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*“The Art of Yielding”*

**How Jujitsu Inspires Confidence, Motivation and Self-Development**

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## Why Jujitsu?

People come to study martial arts for many reasons; some out of curiosity, others naivety, some for being the child of an overbearing parent and others yet seeking an exotic form of fitness. The reasons are infinite. Needless to say, no one is ready for what awaits them.

As the ingenuous rookie progresses along what is undeniably a perilous road, he comes to realise something about it. Something strikes him with such a profound influence that he is no longer capable of leaving the mat for good. He ceases to look at Jujitsu as merely a form of physical activity, and instead looks upon it as it truly is - an art.

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For what has entered a dojo is a sickly, mentally depleted creature with a pale unforgiving look in his eye, leaves as a confident, bright-eyed man ready to take on any challenge in life. And what caused this drastic change? This is a question that many have often pondered. What is it about Jujitsu exactly that can so radically transform a human being.

The answer lies deep within its core, cultivated by thousands of years of philosophy and thinking. So that we may develop a greater appreciation of what draws us to this art, it is vital to first consider the historical significance of Jujitsu and its evolution into what we practise today.

## The Origins of the Art

The origins and history of Jujitsu, let alone most of the oriental unarmed arts, cannot be fully reconstructed. Much of what we know blends considerably with myth and legend, making it exceedingly difficult to accurately pinpoint its birth.

The practice of Jujitsu may be traced back in history for well over 2,500 years. It is the view of most scholars that Jujitsu developed from many individual teachings that either originated in Japan or found their way to Japan from other Asian countries.

Although, there is evidence that some of the empty hand techniques which form the foundation of Jujitsu today, were in use as early as the Heian period, in conjunction with the 'bushi' training of the samurai.

It was during the peaceful Edo era (1603-1868) that Jujitsu really developed momentum. This can largely be attributed to a decree raised by the Tokugawa shogunate that made it unlawful to carry weapons and engage in their use, which thus allowed the art of unarmed combat to thrive.

Right up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Jujitsu spread and evolved into specialised styles. Due to Jujitsu's extensive history and being a complex art, it was inevitable that other

arts would evolve from it. Many of today's other popular forms of martial arts, such as Aikido, Karate and Judo, have direct lineage to Jujitsu.

In the beginning of the Edo era there were hundreds of these various schools (ryu), and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were over 700. Kyushin Ryu is one particular school formed as early as 1558 in the Eiroku period, which today is still a thriving ryu.



Since their introduction outside Japan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, interest in martial arts has spread like wildfire right around the globe. Jujitsu is no exception. Much of the fervent popularity may be attributed to its mysterious origins, along with the fusion of self-defence, combat and Eastern thinking thus contributing to its overall mystique.

### **Rationale of Jujitsu**

Jujitsu has its roots deeply embedded in Eastern philosophy, with Zen and Taoism forming an important underlying aspect of the wisdom behind it.

The Densho Chusaku, a classical Jujitsu text of the Kito school, has one of the oldest descriptions of the art. In Jujitsu, it says, "One should discard one's strength and use the enemy's to win." This is in essence, the mentality behind the art of Jujitsu.

An example of its application is to perform every technique with minimal effort. This means using your body as efficiently as possible. This can involve the ability to time one's movements in order to achieve the best results, the ability to make use of the movement or force of one's opponent to one's own advantage, and just as importantly, the capacity to achieve harmony between mind and body to sharpen the decision making process.

Despite the fact that Jujitsu requires endless practice, discipline and physical exertion, it keeps very much with the Zen principle of effortlessness. This seems a paradox, but it is with clear reason that this is so. Unnecessary actions result from a disorderly mind, causing indecisive and disorganised movements. The mind should be lucid so the body is capable of natural and decisive action. This is what Jujitsu attempts to convey through the practising of the various techniques or kata.

## A means of alternative therapy?

Many would agree that today's fast paced existence is becoming increasingly difficult to handle. There appears to be the growing mentality and expectation that we must work on the verge of obsession to be always productive. We continue to push our thoughts into line, marching with military precision towards fulfilling what is really an empty objective.

With so much output, and so little time to reflect upon one's self, people are becoming increasingly prone to an isolation of the senses, which has had a particularly negative impact on many people's mental wellbeing.

Psychiatrists continue to report an increasing number of people admitted for the treatment of depressive disorders as a result of these growing pressures. However the medical community fails to seek out the source of this problem at its root, and instead prescribe endless doses of antidepressants and other medications that do little more than turn its patients into zombies.

It is little wonder, therefore, that we have seen the sudden growth of Oriental disciplines, yogic practices and martial arts. They stop obsessive thinking and open an alternative mental awareness, relieving the agonies that load minds with frenzied thoughts. They allow for the reception of new experiences that otherwise cannot be achieved. They encourage yielding as opposed to always lashing forward, a concept that has never been much embraced by Western thinking.



Youth are particularly affected by these pressures, which often manifest themselves in social delinquency, many of whom have fallen into alcohol and substance abuse in order to deal with the difficulties presented. This is further reflected by the growing trend in youth violent offences, many of which may be attributed to this growing problem (*2010 Queensland Police Service Crime Statistics*).

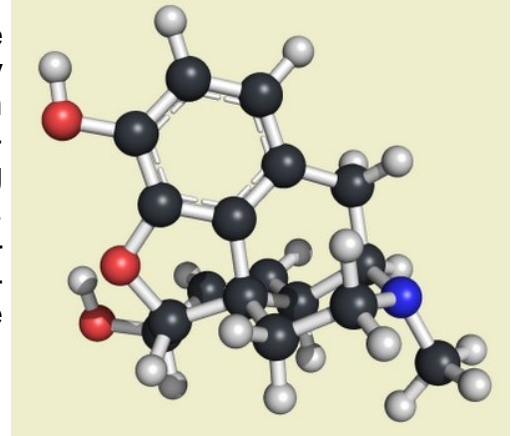
For these youth, Jujitsu is of a particular value that most other physical activities are not. Apart from the development of traits such as respect and patience, Jujitsu provides vital role models for these kids to look up to in the form of a sensei or master.

As Damien Martin, 6<sup>th</sup> degree black belt and instructor of Go Ki Kai Karate explains, "Traditional martial arts provide exactly the experience that will engage young people who are at clear risk for delinquent acts or impulsive violence, and even start them on positive life paths."

Of course this is not limited to juveniles, as many reformed thugs have also turned to the spiritual guidance of a sensei and are now admirable examples of reformation.

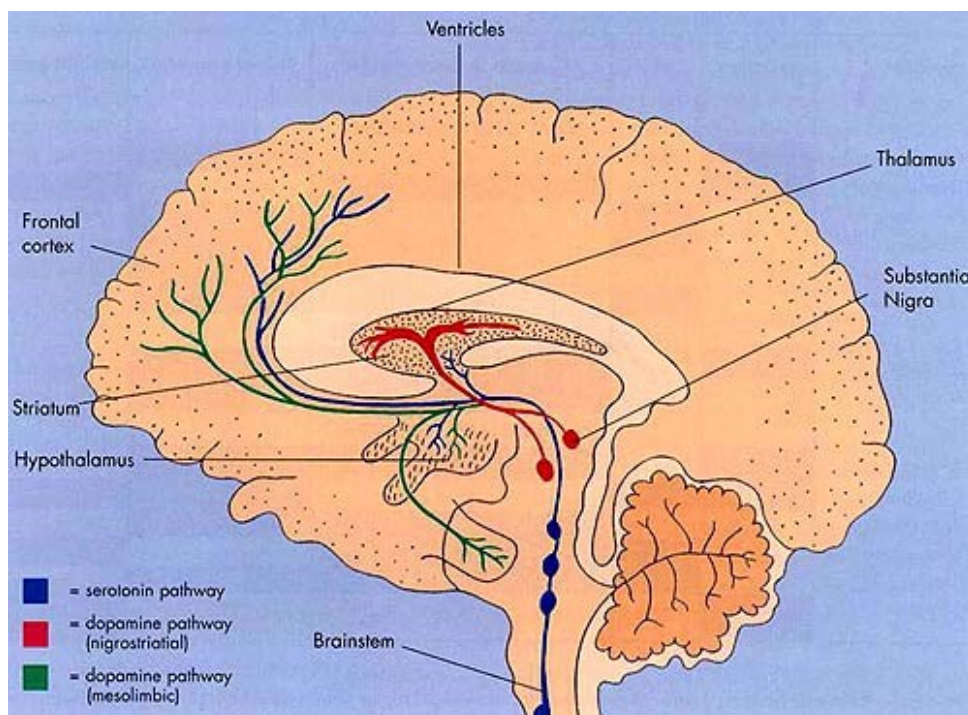
## A more scientific approach

Due to the numerous studies conducted into the short-term benefits of Jujitsu, it is clear that they lie in the physical activity itself. It is well known that during any form of strenuous exercise, a variety of chemicals is released in the brain. Among these are endorphins, dopamine and serotonin. These are all naturally occurring chemical compounds that control a person's mood, and it is after an intense training session, that they produce the effect of mild euphoria and general wellbeing. Considering Jujitsu is very physically demanding, there is therapeutic benefit in this regard.



Recent studies have also revealed that engaging in regular exercise and physical activity such as Jujitsu can drastically reduce the chances of developing a form of depressive illness, and aids in the treatment of those suffering from it.

However, this cannot account for the growth and development of character of a person in the long term. Unfortunately there have not been any studies focusing on the effects of training Jujitsu or other martial arts over an extended period of time. As such, it is a matter of utilising individual case studies and personal anecdotes that can really reveal the long term benefits, until some form of study is conducted to this degree.



## So why do it?

It is clear there are several parallels between Jujitsu and psychological thought, particularly surrounding the concepts of energy, the economical use of force, and just as importantly, attentiveness to oneself and the world around us. What may seem paradoxical to some, Jujitsu is in fact pacifistic by nature. The objective of Jujitsu is never to engage in meaningless combat, for that demonstrates a failure in itself; an inability to control oneself. Jujitsuans pride themselves on being able to maintain great self control; for they needn't prove anything when placed in a defensive situation. They themselves know they are capable. Interestingly, the assurance this creates does not make the practitioner confrontational, but rather very tolerant.

As explained earlier, Jujitsu means the 'art of yielding', or 'art of compliance'. The philosophy of Jujitsu is largely based on the idea of submissiveness to one's environment and surroundings, and an ability to harness control of a particular situation or another's energy, called 'ki'.

Jujitsu, along with many other traditional martial arts, offers an effective medium in which to convey enviable qualities into its practitioners. It teaches them the importance of respect, personal responsibility and the development of mental clarity in general. Over time the practitioner develops self-confidence along with a strong sense of purpose. They no longer see conflict as a means of resolution, but only as the last resort.

The various challenges associated with practising Jujitsu assist in the development of more than just the physiological state, but also the psychosocial, thus positively influencing practitioners in how they handle future challenges.

Unlike many other physical activities, Jujitsu requires a great use of the mind in order to develop the strategies that are then applied to the physical component of the training. As such, practitioners improve their focus, making them more adept at controlling their emotions.



Jujitsu has much more to offer to those who look beyond the physical scope of the art. Those who embrace the fundamental doctrines underlying it are likely to gain more than those who just practise for fitness. It is by constantly practising this art, and looking beyond its physical components, that we discover balance, inner strength and harmony.

Above all, it is forming a network of like-minded people who will continue to support and motivate each other both in and out of the dojo.

**“It is by practising Jujitsu that we discover balance, inner strength and harmony”**

## In summary

As mentioned in the prologue of this paper, practising Jujitsu is by no means a simple undertaking. However, it is for the vast enlightenment that Jujitsu offers us that we practise it, and it is for its immeasurable lessons learnt and skills attained that we will continue to practise it until the moment we become dust. To leave now would be a failure, for of what we have gained, there is much yet to be gained.

In the words of Jean-Lucien Jazarin, President of the National College of Black Belts in Paris, France:

*“The Martial Arts cannot be practised as a form of entertainment or distraction. They are a serious undertaking which does not necessarily mean a sad one – far from it. You cannot approach them tentatively with your fingertips, with a mere touch of the lips, or with superficial layers of thought or heart. It would be better never to become involved, but if you do, it is essential to carry on to the end, until one’s being is regenerated to the point of being made man again – a real man. As soon as your naked feet have entered the dojo, you have entered forever. If you give up, if you waver, you risk finding yourself weaker than before. An important risk and a handicap which is difficult to compensate for.”*

Jujitsu is a monument both to human complexity and simplicity. It is an art that instills within a person great humility and empowerment, respect and tolerance, but above all, a satisfaction that how one trains in the art, reflects upon his own life. Jujitsu is not merely a sport, but a philosophy; in essence, it is a lifelong endeavour, and ultimately its purpose serves to make a good man better.



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