

JIU-JITSU CONFIDENCE

*A PARENT'S GUIDE TO RAISE CONFIDENT,
DISCIPLINED AND BULLY-PROOF CHILDREN*

By

NIGEL KURTZ

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Take Action and get in contact!

Send an email to receive a link to free videos of activities you can play with your child at home to teach them Jiu-Jitsu.

We are also available for consultation to martial art school owners on how to grow a successful kids program to help deliver the right benefits.

Send an email to nigel.kurtz@gmail.com.

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For more information, please send an email to nigel.kurtz@gmail.com.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a guide for parents on why martial arts and specifically Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is an essential life skill for kids of all ages, abilities and stages of life.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is a martial art developed in Brazil by the Gracie family. It uses Judo and traditional Japanese Jujitsu techniques that allows for a smaller, weaker person to defend themselves against a larger opponent by using leverage and proper technique.

Like learning how to swim or read, Jiu-Jitsu will give your child a set of skills that will not only benefit him or her directly but help them excel in all aspects of their personal and professional life.

In a world where technology is shaping kids' confidence, self-esteem and social interaction, Jiu-Jitsu is a perfect and essential tool to add to your child's character development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for all the people around me who support, train with and mentor me. Below is a list of people who have helped me, either through editing, mentoring or inspiration:

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- Yasmyn Castro
- Karelly Quintero
- Veronica Kurtz
- Megan Kurtz
- Lester Kurtz

To all of my coaches and training partners at GD Jiu-Jitsu Academy in Tempe, Arizona.

FOREWORD

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Jiu-Jitsu Confidence: A Parent's Guide to Raise Confident, Disciplined, and Bully-Proof Children.

If you are anything like me and have a very short attention span, this book will be perfect for you because it is very direct and to the point.

This book is primarily aimed at parents, soon-to-be parents, guardians or anyone wanting to know what martial arts and particularly Jiu-Jitsu can do for your child. My hope is that after reading this book, you will have a good understanding why so many parents and kids are passionate about this sport and why they believe that using Jiu-Jitsu is the perfect vehicle to developing a child's full human potential.

Immersing your kid into Jiu-Jitsu at an early age, typically around 4 to 10 years old, gives them a great opportunity to utilize the benefits as they emotionally mature; however, at this early age, it requires commitment not only from the child but also from the parents to keep them motivated and involved.

First off, I will start by telling you a little bit about myself. I was born in South Africa, lived in New Zealand for over 10 years and I now reside in Chandler, Arizona. My previous careers have allowed me to travel all over the world, and I've been to all 50 states in the United States. I have had the privilege to train at different academies all over the world and I've made many good friends, as well as getting to experience many different cultures. I've also had the opportunity to see how different martial art programs are run and what influence and impact these programs have had on adults as well as kids.

I have been training Jiu-Jitsu for 8 years under Gustavo Dantas at his academy in Tempe, Arizona, and I have been heavily involved in the development of adult and kids' programs. This opportunity has given me great insight into how this art has helped many kids and adults in all aspects of their lives.

Everyone starts training Jiu-Jitsu for different reasons, and I believe those reasons change over time. I myself initially started because I wanted to meet new people when I moved to the United States and because I like the sport aspect of it. The longer I've trained, I've noticed the huge positive change Jiu-Jitsu has made in other people's lives, whether it be for PTSD/ ADHD/ autism/ discipline/ self-defense/ self-esteem, you name it. I have seen it change

many adults and kids lives in these past few years. Having seen these life changes, and after the birth of my son, Eli, the reason I train has considerably changed as well. My main reason for training now is to help others experience this amazing martial art and the personal fulfillment that it brings.

Children experience so much change, and they are consistently challenged on a social, emotional and academic level. We have seen a complete turnaround in discipline, confidence and self-esteem from students in our Jiu-Jitsu programs. Students who come in struggling, become more adept in dealing with challenging life situations after only a few short months of training.

This book's intent is to help you understand there's so much more to this sport than just the physical aspects, and we hope you don't see this as just another activity but view it as a true life skill that every kid should be exposed to at some point in their lives.

It has been so impactful for me that I decided just over 6 months ago to make a shift in my professional career and step away from corporate jobs to pursue my passion of changing people's lives with this amazing art form.

As you go through this book, if any of these benefits or chapters truly resonate with you, I absolutely would love to hear from you and get to know your insights and feedback. The best way to reach me is by email at nigel.kurtz@gmail.com.

I would greatly appreciate if you would share this book with anyone you think could benefit from it, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Nigel K.

Nigel Kurtz - Chandler, Arizona, USA

TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS

“Martial arts is not about fighting; it's about building character.” - Bo Bennett

A common misconception is the notion that martial arts, and in particular mixed martial arts (MMA), promotes violence and fighting. It is my firm belief that a trained fighter is more likely to walk away and calm a confrontational situation than someone who has never trained. I have noticed this first-hand on many occasions both with adults and children.

Yes, it does teach you how to fight and defend yourself, but the biggest benefits are a lot deeper than that with the impact it will have on you or your child's character development.

I have noticed first-hand that kids who train in martial arts have less desire to pursue aggression as they do not feel the need to prove themselves. It makes them more rational and calm in these situations.

FOCUS AND DISCIPLINE

In today's world, kids are surrounded by many forms of stimulation, and some might argue they are over-stimulated at a younger age than ever before.

Attention deficit disorder (ADD) is rampant amongst many kids these days, and this makes it all the more necessary to improve discipline and focus. A reputable martial arts program will commonly have a good structure to improve both discipline and focus.

Each academy will typically have a set of rules that everyone will need to abide by, not only your child, but also their peers and other instructors. Things like showing up on time, keeping your nails and uniform clean, respecting when other people speak and not injuring their training partners. Children will learn how to listen to an authority figure and follow instruction. Through this structure and discipline in class, they will learn respect by being humble and paying attention to authority figures. Children who are normally very hyperactive become calm and focused in such an environment.

Most kids, not unlike adults, love praise and seeing improvement, and a martial arts program will give them a great opportunity to achieve both of these but only through dedication, focus and repetitive practice. Coming to class when you don't really want to and practicing something repetitively until you master it will show a child that through focus and discipline, you can achieve results.

The main reason we teach discipline and focus and why rely on it so heavily in martial arts is because it is proven to improve your discipline in all areas of your life, whether it's school work, personal relationships or eventually your professional career.

Kids who are over-stimulated struggle to keep focus and follow rules that are set out to help them learn. Just like with any other skill, you need to practice and dedicate time to improving your discipline and focus.

CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

Your child's self-confidence will naturally increase as they progress through their martial arts career. They will notice improvement and achieve recognition through belts and stripes, which will help them gain confidence. The encouragement of instructors and parents also plays a very important role in building their self-confidence. Many kids start martial arts shy and unable to socialize well; improving their confidence makes them achieve things they never thought possible.

A high level of self-confidence will translate to higher levels of self-worth, more happiness and enjoyment, and the reduction of fear and social anxiety in children. This leads to higher levels of motivation and ultimately being more successful in all areas of life as your child matures.

Fifteen-year-old Ayden Peterson writes about her Jiu-Jitsu journey and how it helped her confidence.

“My Jiu-Jitsu journey started long before I ever learned how to tie a belt or before I stepped foot on a mat. It started the day I sat in class as a fourth-grader and dreaded the sound of the recess release bell. I suffered (and still do) from a severe case of hypersensitive eczema, which caused my skin to

bubble and break out in a painful rash up and down my legs, arms, face, neck and back. But to a fourth-grader, no rash could ever amount to the pain of kids making fun of me because of it. One day, I could no longer handle the harassment. In the middle of the summer, I told my parents I no longer wanted to wear shorts, only pants. Looking back, it was absolutely insane considering it was 100 degrees outside. But it didn't matter to me at the time; I didn't want anyone to see my skin. Still, I walked with my head down, trying to avoid any unnecessary attention.

One day, my sister made the suggestion of trying something new, something that was hard to pronounce. Within a few days, I was in a pair of weird pajamas with a dirty white belt tied around my waist. It was my first stripe on my white belt that changed everything for me. What other people saw as a thin piece of white tape, I saw as a piece of pure gold.

I've been religiously training and competing in Jiu-Jitsu for about 6 years and I couldn't imagine what I would be doing without it. It's given me the confidence to do anything I want in life. I can't even begin to express the immense amount of love I have for the sport and everyone in it.

SOCIALIZATION AND FRIENDS

Martial arts is not only a perfect platform to meet new friends with a common interest, but it will also teach your child how to communicate with children as well as adults of many diverse backgrounds, ages and abilities. This environment can be physically daunting and mentally trying. In the face of challenges, they will have opportunities to engage with their peers in a way where they depend on each other in order to learn and improve. This helps them form a very strong and lasting bond.

Your child will make friends as they progress through life; in this environment, they will have friends with high levels of confidence, focus and discipline who will be there for them and be a great support system as they inevitably face life's challenges. Help them make the **right** friends.

I believe most martial arts programs provide some level of character-building as mentioned here. In the next chapter, I would like to go over specifically why I believe that Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu stands out above the rest. It is one of the best ways for your child to not only learn discipline, focus, self-confidence and self-defense, but it is a necessary life skill that you as a parent should add to your child's education as soon as possible.

TOP 10 REASONS TO LEARN BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU

“I am a shark, the ground is my ocean, and most people don’t know how to swim.” - Jean Jacques

Machado

The following section will focus on why I feel Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) specifically is the skill your child needs to add to their life. All this is based on my experience with other families and how it has changed their lives.

When I first started training, I noticed a lot of parents bringing their kids to every single Jiu-Jitsu class, but they themselves had no interest in training. This always baffled me. As a practitioner, I could not understand why they were so motivated to bring them and spend countless hours waiting in our waiting area. It really didn't hit home until my son, Eli, was born and I started thinking about what type of person I would like him to be.

I spent my entire life playing all types of sports from rugby and cricket to motorsports. You name it, I tried it. I wasn't very good at it all but I always tried. This gave me a good insight as to what type of children, friends and parents I was around when playing these types of sports. I can say by far that the most positive environment for character-building has come from learning and being around people practicing Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.

I respect all martial arts and the value they bring to the table, but I do think that some are more valuable for kids than others. Art forms that require full contact sparring with kicks and punches are too dangerous and risky for children, but with Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, the intent is to nullify these dangerous moves and control the situation.

Based off experience and interviewing some parents, let's go into the top 10 best physical, emotional and character-building benefits Jiu-Jitsu brings to your child and family.

1. *FAIL TO LEARN*

Jiu-Jitsu will teach them how to fail. It is a hard sport that is practiced at full intensity most of the time. It is very realistic that they will have to tap or submit to someone every day. It will destroy any ego. They will be constantly beat by people they may not expect it from, and they will learn to accept themselves regardless of what happens. If they cannot fail, they simply won't learn. In life, your child will fail at some point; it's a given. How they recover from that and what they do with those lessons will set them apart. This is the perfect system for teaching them that.

2. *ALWAYS EVOLVING*

The other important lesson is that they will never be able to rest on their laurels. Jiu-Jitsu is one of the most dynamic martial arts out there. Techniques are always evolving and things that work today will not keep on working in the future. There is always a constant: the strive for perfection and adaption is the key to success. This is witnessed even at the black belt and world champion level of the sport.

3. *HOW TO LEARN*

Many people find it difficult to understand just how they learn. I am very visual; others need to do things themselves in order for them to really understand. Jiu-Jitsu will definitely teach you how you learn and what works best for you. Knowing how they learn and what works for them will be a great advantage for your child and you as a parent.

4. *ADULTHOOD*

Jiu-Jitsu will also teach them a lot about diversity and about adults. They will see adults from different walks of life trying to learn the same art as them. It is good to be exposed to this at an early age so they see both the bad and the good sides of adults. Your child will be able to form his/her own opinion of what type of person they would like to be. On the bad side, they will hear many people complain and have excuses about why they failed (mostly ego); on the good side, they will see adults excited and learning the same techniques as them. They will see the passion in adults and in some cases, in their own parents!

5. HARD WORK

One of the most important lessons is the fact that it doesn't just reward the more talented and athletic kids; in fact, you will often find the more athletic child being surpassed by the weaker, non-athletic child when it starts getting harder. The less athletic child will need to work a lot harder and will have greater patience and persistence and improve in small incremental steps, whereas some of the more athletic kids fail because they cannot handle the failure that comes with learning this art form. Of course, the athletic kid who applies himself will excel very quickly.

Ivan Hurtado, whose 14-year-old son has been training Jiu-Jitsu alongside other sports explains:

“Jiu-Jitsu is my son’s passion. Finding his passion has turned him into an incredibly driven kid. He knows that training for the next competition is important. Training, in my mind, translates into hard work. In other words, my son knows that success comes only through hard work, and that is an invaluable character trait for a 14-year-old to have. I believe that lessons like these are impossible to teach while your children sit and play video games all day. Jiu-Jitsu sets standards of conduct and it doesn't demand dedication; it inspires dedication.”

6. *OPTIMAL CONFIDENCE*

When it comes to self-confidence, many martial arts are different from Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. I say this because you use what you learn everyday against an opponent who is trying to stop you. You don't typically get this in traditional martial arts, where it's more typical for you to be practicing your techniques against a cooperative opponent. In my opinion, that leads to a level of false self-confidence that can be dangerous when a child realizes this cannot help him in a real-life situation.

In most martial arts, it is difficult to create an environment where your child can practice at 100% effort against a resisting opponent trying to subdue him. Doing this activity at 100% makes a child become more proficient, confident and self-assured to a level unlike any other martial art.

7. *PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT*

The level of physical activity in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is unlike many other sports. Kids will utilize their whole body learning and practicing techniques. In current society, video games and social media force kids to spend large amounts of time inactive and living an unhealthy lifestyle. Adding BJJ to their list of activities will teach your child at a very young age the importance of being healthy and increasing body awareness, flexibility, balance and coordination. The demanding nature of BJJ forces your child to have a more holistic approach to being healthy. This means not only exercising at the academy but doing extra strength work and having a good nutritional regimen, as this directly affects your performance on the mats. Jiu-Jitsu provides a very intensive and demanding workout for your child that will improve core strength and help them lose weight unlike any other sport, all while having fun.

8. *SELF-DEFENSE*

The main reason most people decide to study martial arts is for self-defense. Generally speaking, many self-defense systems do not allow for the smaller or weaker person to succeed against a larger opponent. The whole premise of BJJ is for you not to rely on size or strength in order to defend yourself. It helps you control your opponents and stop them from inflicting harm on you, only using force to harm them if necessary.

9. *BULLY-PROOFING*

Unfortunately, bullying is present in all stages of life in both physical and emotional forms. It's a well-known fact that bullies pick on kids with low self-esteem and low confidence, creating a downward spiraling effect in the victim. The fact that your child will spend hours training in real-life situations at 100% force will build up the right reflexes and temperament needed to be able to defend themselves. It will give them confidence, so when a real-life situation presents itself, they will have the ability to deal with it. It has been shown that most altercations end up on the ground, and a lot of martial arts are primarily focused on stand-up techniques. BJJ will teach your child how to neutralize and control an aggressive opponent without having to hurt them, unless necessary.

10. *IT IS FUN!*

The best thing is that your child will have a lot of fun while learning all these great benefits! Especially at the lower age groups, Jiu-Jitsu is usually taught by playing well thought-out games in class. These games are designed to improve balance, coordination and fine motor skills as well as introduce the basic movements needed to control your opponent.

These 10 benefits, whether emotional, physical or character-building, will help your child in other sports and in their personal and professional lives. Next, we will look at just how this compares to other team sports.

JIU-JITSU VS. TEAM SPORTS

Don't walk through life just playing football. Don't walk through life just being an athlete. Athletics will fade. Character and integrity and really making an impact on someone's life, that's the ultimate vision, that's the ultimate goal - bottom line. - Ray Lewis

There are a lot of research out that shows burnout is the number one reason that kids quit sports. The odds of the burnout increase exponentially for children who started at a very young age and stay doing just one sport exclusively. The same research shows that most professional athletes did not specialize in their particular sport until they were in high school.

SEASONALITY

Many team sports are seasonal, but martial arts is year-round. This consistency helps build discipline and allows your child to develop at a faster rate than in other sports. When it comes to obesity and weight control, this type of year-round activity also helps combat the mindset where you can take time off and eat whatever you want in the off-season.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The other nuance with team sports is the fact that they are structured to reward only the most talented, strongest and athletic kids, leaving a large portion of children on the bench, trying to make the team. The disparity in your child's ability becomes even more exaggerated during the season.

In Jiu-Jitsu, the children with less developed athletic ability usually end up becoming some of the best Jiu-jitsu practitioners, as they are forced to rely more on technique and mental fortitude.

Every child in a Jiu-Jitsu class will get the same equal opportunity to participate and practice technique, which provides much more of an inclusive team environment; this is one of the main reasons it makes shy kids with low self-esteem flourish.

The other part of equal opportunity comes in term of gender. Below is a comment from one of the Jiu-Jitsu parents, Samantha Williams, who has twin 10-year-old daughters who train:

“Jiu-Jitsu is an equal opportunity martial art for kids. It doesn’t matter what size or shape your child is, it works for them all. All kids get “equal playing time” on the mat, regardless if they are up against someone bigger, smaller, stronger or weaker. And from a self-defense standpoint, they learn techniques that level the playing field; in other words, they learn how to defend themselves against someone who might be bigger or stronger. Also, because pre-pubescent girls and boys are the same pound-for-pound, there are usually no issues with girls practicing with boys. Jiu-Jitsu is not about brute force; it’s about control. It also gives brothers and sisters an opportunity to practice together and learn from one another as well. More importantly, it teaches mutual respect for the other gender.”

CROSS TRAINING

In short, I believe that cross-training with another sport is an excellent way to stop your child from burnout. It is also a great way to cross-train to improve your Jiu-Jitsu or using the extreme conditioning you gain from Jiu-Jitsu to improve in your other sport skills. Still, like with any life skill, you do not want to walk away completely. My suggestion is dropping Jiu-Jitsu to only one or two training sessions a week while your child competes in another sport.

In fact, many professional athletes these days take up Jiu-Jitsu to improve stamina and skills because it is a whole-body workout that requires not only motion but perfect timing and balance.

JIU-JITSU MIND AND LIFESTYLE

“In the sports arena, I would say there is nothing like training and preparation. You have to train your mind as much as your body.” - Venus Williams

MINDSET

We have many students at our academy who struggle with anxiety, stress, PTSD, etc., and they have made Jiu-Jitsu part of their treatment regimen. Regular exercise is shown, in many cases, to reduce stress and anxiety and to improve mood, but the fact that Jiu-jitsu is so intricate and complex makes it the ideal sport to train your mind.

This complexity will always keep your child's mind engaged. It provides as much an exercise for the mind as it does for the body. The constant details will engage the most inquisitive mind and also excite and train the most wandering. It will help adults and kids manage stress and increase problem-solving skills. While training, you are constantly having to solve complex problems that involve the whole body. As mentioned previously, a typical class will involve

an instructor showing complex techniques and your child then having to apply those under stress. This will force their mind to be engaged the whole time as they try to fend off their opponent while thinking of ways to subdue them. It is this same level of complexity that will keep your children very focused during class. It is very hard to think about anything else but the task at hand when you're trying to apply these techniques during a live rolling session where the other person is trying to resist you at 100%.

Your child will constantly be exposed to students with higher ranks, and sometimes, this will frustrate them in a good way, because they will need to use that frustration and turn it into determination and persistence in order to improve. It is this mental resolve that will help your child in other aspects of life as they grow up, where things aren't always easy and straightforward.

Children will always be asking questions in class and for those who don't, Jiu-Jitsu instructors usually find ways to involve even the shyest student in the class. Your child's brain is like a sponge at this young age, and stimulating that brain with a complex puzzle is the ideal way to increase not only memory retention but also mental well-being. The other areas that will be addressed include the absence of ego as you will constantly deal with overcoming failure and

the increase of discipline needed to constantly learn and adapt to solve this human chess game.

At some point, even as an adult, I go through phases where I get submitted with all kinds of techniques, and it takes huge amounts of mental focus and resolve for me to pull through and overcome these challenges by learning and adapting. The rewards at the end are always worth the struggle I go through. As an instructor, this is one of the most rewarding things seeing this type of growth in a child and what it can do for their mental health and character.

LIFESTYLE

The other amazing benefit this sport brings to your family is the lifestyle aspect. I have seen many broken families using Jiu-Jitsu as a way to train together and bond. Fathers and sons, moms and daughters or the whole family comes together as a whole and trains together.

The challenge and reward system has the ability to change lives. I have witnessed these many times and think this is one of the main reasons I've decided to make this part of my life and my child's life and part of my family routine.

There is a very healthy lifestyle that surrounds BJJ with proper healthy eating habits and nutrition. Now more than ever, there are so many bad options for kids to eat out there; these options are marketed everywhere, and it is programming our children's brains to crave junk food.

As a result of the strenuous workout BJJ places on the body, it forces you to have a healthy balanced diet. Your child's body will be working at a high level of effort, and lapses in their diet will be felt during training. It is a great opportunity to educate your children on making the right choices when it comes to food and to give them a purpose for wanting to eat healthy food.

Being surrounded by people who have the same outlook and challenges also makes it so much easier for children. If they are going to be exposed to peer pressure, you might as well make that peer pressure positive. Eating healthy now might be slightly more expensive and inconvenient, but dealing with obesity and bad health will cost you a lot more later in life, especially with rising healthcare costs.

For us as parents, we want the best for our children, but we will face many challenges in creating or choosing an environment that is positive for the development and well-being of our children. Jiu-Jitsu gives you a perfect platform to build off of. The following quote is from Shannon, whose 14- and 10-year-old have been training for around 5 years:

“This sport brings us together as a family. I train with our kids to have something to relate to them with. We use our car ride home to talk about what we learned; it makes the awkward silence a thing of the past. I allow my children to give me advice just as I give them advice in their life choices. This helps us relate better, and they take my advice a lot better. Make time for your children. We think that as adults, we need to stay busy and make money to be happy. Stress and no time for our children is not the answer. Our kids need guidance now while they are young to help them make smart choices when they are adults.”

JIU-JITSU COMPETITION

“Running taught me valuable lessons. In cross-country competition, training counted more than intrinsic ability, and I could compensate for a lack of natural aptitude with diligence and discipline. I applied this in everything I did.” - Nelson Mandela

There are many opportunities in Jiu-Jitsu to test yourself, and competition is just one of them, but in my opinion, it is one of the best. Nelson Mandela was a very competitive cross-country runner in his younger days, and he used competition and training for competition as one of the tools that shaped his exceptional mind and character. Whether you agree with his views and actions or not, he was an exceptional leader with great mental resolve, and his exceptionally strong mind fought for the morals that he believed in.

I competed in many team sports growing up. I played rugby in both South Africa and New Zealand as well as any other sport that I could find the time to do. Of all the competition anxiety and mental fortitude that I experienced, competing in Jiu-Jitsu, does not compare to anything else I have ever done.

The level of anxiety and the need to think under such immense pressure, while using your entire body, elevates Jiu-Jitsu competition above all the others I have ever experienced, and I hear the same from many other athletes. I will use the rest of this chapter to go over the specific areas in which competing helps your child grow and develop.

My coach and mentor, Gustavo Dantas, wrote a book, (Launching Your BJJ Competition Journey After 30) specifically on the benefits of competing. Even if you are under 30 and you are considering competing or having your child compete, I highly recommend that you read his book. The concepts in it has helped many high-level athletes excel and achieve higher levels of performance. The book is available on Amazon.

Here is a link to it: <http://amzn.to/2wcyPK1>

Research by famous psychologist, Frank Sulloway, shows that younger siblings are more likely to take risks, and in a lot of cases, they compete better because of the fact that they naturally have to compete from a younger age with their older brother or sister.

If you are exposed to competition often, you will have less fear of failure or being judged for failure than those that are not. There also are many research papers written on how kids who play sports are less likely to drop out of school and how they perform better with goal-setting and discipline.

Competition drives performance at a higher level. It is common knowledge that training for something and having a goal will drive us to a higher level of activity and effort in order to achieve that goal. It is therefore the perfect catalyst to increasing your child's learning curve and performance.

One common myth is that professional athletes or people who perform at a high level do not have any nerves. While this might be true for a small percentage, many professional athletes talk about how they still have butterflies when they compete. The difference is that they are used to dealing with them and they have learned how to manage their stress in order to perform at a higher level.

Jiu-Jitsu competition will put a lot of expectation on your child, and it will definitely make them feel nervous and anxious. Learning how to deal with this at an early age will benefit your child later in life when it comes to job interviews and exams. It helped me tremendously in my professional career when I had to do any type of public speaking or teach a class.

It will also teach your child to take calculated risks at the right times while under pressure. There are some moves or techniques that are riskier than others with bigger rewards. Competition will teach your child when to use these based on a set of circumstances. Taking risks is healthy if they are calculated and if all other factors are considered and evaluated. Doing this type of fast cognitive processing in a competition environment under stress will test and improve their decision-making ability.

Your child will not only learn how to win, but more importantly, how to lose. It is inevitable that they will lose a match, and this will teach them how to deal with failure and how to go back to training with a game plan to work on their mistakes. It places a high emphasis on incremental improvement and going back and trying these at the next competition.

The competition environment is very safe for children; they will compete at their age range, weight, and experience level. The rules for kids are set up so that injuries are minimized. Another benefit for your child is that they will learn to fight someone at 100% effort, but within a set of rules and with respect for their opponent.

Like with any other activity, your child's growth with competition and in Jiu-Jitsu depends heavily on you as a parent. The type of support and the expectation you place on them will play a significant role in their ability to use this as a positive learning experience. Let us look more specifically at the parent's role in guiding their child in the next chapter.

THE JIU-JITSU PARENT

“There is such pressure on kids these days to be the best at everything.” - Shirley Henderson

It is only natural that we as parents want the best for our children. We want them to be happy and to be successful in life. Unfortunately, this desire can lead to unhealthy pressure and stress that is not always good for their development, and it can cause the exact opposite of what we are trying to achieve.

Rick Pitino, the well-known basketball coach, writes in his book *Success Is a Choice*: “Most people will tell you that there’s good pressure and there’s bad pressure. I don’t believe that. Pressure in and of itself is neutral. It’s how you choose to view it that determines whether it’s good or bad. If you use it to your advantage it’s good pressure. Let it control you and it becomes bad pressure, or stress.”

Our goal as parents is to help our sons and daughters rise in under-pressure situations, not only in sport but in life.

Your child will lose, and how you react when they fail is just as important or even more important than the disappointment they will experience themselves.

Understanding this is very important in building confident, disciplined, bully-proof and ultimately successful and happy children. There's no doubt we will have anxiety when our child competes and trains, but learning how to control this and keeping calm will benefit them so much more and reduce stress and anxiety.

This will probably be the most important chapter for you as a parent to fully comprehend and understand. Jiu-Jitsu is an amazing platform and you will understand this better now that you've read this book; however, your child's ability to use this as a positive developmental tool depends 100% on you as a parent. Everything from bringing them in for their first class, being encouraging when they don't feel like showing up for class, to how you support and react to their wins and losses all plays a major role in what type of life and success they will experience as they grow up.

To build great character, they will learn to win with grace and humility. They will face failure through losses and overcome them with discipline and persistence. Setting goals yearly/monthly/weekly/daily and helping them achieve them is a good way to prepare them for adulthood. All of these aspects mentioned will be not only touched on, but consistently and daily practiced within the Jiu-Jitsu environment. This is why thousands of people worldwide use this as a platform for growth and character development, and you can do the same.

Most schools will offer classes for both adults and children. This will give you a very unique opportunity to give your child an amazing experience and walk the walk with them and know what they are experiencing. They will look up to you, win or lose, and like a sponge, they will absorb your reaction to failure and hard work and respect. This art form can be an amazing bonding experience for you and your child unlike anything else, and it is something you can carry with your family for the rest of your lives. Unfortunately, this also comes with a disclaimer that no matter what platform you use in your child's life, the way you react and support their success and failures will play a significant role in their ability to use it in a positive manner.

We all want to be great influencers on our children and in our professional careers. One of the world's leading high-performance coaches, Brendon Burchard, states that 3 of the key elements to influence people are:

- 1) Changing the way they think (e.g., Jiu-Jitsu lifestyle)
- 2) Being a role model to them (e.g., train as a family)
- 3) Challenging them (e.g., Jiu-Jitsu competition)

Jiu-Jitsu is the perfect platform for you to use all 3 of these elements to become an even better parent and role model for your child.

PARENTING TIPS

Below are some more tips for parents on how to be supportive and what to watch out for:

- Jiu-Jitsu should be fun, so make sure you're not too serious. Try not to act too nervous and anxious before a child's match or training; children will notice this and it will affect their performance.
- If you have never done Jiu-Jitsu or aren't part of the coaching team, you should refrain from trying to coach from the sidelines. By all means, cheer for them as loud as possible, but still have respect for their opponents. Have trust in the coaching staff and leave the technical coaching to them. A black belt instructor usually has been training for over 10 years and has gone through what your kid is currently going through. The best way for you to understand this is to perhaps try one or two classes. Even if you don't train consistently, try it so you have some idea of just how difficult and how challenging this is for your child. You will value how much they need consistent encouragement and support from you, regardless of the outcome.

- Be careful not to put too much emphasis on winning and don't be too upset about losing. Your child will bounce back after a loss much faster than you as a parent. I have witnessed very bad examples of how parents react to losses. It can turn this into a very unpleasant experience for your child. The emphasis on only winning can damage your child's self-esteem and confidence. This is not unique to Jiu-Jitsu, and it applies to any other sport. If you find yourself scouting your child's opponents all the time or going through countless videos of their fights with them, this might be a sign that you're too invested in the outcome. There is definitely good strategic research that can help them, but looking at their opponent's highlight reels (these are usually the ones getting uploaded) can create higher levels of stress and anxiety. I remember in one of my first competitions, I googled my first-round opponent. I was so focused on his submissions and game that I completely shut down and felt sick with stress before and during my match. Learning to not focus on my opponent too much has helped me a lot.

- Ask yourself what the end goal is. Would you like your child to be a 10-year-old “world or state champion” or would you rather have them be a well-rounded and successful adult? Should your child’s athletic career be used to boast about trophies and belts or should it be used as a developmental tool? Take a step back and look at what Jiu-Jitsu’s role can and should be in developing their confidence, character and health. Don't get me wrong, I still want to win, but placing less emphasis on only winning has helped me a lot more and is my suggestion for you.

Below is a comment from a parent, Robert Dowling, who is currently training Jiu-Jitsu with his family:

“As a husband of 12 years and father to three kids ages 9,7 and almost 5, I more than any understand chaos and what the structure of this sport can truly do. Jiu-Jitsu runs in our blood, I myself have been training for 10 plus years and my children for over 2.

When it comes to training, we have two rules in our family: always try your best and never give up; everything else we simply leave on the mat. My kids come here positive and eager to learn and they leave in the same fashion. They, as well as I, have come to love and count on the family and friends they have gained and our lives are enriched outside of belt promotions and student of the day.

We train at least 3 to 4 days a week and unless there is a very good reason to miss, WE SHOW UP. It starts with us in teaching these young minds to stick with what you set out to do. The other day/days of the week are shuffled between dance for the girls and baseball for my son. I feel exposing them to multiple disciplines of extra-curricular activities is as important as a variety of food options.

The hardest thing for me is remembering “ I am not the coach.”, It is crucial that trust is formed and maintained on the part of the coaches and parents for this to work in your favor. The coaches are extraordinary and I’ve seen my kids’ confidence, attitude, classwork and sleep habits greatly improve.

Do my kids leave in tears some days? Yes, but loss is a part of life and for me, the smiles far out-number those few tears shed.”

GOAL SETTING

My coach, Gustavo Dantas, has a goal-setting technique that we utilize at our academy, whereby you set yourself different types of goals when competing. He breaks it down into an outcome goal, performance goal, and a process goal.

- The outcome goal, for the most part, is to win the match or perhaps make the podium or to go as far as possible in the bracket. The truth is you and your child have only a limited amount of control over this. It depends heavily on their opponent's ability and the referee. Of course, we would all like our child to win and that is a good goal, but there are also other ones to focus on in order to grow.
- The process goal has to do with training and getting ready for a competition. How many training sessions will they do? What diet and extra training will follow? This is all about dedication and preparation; you have a lot more control of this goal.

- The last one, and the one I see as the most impactful and rewarding, is the performance goal. This is where they will focus on what specific technique they would like to add to their game and to try in a competition. It will mean that in some cases, they will not be playing their “A game.” This puts less emphasis on winning and more on growing their technical ability under pressure. Students who focus more on performance goals are the ones who excel most in not only sport, but in life. Unfortunately, this is also the hardest one because of the intrinsic (ego) and extrinsic pressures your child will face. It becomes even more difficult because the result and outcomes take a backseat. It will however develop an ability for them to go outside of their comfort zone not only in sport, but in life.

I hope this book was helpful in deciding whether you would like to make Jiu-Jitsu part of your family's life. From personal experience, I would highly recommend that you do. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me by email at: nigel.kurtz@gmail.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nigel Kurtz is a South-African born entrepreneur, business manager and Jiu-Jitsu practitioner.

Nigel was born in the small town of Paarl, outside of Cape Town, South Africa. After receiving his diploma in electrical engineering, he moved to Auckland, New Zealand, where he graduated with a bachelor's in engineering.



In 2010, Nigel decided to move to Arizona where he completed his MBA in finance and leadership. It was in Arizona that he decided to start his Jiu-Jitsu journey under the guidance of his mentor and coach, Gustavo Dantas.

Nigel has been instrumental in building and growing one of the strongest Jiu-Jitsu academies, Gustavo Dantas Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy, in the world.

His years of experience and business knowledge, combined with his love and passion for Jiu-Jitsu and personal development, have put him in an ideal position to pursue his dream of helping others.

He can be reached on his personal Facebook page:
www.Facebook.com/nigel.kurtz.1

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