

I began training in Ju-Jitsu, a Japanese martial art, in 1986 & achieved my Black Belt at the age of 17. After starting my own club at 20 I soon had to stop training completely due to a back injury. Having to stop training was one of the most difficult things I ever had to do as it had become part of me & I truly loved it. But Ju-Jitsu never left me.

At 34 having worked in various locations, moved house a couple of times & had 3 children, one of which was a new baby, I returned to the club so my eldest child could join.

Although I had found treatment that helped with my back problems, so this was not a barrier to re-joining any longer. Having just had another baby & at 34 I felt too old, over weight & unfit. Whilst dying to get involved again I just couldn't face the embarrassment of what I might look like & that I clearly wouldn't be capable of doing what I could do years previous.

After more than 2 years of watching my son & with lots of encouragement & support from the other members I eventually bit the bullet & returned. It was tough but wonderfully rewarding & I wish I had done it much sooner. Everyone was so supportive & friendly. It was made clear to me that I would receive all the help I needed & any apprehension or difficulties I might face would be faced together.

Now, some 7 years later I am working towards my Black Belt again. I have achieved everything I thought was impossible. It has been a huge struggle, I've had good weeks & bad weeks but stuck at it. Surrounded by a wonderful team who are more like family, I know I always have plenty of support, encouragement & understanding. Two of my three children train too. With my eldest gaining a Black Belt of his own at 14 & my daughter a Blue Belt at 9yrs old. We really are a family affair.

According to my daughter I work harder than anyone else in the club. When asked how she worked that out, she explained:

*"Because you are the sweatiest & have the reddest face out of everyone in here."*

Her comment was accurate but unfortunately not for the right reasons!! Still finding things difficult sometimes & still not being as fit as I wanted to be, this spurred me on. Working towards my Black Belt & wanting to be not the 'best of everyone', but the 'best I can be' has given me the determination to loose some 2 st in weight & to persevere with the dream of achieving my Black Belt again.

Over the years we have seen only a few girls & ladies join our club. I want to show you that being a female & joining what might be a predominantly male class doesn't matter. We are a family, united in one thing - Learning Ju-Jitsu. It makes no difference how young or old, how fit or unfit you may be, what sex or even sexual orientation you are, you are a member of the WMJJC family & will be treated with respect, understanding, support & encouragement.

I can appreciate how you might feel. I have started Jujitsu as a teenager & all that that entails, I have also started as an overweight, unfit middle aged mum of 3 & I have a young daughter who started with apprehension & self consciousness. So I can see things from various angles. I'm here to assure you we are still standing, stronger than ever. So do it, whether your just starting out or you want to return to something you did when you were younger come along, we will look after you & you can start your journey to achieving amazing things.

Achieving my goal & gaining my Black Belt again - THIS GIRL CAN & so can you.