

ENJOYING THE JOURNEY

Martial arts training has taught Rosa Braga-Mele, MD, MEd, FRCSC, valuable life lessons.

"It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters in the end." --Ursula K. Le Guin

How has your martial arts practice developed over time?

My interest in martial arts started in 1994 when I joined a dojo in downtown Toronto to practice Chito-Ryu-style karate. There, I studied both the discipline of martial arts and the art of meditation and Zen with my sensei for 2.5 years. I became pregnant with my first child and took a step back. Although a busy career in medicine and teaching and a robust family life with three children got the better of me, I never stopped thinking about martial arts. Then, in 2012, my youngest son, Lucas, expressed an interest in trying out karate, which gave me an opportunity to begin again.

There were times that I doubted I could learn everything. My memory felt inadequate. My body felt challenged. With the help of a group of dedicated Senseis, however, I persevered and continued to improve. I felt that every day was a new learning experience in the dojo. If I was not learning a new technique or kata, I was becoming more aware of my body and mind. That is the beauty of karate: it allows practitioners to challenge themselves to achieve their own personal best, both mentally and physically, without feeling the need to compare themselves with others.

Studying martial arts has made me a better person overall. It has taught me patience and commitment. It has taught me to listen to my body and make modifications. It has made me more calm and centered and given me a new purpose. It has taught me humility. It has made me a better learner and a better teacher. I take many of the lessons I have learned performing karate into the OR with my residents and have modified my teaching techniques.

I am grateful for the opportunity to challenge myself and restart my journey in martial arts. Achieving my black belt was the beginning of a journey. I am now training for my second-degree black belt, and I look forward to continuing my training and learning something new physically or spiritually within and outside of the dojo's walls.

What would people be surprised to learn about you?

I think people would be surprised to learn that, although I love ophthalmology, it is not the center of my



life. I am a very involved mother of three boys, aged 19, 17, and 9 years, and I enjoy spending time with them. I am a certified basketball coach and have coached all of my boys in sports. I enjoy being outdoors more than indoors, especially with my dog or running, and I love relaxing and binge watching Netflix. ■

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