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Peggy Nolan Vanquish Fear. Slay Doubt. Let Go. Move Forward

10 Reasons Why I Practice Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

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My decade of 40 is nearing its end and it's been a great ten years of learning and growing. I got divorced. I battled breast cancer. I married the love of my life. I became a certified yoga teacher. I achieved both my first degree and second degree black belts in Muay Thai Kickboxing. When I turned 49, I asked, "what's next?" I decided to begin training in the gentle art of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. It took me a few years to reach this decision, step out of my comfort zone and to quit believing the excuses I told myself:

- I'm too old
- Rolling around on the floor with sweaty guys is not my idea of fun
- I might get hurt
- I'm too old
- I'm afraid of falling

After two years of watching two of my Thai kickboxing sisters have fun practicing Jiu-Jitsu, I thought I'd give it a try. Right before Christmas vacation, I took a class just for the ladies. I LOVED it. And of course, I wondered why I created such a big stink in my mind. If I had started two years ago when my friends started, I may be a blue belt like they both are. But instead of beating myself up, I decided to simply start now.

In the beginning Jiu-Jitsu was the hardest physical thing I'd ever done. Forget all the burpees and squat thrusts in Muay Thai. Forget holding Goddess pose for minutes on end. I literally felt like I had been steam-rolled and flattened like a pancake every morning after each Jiu-Jitsu class. I could have easily played a walk-on role in *The Walking Dead*. I had the stiff zombie limp down without even trying.

I thought about quitting after my 4th or 5th class. "I'm too old to feel this way" was a common argument that ran through my brain. I'd push the thought aside and show up for my next class anyways.

Eight weeks into my Great Jiu-Jitsu experiment I received my first white stripe. I wasn't expecting it and I felt like it was Christmas morning, Easter, and Halloween all rolled into one. *Maybe*, I thought, *I could do this*.

At the time I was only taking one Jiu-Jitsu class a week. I knew that if I wanted to get better I'd have to train more...and that meant rolling on the mats with sweaty guys. It's not that they were sweaty that scared me. They were bigger, stronger, and well, a lot better than me. In my small

Muay Thai world, I'm a big fish in tiny pond (at least in my dojo). I'm a second degree black belt and I can more than hold my own. I've been practicing this discipline for nearly 7 years. In the Jiu-Jitsu world, I'm a guppie in a huge ocean. So why do I practice? I'll tell you why!

10 Reasons Why I Practice Jiu-Jitsu



Reason #10: I'm never too old to learn something new. Sure, it would have been better if I had started when I was 46 or 35 or 10, but here I am -- I celebrate my half-century mark at the end of November.

Reason #9: Jiu-Jitsu teaches me mind-body awareness in relation to training with an opponent. After nearly 50 years on this earth, I'm finally learning my left from my right.

Reason #8: Jiu-Jitsu seems to incorporate a lot of yoga. I've added Bridge and Plow back into my daily yoga practice. Why? Bridge pose is a great way to create space and roll your opponent off of you. Plow pose teaches me to relax and breathe even when it feels like I'm being suffocated.

Reason #7: Jiu-Jitsu teaches me to commit 100% to my next move. There is no half-way or being a little bit pregnant. Make a decision and commit to it.

Reason #6: I learn a lot from my training partners. One time during an open mat session, my friend Chris advised me to always have a game plan. I used to be a game plan of one...now I'm up to at least three things I know how to do.

Reason #5: In Jiu-Jitsu I don't need to assume my opponent will always be stronger, faster, or bigger than me. 99% of the time, they are. I can't strong arm them or bulldoze my way to a submission. I must practice my technique and beat them at their own game.

Reason #4: I train with the best. Jiu-Jitsu isn't something you learn by reading a book (although that can help) or through osmosis. You have to practice and train with experienced teachers. I'm beyond blessed to train with the best of the best at [Team Renzo Gracie NH](#). I show up for class. I show up often for open mat. I schedule private lessons to help accelerate my learning.

Reason #3: It's fun. Plain and simple. And fun is always good. It's also a great way for me to take care of me. There's no better mind therapy than trying to figure your way out of your opponent's half-guard.

Reason #2: Practicing Jiu-Jitsu is a major leap outside my comfort zone. So far so good. Besides a little rib bruising, I haven't hurt myself or anyone else...except for that one time the heel of my foot connected with my brother's head. Yes, that was an accident. Please don't tell my dad.

Reason #1: I'm going to get older with every birthday. Age is not an excuse to not do something. So here I am -- nearing 50 and I'm a white belt with two white stripes. I think my 3rd white stripe would be an awesome 50th birthday present!

*I'd love to hear from you. What are you doing that makes you leap from your comfort zone?
And if you're still just thinking about it, why not start now. What's stopping you?*