

Fighting My Way To Fitness!

Aged 59, Hiromi Stone is a glowing example of the health benefits of the grappling sport jiu-jitsu – despite the bruises

As I bow to the young man in front of me, I feel tired but excited from our fight. Tiedly, I lost – but after an old enough to be there. My husband told me two years ago that I'd be taking part in a five sport in a class of others half my age. I'd be aged. But now I take jiu-jitsu classes four times a week and, although I'm stronger than I was, I've been in my life.

Back in 2009, when I noticed that an "MMA" gym was being built just five minutes from my flat in London, I wasn't sure what the letters stood for. "It's mixed martial arts. Mum – fighting!" explained my son Ken, then 18. I'd never been interested in that sort of sport, but

thirties – told me that, as the gym was new, they were encouraging all the staff to try the different classes available.

"If you come and do a boxing class tomorrow, I'll do it with you," she suggested.

To my surprise, I really enjoyed the class, despite the fact that I'd never done

Brazilian jiu-jitsu class. I accepted the challenge and went along, not expecting to enjoy it at all – after all, it was yet another combative sport.

When I walked into my first class and realised that I was the oldest in the class by at least a decade or two, I nearly walked right out! But

"To my surprise, I loved the sport, despite being terrible at it..."

because the gym was so close and I wanted to improve my fitness, I emailed them when they opened to see whether they were running any classes suitable for someone of my age.

I had an enthusiastic response from the manager saying that the gym was for everyone and that I ought to come and have a tour.

When I arrived the following day, the first thing I saw was a boxing ring and I felt completely intimidated.

But the manager – a young woman in her

anything like it before and to be honest, was absolutely terrible at it.

Luckily, my coach was incredibly patient, despite my lack of hand-eye coordination!

I began doing boxing classes every week – I wasn't hitting anyone, just bags and pads. But after a few years I got to the point that, if I wanted to progress any more I'd have to start sparring, and I had no interest in getting hit in the head!

I had a go at another class – Muay Thai – for a while, but again it was a sparring sport and I didn't fancy getting kicked.

Then, in 2016, one of the coaches suggested I try a



The class come from all walks of life

I hate quitting, so I decided I'd give it a try.

To my surprise, I loved the sport, despite being dreadful at it! Although jiu-jitsu is combative, its focus is grappling rather than hitting and kicking, which I much prefer.

It's not without its risks.



Hiromi is rightly proud of her achievements.

Is Jiu-Jitsu For You?

Brazilian jiu-jitsu is a martial art which involves grappling, often on the ground. It may not be a sport that many of us consider, but there are plenty of benefits – for body and mind.

Jade Samuel, Brazilian jiu-jitsu and BJJ coach

trainer from London

Kings Gym, London,

explains, "The

grappling that we do

in BJJ is a very

cultural movement

for the body, and

is suitable for

participants of any age.

"Some people might

worry about the close

contact necessary in

jiu-jitsu, but it is a

sport that requires a

high level of respect.

As well as the physical

benefits of the sport,

jiu-jitsu is great for the

mind as it involves

problem-solving under

stress – something

that helps to keep the

mind young."

Close contact with respect



extreme physical situation and you have to work your way out of it. It teaches you to stay calm, but also to be assertive rather than aggressive.

The sport has taught me a lot about how to approach life.

Understandably, some class members still refuse to fight me – often young men, as they're worried they might hurt me. But that's fine – to be honest, I prefer to roll with people who are closer to me in ability.

Despite taking part in jiu-jitsu for almost two years, I'm still pretty terrible at it. At one stage I felt a bit down because I never seem to get my opponent to "tap" (which

is how they signal that they've given up). But my trainer points out that this wasn't a great measure of my progress rather than aiming for outright victory. I do count the times when I wasn't defeated as a success.

Last week, I was awarded my blue belt. I'm 5 foot 1 and sixty years old, so often surprised when I do jiu-jitsu, even though I think I'm pretty good.

I'd recommend jiu-jitsu to absolutely anyone as a great way to keep mind and body active every minute.

"Jiu-jitsu teaches you to stay calm, be assertive rather than aggressive"