

How to Love a Grappler:

A Guide for People Who Love People Who Love Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

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For Groundswell Grappling Concepts

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Videos courtesy of Valerie Worthington and Lola Newsom

Introduction

See if this sounds familiar: One day a loved one (your spouse, son, daughter, sibling, significant other) comes home and announces that he or she has fallen in love with Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ). This person has finally found something to be passionate about, to be devoted to. Your loved one is going to train as often as possible and maybe even compete, at local tournaments first, but then maybe at a national or world event. He or she has dropped a load of cash on gis, rashguards, compression shorts, a membership fee, and maybe even private lessons. You hear plans of training daily if not more often, which would translate into less time to spend with you. You may even have been on the uncomfortable end of technique demonstrations, where you were grabbed and twisted and perhaps lifted and tossed on purpose or by accident. Deep down you know that this was out of excitement, but that made the experience no less odd and unusual.

I'm sorry, come again? Brazilian what? How much did this cost? What on earth is a rashguard?

You have heard about it happening to other people, but you never thought it would happen to you. And yet, it has: Your loved one has found BJJ. Through no fault of your own, you have joined a special group of people who love jiu-jiteiros, a sometimes odd collection of people who love everything grappling. Unless we miss our guess, your grappler is going to start watching YouTube videos of fit individuals in heavy cotton pajamas snatching at each other. Your grappler will start pacing off the floor in the basement to see how many mats would fit. In addition to classes, which will run three to four days a week at a minimum and an hour or two a pop, your grappler will also want to attend seminars, tournaments, and things called "open mats." Your grappler will get all star-struck after seeing members of the grapplerati at these events, even more so if he or she gets to "roll" with them. Your grappler will participate in online forums of other people who love grappling, people with screen names like "Born2Train" and "The Triangler."



Maybe these things happened 10 minutes ago, or maybe they have been happening for 10 years. Either way, the signs and symptoms are similar from jiu-jiteiro to jiu-jiteiro. Part exercise regimen, part lifestyle, part addiction, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is a demanding mistress, and because you had the great (mis)fortune of ending up loving someone who trains, it is going to take something out of your hide too, even if you never put on a gi.

At Groundswell Grappling Concepts, we have seen (and, admittedly, caused) a lot of consternation in people who love people who love BJJ. So much so, in fact, that we have decided to compile a set of guidelines for people who have grapplers in their lives. Consider them to be operating instructions for your relationship with this person, now that it has become a trio—you, your grappler, and grappling itself. We're not saying that you have to capitulate to your grappler's every whim and demand. In fact, this is a bad idea. Any relationship is a give and take, and this guide in no way endorses relieving grapplers of their responsibilities in the rest of their lives.

But we know that knowledge is power and that knowledge is also empowering. With a little context and a little compromise, you, your grappler, and BJJ can coexist peacefully and even live happily ever after. Read on for some suggestions about how to love a grappler effectively.

First: Understand, basically, what it is.

It has come into your life and supercharged your loved one's enthusiasm the way a helium tank blows up a balloon and then causes the balloon to strain against its moorings. It requires equipment, clothing, time, and energy. But what, exactly, is "it?" Knowing a bit about what it is can help in part to demystify it and its hold on your loved one.

It is Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. There are many descriptions, definitions, and depictions of BJJ on YouTube channels, t-shirts, and documentaries around the globe. And to the extent you are interested in doing so, you are encouraged, as someone who loves someone who loves BJJ, to do your own research to learn more. But here we provide a



brief explanation that will give you enough information so you can feel more comfortable explaining to your social circle what exactly your grappler is off doing when he or she packs a bag and goes to train or travels to compete.

BJJ is first and foremost a martial art. This means that, at its core, BJJ is about self-defense, about imposing one's will on another through the use of physical force. This sounds somewhat ominous, but there really is no getting around the fact that BJJ is about dominance and domination. You are probably familiar with what are known as the



Val's Parents on Her Starting BJJ

striking arts, including karate, kung fu, and maybe Muay Thai, so named because they incorporate punching, kicking, and elbow and knee contact into their arsenals of techniques. Recall for instance movies like *Enter the Dragon*, starring Bruce Lee, and the old *Kung Fu*

TV series starring David Carradine. These films and shows featured the protagonist squaring off against multiple attackers, using fists, feet, and any other available appendage or weapon to ward off those attackers—but always from a standing position.

The conventional wisdom is that BJJ picks up where the standing arts leave off; in other words, BJJ is what happens when a fight goes to the ground. Think about it: if you are lying on the ground and someone is on top of you, is it going to be nearly as effective for you to try to kick or punch that person? (As you may have divined from the leading nature of the question, the answer is no.) So where does that leave us? It leaves us either helpless if we don't know BJJ, or finally in our bailiwick if we do.

You see, BJJ players want to be on the ground. We spend a lot of time there, trying to gain superior position on our opponents so we can eventually apply a submission. Submissions come in two general categories: chokes and joint manipulations. Chokes choke, as their name implies, and joint manipulations result in serious pain and injury if the person in the submission doesn't escape or tap to signal defeat.

Of course there are countless additional nuances and considerations for the grappler: how sport BJJ differs from straight-up self-defense, how competition changes



the nature of training and strategy, how people of widely differing sizes, strength levels, and years of experience can effectively and safely train together. These are things your grappler will consider to varying degrees in conjunction with teachers, coaches, and teammates.

Okay, so we can imagine you trying to picture not only what we are describing, but also what the allure is. We know words can only do so much. If you are so inclined, think about going with your grappler to

class in the near future. There are usually places for observers to sit, and you would get a first-hand look at what your grappler is doing and perhaps

“Know that no matter what you are seeing, it’s probably normal—for BJJ.”

observe what about the sport he or she finds so captivating. Then you can debrief afterward, ask some questions to get a better handle on the what, and try to start wrapping your mind around the why.

A word of preparation: When you do not know what you are looking at, you might be a bit concerned. When Val’s parents watched her train for the first time, she looked up to find her mother watching through her fingers. She quickly began flashing the thumbs up, particularly when she was in positions she knew would look particularly unusual or difficult to process for the uninitiated. So, just know that no matter what you are seeing, it’s probably normal—for BJJ.

Second: Understand that you may not ever fully understand.

Think back on an experience or process in your life that was intensely profound. An experience or process that transformed you in some way, and that engaged you mentally, emotionally, physically, and/or psychologically. Parenthood. Military service. Losing 100 pounds. A stay in a foreign country. Anything that expanded your sense of who you are or how the world works and that forced you to investigate parts of your



personality or belief system that had remained hidden or unexamined before this. Something that caused you to take stock of yourself in some way.

Now, think about trying to explain the significance of that experience to someone who did not share it. It's not that you do not want the other person to get it. It's just that, especially if it is an ongoing thing like raising a child or learning how to inhabit a radically transformed body, sometimes words might fail. One of the many reasons we might love our siblings is that we can communicate a lifetime of shared history to each other with a raised eyebrow or a single phrase. But it would take us far more words and effort to try to convey those experiences to someone who did not go through them with us—and that other person would simply not “get it” the way our siblings do.

This is not good or bad. It just is. But it has implications for your relationship with the jiu jiteiro you love. You might be put off by the specter of violence that surrounds BJJ, as we have described. You might feel more than a little wiggled out that you do not know what you are observing, given that BJJ looks weird and smells weirder. You might notice you are a bit intimidated by the foreign terminology, the distinctive clothing, or the changes you are bound to see in your loved one's behavior. Assuming your grappler ends up training for many years, which happens to many of us, you will grow more accustomed to these things over time. The foreign-seeming aspects of BJJ will become part of your normal experience with your grappler.



Lola's Children Discuss Loving a Grappler

But when you feel unsettled, such as when your grappler comes home with a black eye from an errant elbow, or when you find yourself on the receiving end of the techniques covered in the most recent class session because your grappler was so excited to continue practicing them, it can feel like the rug has been pulled out from under your sense of how well you know this person you love.

We are only partly joking when we suggest you create a support group for people in your area who love people who love grappling. Talking to others who have been loving a grappler for longer than you could provide you with useful perspective about



what constitutes a new normal. So, seek out someone who has been through this and has come out the other side. And remember that profound experience or process you thought of earlier? Keep that in mind too. It is quite possible for people to have different experiences and still love each other. You do not need to train in order to love your grappler. (Of course you already know this. But sometimes it is comforting to be reminded.)

Third: Understand that BJJ can become a lifestyle, not just a hobby.

There is no “end” to BJJ training. No one, probably not even the absolute best practitioners in the world, looks around one day and decides that they are good enough at jiu jitsu. By extrapolation, those who are not even close to being the absolute best practitioners in the world are going to feel highly motivated to train as often as possible so they can maximize their opportunities for improvement. This is true regardless of where the grappler is in his or her development, from the newest white belt to the most seasoned lifer. This is true of practitioners in many other fields too, of course: music, science, art, and other athletic endeavors, to name a few.

This means that BJJ is not something practitioners are likely to dabble in twice a week. In fact, the general belief about training is that a twice-a-week schedule will enable a practitioner to maintain what he or she currently knows but not improve in any



Val's Parents React to Val Quitting Her Job

meaningful way. This means that even the most casual practitioner is going to want to train at least three times a week, and more dedicated practitioners will up that to four or more times, with serious (read: professional) competitors logging in regular two-a-days (morning and evening training) and adding cross-training as well as massage, bodywork, and physical therapy.

As you might imagine, spending so much time with the same people striving for the same goal can quickly build strong bonds. The clothing and equipment needs can distinguish people visually from people who don't train, as can the bruises, scrapes, and

“There is no ‘end’
to BJJ training.”

other injuries your loved one will sustain throughout a training career. The subject matter and the accompanying specialized terminology that describes movements, sequences, and strategies can further

demarcate grapplers as “other.” You can also add to this the fact that some people eventually feel compelled to build their lives around BJJ—with all the decisions about where and how to spend time, money, and energy that jiu-jitsu requires. Maybe your loved one won't quit his or her job and decide to open a grappling academy one day, but never say never.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. The important takeaway here is that the people in BJJ compose a growing and tightly-knit subculture, and this is bound to have reverberations in your life, in some way. Many of these reverberations are potentially positive, but they do constitute a change in the status quo, which may feel threatening or challenging to navigate, particularly since the changes can accumulate over time.

To get a handle on the elements of BJJ culture that might pervade your grappler's life off the mat, consider talking to your jiu-jiteiro about training plans. How frequently does your grappler plan to train, to compete, to travel for training? How will this affect your current routine? And most importantly, how willing are you to adapt? These are all questions you can discuss with your loved one, with the understanding that the conversation is likely to be ongoing. One other thing: If you visit your grappler's jiu jitsu class to learn more about what BJJ actually is, also pay attention to the energy and emotion you observe in the room. Chances are, you will sense focus, camaraderie, discovery, and excitement. Maybe this will help you better understand the allure.



Fourth: Understand that the relationships in BJJ can become very close.

One of the beautiful things about BJJ is that it can bring together people who might not otherwise have an opportunity to meet and learn from each other. The ripped, tatted-out twenty-something dude can sit in the same class with the conservative granny—and they can get to the point where they trust each other enough to be in each other's physical space and even become friends. Their lives intersect through BJJ and the shared desire to realize and even surpass whatever potential they may believe they have as grapplers. This desire can transcend whatever surface differences they may notice.



Lola's Children Talk about BJJ Being Strange

That being said, the very nature of BJJ can seem threatening to people whose significant others choose to pursue it. In BJJ, people tend to get to know each other in reverse. It is not uncommon for grapplers to insert themselves into each other's physical space in a very intimate-seeming way before they even know each other's names.

Groundswell Grappling Concepts is composed of women who train. Women are becoming more and more prevalent in BJJ, but while the proportions are changing, BJJ is still predominantly a sport that attracts men. This means that the relatively small number of women who pursue it are going to interact with men who welcome their presence, men who do not notice their presence, and men who may try to exploit their presence. Similarly, if they so desired, women could capitalize in certain ways on the fact that they are highly likely to be in the minority, and as with men, some do.

This may cause some significant others, male and female alike, to look askance at grappling itself, which is not entirely fair. There are people who engage in inappropriate behavior everywhere. Any respectable academy will establish and enforce



boundaries and expectations about appropriate behavior. The fact that these practices are not failsafe just means that the grappling context is subject to the same realities of life as, well, life.

Given these realities, there can be confusion about how men and women can train together effectively and in a way that is mutually respectful—and also respectful of the relationships individuals have outside of grappling. This is particularly important given how jiu-jitsu looks to the untrained eye. It looks inappropriate, particularly if a man and a woman who are spoken for by other people are doing it together.

At its worst, then, BJJ can be a context where people take advantage of close physical proximity to violate other interpersonal boundaries. As we will discuss later, there is also the added layer of complexity related to authority and pecking order. The two together (proximity and relative location on the academy totem pole) can be a recipe for negativity if left unchecked; sadly, as we have mentioned, this potential merely reflects the fact that the potential for these kinds of issues is inherent in any context where people have to navigate interpersonal boundaries: the workplace, parties, etc.

But at its best, BJJ can facilitate positive, healthy interpersonal relationships between the sexes. Assuming everyone shares at least one reason for being there—to improve at BJJ—the opportunity exists for everyone to learn from everyone. Everyone just has to be open to learning from everyone. (This is the concept embodied in the age-old BJJ saw: “Leave your ego at the door,” which you may hear your grappler loved one say two or three—hundred thousand—times.) And these relationships can transform over time. For instance, two of the four proprietors of Groundswell Grappling Concepts met their husbands through BJJ, and now those partnerships are enhanced by the shared interests of the partners.

And over and above romantic relationships, our experience shows that BJJ can provide an opportunity for men and women to learn more about each other’s experiences in the world. As just one example, many women come to BJJ because of a



desire to learn more about self-defense. Unfortunately, in many cases this is because they have been assaulted. Men and women who train BJJ can explore power dynamics between the sexes in the safe, trusting environment of a properly structured and monitored grappling academy.

Notice we haven't even mentioned the potential additional dynamics of men and women who choose same-sex relationships. This is partially because those dynamics are still emerging. Traditionally, the BJJ world has not been what you would call hospitable to people who choose same-sex relationships, though the times, they are, happily, a-changin'. It is also partially because we believe this conversation deserves its own treatment. For now, suffice it to say that standards of appropriate behavior should apply to, and for, everyone, regardless of their sexual preferences.

Fifth: Understand that we need you.

As may have become evident by now, grapplers tend to be clannish, single-minded, and borderline obsessive—in a word: annoying. If left to their own devices, they



Val's Parents Discuss Loving a Grappler

will do what most people do who are possessed by compulsive personalities and have identified a target for compulsion: they will overdo it.

Repeatedly. We're sure that just reading the foregoing puts you a little bit on alert because you can see how too much of a good thing could become a bad thing for your grappler and for everyone around him or her.

One of the things we sometimes have to do for the people we love is save them from themselves. Grapplers are going to say they want to train all the time, but for the hobbyist this is neither possible nor particularly healthy. (Those hobbyists who are reading this and disagreeing probably need their loved ones' help the most.) Those grapplers who have made BJJ their profession, whether through competition,



instruction, or some combination are a different animal, though even they might benefit from the occasional day off.

In jiu-jitsu, one of the most important concepts is “base.” Foundation. Stability. It is when we grapplers come off our base that we are able to be moved in a way we don’t want, and when we are likely to find ourselves on the defensive. Good base is a fundamental part of BJJ, and, at the risk of sounding cliché, one could argue that good base is a fundamental part of the BJJ lifestyle too. The people who love us grapplers can help provide the foundation and stability we need to live a balanced life. No, you do not need to babysit your grappler, but you can provide useful perspective.

“The people who love us grapplers can help provide the foundation and stability we need to live a balanced life.”

Those of us at Groundswell Grappling Concepts have learned—frequently the hard way—that the lessons taught on the mat related to our BJJ progress are usually relevant off the mat as well. In other words, BJJ can be a metaphor for life. This is pretty readily apparent. Consider for instance that virtues like patience, humility, integrity, self-awareness, and stick-to-it-ive-ness, which are vital for BJJ, are also obviously applicable to myriad situations a non-grappler might face.

As someone who knows your grappler, your perspective on his or her other life challenges could help with on-the-mat challenges. You may not know the specifics of the context, but you know the generalities of the dynamics, both related to your loved one and related to how the world works. Particularly if our stresses related to BJJ are accompanied by tunnel vision, you can help us remember that we have handled similar situations before, and that we have come out the other end.

(Of course we understand that any relationship is a two-way street. Perhaps our next article will be titled, “How to Be a Grappler Who Loves Someone Who Loves a Grappler.”)



Sixth: Understand that you might actually enjoy some aspects of BJJ culture.

The thing about BJJ that is cool for those of you who love grapplers, even if you do not want to train, is that there are aspects of the lifestyle you might actually find appealing. And over and above the fact that these aspects could be a way for you to connect with your loved one, they are also just enjoyable. Here are three elements of jiu-jitsu culture that it is pretty safe to say you might like.

Food: Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, as its name implies, hails from Brazil. And Brazil happens to be the home of numerous culinary delights. There are many treats for everyone to enjoy, whether or not they eat meat, but as just one, carnivorous, example, have you ever heard of a churrascaria? The term loosely translates from the Portuguese as “barbecue.” And it translates right into a heavenly dining experience. There are several churrascaria chains in the United States, huge restaurants with tons of tables for both intimate romantic evenings and enormous groups of hungry grapplers, perhaps after a hard training session or a tournament. Sadly for the people who are trying to have the former, the latter tend to make their presence known.

It is understandable, though, that groups of sweaty athletes would



Lola's Children Discuss the Scary Parts of BJJ

converge on such a place. At a churrascaria, you pay a set price for all you can eat of as many different kinds of meats as can hold a barbecue treatment: tri-tip, bacon-wrapped chicken, pork roast, steak, garlic steak, other kinds of steak, and on and on and on. You get a little thing that looks like a salt-shaker, which is painted red on one half and green on the other. When you flip the shaker so the green side is facing up, server after server brings rack after rack of hot meats and offers as many slices or chunks of them as your eyes tell your stomach you can handle.



You have to be careful not to make the novice, or “white belt,” mistake, though, of filling up on the salad bar and the plantains and amazing little cheese puffs that keep getting mysteriously replenished on your table. Those are less expensive than the meat, so if you want to get your money’s worth, rustle up a few extra stomachs or plan accordingly for the real-estate in the one you were born with.

Another staple of the BJJ lifestyle diet is the more vegetarian-friendly acai bowl. Made from frozen acai berries, which grow in the Amazon, this treat is usually sweetened with guarana syrup and topped with bananas, granola, and flax seed. In addition to having healthy antioxidant properties, the acai bowl is just plain delicious, for meat eaters and veggies alike. Just remember to pronounce it correctly: “Ah-sigh-EE.”

Clothes: Jiu-jitsu attire, the kind we grapplers wear after grappling, before grappling, or while sleeping to recover from past grappling and to energize for future grappling, runs toward the comfortable. It also lends itself to being quickly put on and taken off in anticipation of stepping on and off the mat. Flip flops, hoodies, t-shirts, leggings, board shorts—all of these are part of the typical grappler’s wardrobe, and all of them are comfortable for the non-grappler as well.

Be careful, though. Grapplers are like members of a neighborhood watch when it comes to ensuring their own number do not “jump the line.” If a practitioner were to step on the mat wearing a belt color higher than the one he or she had been awarded by a legitimate instructor, for instance, that practitioner would be “called out.” In other words, if you were a blue belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu but appeared one day at the academy wearing a brown belt (which is two levels above blue), you’d be in for it.

So, keep in mind: there is some gear that incorporates a belt level into the design, such as board shorts that have representations of white, blue, purple, brown, or black belts stitched onto the waistband. As a non-practitioner, you might want to steer clear of wearing such shorts, even if black is a slimming color.

Further, people who wear too much clothing from certain mixed martial arts clothiers are usually assumed to be dilettantes. You may know the type: at any given time they may be sporting a t-shirt, baseball cap, sweat pant, and even a fanny pack, all of the same brand. For these people, too much is never enough. For grapplers, seeing the complete effect is like nails on a chalkboard. You can definitely enjoy the comforts of



grappler clothing; just consider consulting with your grappler loved one to avoid the pitfalls of posery.

Travel: Many grapplers travel to participate in tournaments, and many others make the pilgrimage to the cradle of the sport: Brazil. As someone who loves someone who loves grappling, you might be able to take the opportunity to travel with your grappler to a competition. They are held in more and more locations around the world, so if you are dying to get to middle America, there's hope. And if you want to go to a more far-flung locale, try Abu Dhabi (the birthplace of one of the most prestigious grappling tournaments in the world), the aforementioned Brazil, or, increasingly, any of numerous major world cities where tournaments are being held. While your grappler trains, you can investigate the region. If your grappler competes, you can take in that spectacle as well—trust us that it's worth it to take in a tournament at least once.

Seventh: Understand that BJJ can help your loved one become a better version of him or herself.

Some people go through their entire lives without finding a passion (Angry Birds does not count). And to those of us who have found a passion, like BJJ, there is no



Val's Parents Share Their Tips

sadder prospect than living without one. People who fall in love with BJJ, or who find any passion to enhance their lives, sometimes find themselves willing to do things they may never before have been motivated to do. They might move to be closer to the academy of their choice.

They might rearrange their schedules, jobs, and priorities so they can train more.

A passion like BJJ provides a consistent, relatively safe outlet for the human tendency toward physical aggression, which, whether we want to admit it or not, we are all influenced by (male and female alike). It requires practitioners to come into closer contact with their humility; if we want to improve, we must be willing to acknowledge what needs improving. It forces practitioners to be present in their bodies and in the moment, and in a world that lives mostly in its head and in the unchangeable past or in some future that may become real, that is a refreshing change. In other words, the pursuit of a passion like BJJ can inspire practitioners to expect more of themselves. And if you believe as many practitioners do that BJJ is reflective of life, perhaps you can see how the requirements of BJJ could also inspire self-improvement in general—and how that might benefit you, as someone in your grappler’s inner circle.

Notice that we said “if properly channeled.” Phrasing the sentence this way, of course, implies that BJJ can be improperly channeled. And unfortunately, in our experience, this is sadly.

Think back to the earlier comments about new-to-the-scene practitioners feeling star-struck when they encounter world-class grapplers, people who seem to be able to defy the laws of physics with their ninja-like skills, proprioception, and ability to anticipate less-skilled practitioners’ moves, quite possibly before these more novice practitioners even knew they were entertaining the idea. If enough people approach highly skilled BJJ practitioners with this kind of awe and unconditional adoration, these highly skilled practitioners are liable to start believing the hype. If they’re not



Lola’s Children Discuss BJJ/Family Balance

vigilant about their own insecurities, and if they lose perspective, these experts might start to develop a sense of entitlement that could be fairly innocuous: expecting lower belts to run errands for them (and viewing it as a privilege for the lower belts), or downright insidious: expecting money, sexual favors, or other boundary-crossing behaviors and concessions to their perceived superiority over others.



We are not saying that practitioners who have worked hard to advance in the sport and to advance the sport itself do not deserve respect and appreciation. On the contrary, they deserve respect on the mat for what they know and what they have accomplished, just as any professional does. But as with other professionals, respect for their professional accomplishments should adhere to appropriate boundaries. Would you accept verbal abuse from your attorney? Would you choose a dentist if you didn't trust that that person would value your safety first and foremost? Particularly since you will be making yourself physically vulnerable to that person? Would you look to your accountant to tell you who to be friends with or how to parent your child?

We predict your answer to all of the above questions was an emphatic no. And yet, in the BJJ world, sometimes those who are farther along will use their stature to manipulate lower-ranked people. And of course the converse of this is that sometimes lower-ranked people will allow themselves to be manipulated.

Interpersonal boundaries are tricky to navigate. Part of the challenge in the case of BJJ is precisely because it can become a lifestyle. So the limits of the coach-athlete

“As someone who loves someone who loves BJJ, you can help your jiu-jiteiro maintain invaluable perspective.”

relationship can become blurry. Also, because different people interpret appropriateness differently, and boundary violations can be a process rather than an event. In other words, the

road toward inappropriate or abusive behavior can take time to develop, which means that the person bearing the brunt might not recognize the changes in the power dynamic, in the expectations, or in their own guts. If your grappler is new, then, he or she might be at risk for manipulation by an unscrupulous, self-styled guru. We need look no further than other organized sports, at every level, for examples of these kinds of dynamics.

As someone who loves someone who loves BJJ, you can help your jiu-jiteiro maintain invaluable perspective, perspective that might be lost as he or she becomes more and more devoted to training. You can help your grappler do that proper channeling we mentioned before, even if it means encouraging difficult decisions about



values relative to those of the people in that world who are in positions of power and influence. You can remind your grappler that though an instructor may be a black belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, no instructor is a black belt in everything.

Conclusion

Grapplers are never finished. There is always more to learn, always another opportunity to test personal limits, always a new way to look at a situation that once seemed familiar. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is certainly not the only domain that prompts this kind of thinking, but for better or worse, someone you love has chosen it as theirs. Jiu-jitsu is insanely compelling for those whom it has captivated, including the person you love, and its introduction into your life via this person has implications for you. We hope you agree that there is room for you *and* grappling in your loved one's life, and we hope this information will give you some suggestions and reassurances about how to navigate the new dynamics grappling will likely bring to your relationship with your grappler.



About Groundswell Grappling Concepts

Groundswell Grappling Concepts (GGC) is a limited liability company dedicated to supporting self-actualization through Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) and grappling. We believe the mental, physical, and psychological demands of BJJ and grappling, when properly channeled, have the power to transform lives. We provide products and services aligned with this belief, and with the expectation that personal fulfillment contributes to societal improvement.

For additional information about our products and services, contact us at info@groundswellgrappling.com or visit www.groundswellgrappling.com.

About Artechoke Media

To us, promoting the organic growth of jiu-jitsu means watering the roots of jiu-jitsu: culture, instructors, and schools.

We promote jiu-jitsu culture, and we seek out the most-talented instructors, regardless of whether or not they have won championship belts, and give them a platform for sharing their unique insights and perspectives with the jiu-jitsu community. We take their one-of-a-kind approaches to teaching and use rich media so that jiu-jiteiros everywhere can benefit from their knowledge. Visit www.ArtechokeMedia.com to learn more.

About Emily Kwok, Proprietor, Groundswell Grappling Concepts



About 13 years ago, sometime between studying art and dreaming of impossibly big things, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu made its way into my life and never left. Rolling around on the floor multiple times a week for fun and fitness is the last thing I ever thought I would have made into a professional career (one that I can actually live off of), but somehow this rather “unladylike” activity has helped me become the best version of myself.

Studying BJJ has never been easy for me. My family thought it was totally barbaric and couldn't fathom why I would choose to practice such a masculine and physically demanding sport. I spent many years merely surviving on the mats, but I



always had a lovely community of friends and training partners around me to keep me inspired. Gradually, the lessons I learned on the mats began to translate into larger life lessons I was applying off the mats, and BJJ became much more to me than a hobby. Challenging myself through the sport taught me how to believe in my potential and achieve anything I set my mind to. This is the biggest gift training has given me, and it's something I hope to help other people discover for themselves.

About Lola Newsom, Proprietor, Groundswell Grappling Concepts



I am fortunate to train at the Marcelo Garcia Academy, where I was promoted to brown belt and continue to learn and take beatings from some of the best and brightest in jiu-jitsu. I have an incredible team with a full complement of female champions, male champions and really decent people who push and support me every day.

I am incredibly lucky to be a part of Groundswell Grappling Concepts, and it is a privilege to work with Emily, Val, and Hannelte. It has been my honor to help make the camps a possibility for women. I started as a camper, and I remember seeing Emily and calling her and the other black belt instructors “unicorns,” because I had never seen a black belt woman. I had never trained with a woman above a blue belt at that point. I had such a profound experience at that first camp I asked, “Please let me know what if anything I can do to be helpful.” The idea that I can help to provide what, for me, was a life changing experience to others makes me feel like now my dream is bigger and I get to be awesome at life. My partners are my mentors and my friends, encouraging me to grow personally and to put it out on the line on the mats.

About Hannelte Staack, Proprietor, Groundswell Grappling Concepts



A friend introduced me to Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu in 1997, and I fell in love with the sport after trying it just once. I got the opportunity to start training regularly in Brazil from the man who became my first teacher,



Fernando Cruz. I was basically the only woman in my school when I started. I took this as a challenge rather than a deterrent, and I strongly believe the reason I continue training BJJ to this day is that I wanted more women to be inspired and empowered by BJJ as I have been. When I changed schools, I got to know my husband, partner, friend, and mentor, Andre “Negão” Terencio. He is also my inspiration to stay strong and to believe. I feel fortunate to live the BJJ lifestyle. As the co-founder with Andre of the Brazil-021 School of Jiu-Jitsu/Brazil-021 Project, as well as a competitor and a teacher, I am able to do what I love on a daily basis surrounded by wonderful people

As an ambassador of the art, I use the principles of BJJ to help disadvantaged women and children who have suffered abuse or who feel weak and incapable of accomplishing anything to recover their self-confidence. BJJ changed my life forever. Thanks to it, I have traveled all over the world and met many great people. Today, BJJ continues to help me evolve as a person.

About Valerie Worthington, Ph.D., Proprietor, Groundswell Grappling Concepts



I love Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. It has changed my life, mostly for the better. I say “mostly,” because some aspects of BJJ, like ringworm and the need to do more laundry than normal people have to aren’t necessarily life improvements, but they are things I gladly endure so I can reap the myriad benefits of a grappling lifestyle.

The requirements of BJJ—regular training, preparing for and engaging in competition, self-care so that I can perform at my best—tap into my natural tendencies for introspection and self-deprecating humor. BJJ has prompted me to explore who I am mentally, emotionally, and psychologically, as well as physically. It has given me opportunities to help others as I learn more about my own self-actualization. Through BJJ, I have met amazing people, traveled to far-flung locations, and enjoyed post-training meals, showers, and naps more than I thought it was possible to enjoy such things. While I have been training for well over a decade, I know my journey has just begun.

