

Peer Perspective September 2018



This is my 3rd place medal. I didn't win any matches unfortunately, but it still means the world to me because I never thought I would be in a place in my life to earn one. Last month I participated in the 2018 International Novice Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Open in Las Vegas, Nevada. It is part of the 2018 Worlds Masters IBJJF Tournament that included over 5000 competitors from around the world. Thinking back on where I was a year ago, I don't think I would have ever dreamed of doing anything as cool as this!

A year ago, I was really struggling with my symptoms. I felt like I had no hope of recovery and was going through the motions of life. I had trouble getting out of bed and completing daily responsibilities. I just waited for the time I could go back to sleep. It wasn't much of a life and I definitely wasn't enjoying it. I suffered with constant suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety, which caused me to limit myself to the bare minimums of activity. I dreaded leaving the house to go to work or school. I kept mostly to myself and if I wasn't required to do anything I would be sleeping.

I couldn't live like that any longer. I needed to actively do something to save my life. One major change I made was to start exercising regularly. That was the hardest part of my recovery by far. My mind and body would come up with all sorts of reasons why I should not exercise, especially not try Jiu-Jitsu. A dear friend repeatedly asked and encouraged me to join his gym. I have always loved combat sports but had a difficult time participating due to my depression and anxiety. I was always too tired and too anxious to put myself out there. I missed fighting a lot.

With the love and lots of support of friends and family I was able to ignite my fighting spirit and went to my first class. I felt like I was going to die after just the warm up! I felt so out of place because of my lack of athleticism and inexperience. I was encouraged by my now gym family to stick with it. My supports reminded me every time I complained about feeling like a 90 year old women to keep practicing. They saw the change in me before I did. I was doing better mentally and physically.

I am still slowly improving on my Jiu-Jitsu, but I know I feel much better after going to practice. I feel the depression and anxiety melting away and my self-confidence growing. I may be terrible for a while and I have learned that is part of the journey and to love myself through it. Exercise is now a main part of my self-care. I encourage all of you to find an exercise or healthy activity to add positivity to your life. It will be hard, and it will suck at times, but it is worth it!!

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