

# The Growing Jiu Jitsu Movement Among Cops

## *How the “Gentle Art” Can Help Reform Police Use of Force*

MINNEAPOLIS, October 24, 2022 — Among an estimated 34% of cops leaving law enforcement in the Minneapolis area ([Minnesota Reformer](#)), former Twin Cities police officer, Jason Swartz, says he left, not out of disillusionment, but because he believed he could help change policing from the outside through the art of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ). Swartz’s company, [Jiu Jitsu Five-O](#), focuses on a broader issue facing cops every day: better, safer, life-changing training for cops like him.

“It may sound cliché, but most cops join because they truly want to make a difference. And like most of them, I quickly ran into a wall early in my career,” said Swartz.

Faced with a slew of frustrations in a highly politicized career, he started Jiu Jitsu training as a way to de-stress and to stay in shape. “My wife was sick of hearing me complaining all of the time, so I knew I needed to get control of my negative attitude.” Besides the physical and mental health benefits that he received from the intensive training, Swartz instantly saw how applicable the art was to his job.

“Jiu Jitsu training closely mirrors many of the common situations cops find themselves in on the street...Taking people to the ground, controlling someone who doesn’t want to be put in handcuffs, defending yourself against common attacks like punches and headlocks...Plus, it allows you to train these things with 100 percent intensity against a fully resisting opponent. It’s about as realistic as you can get, which is the exact opposite of what most police departments have been training for years.”

### **Why has Jiu Jitsu become a groundswell movement among cops?**

“The Jiu Jitsu movement is currently driven from the bottom up by cops like me who hit the wall and started to look around for something better and safer for themselves and the people they serve,” says Swartz. “Through more realistic hands-on training, cops can better anticipate real threats and feel confident in their training. The best training for cops isn’t going to come from a PowerPoint presentation.” Using Jiu Jitsu as a discipline, cops practice techniques over and over again until they’re able to perform them without even thinking. For new cops especially, it can be a saving grace. Through continual training, they can make their mistakes before getting into the field.

One of the more obvious reasons that Jiu Jitsu is considered the “gentle art” is that it provides safe and effective movements that generally do not include strikes. Through Jiu Jitsu, cops learn how to safely and efficiently control subjects, without the need for punches and kicks that are commonly taught in traditional police defensive tactics. The result is safer interactions between cops and civilians, a reduction in injuries during use-of-force encounters and reduced liability for the departments and cities in which they serve.

### **Less Reliance on Weapons**

With ongoing BJJ training, we can reduce our cops' reliance on intermediate weapons, such as Tasers, pepper spray, batons, and other devices. When cops are less likely to pull out a weapon, the less likely there is to be an escalation of force, unnecessary injuries, or worse, a deadly force encounter. De-escalation is built into the cop's mindset.

Swartz found that Jiu Jitsu helped him think more clearly. Jiu Jitsu is known as the "gentle art" because those who practice BJJ learn to remain calm, breathe, and think critically in times of high pressure. After Swartz started training Jiu Jitsu, he felt calmer on the job. "I felt like I was prepared for anything that might be thrown at me. When I would come across someone who was yelling, I responded more calmly because I was confident that I could control the person and defend myself if needed. The calmer I was, the more quickly the situation would naturally deescalate without the use of force."

### **Camaraderie and Commonality**

Another positive side effect of Jiu Jitsu training is one that Swartz says isn't talked about enough—diversity. "There's a lot of talk about the need for more diversity training in law enforcement, but that usually consists of a stuffy classroom, with an outside company giving a lengthy presentation to a group of cops who feel like they're being held hostage. It's very impersonal." He says that through his Jiu Jitsu training, he's met and developed friendships with people from all sorts of backgrounds, who he may not have ever had the chance to meet if it wasn't for his training. "Walk into any Jiu Jitsu gym around the country and you'll find cops, accountants, doctors, individuals who have previously been incarcerated, people of different ethnicities, faiths, and political parties - all smiling and training together as they work toward common goals. There's really nothing like it."

### **Mental health benefits**

Life as a cop is stressful. Police officers respond to many situations that can be hard to see – from car crashes to domestic violence – that's why it's important for police precincts to invest in the mental health of their officers. Learning to cope in positive ways is important for everyone, but is vital for police officers. If an officer responds to a call while carrying anger from an unrelated issue, it can have dangerous consequences.

As a Jiu Jitsu Black Belt, former officer and passionate instructor, Swartz said he wants to change the game of police defensive tactics and make Jiu Jitsu more accessible to cops around the world. One of the ways he's doing this is through the Jiu Jitsu Five-O Mobile App, a tool he developed that provides members with techniques for common situations on the street, grappling-based workouts, yoga and mobility videos and monthly nutrition plans. Members also have access to Swartz 24/7 for any training needs they may have. This gives officers a complete training tool to help them not only improve their hands-on skills, but also their physical and mental health. Recently, he left his career as a Police Officer and is now focused full-time on training cops in the art of Jiu Jitsu. Jiu Jitsu Five-O also provides agency training, in-person seminars, scenario-specific courses, and branded Jiu Jitsu gear.

Swartz believes Jiu Jitsu training will become encouraged and supported from the top as agencies

recognize the benefits and enthusiasm behind it. “Traditional police defensive tactics training has failed us for years. It’s unrealistic and inconsistent, and we’re now seeing the result of this through video footage posted on social media. Many agencies only train hands-on skills four hours or less per year, which obviously needs to change. Not only that, but cops are working in arguably one of the most stressful times for their profession and need to find healthy ways to decompress. Consistent Jiu Jitsu training can help with all of it.”

With BJJ training, we can start to see the changes we need in police training almost instantly. Agencies don’t need to wait for a complex and expensive solution to provide their officers with better training that also works to improve their physical and mental health.

### **About Jason Swartz**

Jason Swartz is a former Police Officer of 11 years and a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Black Belt. During his career in law enforcement, he worked as a patrol officer, lead combative tactics instructor, department training officer, field training officer and firearms instructor. He is the recipient of three life-saving awards and multiple department commendations and unit citations.