How Ju- Jitsu Empowers Women.

By Sarah Bradley

Women are told the myriad of ways the world is after us. Women are told not to be in the world alone, or slutty, or in darkness, or in “this” or “that” part of it, because the world might get you. We are in a world where our smallness defines us. Until it doesn’t. One of the many gifts of jiu-jitsu is that it can give you a sense of ownership over yourself. It can give you the comfort of knowing the world isn’t going to get you.

Let me explain what Brazilian jiu-jitsu is — it’s the art of choking necks and breaking joints. It’s been called the art of “how a small man beats a big one,” and I think that is very appropriate. It relies on technique and leverage. Technique is how you win.

 Jiu-jitsu is the biggest perspective-enhancer you can have without being in any real danger. Most of us know that sweating and exercising is good for our bodies. But our minds get blocked up and need working out, too. Life can stack up like an undefeated monster. You stay up at night thinking about your project that’s late, or friend who screwed you over, or your parents and whatever they did right or wrong. You can become paralyzed by your mind. A great way to keep yourself from being paralyzed is to focus on the present by doing something that requires all your attention. Find ways to keep your focus out of your own head. There are a lots of ways to do this — for me that’s meditation, painting or baking — but jiu-jitsu can be a great tool to not focus on what’s in your head.

In jiu-jitsu, every time you are in your head, there are physical consequences. If you’re not paying attention, you get choked. It makes life very simple. It’s hard to care about strict teachers, bad grades or bad friends when you spend an hour a day trying to choke someone until you’re both panting on the floor. Pushing yourself past your limits can be so valuable, and that is something jiu-jitsu might to for you.

Most of us have things we think are beautiful. Some people see a dancer’s arabesque and weep. Some people stare, gobsmacked, at the sea or a glittering skyline. As for myself, I find jiu-jitsu beautiful. It’s the art of how smallness can conquer strength, how you can stand in the world with more confidence and surety. Jiu-jitsu can teach you that you can be weak and still grow to be strong. And that’s beautiful.