

Why Every Man Should Do Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu



The following is a guest post from Brock McGoff at The Modest Man... enjoy!

A couple of years ago, I was working in a small company in downtown Washington, DC. Like many other young guys, I was working 8+ hours a day and enjoying at least one happy hour every week. I was also going out on the weekends, drinking sugary lattes every morning and eating out a lot.

I had a gym membership, but I was totally bored with my usual workouts – a warm up on the treadmill, 45 minutes with various machines, some bodyweight exercises, etc.

Side note: This was before I discovered free weights and power lifting, which is WAY more exciting and rewarding than weight machines and Ellipticals.

The boredom at the gym, plus the long hours at work and my somewhat busy social schedule, led to my gym time being gradually phased out.

I was out of shape, tired and soft.

Lacking the motivation to get back in the gym, I started thinking about other ways to get (and stay) in shape.

Having grown up in the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles generation, I always wanted to take karate. As a kid, I make “weapons” out of sticks and rocks and run around the neighborhood perfecting my flying head kicks. (Luckily, I never had to test them in battle).

But I never got to take lessons, and I always regretted it. That is, until one day a couple of years ago when it hit me:

“You’re an adult. You can do whatever you want!”



So I did what any degree-holding 25-year-old would do: I turned to the internet and started researching. It turned out that one of the best places to learn Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Thai boxing was right next to my office. I’ll never forget my first visit...

It was a true Fight Club moment. I walk down a sketchy street to an even sketchier alley. The gym is in the basement of an old church. Standing at the top of grimy old stairway leading down to the entrance, I could hear the pounding of fists hitting bags and the slaps of palms frantically tapping the mat.

I felt a surge of adrenaline rush through me, which I hadn’t felt in a long time. I was nervous but ready. I walked in and got my ass kicked, thoroughly.

Two years later, I’m totally addicted to jiu-jitsu. I’ve even competed locally and trained overseas. In a nutshell, here’s why I love this martial art:

1. It's a Great Workout

Grappling is basically high intensity interval training. Most classes begin with a wrestling-type warm up – jogging, push ups, crunches, burpees, jump rope, stretching. Depending on what school you go to, this can be a pretty hardcore workout by itself.

After learning some new techniques and drilling them with a partner, you typically spend 30-60 minutes “rolling” (this means sparring) with various partners. Here is where jiu-jitsu is different from other martial arts:

You can spar at full intensity. Since there is no striking (punches and kicks), and the goal is to get your opponent to tap out via choke or joint lock, you can go all out without getting hurt or hurting someone else.

What does this mean? It means you get 4-10 rounds of maximum exertion separated by 30 second rests. And because you want to win, you tend to push yourself that much further. You'll feel it the next day, I promise!

2. You're Learning Something New

The thing that bothers me about going to the gym is that you're not really learning anything new. Sure, you're improving yourself by getting stronger and leaner, but you're not walking away with new and useful skills.

With an extremely practical martial art like Brazilian jiu-jitsu, you are learning how to defend yourself in a fight. Hopefully, you'll never have to use what you learn outside of practice and competition, but it's good to know that you could if you had to.

Recently, a random stranger tried to get in my car while I was stopped at a red light. Luckily, I locked the door at the last second, so all he could do was yell at me through the window. But if he did get in, I knew exactly what I would have done. Before jiu-jitsu, I would have been scared and ineffective.

3. It's Primal

This is more abstract than the first two points, but ask any fighter – there's something about facing off against another man in unarmed combat that is so human, so manly, so natural.

There are no excuses on the mat. It's you trying to impose your will on the other guy. There's no ambiguity. If you lose in training, you'll be forced to tap out. If you lose on the street, you could be seriously hurt. This isn't kickball. It's a different kind of competition than team sports, academics, etc.

Men have lost touch with this primal urge to fight, to prove themselves. Once you start training in submission wrestling, I guarantee your confidence and energy will increase. You will also become a more calm person and not get rattled as easily. Most of the fighters I know avoid real-life confrontations at all costs. They have nothing to prove because they know what kind of damage they could do if they had do.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Is Great for Smaller Men

I'm 5'6" and 130 lbs. I have an athletic build, but I'm not ripped (like Brad). And you know what's cool? The founder of BJJ, Carlos Gracie, was just 5'8" and 158 lbs. Not exactly linebacker material!



Carlos back in the day

BJJ takes into consideration one simple fact: most fights end up on the ground. That's why the first objective is to take your opponent down. Once you have someone on the ground, their height doesn't matter, and their weight matters much less. A choke is a choke, regardless of size.

Most sweeps, submissions and escapes rely on technique and leverage, not strength. A lightweight BJJ expert will make quick work of a heavyweight novice.

For these reasons, I especially smaller guys to train in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Of course, everyone will benefit from it!

Is BJJ Right for You?

There's only one way to find out. Find a local gym, and go to a trial class. Almost every school let's you check out a class or two for free, so you really have nothing to lose.

My only advice is to stick with it. A lot of guys never make it past white belt because, hey, it's really hard work. It hurts. But if you get over the initial hump where everything is confusing, you're always banged up and constantly tapping out, you very well may develop a lifelong passion. Plus you'll be a little more badass than you were before!

Disclaimer: I'm not saying you should cancel your gym membership to focus on BJJ. In fact, once you get into grappling, you will probably want to eat better and lift more, just to get that edge on the mat. One good habit always begets another!

Brock runs [The Modest Man](#) – a blog dedicated to helping short men dress better and feel more confident.