido schools is not new, but it is used mostly for the purpose of physiological and psycho-emotional rehabilitation and socialization when working with children and adolescents with developmental disabilities. Most of the existing techniques are related to overcoming states of anxiety and isolation.*

*As for the approach proposed in the described experiment, it arose in the conditions of the functioning of a mixed aikido group in the realities of military actions in the zone of occupation. When, regardless of the presence of a direct threat to life in the occupied city due to the lack of foodstuffs and medicines and constant moral pressure from the occupation authorities, emotional exhaustion was observed, which was expressed in a general state of constant fatigue, reluctance to do anything, refusal of food and physical activity.*

*The presented article discloses and characterizes the state of physical culture and sports activities of aikido athletes, the effectiveness and relevance of which is not only in the formation of motor skills of self-defense and in the development of reaction, coordination and possession of weapons, as well as skillful work and effective interaction with a partner. One of the most important aspects of the aikido practice is the recreational component, which involves not only the restoration of the body and the study of certain techniques and movements, but also a powerful positive effect on self-control, the ability of focusing attention, and the reduction of the pain threshold both physical and emotional.*

*It was found that Aikido classes aimed at harmonizing the psycho-emotional sphere in order to overcome the effects of stress, using additional forms of work and influence, which included both physical exercises and psychological methods, had a significant positive effect on the well-being of the subjects.*

*The results of the presented research can be used at enterprises and in educational institutions for persons of any age to optimize the production and educational process, to improve the psychological state both in the team, and with the aim of normalizing the psycho-emotional and physical balance and harmony of each individual.*

**Key words:** aikido, aikidotherapy, aikitherapy, overcoming stress, stress.

**Серпутько О., Степанюк С., Слімаковський О., Харченко-Баранецька Л. Аїкідотерапія як засіб боротьби зі стресом.** Автори даної статті розглядають аїкідо в контексті його позитивного впливу в боротьбі зі стресом, нормалізації психічного стану, самоконтролю тощо. Не обмежуючись сприйняттям аїкідо як одного з видів однокорств, чи дисципліни Будо, а визначаючи його місце у якості окремого рекреаційного напрямку – аїкідотерапії, актуальність та значення якого особливо зростає зараз, в умовах глобальної кризи та воєнних дій на території України, на фоні постійного високого емоційного напруження.

*Визначено, що подібний підхід у світовій практиці як психологічної науки, так і деяких європейських та американських шкіл аїкідо, не є новим, проте використовується здебільшого з метою фізіологічної та психо-емоційної реабілітації та соціалізації при роботі з дітьми та підлітками з порушеннями розвитку. Здебільшого існуючі методики пов'язані із подоланням станів тривожності та замкненості.*

*Що ж стосується підходу, запропонованого в описуваному експерименті, він виник в умовах функціонування змішаної групи з аїкідо в реаліях воєнних дій в зоні окупації, коли, не зважаючи на відсутність прямої загрози життю і навіть можливості продовжувати тренувальний процес, в окупованому місті через брак продовольчих товарів та медикаментів та постійного морального тиску з боку окупаційної влади, спостерігалось емоційне виснаження, що виражалось у загальному стані постійної втоми, небажанні щось робити, відмова від їжі та фізичної активності.*

У представленій статті розкрито та охарактеризовано стан фізкультурно-спортивної діяльності спортсменів з айкідо, ефективність та актуальність якої полягає не тільки у формуванні рухових навичок самозахисту та розвитку реакції, координації та володінні зброєю, так само, як і вмінні роботи та ефективної взаємодії з партнером. Одна з важливих сторін практики айкідо є рекреаційна складова, яка передбачає не тільки відновлення організму та вивчення певних технік та рухів, а й потужний позитивний вплив на самоконтроль, вміння зосереджувати увагу, зниження больового порогу, як фізичного, так і емоційного, що виражається як напруження, моральне виснаження, втома тощо.

Виявлено, що заняття з айкідо, направлені на гармонізацію психоемоційної сфери з метою подолання наслідків стресу, з використанням додаткових форм роботи та впливу, що включали в себе як фізичні вправи, так і психологічні методики, мали значний позитивний вплив на самопочуття підослідних.

Результати представленого дослідження можуть використовуватися на підприємствах та в учбових закладах для осіб будь-якого віку для оптимізації виробничого та учбового процесу, для оздоровлення психологічного стану як у колективі, так і з метою нормалізації психо-емоційної та фізичної рівноваги та гармонії кожної окремо взятої особистості, незалежно від займаної посади, ролі у суспільстві та рівня попередньої фізичної підготовки.

**Ключові слова:** айкідо, айкідотерапія, айкітерапія, боротьба зі стресом, стрес.

**Formulation of the problem.** In the conditions of life in an occupied city in the realities of war, the need to continue training was obvious, because constant emotional tension and stress were visible – insomnia, loss of appetite, apathy, which were observed in both children and adults.

With the remote support of colleagues from other universities and cities, and having experience in rehabilitation work with adults with cerebral palsy, we developed and tested a new method of teaching aikido, which was called "aikidotherapy". It envisaged an emphasis on the emotional sphere of practitioners. For this purpose, we formed a single mixed group, in the work of which not only general physical, but also special exercises from various disciplines were used. Special attention was paid to the communication of both the trainer with the group, and the group members among themselves, the intellectual component, as the basis of understanding those processes happening to the body during the training, as well as a multifaceted approach. The latter involved not only working on the tatami, but also practicing jumping and ukemi on the trampoline, learning acrobatics elements, as well as working with weapons in the open air and functional training. An important point was that each of the group members could freely bring their acquaintances, friends or family members to the class.

The main task faced by us as the organizers of this group was to help the group members not only to overcome stress by practicing aikido, but also to help them develop the skills of self-suggestion and self-control by performing breathing exercises, Taizo techniques, physical activity, etc., to prevent stressful conditions in the future. So that a person cannot only independently overcome their own negative psychological states, but also acquire certain movement skills that would become the basis for further physical and recreational activities.

Thus, the **purpose of research** was to formulate a methodology of aikidotherapy, which could be effective with overcoming the stress in the conditions of war and post-war states.

**Materials and methods of research.** According to the testimony of aikido masters, special interest in this type of martial art, and as a result a sharp increase in the number of followers is observed in difficult times for society [3, 4, 9]. It can be an economic or political crisis, natural disasters, military operations and their consequences for the mental health of society. Studying this issue, we concluded that the cause of this phenomenon is in the canons of this martial art, which is restored to the disciplines of Budo, and aims to educate the warrior spirit and form the skills and abilities necessary to participate in a duel using various weapons against any number of attackers. However, the basis of this martial art is a powerful psychological practice, the use of which is the effectiveness of studying aikido, because it is aimed at working on oneself, one's fears, anxiety, aggressiveness, etc.

In the context of this opinion we consider to be very progressive the work of aikidokas and psychotherapists P. Faggianelli та D. Lukoff (2006) [2]. Several scientific works by domestic scientists O. Stegura, O. Dulo (2016-2017) [1, 5] are devoted to the topic of the effectiveness of Aikido classes for overcoming adolescent anxiety and negative mental states. Positive experience in the use of aikido when working on the development of the vestibular apparatus and socialization in adults with cerebral palsy is observed in research of S.I. Stepanyuk, O.K. Serputko (2022) [8].

The following methods of research we used in order to solve the tasks of the research: analysis of literature sources, theoretical analysis and generalization of scientific data, our own experience of aikido practice and teaching.

**Presentation of the main material of the study.** Aikido was founded by Morihei Ueshiba who is respectfully referred to as O'Sensei (great teacher). In 1925, 42 year-old-Ueshiba described being transformed by a divine vision: "At that moment I was enlightened: the source of budo is God's love – the spirit of loving protection for all beings... I understood, Budo is not felling the opponent by our force; nor is it a tool to lead the world into destruction with arms. True budo is to accept the spirit of the universe, keep the peace of the world, correctly produce, protect and cultivate all beings in Nature. I understood, the training of budo is to take God's love, which correctly produces, protects and cultivates all things in Nature, and assimilate and utilize it in our own mind and body [9].

Aikido emerged from a longstanding martial culture, which had transformed a system of fighting arts, devised to inflict injury and death, into martial arts, dedicated to developing self-perfection by integrating mind, body, and spirit. In fact, there are many forms of budo, such as Judo (the way of gentleness), Iaido (the way of drawing the sword), Kyudo (the way of the bow), and Karate (school of the way of harmony), that would be worthwhile to study in connection with psychology. Additionally, arts such as Ikebana and Calligraphy are also methods of self-transformation that may be useful to study in relation to psycho- and mental therapy [2].

Aikido is not a “superior” practice; however, it may be particularly attuned to overcoming stress and negative mental processes because of its approach to conflict, as well as to intimacy and vulnerability, issues that are also important foci of psychology [3].

We determined some stages in our methodology.

1. The practice of aikido results in a mind-body unification, which has a physical and psychological healing effect. All the participants of the group reported that Aikido practice facilitated some form of energy movement into and through split-off or repressed areas of their psyche soma such that whatever was out of balance or stuck was somehow rebalanced and freed up. The fear of physical attack, of being bombarded or just the fear to see the soldier – there are some of the fears our participants told us about they managed to overcome in the process of training [4, 6, 10].

2. Being centered in Aikido is essentially the therapy itself. In order to execute certain movements in Aikido, such as blending and harmonizing with one's partner, one cultivates a certain state called “being centered”. It is a particular experience of embodiment characterized by feeling unattached and balanced while possessing freedom of movement. This experience includes a connection to the universe or ground, which is greater than an interpersonal connection and gives the feeling of relaxing and safe. Being centered a person is able to respond calmly and effectively to the most vigorous attacks. The same principles work in a stressful situation. Aikido provides physical cues to assist one in knowing if he or she is centered and present. These physical cues also assist her in returning to a centered state if she has retreated into her own fear, anger, or desire to please [5, 7, 9].

3. Aikidotherapy is not just a tatami practice. Aikido is no longer, what you do on the tatami; it is what you do in general. In Aikido one has some crazy attacker coming at you, and your goal is to be relaxed, centered, calm, and able to absorb and join with, just be there with that energy, in a way that can accept and redirect it. Aikidotherapy is the same thing – just be there and not be overwhelmed by what is going on, and that has a very calming effect [1, 3, 9].

4. The strategy of “getting off the line” creates a safe space within the conflict. In Aikido, one makes space by physically moving out of the way, blending such that the attacker freely moves by. In the conditions of war, one cannot change many things. For example, it is negativity, pressure and heavy emotions of other people. The permeability of “getting off the line” allows one to be present there without absorbing the impact of their emotional expression [2, 3, 6, 10].

5. The Aikido strategy of extension unbalances one's partner, allowing for successful redirection and completion of technique. To extend or lead in Aikido is to continue moving in the direction of the attack. This movement unbalances the attacker, who can then be redirected. Therapeutically, extension can mean honoring and assisting the energetic direction. All the participants of the group after a while started to help each other and they tried to help other people to overcome the stress, practicing taizo together and bringing them to aikido and jodo practice [5, 9, 10].

In addition, Aikido provides strategies (centering, off the line, blending, extending) which enable them to be safe in stressful situation. These strategies also provide them with a method for exploring their own emotional and psychological issues within the framework of Aikido. These same strategies also work intrapsychically as well as interpersonally. Aikidotherapy provides the participants with a harmonious and effective “aiki” way of overcoming new living conditions and negative psycho-conditions and their accompanying consequences.

**Results of the research.** Aikidotherapy in a given context can be described as “moving meditation”; it requires stilling of the mind even as the body is in action. As with meditation, the practices in Aikido induce states of harmony and spirit that can also be described as flow, higher states of consciousness, and peak experiences that definitely is an effective method of overcoming the stress.

The given research suggests that Aikido circulates well with psychotherapy in a number of aspects. Both deal with personal development and connection to a larger reality, be it family, society, or and groups or concerns. Practicing Aikido has been an important component of some psychotherapy training programs and these results suggest that this use shows promise. Our experience shows that not only body or intellect must be trained, but the whole person for therapy to be comfortable and competent dealing with a broad range of human experience. Being a mind-body-spirit discipline, Aikido cultivates many of the core attributes of a somatically based therapy.

Thus, based on the fact that in aikido the mind and body must be coordinated for a successful training process, this is at the same time the basis for training attention, self-regulation, the ability to concentrate and highlight the main thing, to relax, not to be distracted. All this is an important condition on the way to overcoming stress and forming new personality qualities that allow you to avoid stressful and any other negative situations in the future. The aikidotherapy technique proved to be effective in the recovery of post-war conditions, exclusively through internal and physical work, without changing the surrounding conditions, which allows us to talk about a change in the worldview and worldview of the subjects. The authors express the hope that the practice of aikido and aikido therapy will lead to the minimization of military actions around the world in the future.

**Conclusions/ discussion.** It is interesting that the founder of aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, who, as an experienced warrior and a veteran of the Russo-Japanese and Mongolian campaigns, tried to be involved in the training of Japanese soldiers to participate in the Second World War. To which he replied with a categorical refusal, motivating it by the fact that the goal of aikido is not to teach people to kill, but to find peace within themselves, to learn to transform people from enemies to friends and like-minded people through inner harmony.

This approach could ensure post-war psychological rehabilitation of both military personnel and civilians who had to survive the war, because in aikido there is no aggression, competition, any divisions based on gender or weight criteria, and references to political or religious beliefs are considered inadmissible.

As for our aikidotherapy methodology, we see the need for those components that are especially relevant for a modern person who has witnessed a pandemic, distance learning and work, as well as active military operations on the territory

of his country. First, it is socialization, communication, harmonization of one's values, intellectual and spiritual needs, as well as a physical component, because performing aikido techniques promotes the development of the entire body and its systems.

Further research on this topic can be seen in the expansion of the spectrum of aikido therapy. In particular, the study of aikido directly in classes can be combined with the art of writing hieroglyphs, learning of foreign languages, i.e. everything that can help to concentrate and have a calming effect in a coordinated group work.

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#### РІВЕНЬ ФІЗИЧНОГО СТАНУ БОКСЕРІВ 10-11 РОКІВ НА ПОЧАТКУ ФОРМУВАЛЬНОГО ЕКСПЕРИМЕНТУ

**Мета** – визначити рівень фізичного стану боксерів 10-11 років, які розпочали тренування боксом онлайн в домашніх умовах на етапі початкової підготовки. **Матеріали і методи:** у дослідженні прийняло участь 15 боксерів, які знаходились на етапі початкової підготовки. Проводився аналіз даних спеціальної науково-методичної літератури, педагогічне тестування, застосовувались функціональні методи дослідження, методи математичної статистики. **Результати:** визначено рівень фізичного стану боксерів на етапі початкової підготовки. **Висновки.** Встановлено, що найважливіші антропометричні показники хлопців 10-11 років, які розпочали тренування боксом у домашніх умовах відповідали рекомендованим віковим нормам. Респіраторна система юних спортсменів мала ще недостатній ступінь сформованості до дихання в умовах гіпоксії за рахунок дефіциту надходження кисню до організму. Розрахунок адаптаційного потенціалу серцево-судинної системи юних боксерів відповідав рівню задовільної адаптації.

**Ключові слова:** фізичний стан, боксери. 10-11 років

**Akopov O. Level of physical condition of boxers 10-11 years old at the beginning of the formal experiment.** The goal is to determine the level of physical condition of boxers aged 10-11 years who started boxing training online at home at the stage of initial training. **Materials and methods:** the study involved 15 boxers who were at the stage of initial training took part in the study. Analysis of data from special scientific and methodical literature, pedagogical testing, functional research methods, methods of mathematical statistics were used. **Results:** the level of physical condition of boxers at the initial training stage was determined. **Conclusions.** It was established that the most important anthropometric indicators of 10-11-year-old boys who started boxing training at home corresponded to the recommended age norms. The respiratory system of young athletes was still insufficiently formed to breathe in conditions of hypoxia due to the lack of oxygen supply to the body. The calculation of the adaptation potential of the cardiovascular system of young boxers corresponded to the level of satisfactory adaptation.

**Keywords:** physical condition, boxers. 10-11 years old

**Постановка проблеми.** Етап початкової підготовки є важливою ланкою у всьому багаторічному процесі підготовки. Саме на цьому етапі закладається підґрунтя для подальшого ефективного оволодіння спортивною